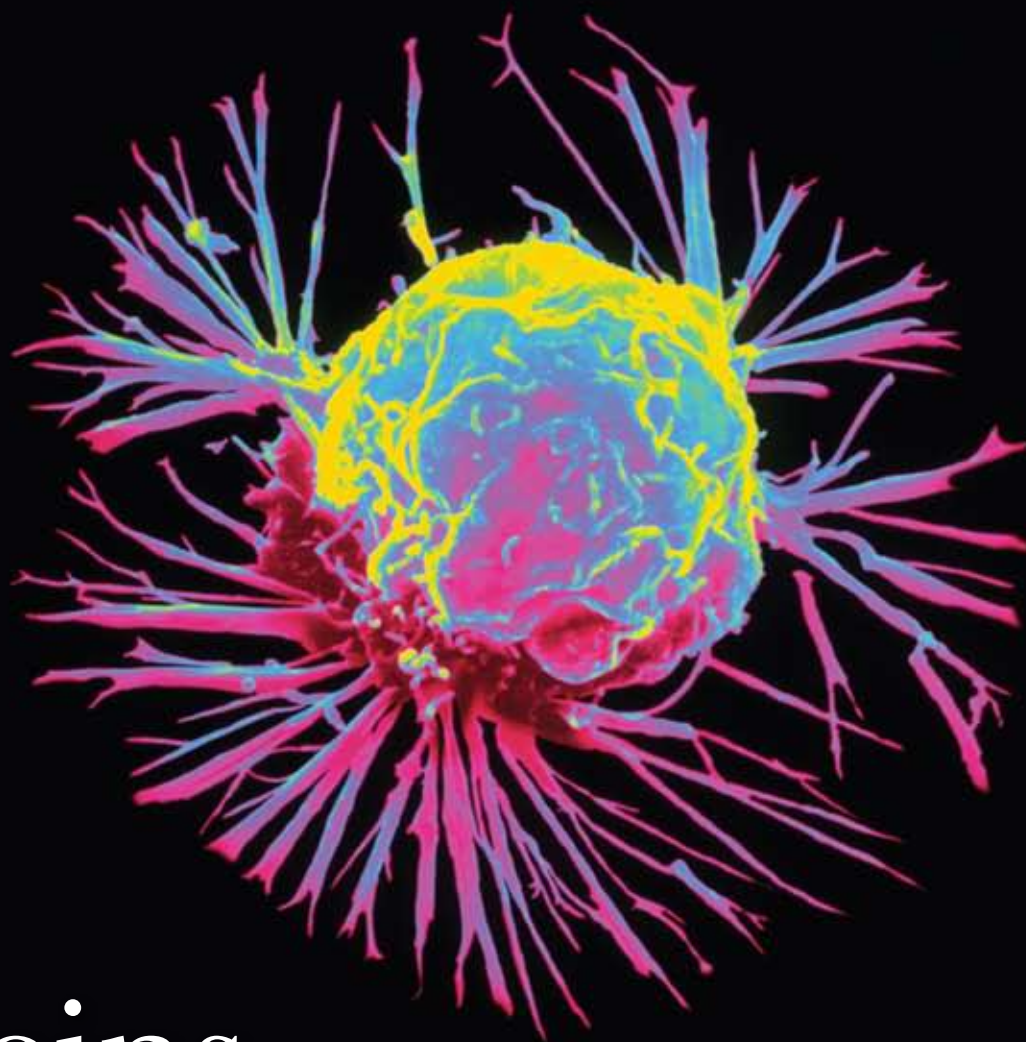




UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

The Birmingham Magazine

Issue 20 2008-09



Proteins to populations

Cancer research at Birmingham in all shapes and sizes

Also inside: Baroness Valerie Amos, Lord David Currie and Sir Liam Donaldson; a look at the Changing Face of Birmingham; groundbreaking research; Olympic achievements and more.

From the Vice-Chancellor

As I reflect on our year of organisational change and look forward to the future, I feel confident that we have retained our standing in the increasingly competitive world of Higher Education and that we are poised to make the leap from a very good institution to a truly great institution.

The changes we have made to our internal structure mean that we now have in place five Heads of College, all outstanding academics in their own right, who will help to drive our University forward as part of a new Senior Management team which puts academic leadership at the heart of our decision making process.

It is often said that change is the only constant but it is with great sadness that the University bids farewell to Vice-Principal Professor Michael Clarke, whose commitment and passion has helped to shape your University over the last 15 years; we thank Michael, and his wife Angela, for their support. Professor Michael Sheppard, former Dean of the University's Medical School, will now take over the reins as Vice-Principal and will continue to champion and drive our University forward alongside Professor David Eastwood, who from April will take over the Vice-Chancellorship.

Change is an ongoing theme throughout this year's Magazine as we hear from three leading alumni about the impact they have had on UK and global policy decisions and their thoughts on the future of their industries. Professor Sir Liam Donaldson, the UK's Chief Medical Officer, discusses his ideas for the future of the NHS as it celebrates its 60th year; Lord David Currie, Head of Ofcom, looks at the future role of regulation in the telecomms industry and Baroness Valerie Amos, former Leader of the House of Lords and current Chair of the Royal African Society, gives her views on the many changes taking place in Africa today.

On campus, our research continues to pave the way for change. Our research into cancer demonstrates the true power of our 'bench to bedside' approach, which allows continuous refinement and testing resulting in immediate results for patients. Our studies into post-conflict resolution in both Rwanda and Sierra



Leone help to facilitate change for the better and the impact of our research is felt across the continent.

I am sure that change will continue to be a feature of your University for many years to come as we continue to adapt to new challenges and ensure our research contributes to society's needs and tackles the key global issues of the day. The only certainty is that to continue to be successful, we will need to rely heavily on the support of our partners, friends and alumni and we thank you for the support that you continue to show us.

Professor Michael Sterling
Vice-Chancellor and Principal

In this issue

Features

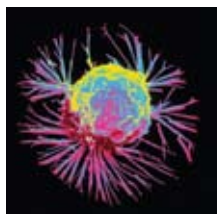
Proteins to populations	14
Carry on Doctor	18
The Changing Face of Birmingham	20
The First Lady	22
A spectrum of experience	28
Farewell Mr Birmingham	30
Conflicting opinions	36

Regulars

The year in pictures	4
General news	6
Student news	8
Events	10
Research news	24
Sporting news	26
Puzzles-Benefits-Gifts	38

On the cover

A coloured scanning electron micrograph (SEM) of a single breast cancer cell. Find out more on p14.



Stay in touch

For general enquiries

Post: Development and Alumni Office,
University of Birmingham, Edgbaston,
Birmingham, B15 2TT, England
Phone: 0121 414 2744/4724
Email: alumnioffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk
www.alumni.bham.ac.uk

For events enquiries

Clare Capella
Phone: +44 (0) 121 414 8904
Email: alumnievents@contacts.bham.ac.uk

With your news, memories and feedback

Tel: +44 (0)121 414 2744/4724/2773
Email: alumniconmunications@contacts.bham.ac.uk
Or leave us your latest news at
www.your.bham.ac.uk

The views and opinions expressed in the University of Birmingham Magazine are not necessarily those of the Alumni Office or the University of Birmingham.

Support the University

You can support the University in a range of ways:

- Direct Debit – making regular giving safe, easy and cost-efficient
- Online – visit our online giving site at www.ecommercegateway.co.uk/bham/eDonate/
- Via your tax return – you can give the University all or some of any tax refund through your tax return. Simply add the code FAH 59JG in section 19A.3 and call Fiona Newell on +44 (0) 121 414 8136 for a Donation Form. You can also reclaim tax on the gift on next year's return
- Shares – most donors can claim tax relief on share gifts. Visit www.alumni.bham.ac.uk/fund/gift/shares.shtml
- Legacies – email Martha Cass on m.cass@bham.ac.uk for more information
- Company matched giving – visit www.alumni.bham.ac.uk/fund/gift/matching.shtml for a list of participating companies
- Giving from overseas – you can make a gift to the University from anywhere in the world. Visit www.alumni.bham.ac.uk/fund/gift/overseas.shtml to find out more



PHOTO L WORTH

In focus

The much-maligned Muirhead Tower in the middle of its £40 million make-over. The tower is undergoing a full internal and external refurbishment to upgrade academic and office accommodation and build new facilities to house University Special Collections.

£62.3 million is spent on capital projects each year. Find out more about the changing face of your University on page 20.

The year in pictures



Football trophy comes to campus

Students and staff pay to pose with the Barclays Premiership Football Trophy to raise money for the Homeless World Cup, an international tournament that unites teams of homeless people to change their lives for the better.



All aboard for climate change

Yachtswoman Dame Ellen MacArthur climbs aboard the University's hydrogen hybrid canal boat as part of the Birmingham Climate Change Festival. The zero-emission craft is powered by a hydrogen fuel cell, solar panels and a permanent magnet electric motor.

Flavour of the month

The University becomes the first in the country to hold a regular farmer's market, selling a range of local produce to students, staff and the local community. It takes place on the fourth Wednesday of every month with plans underway to increase its frequency in future.



Thoughts fly

Shoppers are encouraged to share their thoughts at the launch of the Original Thinking campaign, celebrating the contribution that the University has made to pioneering research for more than 100 years.

Energy future

Hydrogen fuel cell-powered cars fill up as the University opens the first of a UK-wide network of hydrogen fuelling stations. Birmingham's innovative hydrogen research made the local, national and international news.





Warm welcome

New students from across the world get their first taste of university life at International Welcome Week. Birmingham was recently rated first amongst Russell Group universities for its provision of visa and immigration advice to international students.



Historic house hits 100

University House – former Hall of Residence and now home of the Birmingham Business School – marks its centenary with an open day and celebration lunch. The House was the University's first Hall of Residence and the first to open its doors to both male and female students.



Kinnock opens exhibition

Former Labour leader and EU Commissioner Neil Kinnock opens *Overcoming Dictatorships*, an exhibition showcasing the work of European artists and focusing on the change from dictatorship to democracy after the opening of former Communist countries.



Expert advice for prospective postgraduates

Prospective postgraduate students sample the wide variety of taught and research-based courses available at Birmingham at the Postgraduate Open Day, with presentations, tours and research showcases. This year's open day takes place on 3 December 2008. Visit www.postgraduate.bham.ac.uk/visits/ for more information.



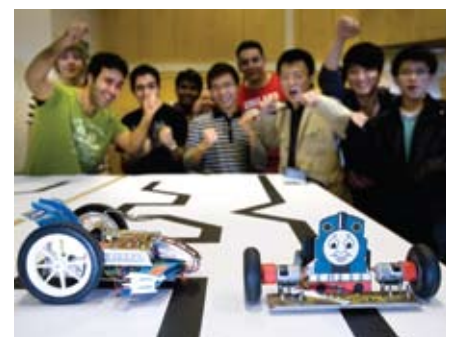
Squash superstars

The University welcomes the world's top squash players for the prestigious Prince English Grand Prix Squash Championships, transforming the Great Hall into a professional sports venue housing a purpose-built, all-glass squash court.



Botanical display

The Coach House Gallery opens at the beautiful Winterbourne Botanic Garden, showing a range of illustrations, textiles and other crafts.



Robot wars

Competition is fierce at the annual University Robot Race, where teams of 2nd year students from the Department of Electronic, Electrical and Computer Engineering go head-to-head and aim to get their robot first around a specially designed track.

News

What do you remember?



Student politician Chris Cobb takes a break in the Guild – spring 1975
Share your pictures and memories of Birmingham on our new online alumni community [your.bham](http://your.bham.ac.uk)
Visit www.your.bham.ac.uk to join.

Faith communities debate what makes a good city

Representatives from major faiths came together recently to discuss 'What makes a good city?' at the launch of the Faiths for the City initiative. Facilitated by the University's multi faith chaplaincy, the initiative aims to bring together representatives of different faith communities, academics from the University and leaders from the City of Birmingham for a dialogue focused on specific issues related to the welfare of the city and rooted in a discussion of religious traditions.

'The project's inception was originally an attempt to respond to the historical moment we are all living in to look at the commonalities in all major faiths by exploring new venues of dialogue and cooperation,' explains Father Nicholas Io Polito of the University Chaplaincy. 'We aim to facilitate communication between faith groups across the city and focus on specific areas of the city's life: commerce and industry, housing and public space, the criminal justice system, education and the environment.'

Money matters for new generation of students

New undergraduates can find out about life on a student budget thanks to a new 'Money Matters' game produced by the University.

The student funding office conceived the idea for an online interactive funding game which helps them negotiate the financial choices they will be faced with. 'It's more important than ever for today's students to understand the large number of choices and funding options available to them,' says Joanne Bryan, Student Funding Manager. 'We hope that the game will help them to do that in a fun, accessible way.'

Money Matters will take the player around a board based on Birmingham. The personalised approach will let them lead their own avatar – a customised character that they play during the game – through a series of choices that they might encounter during their first year of university life. Each turn of play will affect their financial situation or student experience.

'For example, a typical situation for a new student may be deciding whether to stay in and save money or go out and socialise

with friends,' says Joanne. 'The game aims to educate them on how they can maintain a balance between healthy finances and making the most of the social experience.'

The game provides advice to applicants, students and parents on university and external funding and also allows the player to see the effects of borrowing money on their debt and student experience.

[Learn more](http://www.moneymatters.bham.ac.uk)
www.moneymatters.bham.ac.uk



Professor John Holmwood of the University's Sociology Department continues: 'Birmingham is an incredibly interesting city at the forefront of dialogues around religion and politics. We have a great opportunity here to look at issues of faith and community and how you manage them within an essentially secular political system. The University provides a unique space for discussing these issues on behalf of the wider community.'

With many activities taking place in 2008 and continuing into 2009, it is hoped that the Faiths for the City initiative will help to shape the city's future as a positive centre of diversity and integration.

[Learn more](http://www.faithsforthecity.org.uk/)
www.faithsforthecity.org.uk/





Performance: Students imagine a technology-free world

Imagining a mobile-free world

Could you imagine a world where MP3 players and mobile phones didn't exist and plastic was never invented?

The Departments of Drama and Theatre Arts and Electrical and Computer Engineering did just that earlier this year when they collaborated on a play performed in West Midlands' schools. The performance aimed to encourage pupils to consider a career in science.

Entitled 'Magnets, Ducks and Superconductors', the play envisioned life without everyday technology and encouraged the audience to imagine a world where

anything was possible. Then, drawing on University research on superconductivity, it demonstrated how scientific innovation and technology can be used to turn ideas into reality.

The play was devised by students from Drama and Theatre Arts and will be assessed as part of their degree programme. Professor Kate Newey from the Department of Drama explains: 'The students had to research and understand the scientific matter involved and then interpret it in an understandable and engaging way for school pupils.'

Alison Morey, Superconductivity Outreach Manager from the Department of Electronic, Electrical and Computer Engineering adds: 'It is important to encourage pupils of school age to develop an understanding of scientific principles and appreciate the practical application of scientific innovation in our society. We hope that we have enthused pupils about what it's like to study science and engineering at university level.'

150 years of dentistry

Alumni, staff and students gathered in early November to celebrate 150 years of dentistry in Birmingham.

The current Dental Hospital and School at St Chad's Queensway opened in 1965, but existed in several incarnations before that. The first hospital was established in 1858, before the establishment of the University and went on to move five times before settling in its current home. Starting as a very small institution it now takes in over 100 dental, therapy and Biomaterials students each year.

A day of anniversary activities attended by undergraduates, postgraduates and trustees, included speeches from prominent guests including alumnus and Chief Dental Officer for England Barry Cockcroft (BDS, Dentistry, 1973). An evening dinner for alumni and past and present staff rounded off the celebrations.

'It was an opportunity to gather together friends of the Dental Hospital and School and mark this anniversary,' said Phil Lumley who organised the event. 'We were pleased to be able to celebrate Birmingham's significant history and reputation in dentistry.'

NEWS IN BRIEF

Library made easy with audio tours

New students and visitors to the University can easily find their way around the Main Library thanks to new multilingual audio tours.

Full guided tours are available in English, French, Arabic and Mandarin, and enable visitors to discover the services and facilities that the library offers at their convenience.

Library users can download the audio tour directly to their own MP3 player, or can borrow a pre-loaded MP3 player from the lending desk in the Main Library.

The tours have been generously funded by alumni through the University of Birmingham Fund.

Learn more

www.is.bham.ac.uk/Is/audiotour.shtml

Bye bye BUGS; hello Guild of Students

Your familiarity with either BUGS or the Guild of Students will largely depend on when you were a student at Birmingham.

From 2002 to 2007, the Guild was known as BUGS (Birmingham University Guild of Students), but has now reverted back to its traditional name, the Guild of Students. The name change came as the result of a student survey, which revealed that many students did not recognise the full range of services, advice and entertainment that their guild makes available to them.

Hannah Lazell, Vice President (Democracy and Resources) explains: 'Our new name makes it easier to identify that there are a multitude of services and activities that are part of the Guild's provision for students.'

A 21st Century Medical School

Future medical students will benefit from world-class facilities thanks to the generosity of medical school alumni and friends.

Their donations will help to build a brand new clinical skills centre and prosectorium enabling students to observe dissections – carefully programmed dissection for demonstration of anatomical structure – and gain solid practical experience in anatomy.

The prosectorium project will be the final stage of the medical school refurbishments following the development of the Wolfson Centre for Medical Education.

Student experience

Award winner shows community spirit

New alumna Laura Sterling (BA Archaeology and Ancient History with Theology, 2008) had a busy time at Birmingham. In addition to completing her degree this summer she also won the National Union of Students (NUS) Student of the Year award 2008.

Laura won the award for her work with the Guild of Students, organising and raising money for volunteering projects in the local community. The Kids Adventure scheme takes disadvantaged children referred by social services on short UK-based holidays; the Saturday Morning play scheme gives children with learning and behavioural difficulties a safe, engaging weekend environment.

Laura established a training programme, organising training sessions and drop-in sessions for volunteers. She increased volunteer participation and her fundraising

skills ensured that she left the group at the end of the year with a healthy financial base for the future.

As a direct result of Laura's efforts Saturday Morning Playscheme won the Most Improved Group at this year's student volunteering Awards which recognise student achievement – and Laura won Birmingham Student of the Year. She was then put forward for the national NUS award.

'My first reaction when I found out about the nomination was disbelief,' says Laura. 'But after the shock wore off I was really proud to have been nominated and pleased that the good work of the volunteer groups was being recognised.'

Lizzy Ralph, Vice President (Student Activities and Development) 2007–08 put Laura forward for the NUS award:

'Laura has shown a remarkable commitment to volunteering, giving her time to support local groups and support other student volunteers. We are incredibly proud of her efforts,' she says.

Laura's commitment to her local community doesn't stop there. She is also the Director of a regeneration trust in her home town of Kingstanding, North Birmingham.

'Mentoring young people and helping them to make the best choices in life is very rewarding,' says Laura. 'I was the first in my family to go to university and I believe that, given the opportunity, lots of other young people who might not consider higher education, can go on to be successful.'



Student of the year: Laura (centre) at the NUS awards



Experience: Medical students at Bilga Hospital

Four medical students travelled to India for six weeks this summer to complete medical electives at the Bilga Hospital in the Punjab.

The students were funded through the Manjit Gahir travel bursary – established in 2007 by alumnus Manjit Gahir (MBChB Medicine, 1988) – to gain new medical experience and spend time working in a completely different type of healthcare system.

Rebecca Hewitt, Jennifer Walters, Jasprit Chana and Mandeep Hoonjan spent their time at the charity-funded hospital, which

Insight into international healthcare for bursary recipients

aims to provide affordable healthcare to its local community.

'We were all really struck by the differences in healthcare between the UK and India,' says Jasprit. 'Even though the hospital offers the cheapest healthcare that it can, with treatments only costing a few rupees, it is still very expensive for families.'

Jennifer adds: 'We were impressed by the dedication of the medical staff in the hospital. They worked enormously hard just to make sure that patients received a good level of care.'

As part of the elective, the students also spent some time in rural areas at free clinics as part of the hospital's outreach programme, treating

hundreds of patients a day. 'It was amazing to see the number of people who came to the clinics because it was the only way that they could access healthcare,' says Mandeep. 'It was also a huge challenge for us medically, to treat patients with such a wide range of problems.'

All four students found the elective extremely rewarding and a positive addition to their medical experiences. 'It was a wonderful opportunity for us,' says Rebecca, 'and it's been extremely useful back in the UK as we continue our training; we've had first hand experience of some of the conditions that we'd normally only study in textbooks. We all feel extremely privileged to have been given this experience.'

Student wins international prize

Alex Smith, a third-year engineering student, has won the global \$25,000 Wolfram 2,3 Turing Machine Research Prize by proving that a simple mathematical calculator can be used as a 'universal computing machine'. The proof involved a type of calculator known as a Turing machine which given enough time and memory, can solve almost any mathematical problem.

The Wolfram Turing prize was established to be awarded to the first person or group to prove either that the simplest type of Turing machine – which uses only three symbols in its calculations – was universal, or was not. Alex was able to demonstrate with a 50 page proof that Wolfram's Turing machine is, in fact, universal.

This result ends a half-century quest to find the simplest universal Turing machine. It demonstrates that a remarkably simple system can perform any computation that can be done by any computer and strengthens the argument that computers could one day be built from DNA and other biological molecules.

An international summer with Universitas 21

The last few months have seen Birmingham host a variety of Universitas 21 events, inviting students, staff and academics to share their knowledge with international colleagues. The University was a founding member of Universitas 21 (U21), an international network of 21 leading research-intensive universities in 13 countries including China, India, the USA and Australia.

In June, 48 undergraduates came from around the world for the annual Summer School. Participants took part in academic, creative, cultural and social activities, debated a range of issues around diversity and got the opportunity to explore the West Midlands with visits to Eastside-Birmingham's cultural quarter, Stratford-



Summer fun: The Vale Festival

Student FestiVale raises money and awareness

On a beautiful day at the end of the summer term, over 4,000 students headed to the Vale village for the fourth annual Vale Festival.

Planned, organised and staffed by students, the festival has become an annual summer event, with attendees treated to wide variety of live music, arts, and activities. All money raised by the event goes to student-selected charities.

Water is Life was the theme of this year's festival, with £33,000 raised for Water Aid, Pump Aid and Playpumps – charities dedicated to providing sanitation and hygiene education to some of the world's poorest countries. In total, the event has raised an incredible £100,000 in the four years that it has been running.

'We are extremely pleased with the outcome of this year's Vale Festival,' says Andy Earl, one of

the organisers. 'Our aim is to give students an excellent event, where they can have a good time, but also come together as a community and expand their horizons.'

The Festival has always maintained a strong environmental focus. Bio fuels and other renewable energy sources are used to power generators, and 80% of waste from the event is recycled. Ethics are also carefully considered in the organisation of the festival; only groups and companies with sound ethical practices are allowed to participate.

'It's a fantastic event to be involved in,' says Andy, 'and as far as we know, there is no student-run event in the country on anything like a comparable scale.'

The next Vale Festival will take place in June 2009. Watch the website for details. www.valefestival.co.uk

upon-Avon and Ironbridge. The project team were grateful for support from ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) in this venture.

'We hope that the Summer School participants left Birmingham having met fellow students from different cultures across the globe and learnt new skills which will be important for their social and professional development,' says U21 Officer Dr Kieran McGovern.

At the 2008 Universitas 21 Postgraduate Research Conference in July, the University hosted international PhD students. The theme of the event was 'Water' and researchers from any discipline with an interest in some aspect of water be it health, climate change, engineering or politics, presented their work as well as taking part in workshops aimed at suggesting solutions.

The International Conference on Energy Technologies and Policy also took place on campus in September. Academics from around the world came to debate issues, find common ground and to propose energy solutions that can make a difference on the global scene. All participating institutions undertake significant research in energy-related topics – with Birmingham's hydrogen energy research a key topic of discussion – and the conference aimed to encourage significant collaboration in the future.

'Birmingham wants to encourage collaboration and strengthen global relationships with its Universitas 21 partners,' says Dr McGovern, 'and the range of activities that we have held over the summer go a long way to achieving those goals.'

Learn more
www.u21.bham.ac.uk

University events

Join the 2000 former students who attend an alumni event in the UK or overseas each year or get in touch with us for help organising your own reunions and finding old friends. Visit the website www.alumni.bham.ac.uk or contact Clare Capella on +44 (0)121 414 8904 or email alumnievents@contacts.bham.ac.uk. To ensure you hear about the latest events, update your details on the exclusive alumni community www.your.bham.ac.uk

4 December 2008 – London

Christmas Party

Celebrate the start of the festive season with fellow alumni from the last 15 years. This year's Christmas Party will be held at the Pitcher and Piano in Cornhill, easy to get to for those working in the City and your first drink is on us. Please RSVP in advance.

8 December 2008 – University Carol Service

This annual event, organised by the University Chaplains and the Department of Music, is a joyful Christmas celebration for staff, students and families in the Great Hall (Aston Webb). All are welcome.

January 2009 – University and Birmingham Royal Ballet tour of China

University senior managers will be visiting Guangzhou (9th), Beijing (17th) and Shanghai (21st) during a tour of China and would like to meet with as many alumni as possible. Alumni are invited to join an exclusive behind the scenes tour of the ballet and to meet the dancers, some of whom are alumni. Details are available on the website.

19 March 2009 – London Professional Network

Alumni working in finance, insurance, property, legal services and related professions are invited to attend the annual Network. BT will host the event on the revolving 34th floor of the BT Tower, offering stunning views of the capital. Places are extremely limited, please book early.



March 2009 – Birmingham Professional Network

Following the success of the London Network, alumni in Birmingham and the surrounding areas are invited to attend the Network for those working in finance, banking, insurance, property, law and related professions.

Spring 2009 – Media and the Arts Network
Network with fellow media, culture, arts, drama and related professionals over wine and canapés. Further details to be confirmed shortly.

Spring 2009 – Hong Kong reception

Meet and network with fellow alumni living and working in Hong Kong. All alumni are welcome to attend and to find out the latest news from the University. Details available online soon.

25 April 2009 – Fab n Frenzyreunited

Relive your student nights out with the last ever alumni clubnight in Joe's. Discounted tickets available for groups of ten or more and registered users of your.bham. Tickets on sale in the New Year.

25 April 2009 – Class of 1999 10 Year Anniversary

Join your classmates for an evening celebrating the tenth anniversary of your graduation from the campus. Start the night with a curry in Selly Oak before making your way to the Guild to party like its 1999! Beorma Bar will be Frenzy themed. Tickets cost £15.

6 June 2009 – Alumni Sports Day

Alumni go head-to-head with current students in a variety of sports at the eighth annual sports day. Visit the website for details.

June 2009 – London Summer Party

Enjoy a summer's evening with fellow alumni at the popular summer party. Please RSVP in advance.

September 2009 – Guild of Graduates and Alumni Association

Join the Guild of Graduates and Alumni Association meeting for their AGM on campus.

30 October 2009 – House of Lords Reception

Enjoy stunning views, a private tour of the Houses of Parliament and meet some of the University's brightest students at the sixth annual House of Lords reception. Tickets go on sale in August, early booking is advised.



ALUMNI REUNIONS

18–20 September 2009 – Medical Graduates of 1964

Mark 45 years since graduation and 50 years since the start of the undergraduate course in October 1959 with a special reunion – view all the developments taking place at the University, the Medical School and the new University Hospital (QEH and SOH).

Contact: Kishore Shah and Alan Veness
Email: kishshah@doctors.org.uk
Tel: +44 121 454 1630 or 07963 794968



Saturday 20 June 2009

25th, 35th, 40th & 50th Anniversaries

Join us on campus next summer for a trip down memory lane, catching up with old friends and meeting current students. Campus tours, visits to academic departments, a reunion lunch and plenty of tea and coffee will be on offer as you meet classmates.

Golden Reunion

Alumni who graduated from the University in 1959 or earlier are invited to return to celebrate their Golden Reunion. The reunion will be themed around the Class of 1959 who will be celebrating their 50th anniversary, alumni of all subjects welcome.

Celebrating your reunion

What to do next:

- Fill in the booking form (it came with the magazine) and post it to us
- Contact your friends and get a group together – the Alumni Office can help you
- Visit the website for event updates
- Join your.bham to find old friends and plan your day
- Celebrate your anniversary on campus in June

Looking for friends?

Would you like to contact old university friends and colleagues? Our online alumni community **your.bham** lets you search for people that you have lost touch with and contact them directly.

Alternatively, with our postbox service we can also forward on your letters and emails to alumni whom you would like to re-establish contact with.

Your.bham

www.your.bham.ac.uk

Alumni postbox

www.alumni.bham.ac.uk/stay/friends/postbox.shtml



Chemical Engineering 1958/59

John Rudkin would love to re-establish contact with colleagues from his course. If you see yourself in this picture (below left), or recognise someone, please contact the alumni office on alumnioffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk

40th Anniversary engineers

Electrical Engineering alumni Bob Stuart, Mike Goddard, Dave Griffiths and Chemistry alumnus John Wilson are looking for Paul King (BSc Electrical Engineering, 1969) with the hope of meeting him and other former classmates at their Class of 1969 reunion on 20 June 2009.

Some successes!

We have been able to put these people back in touch:

Debbie Taylor (BA French Language and Literature, 1983) and Sandra Young (BA Italian Language and Literature, 1983) met up with former classmates at their reunion, for the first time in 25 years.

Philippa (Jill) Ross (formerly Jill Quiggin – BSc Biological Sciences, 1973) had a great time at her reunion and was able to meet up with a friend following the event, 35 years since graduation.

Groups and societies

For full reports from many alumni groups and societies, information about groups around the UK and the world, including how to join and details of upcoming events, please visit www.alumni.bham.ac.uk/groups/

UK groups

Birmingham University Bristol Association (BUBA)

BUBA is a small, friendly and very active group which meets monthly. This year we have enjoyed a number of talks including 'The Position of Women in Saudi Arabia', and a speech from the University's Professor Joe Biddlestone at our annual dinner. We have also visited Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery and the ancient wool town of Frome. New members are very welcome. Contact Rene Thomas 0117 9736166 or John Smith johnsmith@chyanmor.wanadoo.co.uk

BUGS (Birmingham University Graduates in Scotland)

BUGS members have had a busy year, enjoying a 'Spring Sensation' at the Museum of Edinburgh followed by a meal and whiskey tasting, a summer walk in the beautiful Fife countryside and a cruise on the Waverley paddle steamer. Newly appointed Head of College Professor Nigel Weatherill spoke at the very popular AGM and Annual Dinner in October. Please visit <http://bugs.website.orange.co.uk/> or contact Bill Sandham 0141 339 5138, w.sandham@scotsig.co.uk



Cruise: BUGS trip on a paddle steamer

Midlands Branch

The Midlands Branch have enjoyed a full calendar of events and talks, including the annual Lunch, a talk on 'Recent progress in Cancer Research' by the University's Professor Lawrence Young, a visit to the



Garden party: The Canadian Chapter meet in Ontario

Special Collections Department at the Library, and a trip to Tutbury Castle. New members are very welcome and details of our forthcoming programme can be found at www.alumni.bham.ac.uk/groups/midlands.shtml. Please contact Dr Peter Borchers p.h.borchers@bham.ac.uk

International groups

Canadian Chapter

The Canadian 2008 Garden Party was held in Georgetown, Ontario on Sunday, 24 August. Many thanks are due to our hosts Bert (BSc Chemical Engineering 1967) and Mary Jenkins. The weather was near perfect and 37 alumni and friends enjoyed the delightful garden and delicious food. This year, as a group, we were able to contribute a little money to the Canadian Scholarship Fund, to support a student through their studies. We also drank to the health of Dr Nosrat Ameli (MBChB Medicine 1937; ChM 1946) who had his 95th birthday the week before and acknowledged the contribution of the late Dr Robert Lannigan (PhD Pathology, 1967) who set up the pathology department in the newly established medical school at the University of Calgary, Alberta in 1969. Grateful thanks are due to all members of the organizing committee. We look forward to seeing everyone again next year! Please contact Sheila Cann at scann@yorku.ca

Centre for English Language Studies (CELS) Japan Alumni Association

Following the first alumni gathering in summer 2007, the CELS Japan Alumni Association continues to grow, attracting some of the 400 CELS graduates living in Japan. We hope to

involve all alumni interested in keeping in touch and meeting new friends who share similar interests. This year, the association looks to hold a joint networking event with MASH – www.bhammash.com – in Tokyo in early November. Please contact Chiyoko Nogami at CELSjapan@gmail.com

New York Chapter

The US New York Chapter gets together once every quarter for a variety of events, including evening meals and drinks at bars and restaurants in Manhattan. We currently have an active membership of almost 100 individuals on the email distribution list but are always eager to welcome new members. Please contact David Drinkwater at davedrink@gmail.com for more information.

Societies

University House Association (UHA)

The UHA AGM, held at University House on Saturday 6 September, was an enjoyable occasion but rather sad since it may have been the last AGM of the Association in its present form. It is now six years since House closed its doors as a Hall of Residence and the resulting lack of new graduates to join UHA has led to declining numbers actively involved in the Association. Reluctantly the members present accepted a recommendation from the committee to wind up the affairs of UHA. There will be a last meeting in 2009 at which the Association will be formally wound up but we hope that ex-residents of UH will still continue to meet on an informal basis.

Reunions

Earth Sciences Reunion

Intrepid members of the Birmingham University Geology Graduate Reunion, who have had several gatherings since graduating in 1970, met yet again in September 2007, this time for our fifth reunion. The locality was Tuscany and five stalwarts made it, coming from as far afield as Perth, Botswana and Nottingham! Naturally, the local geology was uppermost in our minds, but because of our wealth of experience, we rapidly concluded that the strata contained neither hydrocarbons nor metals and hence we were able to apply our minds to something more erudite, like viniculture product analysis! We had a good time and so will reconvene for the next episode of this thrilling saga in 2010, venue as yet undecided.



Earth Sciences: Five go to Tuscany

50 years of Biochemical Engineering at Birmingham

Over 90 past and present staff and graduates celebrated 50 years of Biochemical Engineering activity in the Chemical Engineering department on 25 April 2008 with a symposium highlighting its history, achievements and future potential. Glitterati and alumni including Norman Blakebrough, Geoff Hamer, Steve Vbranch, Andy Lyddiatt and Alvin Nienow reminisced about the past and predicted the future and then all joined in a Jubilee Dinner in Staff House. A Jubilee Travel Fund was launched to support research students and staff. Contact a.n.emery@bham.ac.uk for details.



Celebration: 50 years of Biochemical Engineering

75 Years of 'The Stoats'

The University of Birmingham Mountaineering Club (UBMC), more familiarly known as 'The Stoats', celebrated its 75th anniversary with a dinner in Ambleside in the Lake District on 16 February 2008, along with 35 ex-presidents and former members of the club. An anthology of writings by Stoats and ex-Stoats was published this year spanning the years between the mid 1930s and 2007, and visiting mountains in all parts of the world. A limited number may be available – contact Dave Roberts (Stoats President 1961/62) dandl@dandl.myzen.co.uk if you are interested.



Stoats: Members of the mountaineering club

Niteline Reunion

In April, Niteline, a listening and information service run by students for students, had their first ever Alumni Reunion. It was a success with 20 people attending who graduated up to ten years ago. We are now looking for alumni who used to be in Niteline and would like to join the newly founded Niteline Alumni Society or can provide information about the history of the service. For more information please contact niteline@bugs.bham.ac.uk



First reunion: Former Niteline volunteers

Sunshine again greets the Guild of Graduates AGM

Once again warm sunshine and a busy campus (for University Open Day) greeted members of the Guild of Graduates and Alumni Association meeting for their AGM on Saturday, 13 September. This was the last meeting for outgoing President Nick Emery and he greeted some 45 members, many attending for the first time and many travelling long distances to attend. Reports highlighted problems of declining active membership faced by Regional and other groups – common to many membership organisations these days – but all was not doom and gloom, with many activities continuing to thrive and the groups and the Guild all continuing in good financial health.

In the elections the following were elected:

Guild Representatives on Court (from January 2009 to December 2013): David Gilburn, Hilary Baker, Robert Skeates, Christine McCauley, Maureen Edge and David Clegg.

Guild Officers and committee for 2008–09: President: Joe Biddlestone, Vice-President and Secretary/Treasurer (pro tem): Nick Emery, Alumni Awards Officer: Mary Hill, Committee members: John Edge, Maureen Edge, Lesley Payne, Marcia Davies, Arthur Lee, Norma Broadbridge and Calliope Harrison.

After an excellent lunch provided by Rosemary Stuart, a presentation of a Stuart Crystal bowl was made to the retiring Vice-Principal Professor Michael Clarke with our thanks for the support that he has lent the Guild over many years.

There then followed an uplifting talk from Pro-Chancellor and alumnus Dr Jim Glover (BSc Biological Sciences, 1973; DSc 2008). His confidence in the future of the University, based on its success in recruiting a first class leadership team for its new College-based structure, its debt-free financial health and its sound infrastructure was genuinely inspiring and we all went away looking forward to a successful future with the University aiming for a world top 50 – and inherently UK top 10 – position.



PROTEINS TO POPULATIONS

Cancer research in all shapes and sizes

Most people, unless they are extremely fortunate will have a cancer story to tell, either through their own experiences or those of a family member or friend. Each year around 10 million of us worldwide are diagnosed with cancer and unfortunately 6.7 million of us will not survive the disease.

Cancer occurs when a cell starts to divide in an uncontrolled way. Each of the one hundred trillion cells in the body should be regulated, but in certain cases, brought on by genetic, environmental or other causes, the cell becomes damaged. It starts to replicate, ignoring other cells in its vicinity and forming an uncontrolled cell mass that develops into a tumour.

Research into the disease has been ongoing at Birmingham since the early 1920s when researchers took part in early studies on carcinogenic chemicals, funded by the grandly titled British Empire Cancer Campaign. Nearly 90 years later, the legacies of that early research and funding are still very much in evidence. The Cancer Research UK Institute for Cancer Studies employs over 250 academics, with expertise in viral oncology, immunology, genetics, cell biology and clinical trials; all approaching the diagnosis and treatment of cancer in different ways.

The unique situation of the Institute – fully embedded within the University and adjacent to the Hospital – means that Birmingham researchers can take full advantage of special facilities like the University's imaging centre and clinical research facility. Its proximity to clinical expertise is also reflected in its world-rated clinical trials unit and the research base is augmented by other academics throughout the College of Medical and Dental Sciences.

'The institute was founded on a belief that novel therapeutic strategies can only be born from an environment where basic cancer scientists and clinicians work together,' says Professor Paul Moss, Head of the Institute. 'We adopt a true "bench to bedside" approach where exploratory research which initially takes place in a test tube can be followed right the way through to drug trials in patients.'

Viral oncology and immunology

Professor Alan Rickinson has been working on the Epstein Barr Virus (EBV) and its relationship to cancers for many years. His work sits at the crossroads of several specialist areas: virology, oncology and immunology.

EBV is one of eight different types of herpesvirus that infect humans, other examples being the viruses which cause chickenpox or cold sores. As with those viruses, once a person is infected by EBV they will carry that virus for life. However EBV has a unique feature that sets it apart from most other herpesviruses. It can infect cells and make those cells divide and grow, passing on the virus' genetic material to every daughter cell. If not controlled by the infected person's immune responses, the growth of these infected cells can lead to the formation of specific types of cancer.

Although EBV is found worldwide in all human populations, it was first identified in an African tumour called Burkett's lymphoma and has since also been linked with seven other types of cancer, including Hodgkin's Disease and a tumour called nasopharyngeal carcinoma which is particularly common in people of Chinese origin. The Institute houses several research groups whose work focuses on these different cancers and their association with the virus.

Most people become infected with EBV as children and then carry the virus for life without

Cancer occurs when a cell starts to divide in an uncontrolled way.

ever noticing adverse effects. However if first caught in adolescence or adulthood, EBV can cause glandular fever, an acute flu-like with symptoms including sore throat swelling of the lymph nodes and fatigue. One important aspect of Alan Rickinson's work is to understand how the immune response normally controls EBV infection and then to use that knowledge to develop new immunologic treatments for the above types of cancer.

'We're very interested in glandular fever,' says Professor Rickinson, 'because it shows our immune system in the act of responding to EBV infection, at a time when the balance between the virus and the host is out of kilter. By studying glandular fever patients during and after their period of illness, we can identify which parts of the immune response to virus infection are likely to be most useful in attacking cancer cells that carry the virus.'

With this as background, Professor Rickinson's team has recently developed a therapeutic vaccine to educate the immune system to recognise tumour cells more efficiently. 'We are now half way through phase I clinical trials in patients with EBV-associated cancers both here in the UK and in Hong Kong,' he says. 'Patients have received the vaccine after their conventional treatment and we are now looking for evidence that we have boosted immune responses against the tumour cells. This is a first step towards the development of an effective immune-based cancer treatment, and we are encouraged to see many years of basic research now being put to use in the real world'.

Cancer cell biology

In cancer cell biology, Dr Chris Tselepis is

looking into the potential role of iron metabolism in the development of gastrointestinal cancers. Whilst too little iron in the body causes serious health problems; usually detectable as anaemia, his research suggests that an excess of body iron is also likely to contribute both towards the evolution and progression of cancer.

'What we have demonstrated in the progression of both oesophageal and colorectal cancer is that certain activities in the cell are altered, causing them to take up an excess of iron,' says Dr Tselepis. 'The effect of this increased iron will depend on an individual's genetics.'

He continues: 'What we have shown in a laboratory setting is that, in combination with the loss of a protein that suppresses tumours – APC – this increased iron can amplify a major cancer causing pathway within the cell, ultimately leading to tumour formation.'

Dr Tselepis' group is currently working on ways to use chelating drugs – which bind iron – to remove this excess from the body and aims to test their research in phase I clinical trials in oesophageal cancer patients. Studying this patient group is particularly important because of two reasons; firstly the incidence of oesophageal cancer is currently rising faster than any other cancer in the western world and this remains unexplained. Secondly the prognosis for these patients is particularly grim with a five year survival in the order of 8%. 'We think of iron as being the fuel at the centre of the cancer fire,' says Dr Tselepis. 'It is our hope that this class of drugs will help to stop the rapid proliferation of cells and therefore douse the flame.'

Cancer genetics

Birmingham researchers are also delving deeper into the cell, into the genome to see what part our genes play in the predisposition to cancer.

Professor Malcolm Taylor is looking into the influence of the ATM gene on specific cancers. The gene was first identified in a rare childhood condition called Ataxia Telangiectasia (A-T) in which patients show a progressive neurodegeneration. These patients also have a greatly increased risk of developing cancer, particularly lymphoma or lymphoid leukaemia.

Professor Taylor explains: 'In most people, the ATM gene produces a protein that responds to DNA damage in the cell, either by allowing repair of the damage itself or by killing it off. Either way, this ensures that the cell won't pass the damage on when it replicates and cause a mutation. However, patients with A-T carry a mutated version of this gene and the protein is not produced,



A member of Alan Rickenson's research team working in viral oncology and immunology

meaning that damaged cells go on to replicate and may cause tumours.'

After initially helping to identify the gene in A-T patients, Professor Taylor and his colleagues have confirmed that the mothers of A-T children have a moderately increased risk of breast cancer. Interestingly, they have also found that ATM can be mutated in tumours that occur in adults. Most notably the gene is damaged in around one in seven cases of chronic lymphocytic leukemia, which is the commonest form of leukemia in the UK, and is associated with resistance to treatment. The group is now planning to move into stage I clinical trials with leukaemia patients and use specific drugs that are designed to overcome this clinical resistance.

Clinical trials

A Clinical Trials Unit comes to the fore at the point where research moves from the laboratory and impacts directly on the patient. Birmingham is known for having some of the best clinical trials units in the UK.

The Cancer Research UK Clinical Trials Unit was recently rated as 'outstanding/forefront' by an international review panel thus cementing its world-class reputation. The unit has a staff of 80 that coordinate trials on new drugs or combinations of drugs through a series of clinical phases; from phase I trials involving 15 or 20 patients up to international phase III trials of up to 20,000 patients across several countries.

'We've been running since 1980,' explains Professor Philip Johnson, Director of the Unit, 'and our position, embedded within the Institute for Cancer Studies at Birmingham means that, as well as investigating anti-cancer drugs developed elsewhere, we can also take the ideas that come from the laboratories here and get them out in to patients.'

Finding the solutions to cancers are long-term endeavours and Professor Johnson continues: 'It can take years or even decades to see new agents progress through their different phases, but we are seeing excellent results thanks to our research.'

The NEAT (National Epirubicin Adjuvant Trial) stage III trial took 2,400 women from around the UK with early-stage breast cancer and altered the complex chemical cocktail of drugs that they would typically be given during chemotherapy. The four year study found that by using the drug epirubicin in conjunction with existing chemotherapy drugs, women were 31% less likely to relapse or die from breast cancer than those treated with the usual drugs. Thanks to this trial, coordinated from Birmingham, the new drug regime has become standard for women with this early stage cancer.

In another successful trial with prostate cancer sufferers, researchers modified an adenovirus – which typically causes respiratory tract infections – and injected it into the tumour. Patients were then given a second injection of a 'pro-drug' which reacted with an

enzyme produced by the modified virus with toxic results; killing the tumour cells while leaving cells elsewhere in the body unaffected. Following excellent results in the phase I trials with encouraging evidence of anti-tumour activity, a further trial funded by the Medical Research Council is now in preparation.

In parallel with the trial, the unit also developed a new way of injecting the pro-drug into the prostate, increasing the targeting and accuracy of the treatment. 'The synergistic arrangement that we have here means that technical developments in delivery of drugs take place at the same time as scientific discoveries,' says Professor Nick James, Lead Investigator and Co-Director of the Cancer Division of the Birmingham Clinical Research Academy. 'Additionally, the close co-operation of the Cancer Research Institute with the NHS, further promoted by the Research Academy, means that tissue samples taken from trial participants can then go back into our labs for further analysis. We can learn to identify who does and doesn't react well to treatments, further tailoring and targeting future trials.'

Epidemiology

Moving away from laboratory and clinical approaches, the Centre for Childhood Cancer Survivor Studies within the School of Health and Population Sciences looks at the population-wide effects of cancer and the long term consequences of treatment for childhood cancers.

'We're in the fortunate position of having very impressive survival rates for childhood cancers,' says Epidemiologist Professor Mike Hawkins. 'Over recent decades the percentage of survivors living past five years has risen from 25% to approaching 80% so it's therefore very important to look at the quality of life that survivors experience after cancer treatments including radiotherapy and chemotherapy.'

The Centre has spent the past ten years following up the 18,000 individuals who were diagnosed with childhood cancer between 1940 and 1991 in Britain and who survived at least five years, looking at how they have fared since and also looking at causes of death for those individuals who have died subsequent to five-year survival.

'We found that an excess number of survivors later died from cardiac, pulmonary or kidney-related problems compared to the general population,' explains Professor Hawkins, 'and we suspect that this is often caused by the treatments they received for their cancer.' The team also looked into the occurrence of subsequent primary cancers – not the initial cancer coming back, but new cancers – within the survivor group. 'About

4% of survivors develop such cancers within 25 years of treatment,' he says, 'and we have found that some elements of the treatments they received for their first cancers are related to the risk of subsequent primary cancers developing. This work is important for surveillance and planning future treatments.'

Additionally, the Centre has also looked into the lifestyles of the survivor group; investigating the state of their general health and also assessing social factors like their achievements in education and occupation.

Professor Hawkins explains: 'One of the areas where we've recently published relates to smoking. Overall only around 50% of cancer survivors smoke in comparison with what is expected from the general population.'

Unfortunately we found that the groups that were most prone to smoking-related health complications because they may have had, for example, irradiation of their lungs or heart during treatment for their cancer were smoking most.' Through this continuing research the Centre aims to find better, more effective methods of intervention, fully informing survivors about the risks they face.

With survival rates after adult cancers like breast and prostate also increasing, survivorship research will become an increasingly important area. Professor Hawkins says: 'Increasingly we will be able to cure, or at least control, cancers and so quality of life and the consequences of treatment should be looked at among all survivors.'



The Cancer Research UK Institute for Cancer Studies

Learn more

About cancer research at Birmingham

The Cancer Research UK Institute for Cancer Studies www.cancerstudies.bham.ac.uk

Clinical Trials unit

www.cancerstudies.bham.ac.uk/crtu/

Centre for Childhood Cancer Survivor Studies

www.bccss.bham.ac.uk

Elsewhere on the web

Cancer Research UK, the UK's leading cancer research charity www.cancerresearchuk.org/

CancerHelp UK, the patient information website of Cancer Research UK.

The site was co-founded in Birmingham by Professor Nick James.

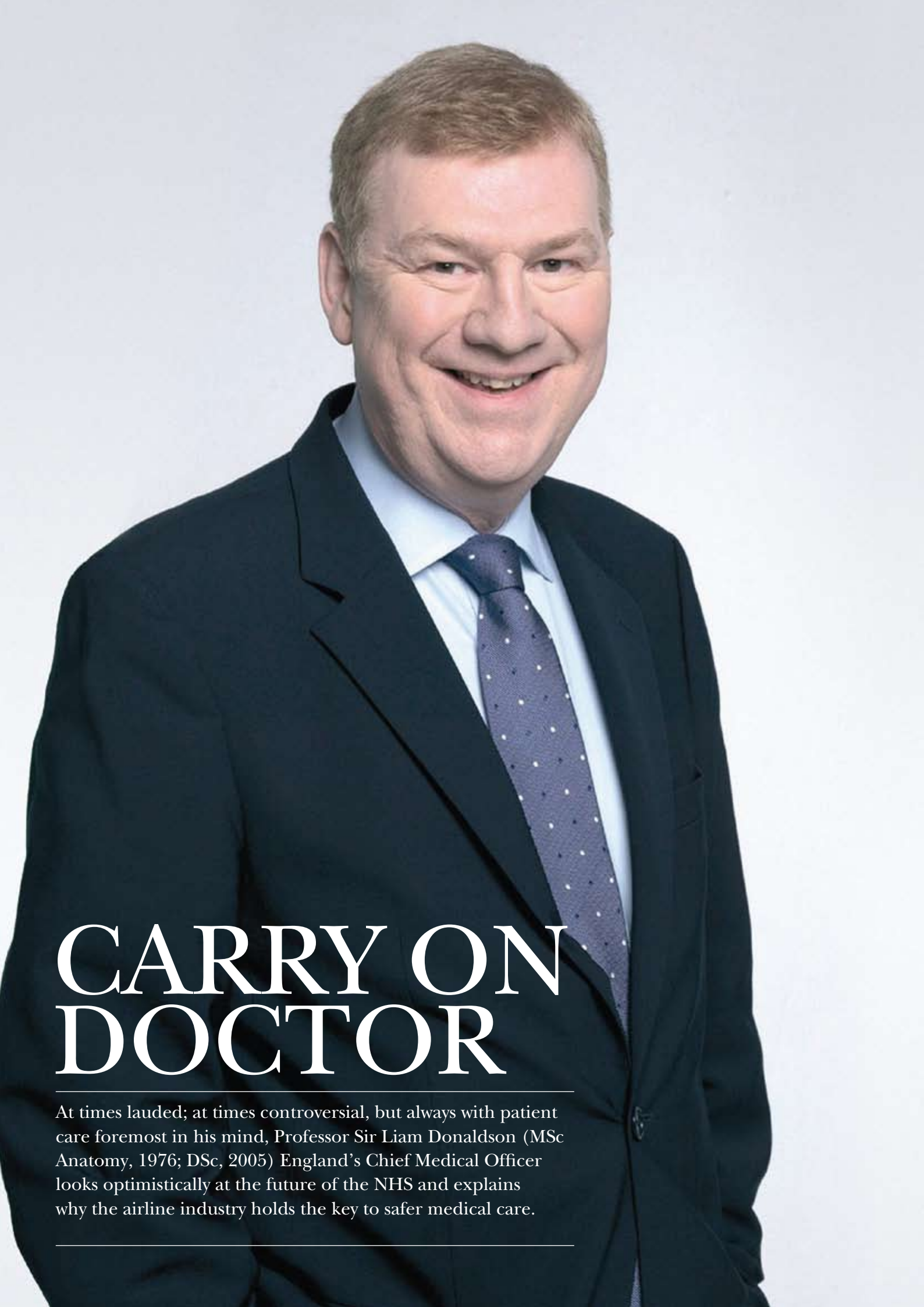
www.cancerhelp.org.uk/

The Ataxia-Telangiectasia (AT) Society

www.atsociety.org.uk/Homepage1.htm

Preparing for chemotherapy at the Wellcome Trust Clinical Research Facility – University Hospital Birmingham





CARRY ON DOCTOR

At times lauded; at times controversial, but always with patient care foremost in his mind, Professor Sir Liam Donaldson (MSc Anatomy, 1976; DSc, 2005) England's Chief Medical Officer looks optimistically at the future of the NHS and explains why the airline industry holds the key to safer medical care.

As Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Sir Liam is the nation's doctor. He is the government's principal medical advisor, the professional head of all medical staff in England and the man responsible for improving quality and safety of care in the NHS.

The down-to-earth 59 year old, has the calm, reassuring manner that you would expect from your own doctor and doesn't seem at all perturbed that he has 50 million people to watch out for.

I don't find the job daunting,' he says, 'but I am always aware of the burden of accountability - making sure I'm making the right decisions and not doing anything that neglects to protect people.'

Although a public health physician for most of his career, Sir Liam started his medical career in surgery and came to Birmingham in 1974 to take up the surgical and teaching opportunities that the Medical School offered. 'I didn't know Birmingham before I came to the Medical School,' he recalls, 'but I enjoyed exploring the city and surrounding Warwickshire and Worcestershire. It was a lovely time in my life.'

The move from surgery into public health came several years later, when Sir Liam discovered his passion for the wider issues in medical care; what you could do to prevent illness; and how you could organise health services more effectively and efficiently.

'Although I enjoyed surgery, I realised that doing that for my whole life meant that I'd be treating a succession of individual patients rather than hundreds of thousands of people. I really wanted to be involved in that population-level work.'

And that decision brought him to where he is now, with unquestionable influence to challenge and affect healthcare in the UK. Not afraid to court controversy, he has proposed new practices for both patients and medics, which have continuously aimed to advance public health whilst sometimes splitting public opinion.

In his annual report last year, he called for organ donation to become compulsory for all, unless a person specifically requested otherwise. 'There are many supporters of the idea, but obviously, those who are against it have very strong views. There are such large numbers of people on transplant waiting lists that I think compulsory donation could be the answer to a serious problem.'

Another public health initiative, which he proposed in 2002, was a ban on smoking in public places. When he first mooted the idea to government he was told that the ban would 'never happen', but now, a year after it was introduced in the UK, is he glad that he persisted?

'It's still a little early to see a reduction in mortality rates, but results from other places where the ban has been in place longer have shown that the percentage of people smoking falls off, and it is that, ultimately which will determine mortality from cancer and heart disease.'

Despite acknowledging that there is still a long way to go towards a fully smoke-free Britain, Sir Liam's involvement in the smoking ban is one of his proudest moments in medicine. 'Watching parliament voting overwhelmingly to introduce smoke-free laws was a big moment. To see political and public opinion move behind it was incredible.'

'I am always optimistic that we will see major scientific breakthroughs.'

Alongside his successes, Sir Liam is happy to acknowledge some darker moments in his time as CMO, but takes them in his stride in typically pragmatic fashion.

During the MMR vaccine controversy several years ago, where it was claimed that the combined vaccine against measles, mumps and rubella caused autism, Sir Liam admits 'it felt like most of the world and media were against us. We knew that we had a very safe, effective vaccine, but we didn't seem to be able to get the message across. Thankfully, coverage rates for the vaccine are now creeping back up, but people find it difficult to forget the original claims, even though the research paper that made the allegation has now been retracted.'

Another area where he has courted criticism was in the introduction of the Modernising Medical Careers scheme in 2007 which aimed to professionalise the career paths of junior doctors. Unfortunately, implementation of the scheme did not go as planned, leaving some young doctors uncertain of their future.

'We learnt lessons from last year and have improved our systems,' reveals Sir Liam. 'The 2008 arrangements have been very different and so far it's gone very smoothly. The important thing now is that we look to the future and take some difficult decisions about the number of doctors that we are going to need and what their roles will be.'

Reflecting further on UK healthcare, Sir Liam feels proud of the NHS as it reaches its 60th birthday this year. 'When I see other countries' healthcare systems, I see many people who fear illness, partly because of financial implications. The generations that have grown up in the UK since the second world war have

never had to fear financial ruin because of illness, and I think that's the NHS's biggest strength.'

When pressed about the challenges that the institution faces over the next 60 years, he is refreshingly positive. 'I am always optimistic that we will see major scientific breakthroughs and I just have a feeling that we are getting close to a new medical frontier. I can see a time where future generations will be reading about diseases like cancer as conditions from the past.'

So where does the airline industry come into the health equation? Well, keen to push understanding of medical safety, Sir Liam is looking to other high-risk industries for inspiration. 'Airline pilots have their skills tested regularly. In a pilot's 30 year career, they may have 100 assessments of their competence, evaluating and improving their skills.'

'Now the culture of medicine is very different,' he continues. 'At the moment, in a medic's career, they aren't assessed at all and I think that's something that needs to be looked at. Of course it's right that we trust doctors, but that trust needs to be underpinned with more objective appraisals of performance.'

And his solution to this: 'I would like to see doctors take part in annual checks and be required to renew their licence to practice every five years. There was initial resistance from the medical community when I first put forward the proposal, but it's now been largely embraced. It's also been very positively received by patient groups.'

Ultimately, it is this passion for the safety of patients that has marked out Sir Liam's career and continues to influence his thinking. When asked whom he finds most inspiring he cites Edward Jenner, the 18th Century physician who invented the concept of vaccination. 'It was probably the most important healthcare measure ever invented,' he says. 'And one which continues to benefit patients to this day.'

Sir Liam Donaldson at a glance

Born: 3 May 1949, Middlesbrough, Teesside

Family: Married, with three children and four young grandchildren

Education/early life: Sir Liam received an MBChB from the University of Bristol, before moving to Birmingham for an MSc in Anatomy.

Reputation: The Patient's Champion. Sir Liam also takes an international interest in public healthcare as the Chairman of the World Alliance for Patient Safety

Enjoys: The history of public health and supporting Newcastle United FC.

The Changing Face of Birmingham

As a City and a University, Birmingham is evolving. A cosmopolitan centre, with new leisure facilities and retail opportunities now befits its place as the UK's second city.

Projects like Birmingham Science City will develop and use science and technology to improve the prosperity and quality of life of the region and recently refurbished venues like the Town Hall are improving its cultural life.

Hand in hand with the City's revival come University changes; to restore facilities, develop new projects and ensure a lasting future.

Muirhead Tower

A £40 million make-over of the Muirhead Tower, due to be completed in early 2009 is updating the iconic building. The 16-storey tower, completed in 1971 has been the subject of much speculation as to its design and the butt of a good few jokes. It was designed by architect Sir Philip Dowson in 1968, but rumours abound that it was built at the wrong angle, was the project of a final year student or was designed to look like a pile of books, complementing the adjacent library.

None of these rumours are true, but the Muirhead has always been a building that has attracted speculation. 'Another myth is its status as a listed building,' says Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Les Clarke. 'This isn't true, but it is viewed as a landmark structure meaning that, if it was demolished, something similar would need to go up in its place.'

When the University looked at their options for the Muirhead – its glazing and climate

control had failed and its deteriorating fabric was becoming a hazard – they considered both demolishing it or completely refurbishing the building.

'A complete refurbishment was deemed the best way to proceed,' says Professor Clarke. 'The work that we are doing on the building has involved stripping it right back to its concrete frame, replacing all of the services like electricity, water and data cabling, adding new, high speed lifts, creating social space on the ground floor and building a new home for the University's Special Collections.'

The refurbishment also addresses the previous 'dysfunction' of the building, which meant that it coped badly with the volume of students and staff who would need to move around on the hour at the start and finish of lectures. 'The planned use of the building will also change,' says Professor Clarke, 'so it's no longer necessary for most students to go above the second floor, reducing the high volume of movement.'



Before refurbishment:
Muirhead in 1980



Muirhead Tower: to reopen in 2009

Departments from the College of Social Sciences will move into the refurbished tower from Easter 2009 with students using the building from the beginning of the 2009/10 academic year.

Did you know?

Award-winning Muirhead architect Sir Philip Dowson is a former President of the Royal Society.

George Cadbury Hall

University Drama moved to George Cadbury Hall on the Selly Oak campus in 2006 from its base in the Allardyce Nicol Studio Theatre in the Muirhead Tower.

The University has committed £1 million to the refurbishment of the Hall including a state of the art theatre for the department's extensive programme of live performance and a preview cinema, shared with the BBC, who's adjacent Drama Village gives students the opportunity to gain work familiarisation experience in television and radio production.

'There's a synergy in having the BBC and the University working together in Selly Oak with both parties benefiting from the creative collaboration,' says Professor Clarke.



George Cadbury Hall today

Did you know?

The Hall opened in 1927 but was only integrated into the University in 1999



The old Mason Hall, here in 1970

Mason

A new residential development to replace the original Mason Hall on the Vale site was opened to students at the beginning of the 2008/09 academic year. Costing £32 million, the new accommodation moves away from the design of its predecessor which had single

rooms, shared bathroom facilities and a communal dining hall.

The new Mason has been designed in clusters of six bedroom flats, forming three crescents round the Vale lake. New studio apartments for two make up the top floor of the buildings.

'Today's students expect a different level of accommodation,' says Professor Clark. 'And to reflect this, the new Mason has all en-suite rooms and communal social and self-catering areas at the end of each corridor. What you would think of as a 'traditional' layout for a hall of residence is no longer acceptable.'

The design of the new Mason aims to carefully blend the new development with the local landscape. Innovative construction, with vertical (instead of more typical horizontal) services throughout the building, has kept the overall roof height low and tiered accommodation blocks give residents views down to the lake and on to landscaped gardens.



Did you know?

The old Mason Hall housed around 650 students; the new Mason accommodates 876

The newly opened Mason

Selly Oak and University Hospital Birmingham

The opening of Birmingham's new super hospital in 2010 will bring major changes to the area around the University.

The hospital, which will ultimately replace the Queen Elizabeth and Selly Oak facilities, is a £540 million project built through the government's Private Funded Initiative scheme and will include a Clinical Science Education Centre run by the University medical school.

Changes to the transport infrastructure will see regeneration of the A38 Selly Oak High Street to alleviate traffic pressure on the existing road and reroute traffic to the new hospital. A new 10m wide, 1.5km urban all purpose road will be built right up to the University's southern border, bypassing the current high street. Increased visitors to the hospital will also result in increased public transport provisions to the area and new bus routes and improvements to the University station are in consultation at the moment.

Did you know?

The new hospital will be Birmingham's first new acute hospital for 70 years.



An artist's impression of the new hospital



Selly Oak High Street: Here in 1940 and soon to change

Your campus memories

Which buildings around campus do you remember – fondly or otherwise? Send in your memories and pictures to our online community, your.bham www.your.bham.ac.uk or email alumnioffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk

A close-up portrait of Baroness Valerie Amos, a Black woman with short dark hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a bright orange blazer with a white collar and green lapels, and large gold hoop earrings. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

THE FIRST LADY

A series of firsts punctuate the life of Baroness Valerie Amos (MA Cultural Studies, 1977, LLD, 2008). From championing the rights of women as Head of the Equal Opportunities Commission to becoming the first black woman to enter the House of Lords, she is a true trailblazer for equality.

A conversation with the approachable, softly-spoken Baroness, who until last year was Leader of the House of Lords, reveals a woman with an easy laugh, a strong sense of social justice and a healthy appreciation for an Edgbaston-based test match.

But Baroness Amos' journey began 6,000 miles away from Birmingham, in the former British colony of Guyana in South America. The themes that have run through her life and career: an interest in development and a passion for equality, were fostered by her unconventional upbringing, which saw her and her family emigrate to the UK when she was nine.

'My parents, having come from a developing country, always enjoyed debate and encouraged family discussion which inspired us to think about social justice and our place in the world. When I look back on my career now, I can see that my interest in equality and especially in development stems from this early upbringing.'

With her parents also instilling an appreciation of education in Baroness Amos, she excelled at school, read Sociology at Warwick University and then arrived in Birmingham to take a place at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. At that time, under the leadership of inspirational sociologist Stuart Hall, the Centre was renowned for its research into social policy.

'I still count Stuart as one of my mentors,' she reveals. 'His work, which looked at race and cultural issues from a left perspective, was enormously interesting and the Centre was a real hub of new thinking where intellectual boundaries were constantly pushed.'

After leaving academia, Baroness Amos moved into local government, working in community race relations, initially in Birmingham and then in London. Following this she was head-hunted by the Equal Opportunities Commission which appointed her as its new Chief Executive.

'In my five years at the commission, we started to use different legal tools, including judicial review, to effectively take on government over equality issues,' she explains. Fighting for the rights of part time workers – an issue which affected millions of women – and pressing for equality in pensions were two areas where huge improvements were made under her, and she has been credited as making 'significant and long-lasting' changes to the working lives of people in the UK.

In 1996 Valerie met soon-to-be Prime Minister Tony Blair in South Africa. He set her on her political path in 1997 when he offered

her a peerage which would make her the first black woman to enter the House of Lords. Her reaction to the appointment illustrated her motto in life, to 'never be afraid of being the first at something.'

'...there have been really positive developments as a result of more women in Parliament.'

'My perception of the House of Lords was that it was a pretty fuddy-duddy institution,' admits the Baroness. 'I remember talking over the decision with my sister who asked me: "How many black women are there in the House of Lords?" When I responded that there weren't any, her response was immediate: "Well you haven't got much choice have you?"'

Six years in the Lords saw her work as a Labour whip and then Africa Minister. Then in 2003 came another first – her appointment as Secretary of State for International Development. The role's remit included many areas that she is passionate about, coordinating government aid policy and working to reduce poverty in the poorest countries in the world. It also made her the first ever black woman in the UK cabinet. 'I can't describe to you how I felt on that day,' she laughs. 'I spent most of it not being able to speak.'

Shortly after that came another call from the Prime Minister, and the Baroness was asked to take the role of Leader of the House of Lords with responsibility for overseeing the organisation and progress of government business, and offering advice to Cabinet colleagues on the handling of their legislation.

So, as a lifetime campaigner for fairness and equality, does the Baroness herself find the world of politics a comfortable place for a woman? 'I think that it's become both easier and harder,' she explains. 'The intense scrutiny of politicians' private lives is hard, especially when it impacts on family. I am a great believer in accountability but we do need a debate about what is appropriate.'

'But there have been really positive developments as a result of more women in Parliament. We can debate equality issues in a way that was not possible only a few years ago.'

Having stepped down as Leader of the House of Lords last year, The Baroness recently became Chair of the Royal African Society, which works to champion Africa's

cause. She is able to use her wide range of experience; from consultancy work in South Africa through to her position as Tony Blair's personal representative to the G8 on Africa, in this role.

Her passion is obvious, but Baroness Amos feels that there is much to be done to get a better understanding of Africa, its challenges and opportunities. 'People forget that it's a huge continent and we tend to see it through three narrow prisms: the problems in Zimbabwe; food and security; and poverty, HIV and AIDS. Of course all of those things are there, but that's not the entire story. There are 53 separate countries, each with their own successes and problems.'

South Africa is one country that she cites as a success; a place that she worked, post-apartheid. 'It was such an exciting place to be,' she recalls. 'Back in 1994, the Mandela government was looking at ways in which public services could be made relevant in the new South Africa. There was a real appetite for knowledge and information from other countries, and I had the opportunity to work in just about every province as well as looking at employment issues and human rights.'

On the subject of one African nation however, she is far more critical and she has spoken out strongly against Robert Mugabe's regime. 'Zimbabwe points to the difficulty that the international community has when you have a leadership that is prepared to destroy its people for its own gains. You can condemn until you're blue in the face, but if you have a leader who cares nothing for that, what do you do next?'

With events over recent months offering a glimmer of hope for Zimbabweans, Baroness Amos hopes that the future will bring peace and prosperity to the country enabling it to become another of the African success stories that she's happy to remind us of.

Baroness Amos at a glance

Born: 3 March 1954, Wakenaam, Guyana

Family: Parents Edward and Eunice who she cites as her 'biggest inspiration.' Sister, Colleen and brother, Michael.

Reputation: Named the 'Most influential black woman in the UK' by newspaper New Nation.

Did you know? Baroness Amos came back to campus earlier this year to collect her honorary degree. While here she officially opened the 'Amos Room' in the Guild of Students.

Research news

Mushrooms are the new fat

You could soon be tucking into tasty treats guilt-free, thanks to a team at the University's Centre for Formulation Engineering.

The team has discovered a new method to replace fat globules in food with microscopic protein-covered structures that contain nothing but air. The tiny structures have similar physical properties to fat, enabling up to 50% of the fat content in food to be removed whilst retaining its original taste and texture.

The protein which coats the fat-free microstructures – hydrophobin – is extracted from common white cap mushrooms. It is excellent for use in fat substitution as it is a completely natural molecule, found commonly in life.

Professor Ian Norton from the research team says: 'Food manufacturers are under increasing pressure to reduce the amount

of fat in their products. We have found that we can use existing materials to change the properties of some foodstuffs in a way that is acceptable to the consumer.'

Co-investigator, Dr Phil Cox adds: 'It is hoped that by making indulgent foods more healthy, the consumer will be able to continue to enjoy those foods that are currently seen as bad for you, without worrying about the fat content.'

Having developed an understanding of the underlying science of fat substitution, the team has now begun to work on alternatives to hydrophobin. The aim of their research going forward is to give food manufacturers a range of alternative natural ingredients that can be used in different products and manufacturing processes. The new materials discovered from the research are being patented by the University.

Antibodies are key in the fight against salmonella

In the developed world, nontyphoidal salmonella (NTS) causes gastroenteritis, with symptoms including diarrhoea, fever and vomiting. It is an extremely unpleasant condition but very rarely proves fatal.

However, in developing countries NTS regularly leads to bacteraemia – bacterial infection of the blood – which is often fatal, especially in young children and HIV-infected adults.

'The problem of nontyphoidal salmonella in Africa is very serious, but has generally been overshadowed by the 'big three': malaria, HIV and TB,' explains University researcher Dr Calman MacLennan, who conducted research whilst working at the Malawi-Liverpool-Wellcome Trust Research Programme. 'We have no human vaccines to protect against the disease and growing resistance to existing drugs means that a vaccine is now needed more than ever.'

Dr MacLennan and colleagues have shown the important role played by antibodies in protecting against NTS. They found that disease-causing strains of NTS were able to survive outside cells in the blood of African children. They believe that the bacteria have survival mechanisms which allow them to replicate unchecked and that this unrestricted growth may be responsible for the high levels of mortality associated with bacteraemia.

Most importantly, the researchers identified a protective salmonella-specific antibody that develops in African children within the first two years of life. The antibody is able to overcome the bacteria's protective mechanisms and kill them, ridding the blood of infection.

Dr MacLennan believes that the findings may prove important in the development of a vaccine against salmonella or a therapy to treat already infected children. 'We have shown that in the blood of African children, NTS bacteria can grow outside cells and so cause life-threatening bacteraemia, but in this location they can be tackled by antibodies,' he says. 'We hope that this information will lead to the production of a successful vaccine.'

Dramatic results for theatre programme



A study by University psychologists has shown that involving violent offenders in theatre and drama projects can produce a notable reduction in their anger levels.

Researchers from the School of Psychology conducted a study on 'Insult to Injury', a nine day drama-based programme developed by West Midlands-based Geese Theatre Company. The programme explored the processes of anger, aggression and violence and helped offenders to identify and develop strategies for dealing with volatile situations.

The Birmingham team examined the effect of the programme on 62 adult male offenders who had been involved in anger-related crime and found that, on completion, participants reported feeling less angry and less likely to express anger physically or verbally.

The research was led by forensic psychologist Professor Anthony Beech. 'The results of this study show significant shifts in behaviour,' he explains. 'They suggest that a drama-based approach may be a promising adjunction to traditional anger management programmes for violent offenders in prisons and the community.'

Birmingham celebrates Big Bang day

The world's largest and most complex experiment was switched on for the first time on 10 September, and Birmingham researchers played an important part.

Scientists at the School of Physics and Astronomy are involved in two experiments at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) at CERN laboratory in Geneva that, they hope, will help them to start uncovering the mysteries of the universe. Research will measure particle

collisions under conditions that would have existed less than a billionth of a second after the Big Bang.

The Birmingham physicists have designed and built the sophisticated trigger electronics for the ATLAS and ALICE detectors that will help select the important particle collisions. Scientists will then be able to concentrate on the data most likely to yield new discoveries.

Dr David Evans from the School of Physics and Astronomy, who is the ALICE UK project leader says, 'The 10th September marked the end of a 20 year journey, from concept to commissioning, and the beginning of a new and exciting journey of discovery. We have played a vital role in the past two decades and are now looking forward to finding the answers to some of the most fundamental questions in physics.'

Infant study identifies heart risk

A year-long study into congenital heart defects was launched back in February.

The pulseOx study is a collaboration between the University and Birmingham Women's Hospital and aims to recruit 20,000 mothers and their babies from the Midlands area over a 12 month period. The study will explore whether using a simple test to measure blood oxygen levels in newborn babies can cut deaths from congenital heart disease.

This type of heart disease occurs in around one in 125 births in the UK and remains a major cause of death in babies. In the Birmingham study, midwives are using pulse oximetry, which measures levels of oxygen in the blood using a small sensor attached to the baby's hand or foot. Researchers believe that low oxygen levels may indicate a higher probability of heart disease.

It is hoped that the results of the study will improve current screening procedures in the health service and help to more accurately identify newborn babies at risk.

Professor Khalid Khan, from the project explains: 'With the support of hospitals and mothers across the Midlands, we will be able to get a real idea of how best we can use this test in the health service.'

The study is ongoing until February 2009. For more information please visit www.pulseox.bham.ac.uk



NHS research shows gender difference

Surprising new research from the Universities of Birmingham and York has discovered that female consultants working in the NHS are responsible for treating fewer patients than their male counterparts.

The findings, published earlier this year in the Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine showed a 20% difference in the number of episodes – the time a patient spends in the continuous care of one consultant – conducted between male and female consultants. Researchers found differences across ten of the most common surgical and medical areas including general surgery, trauma and orthopaedics, gastroenterology, cardiology and paediatrics. On average, male

consultants completed 160 more episodes of care each year than their female colleagues.

Professor Nick Freemantle from the University of Birmingham's Department of Primary Care commented, 'The difference in activity between male and female consultants was striking and changed little between different medical specialties. It is a substantial and statistically significant difference across a wide range of medical areas.'

Researchers now believe that there is a need for further work to identify why these differences exist and what the impact on efficiency and patient care may be. Their findings highlight potential differences in the way medical careers develop for men and women in our health service.

Sports news

Medal success from Birmingham to Beijing

Birmingham alumni had a golden Olympics in Beijing this summer.

Cyclist Paul Manning (BSc Geology, 1996) added to his impressive medal collection, winning Olympic gold for Men's Team Pursuit Cycling and breaking the world record twice in the process.

The team of Paul, Ed Clancy, Geraint Thomas and Bradley Wiggins first broke the world record for the event in the semi-final race against Russia and then went on to better their time in the final against Danish opponents.

After taking home bronze in Sydney and silver in Athens, Paul can now reflect on completing his Olympic set. 'I think that winning my first Olympic medal in 2000 was my proudest moment. It felt like a real breakthrough to realise that winning medals was a real possibility,' he says. 'But the highlight has to be the gold medal that I've just won. Everything I've done in the last eight years has gone into it.'

In other Olympic sports, Naomi Folkard (BMus Music, 2005) came tantalisingly close to a bronze medal in the Women's Team Archery event. She and her two team-mates had to settle for fourth place after losing to the French team in the bronze-medal match by only two points. Naomi also reached the quarter finals of the individual archery



Gold standard: Alumnus Paul Manning (far left)

competition, eventually losing to a Japanese opponent.

Simon Mantel (BCom Commerce, 2007) helped the GB Men's Hockey team to fifth place in their competition. Exciting wins in the team's first two matches were not enough to put them in medal contention, but their new ranking inside the world's top six is Great Britain's best in 20 years.

'We're incredibly proud of our Olympic alumni,' says the University's Director for Sport Zena Wooldridge. 'The well-deserved success of our three Olympians should be an inspiration to our current sports scholars.'

Carbohydrate cocktail boosts sports performance

A sports drink developed by University of Birmingham scientists improves the performance of athletes by twice as much as traditional sports drinks.

Professor Asker Jeukendrup, of the School of Sport and Exercise Sciences, has discovered athletes perform better when they drink a combination of glucose and fructose, because it allows the body to burn more carbohydrate – and generate more energy – than traditional glucose based drinks.

Professor Jeukendrup said: 'By using different types of carbohydrates that are absorbed by different mechanisms we can increase the delivery of carbohydrate to the working muscle. This resulted in an 8% improvement in performance compared with drinks that contain only one type of carbohydrate. Those traditional drinks already improved performance by 11% compared with water.'

The drink has already been used by several elite athletes and in the Tour de France.

New funding to fight obesity

Recent funding for new facilities and new academics has put Birmingham in a great position to make a difference in the fight against obesity.

The University recently received funding for a new mobile clinical research unit as part of a £10 million grant from Advantage West Midlands. The new facility will tour community centres and supermarkets, hospitals and doctors surgeries to enable the public to take part in vital obesity research. This unit builds on the fantastic clinical facilities already available both on campus and in local hospitals.

A new Translational Research Manager, funded by BUPA Giving, will soon start work to coordinate research and additionally the University has recently launched a new obesity PhD studentship initiative to help build the research team. The first two students, funded by alumni, will start next year.

This project is being led by Professor Paul Stewart, one of the leading obesity academics in the UK. He says: 'We have a unique window of opportunity to make a real difference in our understanding and treatment of obesity across the whole population.' With new facilities in place and new academics on the way Birmingham is well placed to make a difference.

...and hopes for the future

A number of talented University Sport Birmingham Sports Scholars are already poised for London 2012.

Among the stars of the future are:

Boxer Tom Langford, who finished runner-up in the British 2008 U19 Championships and recently won the English University boxing title.

Pole vaulter Nick Cruchley, one of the UK's most promising athletes who has recently been selected for the GB team for the 2008 Commonwealth Youth Games.

Runner Hannah England who is current UK number 3 at the 1500m. Hannah was unlucky to miss out on Olympic selection this year, though did get a trip to Beijing as one of Britain's outstanding 2012 prospects.

Hockey fresher, Suzie Gibert, also part of the Beijing 2012 prospects trip. A member of the GB Olympic training squad only narrowly missing out on selection, she has just received her first England call-up.

Cyclist Helen Scott, a regular medallist at national age group track cycling championships since 2004. Helen has competed for the England Junior sprint team and in 2007 won bronze in the Kerin at the Senior National Track Championships.

Another face for the future is recent alumna Louise Hazel (BA French Studies, 2008) who is currently ranked 4th in the UK at the heptathlon.



Squash talent: Joey Barrington

A talented raquetteer

Squash star and alumnus Joey Barrington (BSc Sport and Exercise Science, 2000) has returned to Birmingham to mentor and tutor future champions.

Joey, who is ranked 28th in the world, gained his first national cap in June when he was selected to represent England in the European Team Squash Championships in Holland. He was also the number one player for University Sport Birmingham Premier League Squash.

Despite being the son of icon Jonah Barrington – who won the British Squash Open title six times during the 1960s and 1970s – Joey

didn't take up the sport seriously until his second year as an undergraduate. He spent his first year at University having 'too much of a good time' and struggled with balancing a social and academic life. However, returning to university in his second year, Joey decided to focus on his degree course and on playing squash seriously.

'I started to get into my degree course because I wasn't going out,' he says, 'and I decided to have a go at becoming a professional squash player.' With the University excelling at squash and the men's and women's teams the reigning British Champions, Joey's experience will be

Year of sport

University Sport Birmingham has had a busy 12 months. Here are just a few of our sports team successes.

Hockey

In April the men's first team were crowned Slazenger England Hockey North Champions after a deciding match against second place Doncaster. Goals came from current students Richard Hobley and Neil Hutchins along with alumni Nick Latham (LLB Law, 2002) and Steve Edmonds (BSc Sport and Exercise Science, 2005; MSc Environmental Health, 2007).

Athletics

Birmingham athletes battled it out with many London 2012 hopefuls and collected a total of 12 medals at the BUCS (British Universities and Colleges Sport) outdoor championships in May. The men secured gold in the triple jump and 110m hurdles and collected silver and bronze in the 800m. The women collected seven silvers and one bronze finishing second in the overall standings.

Rowing

The rowers reached 12 finals, picked up six medals and finished fifth from 40 different universities competing at the BUCS Regatta held in Strathclyde back in May, gaining three crew selections for the European University Championships.

Volleyball

The University of Birmingham Volleyball Club was tagged as a 'beacon of excellence', picking up a £3,000 second prize as the Central Council of Physical Recreation's 'Sports Club of the Year'. The club has developed extensive and far reaching community links and serves as a major volleyball hub within the local area.

For full details of all sporting achievements and BUCS events, please visit www.sport.bham.ac.uk

valuable to talented new students in his consultancy role.

'You go through a massive change in life between the ages of 18 and 21,' says Joey. 'It was playing squash that saved me and gave me a goal in life. It's a great sport socially and ideal for students to take up.'



A SPECTRUM OF EXPERIENCE

Thinking of buying a new mobile phone, watching your favourite programme on television or downloading music using your broadband connection? If you do any of these activities within the UK, alumnus Lord David Currie (MSocSc National Economic Planning, 1973; DSc, 2003) is watching out for your interests.

The well-connected 61 year old has seen a career that has taken in distinguished spells in academia and periods dispensing no-nonsense financial advice to politicians. But, for the last seven years, he's been the man responsible for taste, decency, competition and innovation in communications.

Coming to Birmingham as a postgraduate in the early 1970s, David took up residence at Manor House. 'It was a nice community,' he remembers. 'I think that you always have slightly different expectations as a postgraduate student but it was a good experience.'

He continues: 'I came to Birmingham to study national economic planning, which at the time was a quite new, fashionable subject. But I also sat in on a lot of extra lectures – not necessarily sitting exams in them – and learnt an enormous amount of extra economics.'

A short spell in the city and then a distinguished academic career followed after graduation, but David is surprisingly self-deprecating when explaining how it started. 'At that time in economics, everyone was flooding from academia into the financial sector, whereas I was moving in the other direction. Queen Mary College, London advertised for someone to teach monetary economics and I assume that they didn't have a lot of choice in their applicants as I was appointed! It was a courageous decision for them to make, as it's fair to say that I wasn't well trained in that field at the time!'

Despite any initial inexperience, David flourished in academia, becoming Head of Economics at Queen Mary College, before moving to the London Business School to run the Centre for Economic Forecasting, an influential commentator on macroeconomics.

In the early 1980s, he began to build a parallel career as an independent economic advisor to the Labour party advising successive shadow chancellors Roy Hattersley, John Smith and Gordon Brown.

Then in 1992, came 'Black Wednesday', when the UK was forced to withdraw from European Exchange Rate Mechanism, costing the economy approximately £3.4 billion. In the aftermath, a panel of independent economic forecasters – dubbed the 'wise men' by the UK media – was established to advise the treasury on financial matters. 'It was an interesting panel to be involved with,' says David, 'because we produced policy advice.'

David is intrigued by the current 'credit crunch', which is taking hold both nationally and internationally. 'This is an absolutely fascinating financial crisis and, looking historically, the conditions are really very unusual, with the collapse of confidence and the unwillingness of the banks to lend to

each other. I don't think that we've yet seen the full impact on the economy and unfortunately I think the next few years are going to be rather grim.'

In 1996, David was elevated to the peerage, becoming Lord Currie of Marylebone. 'The House of Lords does an important job,' he says. 'Legislation comes from the House of Commons largely unscrutinised; the Lords then looks at it line by line. It's actually quite tedious on one level, but extremely important at the same time.' As the Chairman of an independent regulator he sits on the crossbenches of the House, as a member without allegiance to any political party. 'With my Ofcom role in mind, I only comment on bills which are related to the communications industry,' he explains.

'However, when I'm no longer in a regulatory position, I will vote on a wider range of issues.'

So how did the career path that David forged for himself prepare him for the role as Head of communications regulator Ofcom? 'I've always been involved in interpreting government to business and business to government,' he explains 'and it is in that space that regulation falls.'

Ofcom has a huge remit with responsibility across television, radio, telecommunication and wireless communication services, ensuring that access, content and competition is fair and accurate. Issues include ensuring the quality of television and radio broadcasting and maintaining protection for audiences against harmful or offensive material, ensuring that electronic communications services are available throughout the UK and applying protection for audiences against unfairness or the infringement of privacy.

On the subject of privacy, David is taking an interest in the development of internet 'tracking' where an individual's internet activity is measured for commercial purposes. 'Privacy is an essential right and you don't want a big-brother type situation where you feel observed wherever you go. However, finding ways of collecting and using information about what you use and like could be very valuable because you would receive information about the things that you were interested in. If technology could find a way of accessing this information while maintaining a level of privacy, it could be a positive thing, but of course it's quite right that there are concerns and it is important that there's a debate about it.'

Additionally, Ofcom is responsible for ensuring the optimal use of the electromagnetic spectrum, the frequencies on which communications technologies operate. One of David's actions as Chairman has been to open up competition in the communications industry by the auctioning of the spectrum in different

ways. 'We want to move to a market-based system where companies can buy and sell spectrum depending on innovation and demand. It's a significant development of market economics into an area where traditionally the government has held sway.'

So with a knowledge of, and interest in new communication technologies, where does he see that technology going in the next ten years?

'We will find that we start to live our lives differently.'

'That's too far ahead to see really, but what you are already seeing is broadband colliding with broadcast in the rise of 'on demand' entertainment services. Certainly we'll be seeing investment in extremely high speed broadband and other innovative products like 3D television.'

He also believes that we will see technology having an increasingly revolutionary impact on our lives. 'Look at electricity as an example. When it was initially discovered people did the same things as they'd done before, but just more quickly. Then, products slowly started to change as people found new ways to do things and different places in which to do them. I think the same will ultimately be true of the technological revolution. We will find that we start to live our lives differently. With high-speed broadband we may not need to come to an office to work, and eventually find that geographical communities matter less than online ones. I can't say that I can predict accurately what will happen, but I do think that it will be tremendously exciting.'

Lord David Currie at a glance

Born: 9 December, 1946, London

Family: Wife Angela and three grown-up sons

Career: A well known expert in international economic policy, David became Lord Currie of Marylebone in 1996. He will step down from Ofcom in spring 2009 but maintain a portfolio of non-executive positions.

Interests: A music lover, David plays the recorder and cello and is on the board of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Likes: International travel. He and his wife Angela have built a second home outside Barcelona and also own an apartment in Venice.



Panel: With student and academic representatives



Reception: At the House of Lords alumni event



Achievement: Congratulating the Class of 1957

Farewell Mr Birmingham

Professor Michael Clarke has been a guiding light at the University of Birmingham for the past 15 years, as the Head of Public Policy, Pro Vice-Chancellor for External Relations and lately as Vice-Principal. As he retires, he reflects on his time in the city, the changes that he has seen at the University and in the region and the future of higher education.

Responsibility for the University's external relations portfolio has made Michael a ubiquitous presence in the West Midlands region, representing Birmingham wherever possible, forging strong links with local institutions, businesses and councils. But his reputation isn't just a local one; he has also been heavily involved in national and international representation for the University and is a tireless champion of alumni relations.

The Birmingham that Michael arrived in 15 years ago was a very different one from the one that he knows today. 'My wife Angela and I came to Birmingham just after Symphony Hall and the International Convention Centre had opened,' he remembers, 'and it's hard to remember that in 1993 the developments that have dramatically changed the centre of the city were only just beginning. The West Midlands has become a much more vibrant place, with a set of regional institutions which

are driving modernisation. There has been a real sea change.'

Beginning his career in academia, Michael spent six years lecturing at the University of Edinburgh before a change in career led to him being invited to help set up a policy unit in a Scottish local authority. 'I loved lecturing and research,' says Michael, 'but I was becoming increasingly interested in policy-making and implementation and I asked myself the question if I shouldn't actually go and do some of it in

order to have a better feel and understanding.'

He moved to London to become Chief Executive, first, of the Local Government Training Board and then the Local Government Management Board. This included running the pay negotiation machinery for local government – 18% of the national workforce.

Birmingham called soon after and Michael was appointed as Head of the School of Public Policy, returning to academia after a long period outside it. He spent five years in the role, resuming academic research into local government and building up a network of contacts within regional institutions; contacts which would prove useful when he was appointed first as Pro-Vice Chancellor for External Relations in 1998 and then Vice-Principal in 2003, becoming Deputy to the Vice-Chancellor.

In both of these positions, Michael's remit has been to reshape the University's relationships with the city and the region. 'The University of Birmingham was born out of the city but we had been guilty of turning our back on it,' he explains. 'My job was to try and make us a powerful presence in the region once again. And with the University creating an economic impact of £779 million annually on the West Midlands region, we not surprisingly want to influence the shape of the local agenda and bring benefits to the locality.'

Constantly building relationships and making the University's presence known, Michael has served on a multitude of influential regional groups; as the higher education sector's representative on the West Midlands Regional Assembly; a member of the Birmingham City Strategic Partnership; and chair of the board of the Central Technology Belt (a recent evaluation describing it as an international exemplar) as well as being a non-executive director of the Birmingham Research Park. His nickname, 'Mr Birmingham' is very well deserved.

'Coming from a background immersed in local, regional and national level government, I brought that knowledge to the fore when I was asked to take on the University's external relations portfolio. I had a wide range of contacts but also a reasonable understanding of how governmental institutions and places work. I have ruthlessly exploited that knowledge,' he jokes, 'and tried to use every opportunity I have had to get the University into places that it wouldn't normally be, and to encourage others to do likewise.'

As the University's profile locally, regionally and internationally has improved, the last 15 years have also seen enormous changes in the higher education landscape, with increased competition in attracting new students, new staff and research grants.

'Universities on the whole have had to change to keep up with the pace,' says Michael. And this fact is illustrated in an

increased international portfolio. 'When I came to Birmingham, I think there was one person designated with international responsibility. Recruitment of overseas students has become increasingly important, but more importantly than that, we used to talk about producing students who were UK citizens. Now we're talking about them as global citizens. The international flavour of the University has dramatically changed.'

And Michael has been in part responsible for forging those international relationships through his involvement in Universitas 21 – an international network of leading research-intensive universities, of which Birmingham was one of the founding members. 'Universities have begun to form international networks,'

'...it's great to see people from different cultures whose link is Birmingham, coming together with the enthusiasm they do.'

explains Michael, who has chaired the U21 management group over the last seven years and has been instrumental in driving the network's development. 'We have successfully put together a network which has a wide portfolio of activities and have created important connections with other universities around the world, which I hope that the University will be able to exploit further in the future.'

Alumni may have also seen Michael if they have attended any University events over the past few years and he reveals that he and Angela greatly enjoy meeting former students.

'Such a wide range of lovely, interesting people come along to alumni events; it's a pleasure to meet them all. And overseas, it's great to see people from different cultures and national contexts whose link is Birmingham, coming together with the enthusiasm that they do.'

'I feel that the contact between students and their university should start at the point of application, continuing through graduation and long after that; alumni should always see the University as their first provider of support and continuing development. We are a complex, connected family of 140,000 and allowing alumni to use their Birmingham contacts can help them to advance their own careers and lives.'

So, looking at the future of higher education with an experienced eye, what challenges does Michael think will face the University in the years to come? 'In the short to medium term, the financial circumstances in which all

universities find themselves – especially in the recent context of world financial problems – will be tighter than in recent years,' he says. 'We face a fundamental challenge in how we use precious resources and should look to see how we can best support those areas of research where we have real strength and excellence.'

'There is also going to be a continued challenge to maintain and improve quality, be it in teaching, research, the academics we recruit and so on. We are going to face a review of the higher education fee regime in a few years and if, as is likely, the fees cap is raised, it will only be tenable to levy higher fees if the quality of the experience given is high enough. I don't like making the equation of student with customer, but we must make sure that those who are paying for the services they are acquiring from university are getting a quality of education commensurate with price.'

Reflecting back on his time here, what are Michael's proudest moments, and what will he miss most about the University that will miss him in equal measure?

'It's a difficult question to answer,' he answers, 'but there are a few things that spring to mind. When I see evidence that the institution is taken seriously in Birmingham; when I see neglected parts of the University – like the Winterbourne Gardens – given a new lease of life; at great occasions like degree congregations, where I see the culmination of students' efforts; and when I see the award of a major research grant, or an indication that a member of our community has done something really tremendous, there's a vicarious pride. I am particularly proud of the way we have tackled the recent re-structuring of the University, delivering large scale change with a broad base of support and a high level of enthusiasm.'

'Most of all, I shall miss this place and its people hugely – I'm extremely privileged to have been part of it.'

The CV – Michael Clarke

- Director of Studies in Politics, University of Edinburgh (1969–75).
- Assistant Director and then Deputy Director, Policy Planning, Lothian Regional Council (1975–81)
- Chief Executive, Local Government Training Board (1981–89)
- Chief Executive, Local Government Management Board (1989–93)
- Head of the School of Public Policy, University of Birmingham (1993–98)
- Pro Vice-Chancellor for External Relations, University of Birmingham (1998–2003)
- Vice-Principal, University of Birmingham (2003–08)

Alumni Focus

Find out about the Birmingham alumni making waves in a variety of sectors.

Investment and finance: Janice Roberts

Entrepreneurial alumna Janice Roberts (BCom Hons. 1977) is looking to develop some of the world's most innovative companies. As a venture capitalist and Managing Director of Mayfield Fund, based near San Francisco, California, Janice is looking to global markets for entrepreneurs and technologies to build next generation businesses.



Janice started her career as an international operating executive with companies such as 3Com Corporation and Palm Computing. As an investor she continues to focus on communications infrastructure, products and services for consumers and businesses; mobile applications and online entertainment such as gaming. She explains: 'At Mayfield we look at a variety of new technologies and we are excited by great teams of entrepreneurs and potentially large markets. Our strategy has become increasingly global and we have investments in emerging markets such as China and India, as well as the United States and Europe. She continues: 'One of my most exciting investments was Mobile365, which became a global mobile messaging company. It was very exciting because it was an international company from the start and leveraged the very high growth text messaging market that originated in Europe.

Janice is also involved with the Forum for Women Entrepreneurs and Executives in the US. 'Many people ask me about the challenges of being a woman in the business world. Personally I don't see any real barriers beyond life choices – and men make those too' she says. 'I love what I do. Silicon Valley is the home for many of the smartest, innovative people around the world. They think big and want to make a difference. I have lived here through the internet age and many great companies have been formed. It has been very exciting.'

Technology: John Powell

Alumnus John Powell (BSc Biological Sciences and Geography, 1977) is championing the UK software market with new company Alfresco.



The company produces open source (OS) software – including web, document and image content management systems – for business. It differs from traditional closed source or 'proprietary' software like Windows or iTunes for several reasons: it is free to download but has accessible code which allows companies to alter it to fit their own needs. This has enabled literally thousands of programmers to work on the system as opposed to a few dozen at even the largest traditional software companies.

John explains: 'Open source in essence, makes the software industry similar to any other professional business that relies on training, knowledge and skill rather than secrecy. This benefits software authors as anyone can improve their software, and the customer as they are no longer locked into a single vendor monopoly.'

John's experience in the software industry is vast. Before starting up Alfresco, he was responsible for running worldwide operations at Business Objects, a global business intelligence software company (recently acquired by software provider SAP). He has also worked for Oracle.

Looking to the future, John hopes to see UK businesses take up open source software with increased enthusiasm. 'At present, the open source market is thriving in continental Europe and the developing world and this is proving to be a boon to the economies of these countries. It's probable that OS will replace the bulk of traditional closed source software in the next ten years and I hope that the UK catches on to this new trend in the market very soon.'

Construction: Ian Tyler

With the world's attention shifting from Beijing to London, alumnus Ian Tyler (BCom Commerce, 1982) will be a key player in the delivery of Olympic venues for the 2012 Games as the Chief Executive of Balfour Beatty.

The engineering and construction company recently won contracts for a series of Olympic projects including the flagship 17,500 seat aquatics centre in East London.

'We have won three key event venues: the Aquatics Centre, the sailing venue and the canoeing venue and a whole range of work for the associated transport infrastructure including the East London Line upgrade and the M25 widening project,' says Ian. 'This underscores the fact that we are, by some distance, the UK's leading infrastructure provider.'

Away from Olympic venues, Balfour Beatty continues to lead the market with projects spanning the globe; from building the world's

largest shopping centre in Dubai to constructing the new University Hospital Birmingham.

Ian became Chief Executive of the company in 2005 and has led Balfour Beatty through a period of substantial growth. Despite the ongoing 'credit crunch', he has seen the company's half year profits rise 25% to £95 million, an order book of over £12 billion and newly acquired companies, increasing its market share and influence.

Away from Balfour Beatty, Ian is the President of CRASH, the construction and property industry's charity for homeless people, which works solely with homelessness charities in the UK to improve their premises, facilities and accommodation.



Business and environment:

Antonio and Cristina Amorim

Antonio Amorim (BCom Commerce, 1989) is driving world leading cork producer Corticeira Amorim, towards environmental responsibility and sustainable development.

As the largest, and oldest – its roots trace back to 1870 – cork producer in the world, the company trades internationally in more than 100 countries and produces a wide range of cork applications, applying state of the art technologies and design. If you open a bottle of wine anywhere in the world there's a very good chance that Corticeira Amorim manufactured the cork stopper: the company delivers around 2.9 billion wine stoppers per year.

Antonio leads the company as Chairman and CEO since 2001. 'We are aiming to foster a culture of sustainability within the whole organization,' he explains, 'and we believe that it is crucial to disseminate this culture among our suppliers, employees and customers.'

Cristina Amorim (MBA International Banking and Finance, 1992), the Company representative for Investor Relations emphasises: 'Sustainability was never just a word in Amorim's activity. Integrating economical return with the wellbeing of our staff and with the lowest

environmental impact is a key-driver of our success. But today, we are insistently inviting others to plant this idea. For nature's sake!'

Corticeira Amorim's policies are centred on transforming cork into high-added value products without harming the local environment. This involves promoting the careful development and utilisation of the cork oak forests, creating a positive impact on the biodiversity of local environments and bringing economic and social benefits for the 100,000 people who are employed – directly or indirectly – in the cork industry.

Corticeira Amorim is also championing the part that their cork products play in 'sinking' carbon – removing the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide from the atmosphere during photosynthesis. Its annual production of cork stoppers alone retains over 25,000 tons of CO² from the atmosphere.

www.corticeiraamorim.com



Music and entertainment:

Natasha Marsh

Opera singer Natasha Marsh (BA Drama and Music, 1996) has had a busy 12 months which has seen the release of her second album, a classical Brit Award nomination and a UK tour with TV's 'Britain's Got Talent' winner Paul Potts.

'It was a great honour and privilege to be nominated for a Brit Award,' says Natasha, 'and particularly to be up against some wonderful artists. The evening was just a great celebration of classical music.'

Touring with Paul Potts added another facet to Natasha's career, introducing her to a new type of audience. 'I was performing in front of people who some of which had never been to a concert before and were having their first 'live' musical experience. It was great to have the opportunity to perform for them. I have no issue or prejudice about where opera should or shouldn't be performed. Its power lies in emotion and passion and can reach each and every one of us.'

Additionally, UK-based alumni may have heard Natasha on television over the summer. She was the 'voice of European Football' for ITV's coverage of this year's Euro 2008 football championships in Austria, recording a version of 'Queen of the Night' from Mozart's 'Magic Flute' which was used as the theme tune for the opening and closing credits of each broadcast.

In her current concert tour, Natasha is performing around the UK. 'The summer was full of outdoor festivals which was great fun (when it didn't rain) and I'm singing at some wonderful venues over the next few months including the Bridgewater Hall, Royal Albert Hall, QE2 and Natural History Museum.'

But her most important production will no doubt be the birth of her first child later this year. 'My baby is due in December,' she says, 'so I've had some special glam maternity dresses made for me to squeeze into!'



Charity and healthcare:

Dr Jane Collins

As the Chief Executive of Great Ormond Street Hospital and Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity, alumna Dr Jane Collins (MBChB, 1978; MD 1988) is leading the work to raise £340 million to redevelop the children's hospital, which treats over 150,000 patient visits annually, over the next seven years. Redevelopment at the London hospital will replace outdated wards and facilities with flexible modern premises and keep Great Ormond Street at the forefront of international paediatric healthcare.

'We need to raise £50 million a year to fund the redevelopment, cutting edge research and support for families and staff. The money makes a huge difference to the hospital,' says Jane. 'And most importantly to our patients.'

Knowing from a young age that she wanted to be a doctor, Jane came to Birmingham to study medicine and spent part of her time in the Midlands after qualifying. She later worked as a consultant at Guy's Hospital, London before moving to Great Ormond Street. Specialising in paediatric neurology, her broad clinical interests are in children with

neurological problems and disability, particularly resulting from metabolic diseases.

Joining Great Ormond Street in 1994, Jane moved in to hospital management in 1999, becoming Medical Director and then CEO two years later. She is involved in all day-to-day aspects of running the hospital and also works closely with University College London to develop research links between the two institutions. Together with neighbouring hospitals and UCL they will be bidding to become an Academic Health Science Centre.

In addition to her hospital responsibilities, Jane wrote a 'no nonsense' column in the Times newspaper which dispenses jargon-free advice on health issues.

www.ich.ucl.ac.uk/gosh_families/advice_and_support/ask_dr_jane/



News

Alumni of the Year

Concy Aciro (Msc Poverty Reduction, 2007)



Concy is an opposition MP in the Ugandan Parliament and is involved in peace talks between the current government and the Lord Resistance Army rebel group to resolve the arms conflict in Northern Uganda.

Her interest in politics began at an early age when, as a ten year old, she was abducted by the Lords Resistance Army rebels to be trained as a fighter. After managing to escape, she was faced with considerable hardship; from significant food shortages to the abuse of the people around her by soldiers and rebels, with no protection available from the government. Rather than discourage her, Concy's experiences gave her an overwhelming desire to bring positive change to her country.

As a young, female, opposition MP in Uganda, Concy puts herself at considerable risk to stand up for what she believes in and change her surroundings for the better. Away from politics she has been responsible for creating a football league for children and adults with the aim of building unity between refugee camps and re-integrating child soldiers back in to their communities. She is also dedicated to fighting poverty in her community.

Subir K Choudhury (MPhil(Eng) Civil Engineering, 1997)

Subir Choudhury has spent the last eight years giving his time and money to young children in India living below the poverty line.

Seeing the terrible poverty in which rural children were living in and around his home city inspired Subir to set up a hostel for young boys in 2000. The hostel takes in 300 boys from the poorest villages around

Mumbai and provides them with accommodation, food and healthcare.

The boys also receive education and mentorship to learn trades that will help them to support their families, eradicating poverty and hunger. Subir meets all expenses of the hostel himself without the aid of government grants.

He has always been passionate about social issues and has also given his time to a range of other worthwhile causes including leprosy eradication and patient rehabilitation

programmes and training and placement of physically disabled boys and girls. He also runs an old age home. Subir was made the Sherrif of Mumbai in 1995 in recognition of his work in local society.



Meet your match and make an impact

For the next three years, the UK government has set aside £200 million as a philanthropic 'challenge fund' for higher education institutions. For alumni, this means that every gift that is made to the University, no matter how large or small will qualify for an extra bonus from government, in addition to gift aid. In simple terms, for every £3 that is donated, the University will receive an extra £1 to allocate to strategically important projects and invest further in our future, our students, facilities and research.

'This is an excellent opportunity to encourage more giving to universities and for each gift to have an even greater impact,' says Vice-Chancellor Professor Michael Sterling. 'It will help us to ingrain philanthropy in the University, create an even better environment for research and teaching and make us better able to address the needs of our students and staff, together with meeting the challenges ahead. We hope many alumni, friends, parents, companies and trusts will take up this 'challenge' so that the University can benefit to the greatest extent.'

Learn more

www.alumni.bham.ac.uk/fund/

Alumnus named Birmingham Young Professional of the Year

Anthony McCourt (LLB Law 2004) has become the youngest person to win the 2008 Birmingham Young Professional of the Year award. The 25 year old solicitor, originally from Northern Ireland, who graduated four years ago, works for law firm Wragge & Co.

Anthony was named the top Young Legal Professional and then went on to beat winners from the Communications, Entrepreneurial, Financial, Property and Recruitment sectors to win the overall award. He won for demonstrating a passion for succeeding in Birmingham and for his efforts to give something back to the community and city as a whole.

Class giving adds value to student experience

Over the last two years, alumni have generously donated over £60,000 to the University as part of the Class Giving scheme.

Running in parallel with annual reunion events on campus and championed by a Class Ambassador from their year group, alumni have been invited to give a gift to the University on the 50th, 35th, 25th or 10th anniversary of their graduation. The Class Gift from each year group has then been used to support and enhance the learning experiences of a new generation of students.

Projects supported by Class Gifts over the last two years have been as diverse as providing new media equipment for the Guild of Students, improving the induction experience for new students by funding a

new 'Welcome to Birmingham' website and giving two exceptional students the opportunity to represent the UK at the Model G8 Summit in Japan.

'Our reunion year groups responded fantastically,' says Hannah Eno, Head of Annual Giving. 'By getting together and giving together through their Class gifts, they will have a huge, positive influence on the lives of our students.'

In 2009 we will be running reunion events and Class Giving programmes for the Classes of 1959, 1969, 1974 and 1984 on the occasion of their 50th, 40th, 35th and 25th anniversaries of graduation. Reunion events for the 10th anniversary Class of 1999 will also be finalised soon. Visit www.alumni.bham.ac.uk/events for more details.



Birmingham reunited

Alumnus Jason Bocarro (BSocSci, Sociology with Sport and Recreational Studies, 1992) had an impromptu reunion with fellow Birmingham students at a recent conference in San Diego.

Jason graduated from Birmingham in 1992 and is now a professor at North Carolina State University. At an Active Living research conference, he bumped into two other university professors, John Amis (BSc Maths and Physical Education, 1990) from Memphis and Jacqueline Kerr (PhD Sport and Exercise Sciences, 2001) from San Diego, who were also Birmingham alumni. All three had been students in the School of Sport and Exercise Sciences, albeit it several years apart.



Reunited: Alumni meet in San Diego

'It was a wonderful coincidence to meet up with fellow Birmingham students on the other side of the world,' says Jason. 'Although we didn't know each other well when we were at University, we had a good reminisce about our time in the Midlands. We also had a lot in common professionally; all university lecturers and all doing research in the area of physical activity and obesity.'



© Sven Torfinn/Panos Pictures

CONFLICTING OPINIONS

The inconspicuous exterior of the JG Smith building at the centre of the University's Edgbaston campus belies the groundbreaking work that goes on within its walls. It is home to academics who train aid workers, MI5 'spooks' and international governments, work in partnership with the United Nations and are regularly on the ground in some of the world's most dangerous conflict and post-conflict zones.



© Sven Torfinn/Panos Pictures



© James Morris/Panos Pictures



© Martin Roemers/Panos Pictures



© Jenny Matthews/Panos Pictures

These academics work within Birmingham's International Development Department (IDD), a postgraduate centre which is internationally renowned for its policy work, especially in the areas of local governance, conflict, state failure and reconstruction. It was founded in 1964 as part of the Institute of Local Government Studies, and provided courses for local government officers from around the world. Since its early days, where it dealt with the hand back of colonial countries, the Department has expanded to welcome academics from 99 different countries and addresses public management and governance issues in developing countries and those in transitional states post-conflict.

The IDD also runs several specialist projects and centres which focus on specific areas of research. One of these is the Global Facilitation Network for Security Sector Reform (GFN-SSR) which is funded and managed by the UK Foreign Office, Ministry of Defence and Department for International Development. Its purpose is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of British intervention in global conflicts and to support the processes that take place after they are over. It acts as the government's primary knowledge repository on development and offers advice to anyone working in areas of conflict.

'Security Sector reform involves working in a variety of different areas,' explains Dr Paul Jackson, Director of GFN-SSR and Head of the School of Government and Society. 'We look into civilian control over the military, the accountability of armed forces, the reform of police. Everything from justice through to military and intelligence.'

As the first port of call for anyone involved in reform, the Network works with Foreign Office officials, security services and international governments, providing them with the theoretical and practical experience that they need for the difficult positions that they face.

Dr Jackson explains: 'We provide a framework for training, providing a theoretical backdrop to conflict and post-conflict situations. We then bring in experts who can give advice on the practical aspects of being

out in the field.' The reputation of the Birmingham academics involved means that the GFN-SSR can draw on a wide network of contacts, internationally and within UK government to augment theoretical knowledge with invaluable practical experience.

One of the reasons for the excellent reputation of the centre and IDD as a whole, is its academics' willingness to get out into the field. 'We pride ourselves on practicing what we preach,' explains Dr Jackson. 'We get involved with problems on the ground and do a lot of evaluation work with local communities. As we come from a university, we are seen as neutral by local people and so they speak to us quite freely. Our job is to take an objective view of rebuilding programmes, ascertain if things have worked, and if they haven't – which is often the case – we try to find out why.'

Africa is an area where Dr Jackson and his colleagues from the IDD have worked extensively. They have been involved in conflict analysis and post-conflict rebuilding in a number of countries, each with its own unique problems.

In Rwanda an estimated 800,000 people were killed between April and June 1994 when violence escalated between the Hutu and Tutsi groups. Violence spread throughout the country for 100 days until a ceasefire was finally declared, leaving a new, multi-ethnic government in its place.

The IDD's role, post-conflict was to look at ways that the country could move forward once initial humanitarian efforts in the region were completed. 'What we looked at was the aid management infrastructure that was put in place post-genocide. We found that many international donor organisations were coming into the country to provide aid, but with separate programmes and reporting procedures which was making the situation more complicated than it needed to be. Working for the UN development programme, we came in to coordinate activity, helping donor organisations, aiding in the development of infrastructure, government and health services in a country that was ravaged by AIDS in addition to its other problems.'

In Sierra Leone, academics worked with local government to rebuild infrastructure after a ten year civil war, which destroyed government.

'We went to Sierra Leone fairly quickly after the war ended,' explains Dr Jackson. 'Our job there was mainly sensitisation work – talking to local people and explaining that they had an independent choice about who they could vote for. This sounds very straightforward, but Sierra Leone hadn't had local government since the early 1970s, so many people had grown up without knowledge of it.'

Sierra Leone is now touted as an example of what the international community should do post-conflict. In a decade the country has gone from total breakdown, where central government collapsed and military and police were rife with corruption, to one which held violence-free national elections last year. Dr Jackson continues: 'It's regarded as an extremely good example of how to reform and reinvigorate a police force and build it into something that doesn't threaten the population.'

The IDD is now examining Sierra Leone in greater detail in a comprehensive report commissioned by the British government.

'From the report we are able to start building up a picture of what did and didn't work and why that was the case. On studying the conflict now we are also able to evaluate the importance of resourcing. There can be an assumption made that you need to get members of the international community into post-conflict areas as soon as possible, but that isn't the case. Our research shows that if you send inexperienced people in, just to have a presence, it can be more damaging than not sending anyone at all. It's vital that you have the right people there at the right time; a lesson that the British government is now learning to its cost in areas like Iraq and Afghanistan.'

Through studying the successes and failures of post-conflict nations across the world, the IDD hopes to inform debate about development policy and help to improve prospects for people involved in future conflicts.

www.idd.bham.ac.uk

Puzzles – Benefits – Giving

Competitions

Stretch your grey matter with these puzzling competitions. Try the quick crossword or the tortuously tough Sudoku for your chance to win some University merchandise.

Two-in-One Crossword

Both sets of clues lead to the same solution

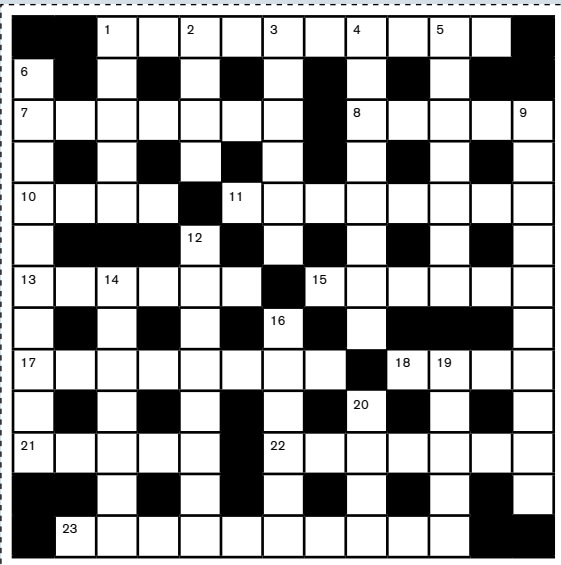
QUICK CLUES

Across

- 1 Toad (10)
- 7 Penguin (7)
- 8 Wild dog (5)
- 10 Blemish (4)
- 11 Furry animal (8)
- 13 Traditional Christmas fare (6)
- 15 Renter (6)
- 17 Living thing (8)
- 18 Extinct bird (4)
- 21 Lions' dens (5)
- 22 Fighting (7)
- 23 Rodent (10)

Down

- 1 Asian state (5)
- 2 Sea bird (4)
- 3 Bawdy (6)
- 4 Huntsman of song (4,4)
- 5 Bank document (7)
- 6 Airtight (10)
- 9 Between foot and shin (5,5)
- 12 Discard (8)
- 14 From the Rhine area (7)
- 16 Increase (6)
- 19 War-torn beach (5)
- 20 By mouth (4)



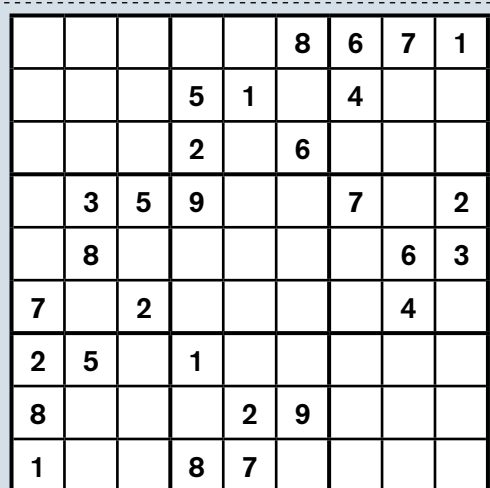
CRYPTIC CLUES

Across

- 1 Endangered 17 will talk to rabbit (10)
- 7 Antarctic 17 has a ruler (7)
- 8 African 17 Delaney has caught on return (5)
- 10 Spy underground 17 (4)
- 11 Token brother, it's said, of burrowing 17 (8)
- 13 17 from the country (6)
- 15 Tenant of castles seen packing them in (6)
- 17 Make old town enclosure for a beast (8)
- 18 Execute – and again, 17 is no longer (4)
- 21 Student adopts manners in 17 homes (5)
- 22 Hostilities are remote in China (7)
- 23 South American 17 catches cold in China (10)

Down

- 1 Country-built plane (5)
- 2 Go back, we shout to sea (4)
- 3 Robust, hearty stew (6)
- 4 Radio legend on the hunt (4,4)
- 5 Verifies noise and makes arrangements to pay (7)
- 6 Chart Emile rolled and sealed (10)
- 9 Kes flying to Lebanon joints (5,5)
- 12 Throw stone, weight is inside (8)
- 14 Right: Laying 17 is hot near German river (7)
- 16 String line that's half of the enlargement (6)
- 19 Boar heart with ham, raised in the American city (5)
- 20 Alternative, for a student, to a viva (4)



How to enter

Cut out and return your completed entry (photocopies will be accepted) by 31 January 2008 to:
 Alumni office
 University of Birmingham
 Edgbaston
 Birmingham B15 2TT
 England
 marking your envelope Magazine Competition and including your name, address, contact phone number, subject and year of graduation.

Benefits and discounts – University benefits

Events

Receive invitations to our full and varied events calendar, from pub nights to reunions and networking events. Visit www.alumni.bham.ac.uk/events/calendar.shtml for the latest events.

News

Keep up to date with the latest University and alumni news with our website and publications including our regular e-newsletter Bitesize.

Continued Education/Training

Alumni receive discounts on some University run courses, such as Business Language Training, and Media Training in the Media Centre. Visit www.alumni.bham.ac.uk/benefits/unibenefits.shtml for further details.

Sport

Alumni are entitled to discounted annual membership at the Munrow Centre. Call 0121 414 4767 or visit www.sport.bham.ac.uk

University Library

Alumni are eligible for free reference membership of the library for the first 12 months after graduation. Once the free membership is complete, alumni are eligible for the concessionary rate of £25. Call 0121 414 5828 or visit www.library.bham.ac.uk

The Guild of Students

You don't have to leave your student life behind – become a Guild of Students Life Member – become a Guild of Students Life Member have continued access to Guild facilities, societies and welfare. Visit www.alumni.bham.ac.uk/benefits/ for more information.

University Gifts and Souvenirs

Buy University of Birmingham merchandise in Vibe or via www.gifts.bham.ac.uk. For more information, call 0121 414 3362.

Accommodation

Alumni receive a 20% discount when staying in Halls Accommodation and other discounts are available for hotel-style accommodation at the Conference Park. Call 0121 415 8400 or visit www.conferences.bham.ac.uk

Weddings

The University offers an extensive range of wedding venues and exclusive locations to create your perfect day. Call 0121 415 8400, visit www.weddings.bham.ac.uk or email e.m.carlin@bham.ac.uk for further information.

National and international discounts

Avis Car Rental

Rent an Avis car and enjoy the freedom to explore more for less. Visit www.avis.co.uk/premierpartners or call 0844 581 0187 quoting AWD K072100 for exclusive alumni discounts.

National Car Rental

Take advantage of exclusive discounts available to alumni. Visit www.alumni.bham.ac.uk/benefits for more information.

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO)

Get 10% discount on tickets for CBSO-promoted concerts (www.cbso.co.uk) at the Symphony Hall, Birmingham. Quote 'CBGT Offer' when booking with the Ticket Office on 0121 780 3333.

Visit www.alumni.bham.ac.uk/benefits for more information.

City Inn

Fantastic discounts available exclusively to University of Birmingham alumni on weekend breaks at the City Inn in Birmingham, Bristol, Glasgow, Manchester, and Westminster. Quote 'University of Birmingham Alumni Rate' when booking.

Visit www.alumni.bham.ac.uk/benefits for more information.

Intercontinental Hotels Group

Enjoy great discounts of up to 25% off weekend stays with IHG available at participating Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn and Express by Holiday Inn hotels across the UK and Europe.

Visit www.ichotels.com/exclusive or call 0870 400 8135 quoting 'Exclusive Rate'.

Radisson SAS, Birmingham City Centre

University of Birmingham Alumni receive great rates at the Radisson SAS, Birmingham, and also a special rate for the Reunion weekend 19–21st June 2009. Quote 31889 when making your booking.

Visit www.alumni.bham.ac.uk/benefits for more information.

Terms and conditions apply. All benefit and discount information may be subject to change.

Donation form

Full name and address

.....

.....

Postcode

Making the most of your gift (UK taxpayers only)

By making a Gift Aid declaration, your gift will be worth an extra 28% to the University at no additional cost to you. To make your gift tax effective in this way please sign this declaration.* Please treat my donation, and any subsequent ones I make to the University of Birmingham, as Gift Aid Donations.

Signature

Date

* To make a tax effective gift, you must have paid an amount of UK income tax or capital gains tax that equals or exceeds the amount of tax to be reclaimed. Gift aid is calculated as follows: £25 from the tax reclaimed and £3 from the transitional relief provided by government following the fall in basic tax rate from 22% to 20% in April 2008. Find out more at www.alumni.bham.ac.uk/fund/gift

I wish to make a gift to:

- ☐ Teaching, Research and IT
☐ Campus Environment and Facilities
☐ The Guild of Students
☐ University Sport Birmingham
☐ Student Support
☐ Let us decide*
☐ Other (please specify)

* General donations will be used to meet the University's most pressing needs

Cheque/CAF voucher

I enclose a cheque made payable to the University of Birmingham or a CAF Voucher for

☐ £25 ☐ £50 ☐ £100 ☐ £250 ☐ other

Credit/Debit Card

Please debit from my Visa / MasterCard / Switch / AMEX (delete as applicable)

Please state currency:

Amount in words:

Card number

CCV number* * The last 3 or 4 digits found on the signature strip on the back of your card.

Name on card:

Start date /

Expiry date /

Issue number (Switch only)

Signature

Date

- ☐ Please send me information on making a regular gift to the University of Birmingham
☐ Please send me information on making a bequest to the University of Birmingham in my will
☐ I do not wish my name to appear on the list of supporters of the University of Birmingham

Please return this form to: Development and Alumni Office, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT, England (and not to your bank). Please note a completed photocopy of this form is acceptable. Thank you.



Transforming lives



‘Thanks to alumni generosity, I’m the first in my family to go to university. The Access to Birmingham (A2B) scholarship programme will help me get the most from my student experience.’

Sarah Stanwell, 2nd year Psychology undergraduate and A2B scholarship recipient

How you can help

The University of Birmingham Fund (UBF) really does transform lives like Sarah’s. There are five areas you can choose to support within the UBF: Teaching, Research and IT, Campus Environment and Facilities, The Guild of Students, University Sport Birmingham and Student Support. If you would like further information about the Fund, its successes and how you can help, please visit **www.alumni.bham.ac.uk/fund/annual** or to support the University, please complete the gift form (see page 39). Thank you.

**UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM**

Edgbaston, Birmingham,
B15 2TT, United Kingdom
www.bham.ac.uk