

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Spring 2013

 OurAFRICA



CELEBRATING 50 YEARS
OF AFRICAN STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Welcome to OurAFRICA



Welcome alumni and friends to our second newsletter, brimming with the exciting activities of our current and former students, staff, and academic visitors.

This year, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Centre of West African Studies (CWAS) with a series of events culminating in a special conference, *Crossroads in African Studies*, to be held on campus in September 2013. We hope you will be able to join us. See page 7 for more details.

We have reached a crossroads in more ways than one – we are incorporating CWAS into a new Department of African Studies and Anthropology (DASA) to more accurately reflect the fantastic breadth of our research, teaching and postgraduate supervision. Our students are excited about the opportunities that this identity shift will present and we are sure that you will be too.

In these pages you can read about the many ways in which we are confirming our commitments to our research fields as we celebrate our past successes.

We hope that you will enjoy this edition of *Our Africa*. Thanks to your enthusiastic response to our last edition, many of you have renewed your links with us. Providing us with your email address has enabled us to take the exciting step of delivering a paperless newsletter. This helps us to reach our international alumni faster and more effectively and, of course, to do our bit for the environment.

Dr Keith Shear
Director of DASA and CWAS

Encourage your alumni friends and colleagues to update their contact details with us via www.your.bham.ac.uk to ensure that they too receive *Our Africa*.

Sites of memory: Exploring memory in research

Conference explores burning questions of memory – Is memory imagination or plagiarism? Are artists the curators or creators of memory? Is memory determined by audience? Do we remember or embroider?



The first *Sites of Memory* conference and interactive workshop, held on campus in February, was motivated by a desire to explore these crucial questions. Memory lurks within most academic research but is rarely actively considered with the care it deserves. The *Sites of Memory* series aims to encourage researchers to realise the need to ask these questions rather than answer them definitively.

Captured in 107 live tweets by organisers and doctoral researchers Tom Penfold and Rebecca Jones, the event (funded by the University's College of Arts and Law) had a profoundly larger, and longer-lasting, impact – creating memories of its own.

Exploring memory through a variety of disciplines, Africanist Jan-Georg Deutsch (University of Oxford) began proceedings with a discussion of how remembrance works at three different sites of slave memory, insisting: 'It's never too late to have a happy childhood.'

Contributions by 12 postgraduates from seven different institutions explained the way memory works at monuments, through film, in graffiti, language and even in the nostalgic practices of baking bread. Fascinating research was presented which shared surprising similarities in the relationships between memory and the future, silence, truth and forgetting.

The interactive workshop encouraged all attendees, both presenters and participants, to discuss the very practicalities of memory. DASA's Benedetta Rossi, Jonathon Reinartz from the department of History of Medicine and published author Joanna Rossiter, spoke about how memory affects and shapes the processes of research.

Finally, Professor Philip Schwyzer, a memory researcher from the University of Exeter, put 'The Past in its Place' – showing how the role of time in memory is all too evident. Overall, the conference suggested that memory is more a comment on the future than the past.

DASA is hosting two more *Sites of Memory* conferences in the coming months. The first will focus on 'the local' in African literature and the second event will be an invitation-only publication workshop. Authors of selected papers from the first two conferences will work with leading journal editors.

To find out more about the conference and the *Sites of Memory* series, follow us on Twitter: @SitesofMemoryUB

'South Africa: Retrospection, Introspection, Extraversion'

Every Spring, we invite young scholars working in African universities to participate in the Cadbury Workshops in Birmingham. The Cadbury Fellows spend time at CWAS participating in seminars and lectures and work with staff to hone a conference paper for presentation and ultimately publication. Themed 'South Africa: Retrospection, Introspection, Extraversion', the 2012 scheme hosted two Fellows.

Jendele Adebayo Hungbo has recently completed a PhD at the Wits Institute of Social and Economic Research (WISER) in Johannesburg on post-apartheid talk radio. At the Cadbury conference, he featured in a panel on 'Outsiders (Self-)Represented'.

Our second Fellow, Isaac Ndlovu, has been working on 'Allegorising South Africa through Life-Writing: The Case of Hugh Lewin and Denis Beckett' at the University of Cape Town's Centre for African Studies. On campus, he formed part of a controversial panel, 'Talking

to and Past Each Other: Political and Other Batons Passed and Dropped', which explored Liberalism, Black Consciousness, the ANC in exile, and external solidarity with liberation struggles in Southern Africa.

Cadbury Fellows: 2013

The tenth Cadbury Fellowship Scheme and Conference (March–May 2013) is examining African newspaper cultures past and present. The three 2013 Fellows arrived in March. Grace Musila, from Stellenbosch University, South Africa is working on the Julie Ward murder and the Kenyan press. From Nigeria's Osun State University, Rotimi Fasan is looking at audience and address in the Yoruba-language newspaper Alaroye. Last but not least, Adebayo Mosobalaje, also from Nigeria, is focused on politics and the Nigerian Free Readers' Association (ie, people who congregate around newspaper vendors to read and discuss the news without buying a paper).

Meet our Fellows and watch the conference podcasts here:
www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/activity/africa-hub/podcasts/index.aspx



Reunion of the 2010 Cadbury Fellows

The 2010 Cadbury Fellows have formed a research network on African media and popular culture, with Patrick Oloko, Leon Tsambu, Shani Omari, Anne Schumann and Alessandro Jedlowski as the core members. Recently, they ran an exciting workshop on re-mediation and informality in African popular culture, held in

Ouagadougou. Inspired, led and organised by Alessandro, the workshop involved two days of mini-fieldwork projects with Burkinabe musicians, TV producers and other cultural producers, as well as a full programme of research papers and keynotes.

Researching religious tolerance and difference in Nigeria

Exploring everyday religious encounters between Christians, Muslims and traditionalists, Rebecca Jones spent time in Yoruba-speaking southwestern Nigeria, a region with a relatively high degree of religious tolerance, as part of a DASA project working with Osun State University in Nigeria.

Rebecca, a Research Fellow, shares her experiences:

'Beginning in Ede, a small town with a 90% Muslim population, we've been administering door-to-door surveys, looking at attitudes to everyday religious encounters.

'Here, we heard the beautiful saying: *'Ede, iyara kan ni'* or *'Ede is one room'*, meaning that Ede is a small, unified place, where people can't help but interact despite religious differences.'

'In December 2012, Dr Insa Nolte and I returned to Ede with our colleague Professor Ogen and his team for a workshop looking at what is distinctive about everyday encounters between religions in the town.

'With colleagues from Ede's Adeleke University, we discussed everything from daily interactions between university staff of different faiths, to the experiences of couples of inter-faith marriages, the role of Sango worshippers in Ede and the place of popular music in negotiating religious difference. The people of Ede joined us for a 'town and gown' discussion about religious difference in the town, and to give us feedback on our research findings. We even enjoyed a short play devised by students from Adeleke University exploring mutual understanding in Ede.

'This was my first experience of attempting to MC an event in Yoruba, certainly a test of the language skills I've been developing over the last few years! Most of all, it was great to work as part of a team with our Nigerian colleagues. Their long hours on the road collecting survey responses, often in torrential rain or blazing hot sunshine, put my deskbound number-crunching into perspective.'

This project has been funded by the European Research Council.



Students of Adeleke University performing a drama they had devised about religious difference and tolerance.

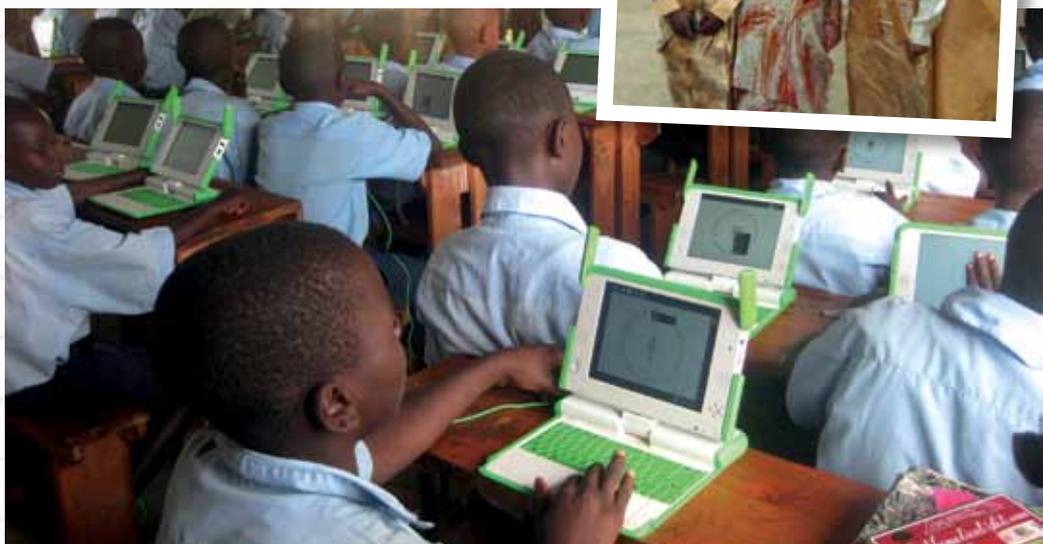
A letter from an alumna in Rwanda...

Hello! My name is Ceri Whatley and I graduated from the Centre of West African Studies (CWAS) in 2010. I was awarded a First in African Studies with Social Anthropology and loved CWAS's interdisciplinary approach and supportive learning environment. After graduating, I was lucky enough to intern for One Laptop per Child (OLPC) Rwanda.

OLPC is a non-profit organisation which provides children in developing countries with durable, inexpensive laptops designed to transform education. I designed and ran educational workshops, as well as assisting at teacher training events and expos. I was also one of a small team responsible for the testing, re-flashing and boxing of 63,000 XO laptops ready for deployment.

Working in Rwanda was a fascinating and meaningful experience. While it was rewarding to work on such a forward-thinking and ambitious project, I had to learn how to deal with some of the complex difficulties faced by an NGO operating in a developing country. There were obvious challenges such as financial constraints, problems with reliable electricity and internet supply and the everyday surprises that come with working in a different environment; in Rwanda, employees are not expected to turn up to work on time if it has been raining!

OLPC's role supports the Rwandese Ministry of Education (MINEDUC). It was meaningful knowing that the government had such a high level of interest in the project although there were unfortunately conflicts of interest between the different teams – often to do with those globally common issues of egos, fiefdoms



and individual career advancement – which meant the project was sometimes frustrated in its efforts.

When interning for OLPC, I proposed the need for evaluative research and was appointed as their Head of Research. For three months, I was in charge of the entire research process (which was a steep learning curve) and used my findings to write a report and policy paper to improve the programme.

I didn't want to leave Rwanda as I was having too much fun, so I decided to stay in Kigali

with friends while I taught art and music at an international primary school. I was given a lot of freedom with the curriculum and so my students are now fans of Fela Kuti among other African artists.

I am currently working and saving money for my Masters Degree at the new Department of African Studies and Anthropology (DASA)... Maybe I will see some of you there very soon.

*Best Wishes
Ceri*

Share your memories of studying at CWAS and let us know what you have been doing since – email **Charlotte Heap**, College Alumni Relations Manager, at c.heap@bham.ac.uk

A new look for Anthropology

We've broadened our anthropology themes beyond Africa to invite students to compare societies and cultures worldwide.

We are encouraging first year students to consider: *What is love? What is wealth? How do non-human animals shape human societies? What is national citizenship?*

Addressing everyday questions such as these from an anthropological point of view helps to

make sense of unfamiliar forms of social and cultural life. This encourages students to obtain a rounded appreciation of human history and culture.

Meanwhile, a focus on study skills offers essential preparation for university life.

'Theory, Ethnography and Research' provides the innovative opportunity to be a practising anthropologist in the second year. Closely-supervised independent fieldwork gives students specialised training in ethnographic research, preparing them for their dissertations.

ALUMNI BURSARY

A POSTGRADUATE BURSARY FOR ALL UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM GRADUATES

For courses starting in September 2013, all University of Birmingham graduates are entitled to a £750 reduction on full-time postgraduate tuition fees for Masters-level taught courses in the College of Arts and Law.



Find out more:
www.birmingham.ac.uk/alumnibursary

The Bowling was Superfine

CWAS alumni of a certain generation may recall the annual Staff vs. Students cricket match – a tradition which fizzled out in the 1990s – but the department's interest in cricket as an occasion for relaxation and reflection and, in a more scholarly way, as one of the shadows of empire, persists.

Others may remember Dr Stewart Brown's Caribbean Literature modules – cricket and Caribbean literature are represented in the anthology *The Bowling Was Superfine: West Indian writers on West Indian cricket*, co-edited by Stewart and the Guyanese poet, and cricket aficionado, Ian McDonald.

Featuring poems, calypsos, stories, essays, speeches and journalism, *The Bowling was Superfine* showcases cricket 'from its expression at the highest level on the global field of play, to the no less titanic struggles on the bumpier fields of the village or the sugar estate' and acts as a 'celebration of those who forged an art out of a game, transformed a colonial sport into the cutting edge of Caribbean nationalism, and changed forever the nature of the game'.

The collection was launched in the Pavilion of the 3Ws Oval at the University of the West Indies, Barbados. Every wall is adorned with photographs of great West Indian cricketers in action, from Learie Constantine to Brian Lara.

'It was both quite appropriate and quite eerie to be reading poems and stories about the exploits of these great players 'in their presence'!

Notable attendees at the reading included Deputy Vice Chancellor Hilary Beckles, the Commonwealth Writers Prize winner Mark McWatt and Barbados-based CWAS alumni Philip Nanton.



The Life Story of Me, Segilola: Scholarly Launch in Lagos

The Life Story of Me, Segilola, of the fascinating eyes, she who had a thousand lovers in her life caused a sensation in colonial Lagos when it was published in 1929. Years later, our Professor of African Cultural Anthropology Karin Barber has caused a similar sensation launching the first critical and scholarly edition of *The Life Story...*

Presented as a series of letters to the *Akede Eko*, a popular Yoruba-language weekly newspaper, it was believed by many readers to be the true confessions of a former good-time girl repenting on her death-bed. Today, *The Life Story...* is recognised as a work of fiction written by the newspaper's editor Isaac Babalola Thomas – and in fact, as the very first Yoruba novel.

The nephew of I.B. Thomas was fittingly present at the launch of Professor Barber's volume which includes a new, complete translation and readers' letters, editorials, commentaries, and poems about Segilola.

Organised by former Cadbury Fellows Professor Funke Adebayo and Dr Patrick Oloko (University of Lagos) and former British Academy Visiting Fellows Dr Oyeniji Okunoye and Dr Sade Hunsu (both of Obafemi Awolowo University) and Dr Remi Ajala (University of Ibadan), the celebration was generously hosted by the University of Lagos in December 2012.

Professor Tunde Lawuyi, University of Ibadan, was joined by eminent scholar, playwright, poet and novelist, Emeritus Professor Akinwumi Isola and Karin Barber who gave a talk on the cultural background of *The Life Story...* The Reverend Adetunji Adebisi, representing the Governor of Lagos State, His Excellency Babatunde Raji Fasola, and the illustrious novelist and playwright Oladejo Okediji were also in attendance along with many leading Yoruba scholars.

Welcome back to our new Newton Fellow

We are delighted to announce our third Newton International Fellow Dr Augustina Adusah-Karikari, from the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration. Tina was a Cadbury Fellow in 2011 and we look forward to welcoming her again.

This prestigious two-year award, funded by the Royal Society and the British Academy, will support Tina's research on the impact of the recent oil find on women in Ghana, which aims to feed into government policy on natural resource management in Ghana.



Jack Harris in Wartime: Grant allows DASA to explore ethnography and intelligence

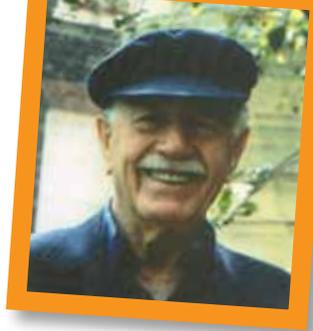
A British Academy grant is enabling the exploration of ethnography and intelligence through the wartime career of American anthropologist Jack Harris.

Jack Harris (1912-2008) carried out fieldwork among the Ozuitem Igbo of eastern Nigeria in 1938-39 and, when the US entered the Second World War, joined the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) – a wartime overseas intelligence and special operations agency and

forerunner of the CIA – and did tours of duty in West and Southern Africa.

Harris later criticised Britain's administration of Tanganyika and worked with the radical cleric Michael Scott in condemning South African rule in Namibia. Unfairly dismissed from the UN for having alleged communist leanings, he took refuge in Costa Rica where he became a successful businessman.

In collaboration with Kevin A. Yelvington of the University of South Florida, Dr Keith Shear and Dr Insa Nolte will explore the relationship between ethnography and intelligence by accessing OSS files in the US National Archives and interviewing Harris's family and acquaintances.



Exchanges around Emancipation: Birmingham and Dakar

Dr Benedetta Rossi writes on researching the often sensitive issue of slavery...

'It has never been easy to research slavery in West Africa as there can be a stigma attached to being of slave descent in contemporary society. Emancipation is still alive in the memory of the older generations and in the same room one can sit with both descendants of slaves and slave owners.

Some, however, regard the 'slow death of slavery' not as a source of potential tension, embarrassment and shame but as one of the most important transformations in West African labour history and it is becoming increasingly possible to openly discuss these topics in African research institutions.

Professor Ibrahima Thioub, Director of the African Research Centre on the Slave Trade and Slavery (CARTE) in Dakar, has led African scholars in actively researching African slavery, its vestiges and legacies in spite of resistance. I was delighted to receive his invitation to teach graduate

students at CARTE and Université Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD).

Dakar was full of treasures – the national archives, the library of the IFAN, the controversial heritage site of the island of Gorée and the old neighbourhoods that feature in many West African classics. The most impressive aspect of my visit, however, was the work I was able to do with graduate students who took my 'Trajectories of Emancipation' course. Motivated and intellectually mature, they were full of youthful enthusiasm. Conversations morphed into reflections on the meanings of research, cross-cultural exchanges, religious experience. Our sessions started early and finished late.

We have been awarded a grant to support shared graduate supervision across our institutions for the next three years, focusing on slavery and emancipation in nineteenth and twentieth century African history. I look forward to the contributions that the young researchers of the Dakar School of History will make to African historiography in their future careers.'



Beyond the National Archives: Researching Ghana's past

We have long enjoyed a positive relationship with the University of Ghana, Legon – our first Director, the notable JD Fage, began his career teaching there. The newly named Department of African Studies and Anthropology (DASA) is nurturing its historical relationships with African universities as well as developing new ones – leading to exciting new collaborations.

The British Academy has awarded the sizeable sum of £26,000 to an exciting new collaboration between Dr Kate Skinner, our Lecturer in the History of Africa and its Diasporas and Dr Wilson Yayoh, Head of the Department of African Studies at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana. The pair first met when Wilson was studying for his PhD in the UK.

During 2013 and 2014, workshops in Ghana will bring together Ghanaian, British and American researchers with experience of working with unconventional sources focusing on the theme 'Beyond the National Archives: innovation and inter-disciplinarity in researching Ghana's past'.

We hope to highlight how much there is to learn from oral and written sources produced in African languages and incorporate this into a new research training module which is being developed by Dr Yayoh.

GOLDEN YEAR: A CROSSROADS IN AFRICAN STUDIES

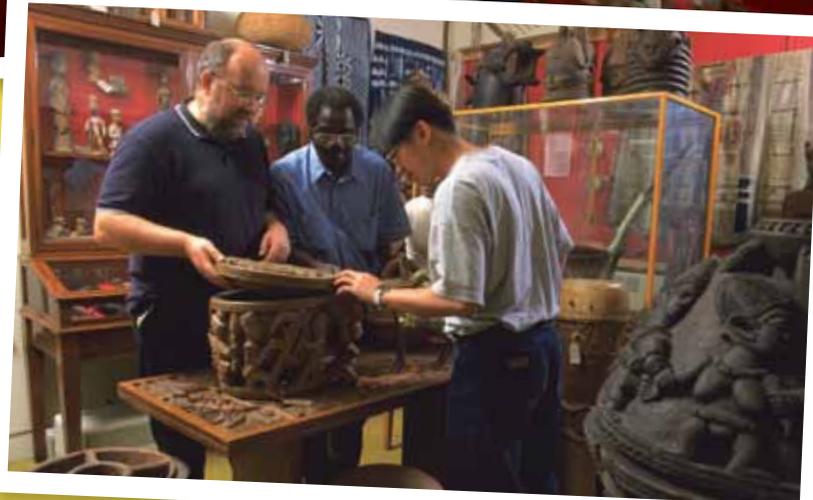
It's the Golden anniversary of CWAS and we're celebrating with the conference 'Crossroads in African Studies' at University of Birmingham on 4th, 5th and 6th September 2013.

For 50 years, CWAS has been distinguished by its interdisciplinarity with research spanning the humanities and social sciences but united by a focus on people's experiences in West Africa. Whilst CWAS continues to develop and disseminate West Africa-focused research, the creation of the Department of African Studies and Anthropology (DASA) formalises our recent expansion beyond West Africa as well as the growing importance of Anthropology.

Crossroads in African Studies will mark this moment in the centre's history – celebrating 50 golden years and looking ahead to the next 50.

Fittingly, the inaugural Fage Lecture will take place on 5th September – named after CWAS's founder Professor John Fage.

The Fage Lecture, supported by the African Studies Association of the UK (ASAUUK), will feature Prof. Gareth Austin (Graduate Institute, Geneva) and Prof. A.G Hopkins (University of Texas) in dialogue about African economic history. Following the Lecture, CWAS's first home on campus, 32 Pritchatts Road, will host a reception.



Join us for the anniversary conference. More information can be found at: www.birmingham.ac.uk/crossroads

Would you like to feature in the conference?

We invite the submission of panels and papers focusing on seven main themes:

- ❑ Economy and society
- ❑ Interpreting sources for the study of Africa's past and present
- ❑ Africa's treasures
- ❑ Power, information, participation, exclusion
- ❑ Religious encounters
- ❑ Social inequalities
- ❑ Fifty years of African studies: ground covered and ways forward (round-table)

Find out more about your chance to showcase your academic research at this special Golden anniversary to: CWAS2013@gmail.com

Sad goodbyes

Dr Paul Ugor, Newton International Fellow 2011/12, has returned to Canada to take up a teaching appointment. During his Fellowship, he undertook, and published, extensive research on youth and popular culture in Nigeria including Nollywood. We hope that Paul's association with the department will continue.

Happy returns

Dr Katrien Pype was our first Newton International Fellow and was a dynamo of energy and ideas. Between 2009 and 2011, she forged links with the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, as well as helping to establish a permanent research network on African media and popular culture.

Having spent time as a Marie Curie International Outgoing Fellow at MIT, Katrien is returning as a recipient of a highly sought-after Birmingham Fellowship. We're excited about Katrien's joint appointment in DASA and International Development, strengthening links between the two departments.

Find out more about the University's innovative Birmingham Fellowships here: www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/excellence/fellows/about/index.aspx

Golden memories...

In honour of the 50th Anniversary of the Centre for West African Studies, we asked you to share some of your fondest memories of your time here on campus...

'CWAS set me really well for a future life that has been really fulfilling with a family, career, business all to do with Africa. While doing my 3rd year at University of Dakar in Senegal, kindly arranged by Paulo Farias, I met a Senegalese lady with whom I have been together ever since – married 14 years with two kids.'

Paul Hipperson (African Studies and French, 1997)

'During the period I studied at CWAS, I made friends with almost all the lecturers at the Centre, particularly Dr Stewart Brown who was of tremendous assistance to me and became a personal friend. I even named my only son Stewart after him in appreciation of what he did for me! Indeed, I always have nostalgic memories of my great Alma Mater, CWAS and have not ceased mentioning it in discussions with colleagues or friends.'

Kwame Kwarteng (PhD, 2008)

'I attended CWAS after spending two and a half years in Nigeria as an English teacher at Government College Sokoto. It was a life-changing experience. I wanted to synthesise what I had learned in Nigeria from an academic and intellectual standpoint. The most remarkable person I met at CWAS was Dr Paulo Farias. I have kept in touch with Paulo and Karin Barber and, when I could, I have visited them over the years since. Paulo has such a remarkable breadth of vision, a grasp of so many disciplines – intuition of the human soul and a vast knowledge of many languages and 'cultural' perspectives, on top of being a formidable Africanist. He helped me understand who I was in a new way – and this gave me the confidence to think about many of life's issues more coherently and in a more disciplined, but also a questioning, way. CWAS had and still has a bit of magic for me. My wife has visited CWAS with me – but our three children have yet to call by. Some day they will.'

Guy Tombs (MA, African Studies, 1978)

'Studying at CWAS was the most rewarding of my university years, and I remember particularly the friendliness and support of staff and fellow students, and the Danford Collection, which spurred an interest in African art. My time at CWAS led to my career in publishing, for at the suggestion of Professor Fage, I contacted the publisher Christopher Hurst, and became his first editorial assistant. From there I moved to Thomas Nelson & Sons, and spent several years in Nigeria as Senior Editor for Nelson Nigeria. Later, I worked for ODA (now DfID) in Jamaica as publishing consultant to a textbook project in the Ministry of Education. None of this would have happened but for my time at CWAS.'

Alison Hodge (African Studies, 1970)

'I enjoyed my studies at CWAS enormously. There are two people who stand out in my memories: Professor Fage, who was a very impressive man, who made Africa's history come alive and Paulo Farias whose enthusiasm for the history of Islam in Africa was inspirational to me. I loved the CWAS house with all the African artefacts, which I found magical. I enjoyed learning African poly-rhythms at a musical workshop one evening, which was also very memorable.'

Angela Truesdale (nee Thornton) (African Studies and Geography, 1975)

'I enjoyed meeting a very lively group of students, varying widely in experience and background. Some of them remain my friends today. I remember we arranged the first CWAS cricket match. I was fortunate enough to share a study room with E. B. (Dele) Bolaji (a colleague of mine at Kwara Tech) and Chief Victor Omogbehin. When we arrived early in the morning, on days when no one else was around, we would sing the Yoruba greetings to each other as we came up the staircase, which was decorated with carved wooden Yoruba verandah posts. Our study room was known as 'the Tropical Room,' owing to the number of space heaters we commandeered. Both Dele and Chief are now dead. I am very glad to have known them. I learned a lot from various members of the CWAS staff, most notably Professor Fage himself.'

Ann O' Hear (MA African Studies 1968 and PhD 1983)

WIN two tickets to our Crossroads conference

For your chance to win a pair of tickets to our 50th anniversary conference, simply compose a witty limerick, a sonnet, a poem or an African-themed acrostic and send to Charlotte Heap, College Alumni Relations Manager, at c.heap@bham.ac.uk. The deadline for entries is 14 June 2013. The prize includes two tickets to the Crossroads conference, 4 – 6 September 2013 (excluding travel and accommodation). The winner will be notified via email by 12th July 2013. Entries may be used in future publications.

Share your memories and celebrate with us...

We hope you have enjoyed reading *Our Africa* and catching up with what's new in the Department of African Studies and Anthropology. Now, it's your turn!

We're seeking more memories and images of your time at Birmingham that we can display during our 50th Anniversary conference. Share with us and catch up with old friends!

Email your fond memories and images to Charlotte Heap at c.heap@bham.ac.uk or post them to Room 421, Arts Building, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT and you could feature in the next newsletter.

