



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

OLD JOE

ALUMNI AND FRIENDS MAGAZINE

Autumn 2018



The alumni team at the
home of English football

Making Downton Abbey

70 years of supporting the NHS

The first word

Welcome to your Autumn 2018 edition of *Old Joe* magazine; the first published across not one, but two campuses, following the arrival of the first students to our new campus in Dubai just a few weeks ago.

You can already say you studied with one of the world's top 100 universities*, and now we have a truly international footprint to match. Like Birmingham, Dubai brings together many cultures in one place, encouraging us to learn as much from each other as from our courses.

As a global university with a civic outlook, we are committed to contributing to society in the United Arab Emirates. Some of the Dubai students attending their first weeks of lectures right now are supported by scholarships for the brightest minds and their commitment to learning.

We are keen to make sure that anyone with the capability, the determination and the dedication to change their life has the opportunity to study with us.

That is why I am so proud that, in the West Midlands, our 10,000 Lives appeal has already offered life-changing educational experiences to more than 2,000 students in its first year – read more from page 26. Alumni like you, who offer your time and money, are helping provide mentoring, internships and scholarships to cover fees, bursaries that help with living costs, and summer schools to raise aspirations.

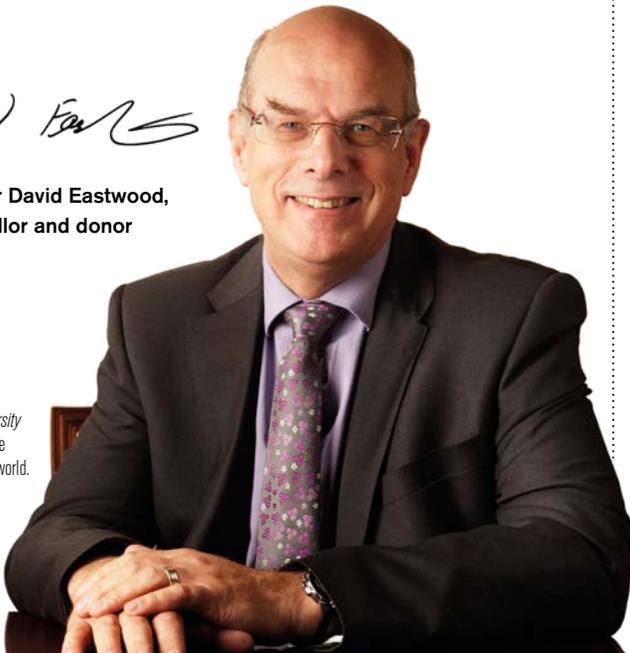
Our mission to change lives is not limited to our two University campuses. Next year, our new fundraising and volunteering campaign will help tackle critical issues, from supporting mental health in Birmingham to global challenges such as air pollution. I look forward to telling you more about how you can get involved.

Best wishes,



**Professor Sir David Eastwood,
Vice-Chancellor and donor**

* Reconfirmed in the 2019 *QS World University Rankings*, climbing five places to 79th in the world.



**GUEST
EDITOR**



**LANA KHATTAB
(BA International Relations, 2012)**

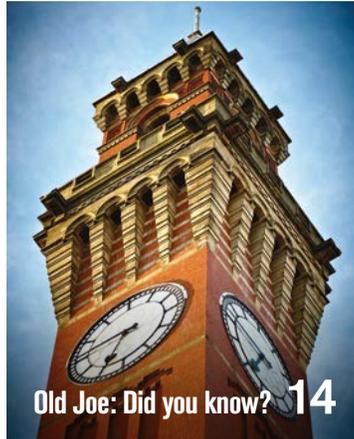
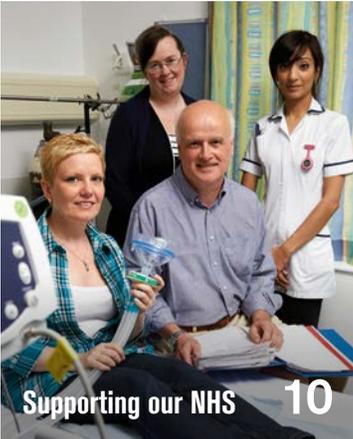
My time at the University of Birmingham was very formative and eye-opening to global career opportunities. After graduating, I pursued a Masters in London and have since then been working in Europe and the Middle East. Currently, I am working in Amman, Jordan, on finding durable solutions for Syrian refugees in the region displaced by violent conflict.

I believe that the opening of a branch in Dubai is a major step in further extending Birmingham's reach and accessibility to students in the midst of a fast-changing world (page 6). At Birmingham, I learnt to be self-confident about my abilities and to raise my aspirations. I am therefore especially proud to read about fellow female Birmingham graduates who are contributing to society. As finding efficient yet just solutions for healthcare systems is an increasing priority, Nikki Kanani's contribution to ensuring NHS patients receive joined-up care is admirable (page 11). Similarly, Agnes Leong's career path as a detective with the Singapore Police Force (page 40) inspires us to be bold and seek new opportunities.

Let us know if you would like to be a guest editor via alumnicommunications@contacts.bham.ac.uk

Contents

Features



Highlights

Your year in pictures	4
News	6
Campus romances	16
My favourite books	19
Reunion photos	24
Studying our closest stars	34
My biggest mistake	36
Share your thesis online	42
Your stories	45
Finding purpose	46



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● **Cover image:** Four alumni from the same Sport and Exercise Sciences class are all working at St George's Park. *Old Joe* paid them a visit this summer – read more on page 32.

YOUR YEAR IN PICTURES





1. VIRTUAL STUDIES HIT HOME: Students Gayan Sirimanne (MBA, 2018), Helena Feibert (MSc International Business, 2018) and Colin Fagan (MPA, 2018) were among the first group from across the globe to graduate from the University's innovative wholly online MBA, MPA and MSc programmes. Graduation was the first time many of the students had set foot on campus.

2. DIGGING DEEP: Birmingham scientists battling cancer received a welcome funding boost in February when the University joined forces as a collaborative partner with Cancer Research UK for the second 'Birmingham Beats Cancer' dinner. The event, hosted by alumna Rachel New (MA Creative Writing, 2014; PhD English Literature and Creative Writing, 2017), included a silent auction that raised £20,000 for cancer research projects at the University. Contact Ellen Jurczak (ellen.jurczak@cancer.org.uk) for details on the 2019 event on 7 February.

3. ROARING OUR GRATITUDE: The impact of those who give time and money to the University was celebrated in the Lapworth Museum of Geology at our new 'Gratitude' event. Guests heard from students Louis Holliday and Donovan Simpson, as well as Professor Rob MacKenzie from the Birmingham Institute of Forest Research, Professor Matthew Broome (MBChB Medicine, 1997), Director of the Birmingham Institute for Mental Health and Jon Clatworthy, Director of the Lapworth Museum. Gratitude 2019 will take place on campus on 21 February, and all donors and volunteers will receive an invitation soon.

4. FLAGSHIP STATUS FOR BIRMINGHAM: Following its successful hosting of the British Transplant Games, the University has been awarded the UK's first ever Donor Campus status. The award signifies our commitment to increasing sign ups to the NHS Organ Donor Register, which will be promoted alongside issues of organ transplantation to staff, students and alumni for the next two years. The University's Sport & Fitness Club hosted 75 per cent of the Games' events, while the majority of competitors and their families stayed on the Vale Village.

5. QUR'AN HEADS EAST: 25,000 people, including senior figures in the United Arab Emirates government, visited an interactive digital exhibition of the Birmingham Qur'an Manuscript during its tour of the Middle East. Her Excellency Noura Al Kaabi, UAE Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development is pictured at the VIP opening of the Abu Dhabi exhibition, alongside the UK Ambassador to the UAE Philip Parham.

6. SIT-INS GO WALKABOUT: Dr Annie Mahtani (BMus Music, 2003; MPhil Musical Composition, 2004; PhD Musical Composition, 2008), Lecturer in Electroacoustic Composition, is putting the final touches to a 'soundwalk' – an interactive, audio-led museum exhibition – on the 1968 student protests on campus, ahead of the anniversary of the occupation of the Great Hall in November. An initial version of the soundwalk was launched at the Flatpack Film Festival in April.

GUEST
EDITOR
LOVES

HISTORIC OPENING OF UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM DUBAI

The first students of the University of Birmingham Dubai walked through its doors in September following its official launch.

They will go on to receive degrees that are taught, examined and accredited to the same recognised high standards as those delivered on the University's UK campus in Edgbaston.

Birmingham is the first global top 100 and UK Russell Group university to establish a campus in Dubai International Academic City (DIAC), a rapidly developing international education hub.

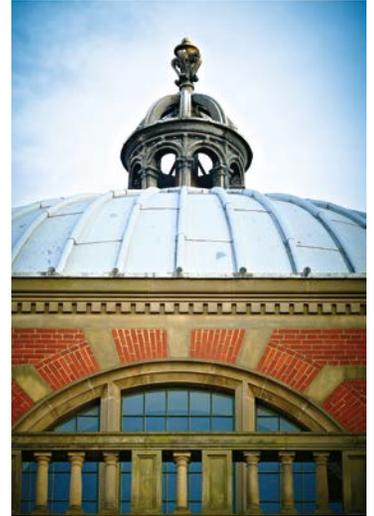
Vice-Chancellor Professor Sir David Eastwood was joined by a select group of VIP guests to cut the ribbon marking the official opening of campus. The group took a tour of the new facilities before an evening reception at the British Embassy in Dubai, attended by approximately 100

guests from Dubai and the UAE and senior members of the University.

Sir David says: 'We are a global university and, for more than 20 years, have provided opportunities for students to study on our degree programmes at partner institutions around the world.

'With strategic partnerships in the USA, Australia, China, and Brazil and active research collaborations across the world, opening a campus in Dubai is the next step in our global mission and demonstrates our ambition as an outward-looking, world-class institution.'

Initial undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at the University of Birmingham Dubai include Business, Economics, Computer Science, Mechanical Engineering, and teacher training degrees, with further programmes to be offered subsequently.



GLOBAL AWARD

FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE VISION

The University has won a Spotlight Award in the Global Teaching Excellence Award (GTEA) 2018.

The award commends the University for its drive to give students a challenging and stimulating learning experience, while placing research at the heart of teaching.

Birmingham was described as providing 'an excellent example of how teaching excellence can be achieved in a large, comprehensive and multicultural higher education environment'.

Professor Kathleen Armour, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) at the University, says: 'Our graduates are among the most highly sought after in the world, which is testament to the quality of our teaching and extracurricular provision.'



Retirement for SCHOOL PRINCIPAL



The Principal of the University's acclaimed high school has retired after five years in post. Mike Roden joined the University of Birmingham School in 2013 with a unique vision to welcome pupils of all backgrounds from all over Birmingham.

His innovations included developing a character education programme with the University's Jubilee Centre for Character and Values to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and British values through learning. The School also offers an extended school day, giving pupils the opportunity to expand their learning through enrichment activities.

Thanks to the generosity of donors, the school building was enhanced to provide the best experience possible for pupils. For example, the school's classrooms now have the latest technology fitted.

'My proudest achievement as Principal is seeing the impact we've had on our young people,' Mike says.

'There's the opportunity for every child, from whatever background, to develop social and cultural awareness and that, for me, is a unique thing.'

Grateful students bid Mr Roden farewell, describing him as 'kind', 'supportive', 'special', and 'caring' in a video they made for him.

Colin Townsend, former Head of Denbigh High School in Luton (rated 'Outstanding' by UK school inspectors OFSTED), is the school's new Principal and will take its mission forward.

Watch the 'Goodbye Mr Roden' video and get the latest news from the school on its Facebook page at www.facebook.com/uoschool

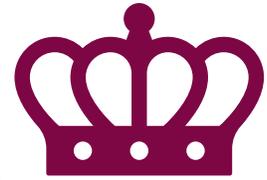
PATIENT CONTROLLED DRUG COULD REDUCE NEED FOR EPIDURALS IN CHILDBIRTH



A trial co-ordinated by a University team has identified a more effective pain relieving drug for women in labour, which could significantly reduce the number of women requiring an epidural due to inadequate pain relief.

Researchers at the Universities of Birmingham, Sheffield and Nottingham showed that the epidural rate could be halved using remifentanyl PCA, instead of the commonly used pethidine. Remifentanyl PCA is delivered through a drip that women can control with a handheld device as needed.

Professor Christine MacArthur, of the University of Birmingham's Institute of Applied Health Research, says: 'The results of the trial provide strong evidence that remifentanyl PCA should be routinely offered as an alternative to pethidine and should be rolled out at hospitals across the UK.'



Honours for alumni who serve their communities

Many graduates of the University were recognised by honours awards in 2018, for their contributions to their communities and to healthcare.

BUILDING ONLINE AND OFFLINE COMMUNITIES

Community leader Sabrina Francis (BA Social Policy, 2006) is one of many Birmingham graduates who received an honour. Her British Empire Award Medal (BEM) recognised her work building strong online communities at City, University of London, supporting Camden as a local Councillor in the Bloomsbury Ward, and her volunteer work helping to provide meals for homeless people.

Sabrina says, 'I studied Social Policy at Birmingham and it gave me the ability to understand difficult policy issues, how interconnected they are and how policy can shape society by either helping or hindering particular situations. Being a councillor has given me lots of ways to get really involved and try to improve the borough I love. I want to continue to work for organisations that give back to society and help them reach their audiences and create change through digital media.'

DID YOU STUDY WITH AN HONOURS RECIPIENT?

New Year's Honours 2018

- Sir (David) Keith Peters GBE: For services to the advancement of medical science
- Professor Clive Behagg OBE: For services to higher education and economic regeneration

- Robert Black MBE: For services to ex-Service personnel and their families
- Jane Clarke MBE: For services to vulnerable women and children
- Sabrina Francis BEM: For services to the University of London
- Robert Herman-Smith OBE: For services to the Global Aerospace sector
- Colin Hopkins MBE: For services to education
- Professor Elizabeth Kuipers OBE: For services to clinical research, treatment and support for people with psychosis
- Jane Marriott OBE: For services to Public Administration and Finance
- Judith Morris BEM: For voluntary service to first-aid and young people
- Andrew Ready MBE: For services to renal transplantation
- Helen Sharman OBE CMG: For services to science and technology educational outreach
- Angela Tate MBE: For services to probationers and voluntary work to the community in the Isle of Wight

Queen's Birthday Honours 2018

- Professor Sir David Haslam: For services to NHS leadership
- Professor Dame Susan Hill DBE: For services to the 100,000 Genome Project and to NHS Genomic Medicine

- Dame Stella Manzie DBE: For services to Local Government (Birmingham City Council)
- Dr Sir James Ratcliffe: For services to business and investment
- Susan Bailey MBE: For services to vulnerable children and families in the West Midlands
- Alexandra Cotton MBE: For services to mental health
- Andrea Clarke MBE: For services to children and young people with physical disabilities
- John Craggs MBE DL: For services to education and the community in Birmingham
- Susanna Daus BEM: For services to adoption and fostering
- Dr Richard Dewar MBE: For services to the NHS, particularly stroke patients
- Alun Evans CBE: For services to scholarship
- Janie Ewing BEM: For services to the community in Bermondsey, London
- Patrick Heneghan OBE: For parliamentary and political services
- Dr Rabindra Ratnasuriya MBE: For services to General Practice in the West Midlands

Full details are available online at oldjoe.co.uk.

If you have received an honour that we don't yet know about, please get in touch!



Springfield Club
meeting, 8pm at
the Brook Pub!



The Springfield Club
Marcus Hall (BCom Industrial
Economics and Business
Studies, 1984)
Martin Bambridge (LLB, 1984)
Nigel Brettton (BCom Business,
French and German, 1984)
Andrew Gumpert (LLB, 1985)
Tim Reeve (BCom Accounting
and Finance, 1984)
Manoj Vaghela (LLB, 1984)

A Birmingham bond of 37 years

When Marcus Hall (BCom Industrial Economics and Business Studies, 1984) first met his new neighbours in Mason Hall in 1981, they instantly clicked. Thirty-seven years later, they are still firm friends.

'Fate threw us together and we have never looked back.' Within weeks of meeting, six new friends knew this could be for life. So they needed a name...

'We were huge fans of an affordable local pint called the Springfield. Many a night was spent unwinding after lectures at Selly Oak's Brook Pub with a beer glass in hand. So we became the Springfield Club – I think the beer has been discontinued, but we are still going strong!

'Our lives have criss-crossed so much since our student days. For example, we've been best men and ushers at each other's weddings and between us are godfathers to seven of the Springfield children!

'We returned to Birmingham many times over the years before we realised we couldn't handle as many pints of Springfield as we once could! Nowadays, we share a laugh and catch up on each other's lives on the golf course. And we all got together for the latest alumni celebration at the House of Lords.

'As well as my brother, who did Geography at Birmingham at the same time as me, the next generation of the Springfield Club is making its mark on campus.

'My two nieces both studied Physiotherapy, and are now helping people recover from conditions such as strokes. And mine and Martin's sons are both studying at Birmingham right now,

and have just finished their first and second years.'

The three Business graduates and three Law graduates have made the most of their degrees, from a stellar career in finance to partners in a law firm. 'But we still feel like students again when we get back together!

'We are very fortunate that so many of us have been able to stay in touch – and it all stems back to that shared experience at Birmingham.'

.....
Would you like to get back in touch with friends from your time at University? Contact alumnioffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk and we will do our best to put you in contact.
.....

NHS 70

Birmingham's experts and insights

To celebrate the NHS's 70th year, *Old Joe* explores how you and the University contribute to the NHS's patient care, groundbreaking research and management.

Over the last 70 years, Birmingham's alumni and researchers have helped revolutionise care within the NHS, including Nobel Prize-winning discoveries that led to new treatments and medicines for cancer, the first variable-rate pacemaker controlled by the patient, and an understanding of several genes involved in HIV.

Over the next four pages, we meet some of the dedicated NHS professionals who studied with us, and look ahead to the next healthcare breakthroughs on the horizon.



Every year, Birmingham produces around:

- 370 doctors**
- 120 nurses**
- 70 dentists**

How our graduates changed the NHS

Watch current students interview Birmingham's doctors, nurses and dentists at www.oldjoe.co.uk

Your support is changing childhood cancer research

625 alumni have made gifts to support Dr Frank Mussai's research. Frank's team have shown that cancer cells rely on an amino acid called arginine to survive, but healthy cells can go without it much longer.

Clinical trials are about to begin with 60 children whose cancers

have returned, including leukaemias, brain tumours, neuroblastomas and sarcomas. Gifts from alumni have helped research which cancers might be most suitable for arginine deprivation, and purchased the chemicals and equipment needed.

Thank you so much for your support.



Designing healthcare for a whole community

GUEST
EDITOR
LOVES



Delivering high-quality care with limited resources is one of the key challenges of the NHS. Birmingham's Health Services Management Centre (HSMC) is helping educate many of the NHS's skilled healthcare leaders, who fight for both patients and staff.

Nikki Kanani (MSc Healthcare Commissioning, 2014) loved working as a GP, but couldn't understand why, despite all the dedicated people working to offer the best possible healthcare, patients weren't getting joined-up care across different services. 'I didn't want to see people fall through the gaps. So the Deputy Chief Executive of the NHS Trust I trained at asked me, "Why don't you do something about it?"'

Three years at Birmingham gave her the practical tools she uses today. 'It really hit the mark for me. It was phenomenal to see first-hand how national and international healthcare leaders think and work.'

From GP to commissioning

On graduating from HSMC, Nikki chaired the Clinical Commissioning Group in Bexley, then became one of the few Chief Clinical Officers still working as a part-time GP to see the challenges – and changes – from

both sides. 'Commissioning isn't just about the money. It involves predicting the future needs of your community. We're so proud that people are living around 15 years longer now than when the NHS was founded. Now we need to make sure those are a good 15 years, with the best possible quality of life.'

Nikki is also focused on keeping staff motivated and offering them work-life balance, in what can be an emotionally difficult job. 'It's not just a nice thing to do; the data shows that the more staff feel heard, cared for and consulted, the better the outcomes we create for patients.'

Empowering more women to study the sciences

Together with her sister Sheila, Nikki speaks in schools to encourage more young women to use their skills in STEMM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Medicine). 'To support the whole population the

NHS cares for, I believe we need to be diverse across our staff groups too.

'Our dad was a refugee, living in a tent when he arrived here, so we were incredibly lucky to have a chance to study at university. It's so rewarding to speak to disadvantaged young people who have only ever heard "no" and prove that anything is possible.'

Inspired since childhood

Nikki's lifelong NHS journey has just taken her to a new challenge on an even bigger scale, as Deputy Director of Primary Care at NHS England. 'I think I was destined for the NHS, and Birmingham helped make it a reality. My parents met studying pharmacy, so as a baby I played (safely!) in a basket on the chemist counter while they helped the local community. It planted something in me, not just about health, but about human interaction. It's the perfect way for me to serve my community.'

“We're so proud that people are living around **15 years longer** now than when the **NHS was founded**. Now we need to make sure those are a **good 15 years**”



World expertise on breath-holding to revolutionise radiotherapy

How long can you hold your breath? Few of us can manage longer than a minute, before we gasp for air.



In the School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences (SportEx), the science behind breath-holding and its breakpoint has been the focus of fundamental research over the last 20 years and also a major interest to students, as a teaching aid to help understand basic physiology and with obvious applications to sport.

Recently, in collaboration with clinical colleagues, this world-class expertise is now being translated to the bedside to solve a major problem in radiotherapy, where X-rays (photons) are widely used to treat cancer. Most breast cancer patients, for instance, need to keep perfectly still for about two minutes of radiotherapy in each treatment session. But they still have to breathe and this respiratory motion means having to irradiate a moving target. So a margin of healthy tissue has to be irradiated to guarantee destruction of the tumour. It is damage to this healthy tissue that causes the

short- and long-term side effects of radiotherapy. Respiratory motion is a major problem for radiotherapy of all structures in the chest and abdomen (breast, oesophagus, lung, liver, kidney, pancreas, etc). A number of strategies are used to mitigate it with limited success.

More accurate radiotherapy

Dr Michael Parkes says: 'Being able to hit the cancerous tumour accurately is essential to avoid damage to other areas, including the heart muscle. Having a stable chest that we can target in one dose could be invaluable in protecting the surrounding tissue.'

In collaboration with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham, Dr Parkes has developed a technique where healthy volunteers can hold their breath simply and safely for over five minutes. The QEHB Charity funded further work showing this can be easily achieved by patients with breast cancer.

Trials with patients

This revolutionary technique will next be trialled by patients with lung cancer, a patent application has been filed and the team is keen to collaborate further. For instance, this has a major application for treatment of patients with the exciting new technique of proton radiotherapy, which is now becoming available in the UK. This high-precision form of radiation therapy has greater ability to reduce doses to healthy tissues, but is even more sensitive to respiratory motion.

'Our goal is to help cancer patients get the best possible treatment with fewer negative side effects, less discomfort and a greater long-term quality of life.'

Dr Michael Parkes is keen to hear from organisations and researchers about working together. Get in touch via alumnicommunications@contacts.bham.ac.uk

Finding words for the unimaginable

The College of Arts and Law is exploring how the right words and information can improve care for people who have experienced miscarriage, termination for fetal anomaly, or stillbirth.

The Death Before Birth project is looking at how such bereaved people and those who support them reach decisions concerning what happens to their baby after death, how their perceptions of the law impact on

their decision-making, and how they communicate their experiences and choices to those there to support them. The research will influence government policy and help raise awareness of the complexities of pregnancy loss.

Find out more at www.deathbeforebirthproject.org and thank you to the many alumni who made gifts to support miscarriage research in 2016.



Engineering healthcare solutions

When damage goes beyond the body's own healing, innovative technologies and materials could help us get back to real quality of life.



Research in the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences has developed everything from materials that can replace bone, to new ways to detect brain injuries earlier.

Now, two areas of research in the School of Chemical Engineering are using sweet natural substances – sugar and honey – to help us heal and protect us from infection after a traumatic injury.

Using the science of sugar to prevent scars

Liam Grover, Professor in Biomaterials Science, is developing a biomembrane dressing that, instead of simply shielding a burn from infection, actively delivers a key molecule that the skin can use to heal without scarring.

Two out of three people who suffer burns experience problematic scarring that can affect the rest of their lives. Scars can restrict movement, cause discomfort and damage self-esteem, sometimes leading to social isolation.

Liam explains: 'The body contains a molecule called Decorin that gives damaged tissues the chance to heal normally without scarring. We can synthesise more of it, but we need to get the right amount to the injured skin as fast as possible. Traditional plastic dressings are designed to keep bacteria out, so they are too dense to deliver the healing Decorin.'

'We are using molecules from sugar to create a gel that delivers the molecules like Decorin while limiting the chances of infection. This anti-scarring dressing can be freeze-dried and instantly activated using salt water, then applied before the skin starts producing scar tissue.'

'We are so excited to see it in clinical trials right now and very proud to be creating something that could really change people's lives.'

Find out more at www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/chemical-engineering/grover-liam.aspx



A spray of honey

Dr Sophie Cox is taking inspiration from nature to fight antimicrobial resistance, which is set to be a bigger killer than cancer by 2050. The reactive oxygen released by honey could be the solution – if we can create an effective delivery system.

Find out why alumni voted to support her research on page 30.



Pioneering new dental techniques for patients

- Saving us from chronic kidney disease by preventing gum disease
- Spotting cavities before they develop, for personalised prevention
- Using light therapy to help gums heal more quickly

Old Joe:

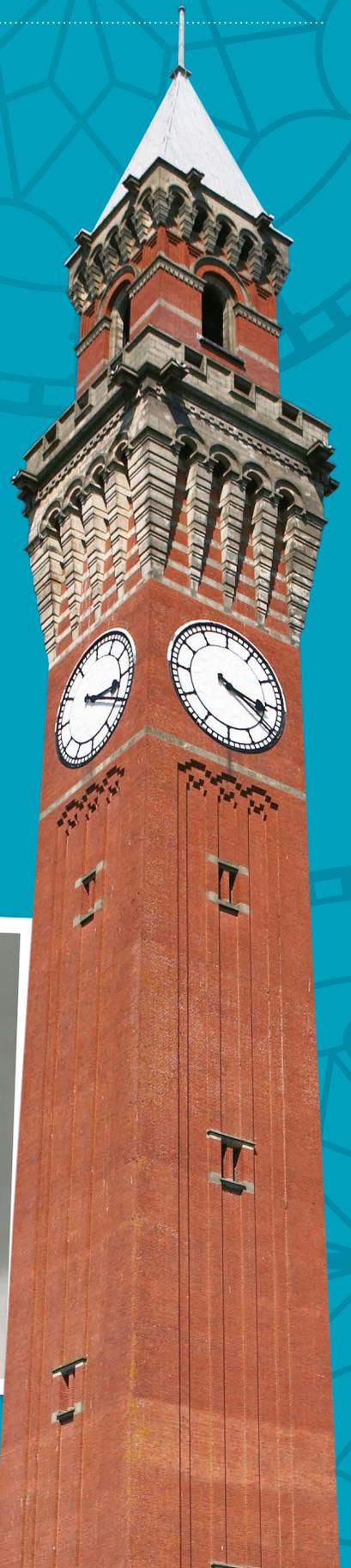
Did you know?

Since 1908, the Joseph Chamberlain Memorial Clock Tower, fondly called Old Joe, has been an iconic part of campus but did you know the following . . .

- Named after the first Chancellor of the University Sir Joseph Chamberlain, not everyone refers to the clock tower as Old Joe! Many alumni remember him as 'Joe' or 'Big Joe'
- Architectural work began for the construction of Old Joe in 1905, the same year that the first Dairy Milk bar was produced three miles down the road in Bournville
- He is a working water tower
- There is a superstition if you walk under Old Joe when he is chiming you will fail your degree: many graduates process underneath the clock tower after graduating
- There is an asteroid named for Old Joe, which can be found in the belt between Mars and Jupiter: Asteroid 10515
- Old Joe was only built thanks to a philanthropic gift
- Peregrine falcons call the top of the clock tower home
- You can fit a double-decker bus through each clock face – not that we've tried!
- Old Joe has his own Twitter account! Check him out [@oldjoeclock](#)



● Image copyright: (Above) UB_PH_A_1_2_214
Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham
(Left) UA10_2b Cadbury Research Library, University
of Birmingham



When Joe met Joe...

The University's much-loved clock tower has many fans. Alumnus and member of staff Joseph McDowell's (BA Political Science, 2015) passion for the history of the University started as a student ambassador when he would give tours of campus. Joe shares his Old Joe highlights:

Developing a passion

'The campus is steeped in history, every brick has a story and I am proud to be part of it. It's a civic university, built for the city and that ethos is still here. I've seen Old Joe almost every day for the last six years and so I've always been interested in finding out more.'

A lasting legacy

'Old Joe was made possible thanks to philanthropy. Thomas Rowbotham, a builder who is one of the people responsible for bringing the red brick to campus and whose firm built the Aston Webb complex, wanted to support it

personally. He gave a gift that went towards the bells, face of the clock tower and hands – both made from single pieces of copper. His bells still chime today. His son Samuel would also go on to give the University its first legacy, which is why the Rowbotham Fellowship group of legacy supporters is named in his honour.'

More than a pretty clock face

'The clock tower was originally designed with the physics department in mind to help experiments. Sir Mark Oliphant and his team used the tower in the 1940s to test his equipment which would form the basis of RADAR technology in World War II. It also provided useful as a watchtower during the World Wars.'

Connecting graduates

'I'm always learning new things about the clock tower and I think he is so well loved because he is useful and a



unique icon. He connects us to every other graduate of Birmingham who walked in his shadow. He's a shared part of our history.'

Send in your memories of Old Joe to alumniconnunications@contacts.bham.ac.uk and our favourite five will win an Old Joe fridge magnet.



● Image: Taking Care of Old Joe

When time stood still

Campus fell silent without the bongs of Old Joe when he stopped ticking for a few months this spring. The clock tower had to wait to be repaired by specialist company Smith of Derby (through their regional company JB Joyce & Co) who have serviced the clock and bell equipment since it was installed.

The clock main barrel mechanism and the large hammer on the tenor strike bell both had faults and had to be removed. Due to their size, it took two people to move them and they were then taken to be repaired in the Derby work shop. As Old Joe is a unique design, if any parts need to be replaced they have to be specially manufactured, as there are no standard parts.

Smith of Derby carry out two service visits per year while the Internal Estates

department work hard to ensure Old Joe keeps chiming.

Dan Watkins, Deputy Head of Maintenance at the University says: 'As Old Joe is so special to us all, we carry out weekly inspections and routine maintenance tasks.

'This is to ensure that not only do we identify and rectify faults in an efficient way, but we also manage the other services within the structure effectively and of course, we provide the best possible environment for our resident falcons.'

Many passionate Old Joe fans showed their support on social media while they waited for it to be repaired. A member of Team UoB (see page 27) even ran the Great Birmingham 10K with **#Bringbackthebongs** written on their t-shirt.

Campus r♥mances



“LIFE WOULD BE PERFECT IF EVERY MOMENT WAS JUST LIKE WHEN WE FIRST MET.” *Ms Miao Jin*



Hao Qin (MSc International Accounting and Finance, 2015) and Miao Jin (MSc Investments, 2015)

‘Our first meeting was in the Business School in September 2013, when we were both new to the University and to the UK. Life was difficult for us both at the beginning since everything around us was so unfamiliar. Although Hao was very shy to express his feelings, he was really thoughtful and looked after me carefully in every way. We spent the first few months together studying,

going out, doing group work and enjoyed lots of spare time to walk around the lovely campus.

Company is the longest confession of love. We left Birmingham in September 2015 after two years of happy and romantic times. We will always miss the place where we fell in love. Now we are going to get married and we came back to this important place to recall our valuable memories and to witness and record our marriage.’ *Miao*

Serena Greco (MSc International Business, 2014) and Wisarut Rungsun (MSc Investments, 2014)

‘We met at the University of Birmingham in 2013 and then I followed him to his home country of Thailand, where we lived for two years. We just got married near my hometown in southern Italy and we are now on honeymoon in Austria. We both miss Birmingham so much and we still keep in touch with our friends, many of whom came from all over the world to attend our wedding. We are planning to move back to the UK together very soon.’ *Serena*

Graham Owen (BA (Combined Honours) History and German Studies, 1977) and Lesley Owen (LLB Law, 1979)

'In October 1976, I had just returned from my language year abroad in Vienna. In order to make settling back into student life as easy as possible, I signed up for what was then known as Lake Hall. At breakfast one Sunday morning I was sitting drinking coffee and wondering what to do with the day. At the table was a group of first-year women who had just moved into the student flats that were connected to the hall. Lesley was sat next to me and brought me into the conversation by asking whether I was a first year as well.

'That led to a long conversation that led to a romance that continued after I graduated and returned to service with the Royal Navy. Our romance survived a lot of separation and we were married in 1981. We have one daughter Katie and are still very happily married. We both look back with great fondness on our time in Birmingham, so many good memories!' *Graham*



“ WE BOTH LOOK BACK WITH GREAT FONDNESS ON OUR TIME IN BIRMINGHAM, SO MANY GOOD MEMORIES! ”



Geoff Giles (BSc Chemistry, 1963) and Linda Giles (BA English, 1964)

'In the old days, there were only two male residences. I was in Chancellor's Hall and the social event of the year was May Ball, strictly formal! I met

Linda at the first two of these events. In January of my third year, we met in a pub called The Viking near the Town Hall. Linda announced that she had broken off her engagement and thus started our romance.

'Five months later, at May Ball number three, we got engaged; three weeks later we were married at St Martin in the Bullring, in the afternoon of my morning Degree Congregation. I went on to do a fourth-year EdCert while Linda finished her BA, despite the arrival of a beautiful daughter Alison in February.

'After four years we moved to Terrace, BC, Canada, where I taught Chemistry and General Science and Linda taught English. Two more girls arrived.

'Then we moved south to Victoria and continued teaching. Linda eventually became Principal of a local High School (the first woman

High School principal in the District) and worked at the University of Victoria, and I was Vice-Principal at another school. We have five amazing grandchildren.

'We share interests, we travel, we laugh together a lot, and we are still very much in love!' *Geoff*



Do you have a tale of campus romance? Send it to alumnicommunications@contacts.bham.ac.uk and find more contributions online at oldjoe.co.uk



The books that *inspire us* to write



A book club with a difference, founded by a Birmingham graduate, is bringing together readers and writers from across the city – and this year they were chosen to shadow the Man Booker International Prize.

When Polly Wright (BA English Literature, 1974) graduated, she soon missed the in-depth critical thinking about novels that she had shared at University. Traditional book clubs helped scratch the itch, but she wanted to analyse books in greater depth and use them as models to develop her own writing. So she set up the Writers' Reading Group at the Birmingham MAC.

Learning the craft from other writers

'We look for books that offer ideas for our writing; changing the point of view, creating new dialogue for unseen scenes, flipping the genre, etc. For each book, we set out to create our own creative response, from a new chapter or a sequel, to poetry exploring a key theme.

'Our readers come from so many backgrounds across Birmingham, from a photographer to a consultant microbiologist. Around a third have a connection with the University, including alumni and lecturers, and we are proud to have so many representatives from across the city community.'

Polly suspects the group's unusual hybrid focus on creativity may have

been why they were selected to shadow the prestigious 2018 Man Booker International Prize.

Reviewing the Man Booker International Prize shortlist

'Dr Josie Brady, one of our members from the School of Education, spotted an invitation through the Reading Agency to review one of the six-strong shortlist. This new award recognises books written in languages other than English and the skill of the translator in bringing them to a wider audience.

'We read *Vernon Subutex 1* by Virginie Despentes, a controversial book that many French shops won't even stock. We were excited to read something so challenging, and thrilled to be chosen for a French book, as we have a former University of Birmingham French lecturer in our group who could guide us through the language.'

Translating novels across both languages and cultures

'With instant access to websites such as Google Translate, we hadn't considered the extent to which translation is an art, but we quickly

realised that *Vernon Subutex 1* was no easy task for translator Frank Wynne. The characters use Verlan, a real-world slang popular with young people in France, in which syllables or letters are reversed. How do you translate "meuf" when its origin is the syllable sounds of "femme" (meaning woman)?'

One of the joys of reviewing the book was the huge range of perspectives. 'As in my University days, it was wonderful to see so many people in passionate debate. Whether they loved it or hated it, every member of our group submitted their own review to the Man Booker International Prize Foundation.

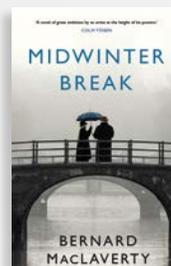
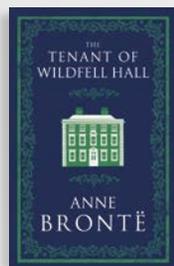
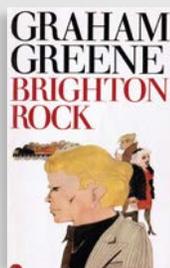
'We did wish our book had won, but we can't wait for the next parts of Despentes' trilogy to be translated – and some of us are already devouring the rest of the shortlist for creative inspiration!'

Do you still explore your degree subject with fellow alumni? Tell us your story at alumnicommunications@contacts.bham.ac.uk



MY FAVOURITE BOOKS...

Polly Wright (BA English Literature, 1974) selects five books that the Writers' Reading Group have found exciting, that showcase a creative response to existing literature and which she has used in her own teaching.



Brighton Rock by Graham Greene

This classic thriller was a book we discussed recently in our Writers' Reading Group. Many of us loved Richard Attenborough's portrayal of anti-hero Pinkie in the 1947 film, but a new staging we saw at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre (adapted by Bryony Lavery, former playwriting tutor at Birmingham) elicited a more mixed response from us about Lavery's version of Greene's 'pure' evil.

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall by Anne Brontë

Like *Vernon Subutex 1*, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* was shocking when it was first published. Anne's sister Charlotte tried to prevent it being published. We loved reading how mother and widow Helen Graham breaks every social convention needed to protect her young son. Extracts from her diaries share her secrets and her point of view, but we explored how the book might have been different if it had been written in a more traditional third-person narration.

Middlemarch by George Eliot

I returned to the University in the 2000s to teach communications skills to medical school students. It's so important that, in the midst of all their scientific learning, they get to think about how to empathise with patients. *Middlemarch* is the first novel to feature a doctor (Lydgate) as one of the main characters, and it is fascinating to reflect upon how the medical profession is seen by the general public – then and now!

Wide Sargasso Sea by Jean Rhys

This is one of the best models for the Writers' Reading Group approach, as it is a creative response to another novel. Without giving too much away for those who haven't read *Jane Eyre*, Jean Rhys reimagines Charlotte Brontë's mysterious woman in the attic. She creates an entirely plausible narrative of how she got there and turns a terrifying figure into a truly sympathetic one.

Midwinter Break by Brian MacLaverty

One of our latest books, this moving and often surprisingly funny story of a retired couple on a holiday will be recognisable to anyone who has ever got a little lost in a large hotel. On their own away from home, the fault lines in their relationship come to the surface, as he struggles with alcoholism and she is drawn to life in a Catholic women's retreat in Amsterdam and their memories of the troubles in Northern Ireland bubble up. Will they stay together for better, or worse?

Fancy reading Polly's selection of books? For a chance to win them all, answer this question:

WIN

Who translated *Vernon Subutex 1* by Virginie Despentes into English?

Email your answer with your name, address and telephone number to alumnicommunications@contacts.bham.ac.uk by 31 January 2019.



From the Drama department to Downton

From the age of 13, Gareth Neame OBE (BA Drama and English, 1988) knew he wanted to be a television drama producer.

Now he passionately describes his 30-year career working in television, coming up with the idea for, and executive producing, the international sensation *Downton Abbey*.

Gareth says: 'I chose to study at Birmingham because I knew it would be the perfect course for my eventual career. There is such a literary element to my job in editing scripts and selecting material, and brainstorming with writers. I forget the number of times that I have encountered a text or wrestled with a point of drama and realised that I studied that at University.'

Within months of graduating, Gareth was working in TV drama at the BBC in Birmingham at the Pebble Mill studio, also in Edgbaston.

He then worked his way up from the floor into development and producing, becoming the BBC's

Head of Independent Drama in 2000, producing groundbreaking shows at the time such as *Spooks*, *Hustle*, *State of Play* and *New Tricks*. He has run his own company since 2004.

'I am responsible for a production from the inception until the final stages of post-production and marketing. Editing is one of my favourite parts of the process, where you see the final product coming together.'

Discovering *Downton*

'I loved producing every hour of *Downton Abbey* and although the TV series ended in 2015, there is not a working day in the last decade where I haven't had something to do with the show.

'It may surprise people to know that it is the producers who often pitch ideas to the writers. The idea for *Downton* had probably been

percolating within me for some years, but one day I came across an old episode of *Upstairs, Downstairs*. I was well aware what a perennial favourite this genre had been, but I thought if at the age of 40 I was too young to have remembered the show, there must be an entire generation of people who had never seen it. But I knew the subject matter (in the right hands) could be extremely popular.

'I was a big fan of Julian Fellowes' writing from novels and film, but he had actually never created a television show before. I said to him: "Why don't we take the territory you revealed to the world in *Gosford Park* but instead create a new episodic television show?" A few weeks later I had an email from Julian describing most of the eventual characters in the show. I am certain I unlocked something in him that had been there for years.'



It's all in the *family*

'My great-grandmother Ivy Close was an Edwardian film star. Julian wrote a scene where one of the servants called Ivy was taken to the pictures to see one of her films. The character comments: "How funny to think I have the same name as a film star!" That was a little family in-joke for me.'

The show was viewed by millions of people and shown in every territory on the planet, becoming Britain's most successful scripted television export and the most-nominated non-US show in Emmy history.

Adds Gareth: 'You do this job to entertain people and when you find out you are delighting millions of people across the globe, and that all of those different people, with their different languages and cultures, can still relate to it... that is incredible.'

Gareth thinks the show's success is down to a combination of the elements of romance, family and comedy.

'Also, it is quintessentially British – and that really travels – there is a real appetite for our stories and settings. As a British producer I am constantly thinking what can I do that is unique to us. These are very modern stories told in contemporary ways but they happen

to be set 90 years ago. Of course it is all dependent on the wonderfully written scripts and how exquisitely the characters are played.'

What's next? Gareth's current shows are *The Last Kingdom* (Netflix), *Jamestown* (Sky) and *Lucky Man* (Sky) and the highly anticipated *Downton Abbey* film is due out next year. He also wouldn't rule out returning to study at some stage.

He says: 'Over the last couple of years I started to turn my attention back to study. I'm not sure if I will get the time or opportunity but it is something that interests me.'

.....
**Find out Gareth's favourite
Downton character and how the
filming location was chosen at
www.oldjoe.co.uk**
.....

WIN

To win a Season 1, Episode 1 script cover signed by Gareth and the cast, just answer this question:

Name one of the television shows Gareth is currently working on.

Please email your answer to alunicommunications@contacts.bham.ac.uk by 31 January 2019.



Visions of the future

New contact lens gets the green light

Researchers at the University have developed a contact lens that may help people with colour blindness simply by using a low-cost dye.

While there are current products on the market such as colour filtering glasses to combat the disorder, they are expensive, bulky and incompatible with other glasses.

But a research team from the Department of Mechanical Engineering and the Healthcare Technologies

Institute, led by Dr Haider Butt, used an inexpensive soft contact lens dyed with a non-toxic rhodamine derivative that enhanced the colour perception of people affected by red-green colour vision deficiency.

The team are also set to begin human clinical trials on a similar

process to correct purple-blue colour blindness, and bringing together a number of dyes to make lenses perform for both red-green and purple-blue colour blindness simultaneously.

Eyes on the prize

Eye drops could replace eye injections in new treatment for sight loss.

A revolutionary new treatment for the leading cause of blindness in the developed world could start clinical trials in early 2019, following laboratory research at Birmingham.

Scientists led by biochemist Dr Felicity de Cogan from the Institute of Microbiology and Infection have invented a method of treating age-related macular degeneration (AMD) with a drug administered as eye drops.

About 200 million people worldwide will have AMD by 2020. The condition is currently treated with injections

directly into the eye, which must be administered by medical professionals.

Results from laboratory tests so far show that the eye drops could have a similar therapeutic effect as the injected drug.

Dr de Cogan says: 'For several years, our team has focused on the challenge of delivering drugs to the back of the eye.

'From the outset, we realised that delivering drugs through eye drops would mean that patients can administer their treatment themselves, and this would be less costly, save time for

patients and healthcare providers, and reduce the potential complications that can arise from injections.'

The scientists' pending patents for the eye drops are now with the US-based Macregen Inc, and a team of Birmingham researchers is working with the company to develop a novel range of therapies for AMD and other eye diseases.

The combined team is now accelerating proof of concept studies to confirm the validity of the therapeutic approach, with clinical trials to follow once these are completed.

REUNITING SEVEN DECADES OF GRADUATES



230 alumni and guests returned to campus in September for the 2018 Reunion. Graduates spanned seven decades, from the Class of 1953 to the Class of 2015, and travelled from nine countries, including Australia, Canada, Kenya and the United States.

Alumni reconnected with old friends and met new ones over a lunch hosted by Vice-Chancellor Professor Sir David Eastwood in the Great Hall, visited their old schools, joined a range of lectures and explored the many cultural gems on campus.

Our ground-breaking researchers spoke to alumni about their work on cancer treatment and the impact of climate and environmental changes. Professor Rob MacKenzie, Director of the Birmingham Institute of Forest Research (BIFoR) shared how research in a Staffordshire woodland is testing whether trees will mop up increasing CO₂ from the air we breathe. Preliminary results from this 'Sci-fi Forest' already indicate that increased carbon is being drawn down into the forest.

Friends meeting up at reunion included Vanessa Ward née Goodfellow (BA English Language and Literature, 1984) and Claire Gould (American Studies, 1984), who both lived at Manor House hall of residence, former home of the Cadbury family. Vanessa says: 'I now work at Durham Cathedral, which has in its collections one of the earliest copies of Spencer's *Faerie Queen*, so it was wonderful to return to the campus where I first read it as an undergraduate. It is amazing to see the development that has taken place on campus in the last 34 years. The new library is fantastic. I had the time of my life at Birmingham.'

Claire says: 'I have fond memories of the Arts Faculty, and particularly the Mason Lounge where we met friends and whiled away many a happy hour between lectures, and which has certainly changed beyond

all recognition! It was funny to see the same lecture rooms and even the stairs I walked up and down when I was 18 all these years later. I also remember the queues for the telephone in Manor House on a Sunday night, clutching our stack of ten pence pieces as we waited to make our weekly call home. Vanessa and I returned with Trudy Feltham (BSc Psychology and Sports Science, 1984) to Selly Oak the night before the reunion to eat at the Dilshad curry house – thankfully still in existence all these years later!'



● Image: Vanessa Ward née Goodfellow
(BA English Language and Literature, 1984)





● Image: Medical graduates revisiting their school



● Image: Geology and Geography graduates in the Lapworth Museum of Geology



● Image: Civil Engineering Graduates



Have you been to a Reunion yet?
More than half those joining the 2018 Reunion were visiting campus for the first time since graduating. Find out more about the 2019 Reunion on the back cover.



GIVE. VOLUNTEER. CHANGE 10,000 LIVES.

THE GIRL WHO GOT THE GRADES



Old Joe catches up with Niamh from our last issue, who was studying incredibly hard in sixth form while taking care of family members at the same time. The support of graduates like you has made her dreams of becoming a University of Birmingham student come true . . .

Niamh's desire to help others

Awaiting her A-Level results was incredibly nerve-wracking for young carer Niamh Wilson, who has been striving to earn a place at Birmingham since attending a summer school for sixth form pupils.

With support and inspiration from the University's outreach team, she turned her passion for helping others into the dedicated study needed to earn a place at Birmingham.

Her brother's autism had already sparked her interest in healthcare, but when her mum had a stroke, Niamh committed to studying Psychology. She does a lot for her mum, and hopes to build a career helping other people who have experienced strokes and psychological conditions. Yet it can be tough to balance her immediate caring responsibilities with planning for her future.

A taste of University learning

Niamh had a week-long taste of real lectures at the summer school on campus. She went on to join the Access to Birmingham (A2B) scheme, which helped her apply to Birmingham and prepare for life here.

'My excitement about starting first year is growing each day. I can't wait to be surrounded by like-minded people and inspiring lecturers, and it's all possible because of the amazing A2B scheme! I'm really looking forward to beginning this new chapter and am so grateful to everyone who enabled me to achieve it,' she says.

Thanks to gifts from graduates, Niamh has been given an A2B bursary to help her meet living costs during her studies, meaning she can continue to help her family while she learns. Watch Niamh's summer school vlog, and her excitement at getting her A-Level results, at www.oldjoe.co.uk.

Help another student like Niamh

Alumni like you have already changed 2,490 lives through the 10,000 Lives appeal. If you would like to offer students like Niamh genuinely life-changing educational experiences, find out more at www.birmingham.ac.uk/10000lives or get in touch with Sarah Harrison at S.Harrison.4@bham.ac.uk to discuss making a gift to the area that means the most to you.

HOW STUDENT SUPPORT HELPS YOUNG PEOPLE ACCESS EDUCATION

Young Adult Carer Bursaries:

Meeting the cost of studying at University can be particularly challenging for Young Adult Carers (16–24yrs) who often have travel, healthcare or other costs on top of regular university expenses. The bursary of £2,000 a year helps alleviate some of this pressure, giving students the support they need to focus on their studies.

Access to Birmingham:

The A2B scheme supports the most able learners in local schools where few pupils go on to university, helping them apply to Birmingham. Scholarships of £1,500 each year, and bursaries of £1,000 in a student's first year, make university possible for those who otherwise may not progress into higher education.

TEAM UOB STEPS FORWARD FOR THE 10,000 LIVES APPEAL



More than 400 members of Team UoB – alumni, staff and students – took part in the Great Birmingham 10K on Saturday 6 May.

Whether they ran, jogged or walked their way to the finish line or helped cheer on the team, they helped raise awareness and funds for the 10,000 Lives appeal, which supports scholarships and bursaries designed to make possible genuinely life-changing opportunities in education.

Olivia Kew-Fickus, Director of Strategic Planning at the University of Birmingham, was part of the business challenge team that won the overall large business challenge for the second year. Running with alumnus and Director of Development and Alumni Relations Simon Lerwill (BSc Geography and Planning, 2002), together they raised more than £500 for the appeal.

Olivia says: 'It was great running as part of Team UoB. Seeing all the blue t-shirts with gold lions as I headed into town and stood in the starting line-up gave me a real rush.

'I chose to fundraise because I have worked at the University for 15 very happy years, and it was an opportunity to give something back. For me, 10,000 Lives is about the students who have their prospects transformed by the University of Birmingham.'



Team UoB was the largest University team in the only 'university wave' at any Great Run event in the country. All together, more than £3,000 was raised to help fund life-changing opportunities for 10,000 young people in Birmingham.

Thank you to everyone who took part! If you'd like to find out more information about joining #TeamUoB next year, or if you are interested in fundraising for one of our projects at a different challenge event, contact Joseph McDowell on j.m.mcdowell@bham.ac.uk.

● Images: (Left) Team UoB staff runners Olivia Kew-Fickus and Simon Lerwill (BSc Geography and Planning, 2002). (Below) Ioana Chiva (LLB Law, 2016), Team UoB runner.



THE MAGIC OF MENTORING

Giving your time as a mentor or hosting an internship is one of the most rewarding ways to support students. Since 2011, more than 1,770 volunteer mentors have helped Birmingham students discover all the possibilities open to them, overcome challenges through shared insights, and develop their career ideas.

BELOW, OLD JOE MEETS SOME ALUMNI VOLUNTEERS AND THEIR PROTÉGÉS.



YANA AND VALERIE

Yana Petrikov (BSc Psychology, 2018) was mentored by Valerie Hughes-D'Aeth (BSc Industrial Economics and Business Studies, 1981), Director of Human Resources at the BBC.



Yana says: 'Being mentored has changed my life. It's been an amazing experience; Valerie has been so supportive and understanding.'

'Through shadowing Valerie, I found out that HR might not be the best career path for me. That was equally as helpful as finding out that it was what I wanted to do. It allowed me to realise that I wouldn't be suited to HR in a business environment, so I'm pursuing a career in the NHS as a dietician instead.'

Valerie says: 'Yana was a delight to work with, full of enthusiasm and very talented. We all have busy lives and many of us don't take enough time to stand back and reflect on career decisions that we need to make. Mentoring gives time and space and a safe supportive environment in which to talk through different options.'

'I think that most of us can look back on our lives and name people who have had a real influence on career decisions we have made. They are the

people who have taken the time to encourage us but also challenge our thinking. Being one of those people by mentoring through the University is a great privilege. It also has the added benefit of keeping you in touch with the next generation as they move into the workplace.'

MATT AND LUCY

Lucy Baldwin (BSc Economics, 2004), Managing Director at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, helped Matt Beswick (BSc Economics, 2018) begin his career in finance.



Matt says: 'Having a mentor who has had wide experience in such great roles in the sector you want to go into is unbelievably useful. I was lucky because Lucy's career path is the exact one I want to take.'

'I'm very grateful to her for all the time she gave to me, the times she reassured me when I was uncertain, met me before I went to interviews, and checked my applications. She was constantly on hand whenever I needed advice.'

Lucy says: 'I was in exactly the same position as Matt; super keen but lacking the networks and the knowledge to make informed choices when I left university. I know how it feels and how much I'd have valued having someone to give me some context and perspective.'

'For me as a mentor it's been a good way to feel like I'm giving something back to the University that set me up so well for my career, and it's a great way to grow as a business leader

myself. We all know mentoring forces you to think about the bigger picture, put things into context and make sure you know how to explain things in a straightforward way.'

SAM AND MELISSA

Melissa Tindall (BSc Biological Sciences, 2018) is receiving career advice for her specific subject from Sam Decombel (BSc Biological Sciences, 2002; PhD Biosciences, 2006). Read more about them on page 37.



Melissa says: 'One of the main things I've learnt from Sam is to just go for opportunities, even if they may be daunting. I also think she's shown me how life experiences, both good and bad, help you to form your career. I've learnt that failing occasionally should not be seen as a setback but as something to learn from.'

Sam says: 'On the Alumni Leadership Mentoring Programme (ALMP), I initially felt 'ordinary' next to some of the other mentors, but soon realised that you don't have to know everything about everything. I'm matched with students who studied the same subject as me, and they want to hear your real-life experiences.'

COULD YOU BECOME A MENTOR?

If you are interested in mentoring a student, please email alumni-volunteers@contacts.bham.ac.uk with a brief summary of your career area. You can also share your expertise through joining our LinkedIn group.

Sweet victory in research vote



Thank you to everyone who voted for their favourite research project in the spring edition of *Old Joe*. Here's a chance to learn more about the pioneering work carried out by your winner and runners-up.

More than 10,000 votes were cast in the Philanthropic Research Project final 2018. Your winning project was Dr Sophie Cox's research, engineering new medical systems to fight antimicrobial resistance. The University will fundraise for the work of Sophie and her team over the next year, so look out for updates from them.

Sophie says: 'Thank you so much to everyone who voted. All three projects were a wonderful example of the impact our University strives for. Antimicrobial resistance is predicted to kill more people than cancer by 2050, so we're really excited to push this important research forward to save lives.'

SurgihoneyRO, a bio-engineered honey, produces natural antibiotics called reactive oxygen species, which destroy bacteria and are also produced naturally by our bodies to fight infection. Doctors are currently using the reactive oxygen in SurgihoneyRO to treat wounds but it is sticky and difficult to apply the correct dose.

Sophie's team, in collaboration with industrial partner Matoke, are working on developing a much enhanced pharmaceutical product and creative ways to deliver it, including: a spray, a cream and a powder that becomes a gel when applied to a wound, creating a protective barrier. These systems enable reactive oxygen to be used

more widely across the body and can control how the drug is released for accurate dosage.

Donations from alumni and supporters could help buy essential lab equipment being used to test and develop the products, and additional researchers to bring these promising systems to clinical trial within the next five years.

Sophie says: 'So far we've not seen any development of resistance to the product, which is very exciting.'

'We're engineering systems that will not only deliver antimicrobial drugs, but could also be used for a range of medicines. With your support we can take the technologies we've developed one step further to help save lives.'

From bees to bedside: How your winning research project could help patients...



Sam has an infected wound.
Traditional antibiotics
aren't working



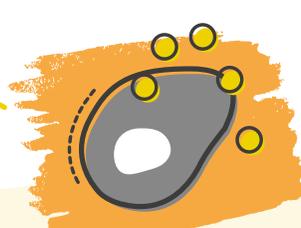
Honey contains natural antibiotics
called reactive oxygen species



But SurgihoneyRO, like the
honey in your cupboard, is
sticky and difficult to apply



Sam makes a full recovery



These natural antibiotics
destroy the bacteria causing
Sam's infection



The products developed at the
University make the right dose of
reactive oxygen species easy to apply

Cancer research: a new era

Growing mini versions of cancerous tumours to test treatments personal to patients may sound like science fiction, but it's happening here at Birmingham.

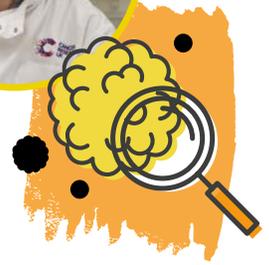
Led by Dr Andrew Beggs, the project came in second place in the research vote. Known as avatars, the tumours can be used to develop new and better treatments for several different types of cancer and provide options for patients whose cancer has spread throughout their bodies.

'Instead of giving treatment that may

not work we'll be able to target the right treatment for the specific type of cancer. An era of true personalised medicine,' Andrew says.

'Thank you so much to everyone who voted. It's been great taking part and has helped to raise the profile of our lab and our work enormously.'

Watch out for Andrew's research featuring in the BBC2 series *Surgeons: At the Edge of Life* next year.



Helping children in Malawi

In Malawi, children with disabilities are often isolated and stigmatised. How can this change?

Dr Paul Lynch is running a high-quality training programme for volunteer nursery teachers and parents of children aged three to six focused on play-based learning.

Through training, advice and support, Paul hopes children with disabilities will be more included

in their local schools and better supported by their families. His eventual aim is for the work to improve national policy in Malawi.

'Thank you so much to everyone who voted. Being involved in the vote has helped promote my work and has given me a real momentum to find a way to do this research,' he says.



Thank you so much to everyone who voted. Being involved in the vote has helped promote my work and **has given me a real momentum to find a way to do this research** *Dr Paul Lynch*



Support our research

University staff members are giving money to Sophie's research in this year's BUAF TA raffle. If you would like to support innovative research by Sophie, Andrew or Paul, we would love to hear from you.

To find out how you can get involved, please contact Emily Henderson on 0121 414 6879 or e.g.henderson@bham.ac.uk.

THEY'RE COMING HOME



Four Birmingham alumni, who all graduated together with the same degree, are now working at St George's Park, Burton upon Trent. They explained to *Old Joe* what it's like to be based at the home of English football and how they use what they learned at University.

ADAM BURTON (BSC SPORT AND EXERCISE SCIENCES, 2013)**Role: Lead Physical Performance Coach, GameChanger Performance**

Road to Burton: Adam came to work at Burton after spells with various football clubs, including working at Leicester City FC – the club he supports – when they won the Premier League in 2015–16.

'My job involves both sports science and strength and conditioning. I'm trying to improve the conditioning of players, whether that be fitness on the pitch or on bikes, etc. I also do gym-based resistance training to improve their strength, and we can do some profiling of players to see what their physical characteristics are like.

'I could see professional footballers all the way from Conference to Premier League level who come here to do their rehabilitation. Being injured is a challenging time mentally as well as physically, and a change of environment can help them work to get fit again.

'If you want to work in football, then St George's Park must be the pinnacle. The atmosphere was very positive ahead of the World Cup. Players were excited and looking forward to the tournament and that showed in how they performed.'

EMILY CAIN (BSC SPORT AND EXERCISE SCIENCES, 2013)**Role: Physical Performance Coach, England Women Under-19s and PhD researcher, the Football Association**

Road to Burton: Emily worked as an intern at Sheffield United FC before combining an internship with British Swimming with her studies for a postgraduate degree at Loughborough University. A role as strength and conditioning coach with the Hong Kong Women's Lacrosse team followed before taking up her current position with the FA in 2017.

'While we all recognised each other from our lectures at University, I got to know Francis and Adam better in the third year as we were all doing internships within Applied Sport – me with Bourneville Rugby Club, Francis with Birmingham City Ladies FC and Adam with Birmingham City FC. We were doing the same kind of work and wanted the same kind of thing from our careers.

'When I started at St George's Park, I remember bumping into Vicky. We both said: "What are you doing here?" I just said: "I work here!" with my England kit on.

'My career has always been about working with the best people possible and putting myself in the best opportunity to develop. I'm happy working in any sport.'

VICKY SMITH (BSC SPORT AND EXERCISE SCIENCES, 2013; MRES SPORT AND EXERCISE SCIENCES, 2015)**Role: Sports Physiologist, Professional Game Match Officials Limited (PGMOL)**

Road to Burton: Vicky's Masters at the University provided her with an opportunity to work at Burton through an internship with Perform, the predecessor to GameChanger Performance, where Adam now works. After a year at West Bromwich Albion FC, she returned to St George's Park to work for PGMOL.

'Francis and I were in the same undergraduate study group at University and we both started with placements at Aston Villa together. We both ended up working at West Brom, before I moved to the PGMOL.

'We're very good friends but we also work extremely well together. Having that trust in football is huge: you respect each other, and when we do differ we'll discuss the issue, come to the right conclusion and have a united front to our officials.

'My first spell at St George's Park gave me my career highlight: as an intern with Perform, I worked with the 2014 World Cup squad ahead of their flight out to Brazil.'

FRANCIS BUNCE (BSC SPORT AND EXERCISE SCIENCES, 2013)**Role: Sports Physiologist, Professional Game Match Officials Limited (PGMOL)**

Road to Burton: Francis got his first experience of working in football during a second-year internship with Birmingham City Ladies FC. Following graduation, he worked at West Bromwich Albion FC before starting his current role alongside Vicky training English football's professional referees.

'Working at St George's Park is brilliant. We get to bring the match officials here to train in a world-class working environment alongside other teams, and being based here means we feel part of the wider footballing family.

'Our job is to ensure that the referees who work in English football are at their peak physical condition to cope with the demands of the game, and therefore help them make the best decisions possible during a match.

'Studying at Birmingham meant I got an excellent academic underpinning to everything I do now in my career. Studying alongside other really talented sport scientists, who had a real drive to work in the field, was a real motivation, and I also learned the importance of networking: getting out there to meet people and see how the work is actually done.'

Are you working with friends and colleagues you studied with at Birmingham? Have you set up a business together? Let us know at alumnicommunications@contacts.bham.ac.uk

Ground control to major Brum



Astronomers at Birmingham are playing a leading role in a new NASA mission, which is set to study our closest stars and find planets around them: an important step forward to ultimately finding life beyond our solar system, according to Professor Bill Chaplin.

Few people get the opportunity to see a NASA space mission launch in the flesh and fewer still will be invited to see two.

So when Professor Bill Chaplin (BSc Physics, 1990; PhD Physics, 1994; PGCert Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, 2001) received an invitation to go to Florida's Cape Canaveral earlier this year for the launch of the Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS), he leapt at the chance.

Our Professor of Astrophysics had previously been unable to attend the launch of the NASA Kepler Mission in 2009 and as he puts it: 'I didn't want to miss out this time!

'To be able to see a launch first-hand was great. The most striking thing was how bright the rocket was – you don't fully appreciate the light and noise produced until you see it in person.

'The conditions were perfect as well, as the launch was just before twilight against a clear blue sky, so we could follow it high into the atmosphere. We were a few miles away from the rocket, which is probably further back than observers were in the 1960s and 1970s!'

Our survey says

TESS will survey the brightest stars in the sky and search for planets that might be orbiting those stars. Bill is leading the international work in the asteroseismology programme of the mission.

He explains: 'Asteroseismology is the study of stars by observing their resonant oscillations, caused by sound trapped inside the stars. Analysing this "stellar music" means scientists can determine the properties of individual stars in exquisite detail: size, mass and age, to a level of precision and accuracy that cannot usually be reached in astrophysical observations.

'Measuring the oscillations means we can also probe the structure and dynamics of the stars' interiors; you might say it is the equivalent of a CT scan on a star, not possible by other means.'

By measuring the brightness of millions of stars, TESS will also discover previously undetected exoplanets, by measuring the tiny dimming of light from the star when orbiting planets pass in front of it.

'TESS will provide a census of exoplanet systems in our local solar neighbourhood,' says Bill. 'Compared to the Kepler space telescope, it will look at stars across almost the entire sky, and is focused on the brightest stars, while Kepler observed those too faint to be visible to the naked eye.'

To boldly go

Identifying new planets orbiting the closest stars to the solar system offers the tantalising prospect that a few of them may lie in the stars' habitable zones.



● Image: Professor Bill Chaplin at Cape Canaveral

The first set of TESS data should be available at the start of 2019, with the initial mission set to last two years. Any promising star systems will be high-priority targets for the upcoming James Webb Space Telescope, which will be launched in 2020 and have the capability of characterising the atmospheres of those planets.

Bill says: 'While the TESS mission is expected to run for two years, initial readings from the satellite's commissioning phase suggested that its fuel could last for 20 years or more, so as long as it is providing exciting science we would expect the mission to be extended.'

The project is undoubtedly one of the highlights of the proud alumnus, who has spent most of his career at Birmingham since arriving for his undergraduate degree in 1987.

His expertise in asteroseismology meant that his team at the University led the selection of the Sun-like stars to be observed and he adds: 'We got involved with the project much earlier than Kepler, so it meant we've had a role in shaping the mission.

'It felt like a big responsibility and setting up the structure of the project has been exciting. I can't wait for the first results and to find out more about the stars we can all see in the sky at night.'

My biggest ~~MISTAKE~~



Everyone makes mistakes, and they can teach us just as much as our successes.

What is your biggest mistake and what did you learn from it? Katie Keates (BA Law with French, 2011) is one of many alumni who have shared their mistakes with groups of recent graduates, revealing what they have learned from it and how it shaped their career for the better.

Katie explained why she thought she did the 'wrong' degree, and how she made the leap from law to recruitment.

No such thing as the 'wrong' degree
'Through my work as a team leader at a recruitment agency, Katie Bard, I often meet recent graduates who might be worried if they want to do something different to what they studied.'

After Katie graduated, she went into law and worked as a Barrister's Clerk for Number 5 Barristers Chambers. It was in that role that she discovered what she truly wanted in a job, helping her decide to pursue a different career path.

Skills that transfer to many roles

'I spent a lot of time thinking I had to do law; my advice would be to just be open to all opportunities that are available to you and remember there is no 'wrong' degree. A graduate may believe that they have locked themselves into a particular

“ I THINK IT IS SO USEFUL FOR RECENT GRADUATES TO HEAR SOMEONE SAY IT'S OKAY TO MAKE A MISTAKE ”

career path, but my work with employers proves that it is often the transferable skills that companies prize most highly.

'I think it is so useful for recent graduates to hear someone say it's okay to make a mistake. I can stand up and say "I'm proof that a few mistakes can actually be the making of you!"'



'My biggest mistake' is part of a series of events designed for recent graduates, where alumni sum up their experiences in just four minutes, then offer advice. If you would like to attend, to share your advice, or have any ideas for future events, please get in touch by emailing alumnicommunications@bham.ac.uk.

Alumna OF THE YEAR

From *mentee* to *mentor*



Sharing your experience and expertise can make a big difference to students and recent graduates. **Sam Decombel**, 2018's Alumna of the Year, explains why she became a mentor.

● **Image:** Mentee Melissa Tindall (BSc Biological Sciences, 2018) at her Summer 2018 graduation with mentor Sam Decombel (BSc Biological Sciences, 2002; PhD Biosciences, 2006).

Bringing Biosciences to life

'My love is genetics, so I chose one of the best courses in the country. Birmingham supported me at every stage of my journey, from undergraduate to PhD and beyond. I spent an extra year as a Medici Fellow at Birmingham to learn how to get cutting-edge science into the hands of those who could benefit from it.'

Me and my mentor

'Shortly after I graduated, my father died from oesophageal cancer, and I realised that life is too short not to pursue your dreams wholeheartedly. I wanted to start my own science business, but I needed some serious advice...

Supported by the University, mentoring gave me the skills to make it happen, great guidance without dictating what I should do, and the confidence to throw everything I had into my business. The lessons my mentor taught me, I still use today.'

Continuing the chain of support

'I leapt at the chance to become a mentor myself. Mentoring is often about learning from the mistakes of others! You can often help people

avoid making the same ones you did.

I believe mentees also need to learn to recognise when one idea isn't working, so they can move onto the next. My first business offered personalised DNA portraits, but customers didn't know what to do with that knowledge. My second business now focuses on fitness, identifying genes for endurance, fat burning etc, then creating a tailored workout plan.'

What mentoring involves

'There is no set way or schedule for it. Some students want regular meetings to explore ideas, others just get in touch when they have a specific question. It only takes about an hour a month. The personal reward of giving something back is incredibly uplifting.'

Becoming Alumna of the Year

'It was a tremendous honour to be chosen for Alumna of the Year 2018, and it meant so much to receive it at the same ceremony where my current mentee Melissa graduated. I used my acceptance speech to share the three most important lessons I've learned; learn from your mistakes, stand up for what you believe in, and cherish and nurture your support networks.'

Beyond mentoring

'If mentoring isn't for you, there are lots of other ways to share your expertise. I've advised on student projects, provided internships that offered amazing support for my company, and much more. It's a genuine pleasure to sit down with such bright students and hear their thoughts – I've got a lot of hope for the next generation.'

Share your experiences

Do you know a Birmingham graduate who has made a difference to others or made a significant achievement? To nominate your fellow alumni for 2019, visit www.birmingham.ac.uk/alumnioftheyear

WIN A GENETICALLY
TAILORED WORKOUT AND
NUTRITION PLAN

WIN

To win one of the fitness plans developed by Sam, just answer this question:

What award did Sam receive from the University of Birmingham in 2018?

Send your answer with your name, address and telephone number to alumnicommunications@contacts.bham.ac.uk by 31 January 2019.



Protecting and sharing a world of heritage

How can we enjoy and examine our heritage while meeting the needs of modern communities?

For more than 30 years, the Ironbridge International Institute for Cultural Heritage (IIICH) has been teaching the postgraduate experts who protect, uncover and showcase so much of our heritage around the globe. Birmingham graduates are the guardians of everything from historic buildings and landscapes to intangible memories, stories and rituals.

Building on one of the first Heritage Management postgraduate courses in the UK, its innovative World Heritage Studies, and a unique relationship with the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site, the Institute is now trans-Atlantic, through a new Masters programme offered with the University of Illinois.

Natasha Downie and Cody Groat are just two of the 600 graduates working around the globe in a huge range of heritage roles, from museums to tourist organisations.

Tower of London: Natasha Downie (MA Heritage Management, 2008)

I've always loved visiting historic sites. They provide unique opportunities to learn history in a way that you can't get from being in a classroom. I also appreciate the space they provide to connect and reflect on life outside our normal routines.

I work with six royal palaces across London and Northern Ireland to bring their histories and stories to life for all our visitors. It's a privilege to help ensure their future.

A key challenge for the Tower of London is preserving the setting around the World Heritage Site. Built to literally tower over the city, the site

is becoming in danger of losing part of its significance amongst modern skyscrapers. My role involves working with local organisations to mitigate the impact of new buildings, so the tower retains its majesty, using the skills I learned at Ironbridge.

Studying at a World Heritage Site taught me that preserving and sharing our heritage doesn't have to be in conflict. The three million visitors each year to the Tower help to fund our conservation projects. Our vision is to also share this history with those who can't travel to us through touring events, TV, social media and podcasts. We're continually looking for new ways to enable greater access and create modern and relevant experiences.



Collator of oral histories: Cody Groat (MA World Heritage Studies, 2017)

It all began with a man named John Turmel. I discovered that I lived only a few minutes away from the man who lost the most elections ever – over a hundred. I knew I had to meet him and record his story.

Since then I have interviewed some of Canada's most influential and inspiring individuals. My book *Canadian Stories* includes Dan Aykroyd, two former Prime Ministers, the world's oldest drag queen, and

a (reformed) drug lord.

Studying at the Ironbridge Institute, much like writing *Canadian Stories*, taught me that heritage can be more than a built structure.

It can also relate to the stories, practices and beliefs of individuals or groups. These lessons have carried through to my current work as a PhD Candidate at Wilfrid Laurier University, researching national historic sites relating to Indigenous themes. This work, and my lessons



at Ironbridge, demonstrate that an officially commemorated history is hardly ever the entire story.

WIN



Win passes to the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

Ten museums and 36 listed buildings/Scheduled Monuments make up the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust (IGMT), one of the largest independent museums in the world. Visitors can take in everything from the pioneering iron bridge itself to a fully working Victorian town, packed with authentic shops, cottages and workshops.

To win a family annual passport to the birthplace of the industrial revolution, just answer this question: **How many heritage students have graduated from the Ironbridge International Institute for Cultural Heritage?**

Email your answer to alumnicommunications@contacts.bham.ac.uk by 31 January 2019.

THE SCHOLARLY DETECTIVE

Investigating murders as a detective with the Singapore Police Force isn't the usual career path for a Business Management graduate, but Agnes Leong is determined to fight crime.

Like the detectives in the crime novels she loves to read, Agnes Leong (BSc Business Management, 2011) is used to seeing the hidden side of humanity. In an extremely challenging job, her main focus is homicide.

'We're often put in a life and death situation that is time critical. Every single decision-making process is challenging and will impact on a person's life,' she says.

'Each case I deal with is unique, which gives me the drive to find out what happened. I always believe that the living can lie, but the deceased cannot. So what you see is what you get. When I face a murder victim, for example, I try to understand the deceased and establish a connection that will enable me to discover the truth.'

Agnes was in the first group of students taught through Birmingham Business School's partnership with the Singapore Institute of Management. She uses the skills she learned from Birmingham academics to this day, but has never visited the campus in Edgbaston.

'My impression of it is that it's a place of history and boundless knowledge. I would be in awe and revel in the beauty of it if I get the chance to visit it someday,' she says.

Agnes always wanted a job that would help people. She chose to

become a police officer rather than a social worker because she wanted to prevent crime, rather than wait for its consequences.

Agnes's career ambition is to influence policy-making and implement the solutions in battling crime to help all Singaporeans. She's about to

‘WE’RE OFTEN PUT IN A LIFE AND DEATH SITUATION THAT IS TIME CRITICAL. EVERY SINGLE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS IS CHALLENGING AND WILL IMPACT ON A PERSON’S LIFE’

take a year out from work to study for a Schwarzman Scholarship, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn more about becoming a global leader.

She had only two weeks' notice to apply for a place on the highly competitive programme, and believes that her motivation and taking on feedback from others got her through the rigorous selection process.

The programme gives the world's best and brightest students the chance to develop their leadership skills and

professional networks through a one-year Masters degree at Tsinghua University in Beijing. Launched in 2016, it was created to respond to the geopolitical landscape of the 21st century and develop future leaders with an understanding of China's role in global trends.

'Leaders appear in all walks of life,' Agnes says. 'The programme offers boundless opportunities to work with China and immerse myself into a universe of like-minded individuals who are attuned to making the world a secure and peaceful one to live in.'

As someone with an unconventional working week who is about to return to study, what does Agnes do to relax? She goes back to her detective novels. And her recommendations to *Old Joe* readers are *Malice* or *The Devotion of Suspect X* by Higashino Keigo.

'I often find myself flipping to the earlier pages to reaffirm a fact that was revealed at the end,' she says.

Learn more about studying with Birmingham Business School in Singapore at www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/business/courses/study-in-singapore.aspx. For further information on Schwarzman Scholarships, visit www.schwarzmanscholars.org





SHARE YOUR THESIS ONLINE



PRESERVE YOUR WORK TO BE READ BY TODAY'S STUDENTS AND FUTURE GENERATIONS.

Do you remember the huge amount of work you put into your Masters or Doctoral thesis? Whether you took your research further or not, your work could help today's students narrow down their research question, find a niche that few others have explored and add something new to the debate.

Until recently, if students wanted to see what researchers before them had written a thesis on, they needed hundreds of hours to look through fragile original copies by hand.

Today's digital copies can be

searched in seconds, even including typewritten text.

Thomas Jenkins, Digital Assets Assistant Team Leader in the Library, says: 'We are starting with our oldest theses as these are often the most delicate.

'But we are sure there are many hidden gems we haven't got to yet, that hold real insights for today's researchers. We want to hear from you if your thesis might provide useful background context for current students.'

FOLLOW TWO SIMPLE STEPS TO NOMINATE YOUR RESEARCH FOR RAPID DIGITISATION:



1. Check the library catalogue to see if your thesis is retained by the library, at <http://findit.bham.ac.uk>
2. If it is there, and you would like to see it digitised, get in touch with us at [alumni@communications@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@communications.bham.ac.uk)

A SECOND CHANCE TO DISCOVER HER FATHER'S WORK

Penny Hunking didn't get the opportunity to talk in detail with her father about his University days during his lifetime. The digitisation gave her a second chance to learn about his studies.

'It was wonderful news that I could find my father's PhD thesis, submitted in 1961. My father suffered motor neurone disease in later life and, after a brave battle, passed away peacefully in April 1991 at the age of 67 years.

'I knew my father had attended Birmingham as a student (and subsequently had been a lecturer at the University) when I was a little girl; however, I wanted to know more. I was delighted to know that as a result of making contact, his thesis is now digitised and preserved online. This now offers the opportunity for others to easily access it online today and add to historical enquiry in this area of mechanical engineering and machinery.'



● Image: Penny's father Edmund Wright

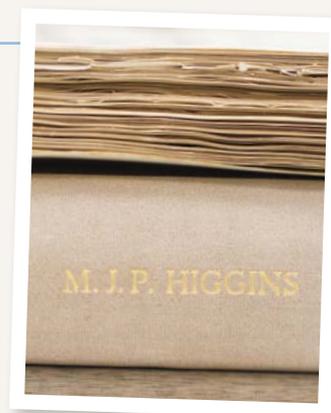
RECOVERING THE KEY FINDINGS HE COULD NOT AFFORD TO PRINT

Dr Malcolm Higgins (BSc Biochemistry, 1966 and PhD Biochemistry, 1969) immediately thought of his 1969 thesis when he was invited to write a major historical review of the development of our understanding of the biosynthesis of isoprenoids (a process in the body that builds complex structures out of simple ones). This diverse and important group of substances (such as cholesterol) are produced in plants and animals, all starting with the same few chemical steps.

His PhD work examined the early steps in the biosynthesis of these compounds so we don't need to take them from plants and animals, which after his studies at Birmingham, led to

early investigations into the biological control of the process, with applications in everything from medicines to nutrition. Malcolm says: 'It was pointed out that I am one of the few people left alive involved from the very basic biochemistry to the modern era. My PhD thesis comprehensively reviewed the early work, but I did not have a copy – as a student, I could not afford to bind more than the minimum number.

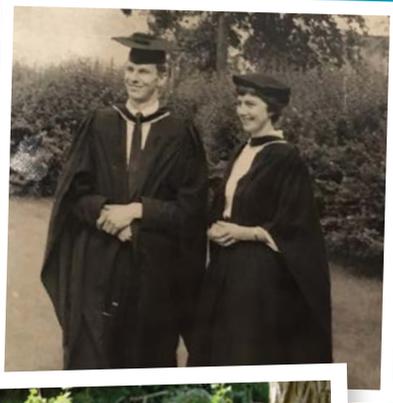
'When I asked the University Library about obtaining a photocopy, they told me about the digitisation service. I am impressed. Remember, the original was produced on a typewriter long before personal computers and even word processors, but the quality of the scan



is very high. So I now have all 370 pages on my computer, a memory stick and instantly accessible to anyone via the British Library.'

Graduates across the generations

The sun shone on the summer 2018 graduation ceremonies, as proud families welcomed more than 6,000 new members into our alumni community.



A University of Birmingham degree runs in the family for many recent graduates

Charlotte and Elaine

Geology graduate Charlotte Storey is pictured top left with her grandmother, Elaine Goodwin. Elaine graduated in 1960 with a Maths degree, which included a Geology module. Elaine also met her husband on campus on their first day in the Guild. He studied Physics and they are pictured top right on their graduation day. They even still have their graduation ticket from 1960!

Three generations of chemical engineers!

The Williams/Wood family celebrated their third generation of chemical engineer graduates. Mervyn has three Birmingham degrees, his daughter and son-in-law met as lab partners and his grandson Hywel graduated this summer.

Alumni shared their advice for the future through LinkedIn



Fran Broomhall (LLB Law, 2002):

'The steps off the stage are the first steps of your next adventure. Don't worry if you don't know the destination, the journey is often the most rewarding part.'

Andrew Laughland (BSc Physics, 1980):

'Don't plan too much. Try to do things you enjoy and take unexpected opportunities that come your way.'

Renu Prashar Prinjha (BSc (Hons) Planning and Public Policy, 2004):

'I've just seen my sister graduate with her PhD, 14 years after I graduated with my degree. My advice would be

to seize every opportunity that comes your way no matter how small. They all lead somewhere!'

The alumni network is a great way to connect with fellow graduates and share advice and experience. You can attend an event, update your details or join our LinkedIn group 'University of Birmingham Alumni and Friends' to make connections. Visit oldjoe.co.uk for more information.

YOUR STORIES

What have you been doing since your time at Birmingham? Share what you are most proud of with your fellow alumni. Email alumnicommunications@contacts.bham.ac.uk, use the enclosed form or tweet us using [#wearebrumalum](https://twitter.com/wearebrumalum).



1995

DR LOK KEE SIU (PhD in Electronic, Electrical and Systems Engineering, 1995)

I was part of the first 2018 team to climb Everest. Having climbed in several countries, I have always wanted to see the view from the top of the world. We carried traditional prayer flags to spread blessings, and the flag of my home Hong Kong, where I work using my skills from Birmingham to plan, design and implement railways.



1996

JANE SIMPSON (MPhil Electronic and Electrical Engineering, 1996)

I became the first female Chief Engineer of the Railways at Network Rail, and I was thrilled to work with professors and students at Birmingham to apply the latest research to our network. Now I'm bringing water to 1.3 million people, at Severn Trent Water. My work ranges from maintaining a massive aqueduct to a new children's book on creative engineering work, to inspire more people, from more diverse backgrounds, to become engineers.



Image credit: Mike Pettidemange

2010

RUTH SHEAVES (BSc Geography and Environmental Sciences, 2010)

As Development Officer with the New English Ballet Theatre, I was delighted to return to Birmingham with our 2018 show in October. The second work *Remembrance* commemorates the Armistice through the true story of leading ballet dancer/teacher Dame Marie Rambert, who was separated from her beloved when he was called to the battlefield.



2013

JAMES GRANT (BA Philosophy, 2013)

After graduating, I co-founded the online tutoring platform, MyTutor. We exist to broaden access to high-quality one-to-one support. Last year, we delivered 200,000 online lessons, partnering with 250 schools and 35 universities across the UK, reaching pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. We're particularly proud to work with UoB to support A level pupils as part of the Access to Birmingham scheme.



Image credit: Shadi Baker

2014

PEJMAN PIRGHEIBI (LLB Law, 2014)

I recently realised my dream to become a criminal defence lawyer in Vancouver, BC. I support marginalised people in my community, building on my experience helping at-risk youth make positive choices. With my law degree in hand, I strive to find justice and truth – coming to the University of Birmingham was the best decision I ever made.

Find more stories and share your update at oldjoe.co.uk

FINDING PURPOSE

Alumnus Leonard Stall (BSocSci Economic & Social History, 1982) has enjoyed a varied and successful career as a journalist, author and business leader, but claims his newest challenge has revealed his true purpose.



Leonard is attempting to shape and support the next generation of philanthropists through his company's innovative book *How to do Good*, a series of essays about building a better world. Contributors range from Hollywood star Matt Damon to major philanthropists like Melinda Gates, as well as some 'ordinary people already doing extraordinary things'. The key for them all is making sure good intentions translate into real benefits for the world. The book grew out of his work as

editor-in-chief of *Philanthropy Age* magazine, as he explains: 'Our magazine has grown from an idea intended to inspire and inform intelligent giving, into something that is of real international benefit.'

'We realised we had a terrific network, could communicate with people who want to do good, might be able to inspire them and could find the expertise to inform them. I felt that through my communication skills, I had found my purpose and now all of a sudden, I'm a man in a hurry.'

Leonard went straight into the media after graduating from Birmingham, working on a wide range of publications from business magazines to local titles and as a publisher of a regional edition of the *Metro* newspaper.

Now based between the UK and the Middle East, he chairs a company working in strategic communications for national governments and international sporting bodies, bringing him into

contact with influential individuals.

But his growing interest in philanthropy led to *How to do Good*, which is now on an international speaker tour across the globe. As he says: 'These projects around philanthropy and making a difference are my driving passion now. When small acts of good are added together, they have the power to become life-changing.'

Win a copy of the book!

WIN

Leonard is editor-in-chief of which magazine?

Send your answer, together with your name, address and phone number to alumnicomunications@contacts.bham.ac.uk.

WIN

Lots of chances to win in this issue's competitions

- Send in your memories of the clock tower to win an Old Joe fridge magnet
- To win the highlights from graduate Polly Wright's book club, see page 19
- To win a signed *Downton Abbey* script page, see page 20
- To win a fitness plan tailored for your genetics, check page 37
- To win an Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust annual family passport, go to page 39
- And you are already on the right page to win Leonard Stall's book *How to Do Good*

To enter, send your answer with your name, address and telephone number to alumnicomunications@contacts.bham.ac.uk by 31 January 2019.

Don't forget to update your contact details using the enclosed form, by email or online – we'll pick one new address to win a £50 Amazon voucher.

WIN

GLOBAL ALUMNI GATHERING 2018

More than 250 graduates across 17 countries joined the third annual Global Alumni Gathering in May/June 2018.

Alumni around the world volunteered to host their own Global Alumni Gathering events around 25 May, the date when the University received its Royal Assent in 1900.

Speaking in Hangzhou, H el ene Compain-Holt (PGCE Education (French), 1991) spoke about being a Birmingham graduate: 'Our experience

has equipped us to want to make a difference and a contribution to the areas closest to our heart... it is a measure of the success of a university to remain a presence in our lives years after we have left; and maybe the connection grows as we grow older.'

Flags and goodie bags welcomed alumni to brunches, picnics, pub nights

and formal dinners. Meet-ups ranged from two firm friends in New Zealand to a community of 35 graduates in Oman. Many recorded videos of congratulations for this year's new graduates, welcoming the newest members of the alumni community, shared through our Facebook and Twitter accounts.

TEHRAN, IRAN



DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA



ATHENS, GREECE



GENEVA, SWITZERLAND



MUSCAT, OMAN



Help make the 2019 Global Alumni Gathering even bigger! Email alumni.events@contacts.bham.ac.uk to join or host your local gathering.

Join us for your next...

ALUMNI REUNION

Saturday 8 June 2019

Whether you're celebrating a milestone anniversary, or haven't been back to campus in a while, return to Birmingham to rediscover what made Birmingham 'home' for you. It's a fantastic way to reconnect with friends and classmates, and to see how Birmingham has grown into the university it is today.

With the formal opening of the University's Green Heart on the same day, you can also enjoy a celebratory weekend of free activities open to alumni, family and friends.

Please visit our website (www.birmingham.ac.uk/reunions) for further information and the latest updates.



Celebrate. Remember. Reconnect.

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