

August/September 2016

# Athletic *Ambition*



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

# Vice-Chancellor's *view*



Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir David Eastwood

## YOUR BUZZ

Next edition 5 October 2016

Copy deadline 9 September 2016

Contact us

[university-buzz@bham.ac.uk](mailto:university-buzz@bham.ac.uk)

Buzz online

[buzz.bham.ac.uk](http://buzz.bham.ac.uk)

Follow us on Twitter

[twitter.com/buzzunibham](https://twitter.com/buzzunibham)

Find us on Facebook

[facebook.com/buzzunibham](https://facebook.com/buzzunibham)



Edited by Matthew Collins

[internalcomms@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:internalcomms@contacts.bham.ac.uk)

Your details

Please let us know if you want extra copies of *Buzz* or if you think we need to amend your distribution details.

Views expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the University or a statement of University policy. All submissions may be subject to editing. The Editor's decision is final.

**Front cover image:** Luke Gunn, Head of Athletics at University of Birmingham Sport

Since the result of the referendum on Britain's leaving the European Union, I have been frequently asked whether there are any exact historical parallels.

It is a truism of history that history never really repeats itself. The famous British historian A.J.P. Taylor once said that the only lessons we learn from the mistakes of the past are how to make different ones. Karl Marx memorably remarked that history happens twice: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce.

Some historians refer to aphorisms such as these in order to get themselves off the hook of offering up illuminating historical parallels. Some, however, are either more bold or more foolhardy.

Reflecting on what happened on 23 June and on its aftermath, British history offers a number of similar moments where an unexpected decision led to a period of very substantial dislocation and political reconstruction.

One parallel occurred on 2 November 1830, shortly after the 1830 general election, when the Prime Minister, the Duke of Wellington, addressed the House of Lords. Almost everyone was expecting the Duke to announce a moderate measure of parliamentary reform. To the consternation of his colleagues, the Duke did not commit himself to reform but, on the contrary, suggested that the current constitution of Parliament '*answered all the good purposes of legislation and this to a greater degree than any legislature ever had answered in any country whatever.*'

The Duke was astonished at the consternation to which his remarks gave rise. He asked his Foreign Secretary '*what can I have said which seems to have made so great a disturbance?*', to which the Foreign Secretary replied, '*you have announced the fall of your government, that is all.*' What followed was the great crisis of parliamentary reform when, during two years of convulsive political struggle that involved an unprecedented constitutional crisis and riots in many major cities, the franchise was reformed, the vote extended, and Britain was set on a long road which would lead to subsequent measures of parliamentary reform.

A period of Tory ascendancy largely came to an end. A decade and a half later the Conservative Party decisively broke in the Corn Law Crisis of 1846. In

January of that year the Conservative Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, introduced the repeal of the Corn Laws – tariffs which protected British agriculture – following budgets in 1842 and 1845 where he had reformed the tariff system setting Britain on a course to free trade. The Bill passed and the Tory Party divided. There was not another majority Conservative government for twenty-eight years.

In 1886 it was the Liberal Party which divided; a crisis triggered by our very own Joseph Chamberlain. On this occasion it was Gladstone's proposal for rule in Ireland which led to Chamberlain's leading a minority of Liberal Unionists into a voting alliance with the Conservative Party. The Home Rule Bill fell and with it Gladstone's government.

This was not the last occasion on which Joseph Chamberlain divided a major party. By 1903 his Liberal Unionists had effectively joined the Conservatives hence, eventually, the 'Conservative and Unionist Party'. In 1903 Joseph Chamberlain, then Colonial Secretary, announced his support for a policy of 'Imperial Protection'. At its simplest this was a policy which would see Britain repudiating free trade, adopting a free trade zone within the Empire, and using the revenues from tariffs on trade outside the Empire to fund social reform. Chamberlain was convinced that it was not possible simultaneously to sustain free trade, national defence, and the substantial social reform including old age pensions. His solution was to abandon free trade.

As a result of Chamberlain's support for 'tariff reform', the Conservative Party divided and the Liberals won the 1906 election. The Conservatives would not return as a majority government until 1924.

My final partial parallel involves our University's 'other' Chamberlain, Neville Chamberlain. In 1931, following the crash of 1929 and associated global recession, Ramsay MacDonald's second minority Labour government fell. The result was the formation of a 'national government', led by MacDonald with a majority of Conservative Cabinet ministers and MPs. Neville Chamberlain became Chancellor of the Exchequer and immediately proposed a policy of 'imperial preference' with a 10% tariff on non-imperial goods. This was further developed at the Ottawa Conference of 1932, which committed

the major economies of the British Empire to a system of 'empire free trade', on the principle of 'home producers first, empire producers second, and foreign producers last.' Some may see resonances here.

The parlour game of historical parallels is, of course, nearly infinitely extendable. Nevertheless, the examples that I have cited, when compared to the referendum and its outcomes, are highly suggestive.

All great political crises tend to focus on our constitutional and economic arrangements. Very often, implicitly or explicitly, they have involved our trading relations with Europe. More often than not, they have raised questions about the nature and organisation of the Union.

Our current crisis, and I do not think that is too strong a term, has many of these features. Ever since Peel's repeal of the Corn Laws, we have as a country, and the Conservatives as a party, often found unfettered free trade, and the regulatory arrangements associated with making international markets work, challenging. In 1903 and again in 1931-32 there was a strong attempt to assert national sovereignty over trading, monetary, and, indeed, fiscal policy. These issues are now again at the heart of a national debate.

The ways in which public opinion is expressed and weighed have also been frequent features of our major political and constitutional crises. That was at the heart of the 1830-32 crisis, and is acutely apparent in the way in which we are now struggling to reconcile a functioning parliamentary democracy—where over five hundred Members of Parliament are declared supporters of 'Remain'—and the outcome of a referendum where a majority has voted to leave the European Union. Those tensions will be worked through in complex and sometimes contested ways as the terms on which we might exit the European Union are negotiated, with Parliament in the end having to reconcile what might be radically different views on what constitutes a 'good' or appropriate deal.

Finally, the referendum result has again thrown into stark relief the extent to which the perceived interests of different territories within the United Kingdom are divergent. As with Irish Home Rule, so now perhaps with Scottish home rule, a perception of divergent interests might in due course lead to a formal

parting of the constitutional ways.

Put like this, our recent political history does suggest fault lines which continue to disturb and reshape British politics and policy. We should, I think, take some comfort from the resilience of our institutions and the relative maturity of our political culture. In the long term both of these have served us well. In the short term, though, history tells us that political crises by their very nature are unpredictable and we can expect over the next two or three years further moments of challenge and conflict. These may be exacerbated, and certainly they will be shaped, by the ways in which our political system responds. As in 1846 and 1903 with the Conservatives, or in 1886 or 1916 with the Liberals, or in 1931 with Labour, we should not assume that our political parties do not divide. They have, and they may yet again.

In my judgement, the long term stability of the British State perhaps owes most to the resilience and subtle mutability of its institutions, notably Parliament and some of the key institutions of the State, of which universities probably now are one.

We are now told that the country is sceptical of experts. Were that true, the quality of public debate and with it of policy development would rapidly decline. Universities have a particular responsibility to ensure this is not the case.

In 1834 Sir Robert Peel addressed the electors in his constituency of Tamworth. He began:

*'It is common, we suppose, to all men, who find themselves involved in some expected and – as they think – undeserved difficulty or danger, to exhale the first impulses of vexation in reproaches against those, whose folly or wickedness have led to their embarrassment. But after this, natural burst of indignation, no man of strength, courage, or prudence will waste his time or his strength on retrospective reproaches or repinings.'*

Whatever side of the debate we have found ourselves on, we could do much worse than deal with where we are rather than where we might have been.

**We should now face the future. Indeed, in our own small ways, where we can, we should make the future.**

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



## Entertainment awaits at the Bramall this Autumn

Tickets are now on sale for a new season of exciting events at the Bramall.

We've got 'Mock the Week' and 'Live At The Apollo' comedians providing the laughs, an ABBA tribute band taking us on a 70s rollercoaster of their greatest hits, and for the first time, a series of 'An Audience With...'

Join legendary cricketer Allan Lamb as he takes to the stage, sharing his colourful cricketing career and be inspired to dust off your walking boots as explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes navigates you through a lifetime of expeditions.

**To book your tickets today visit the website [www.thebramall.co.uk](http://www.thebramall.co.uk) or call the Box Office on 0121 414 4414.**

## New Core contract signed



The agreement signals the start of an exciting two-year project to streamline HR, Payroll and Finance processes.

**Find out more about New Core at:**  
<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/university/new-core/index.aspx>

# THE BIG READ

From July onwards, you may spy a uniquely decorated 'BookBench' positioned here and there around the city of Birmingham and the West Midlands as part of The Big Read education programme. Schools and community groups have decorated benches shaped as open books – adorned with designs inspired by their favourite novels, comics, poems and prose. With the amazing impact of The Big Hoot still fresh in our memories, this unique literacy project has been developed in conjunction with the University of Birmingham to ignite and develop an interest in reading and writing in schools and communities across the region.

The University's School of English, Drama and American & Canadian Studies (EDACS) has sponsored the creation of two book-themed benches.

With EDACS supporting both the Bishop Challoner and the Dame Ellen Pinsent Schools, they are able to provide their students and teachers with a new creative, positive and encouraging learning space. These benches were produced with the creative input of two

of the University's College of Arts and Law (CAL) Fellows – the painter Tom de Freston and writer Helen Cross.

On the weekend of 16–17 July, The Big Read project launched in Centenary Square in collaboration with the BBC's 'Awesome Author' weekend, featuring a wealth of writers including well-known children's author Jacqueline Wilson. BookBenches will be spread across the region in cultural hubs such as shopping and leisure centres to create a series of free indoor art trails, giving people the opportunity to enjoy young people's creativity during the summer holidays.

In September they will then be returned to participating communities and schools.

Over the months of July and August make sure to keep your eyes peeled for a BookBench across the city where you can sit and enjoy a good read!

Further details of The Big Read can be found online at [www.thebigread.org.uk](http://www.thebigread.org.uk)



# Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson on Happiness



On June 20, Paralympian wheelchair racer and Life Peer Baroness Grey-Thompson DBE delivered the 38th annual Baggs\* Memorial Lecture on the theme of 'happiness – what it is and how it may be achieved by individuals as well as nations'. *Buzz* spoke to her before the event.

Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson has a photograph of herself at the age of seven, just after spina bifida left her partly paralysed. *'No one, then, would have looked at me and said, "she'll be a Paralympian" or "she'll be a parliamentarian" they would just have seen a wheelchair.'*

Thanks to education opportunities, her parents' support and her own drive and determination, Tanni – now 47 – went on to become one of the UK's most successful disabled athletes, amassing a remarkable haul of 16 medals, including 11 golds, from five Paralympic Games. She won the London Marathon six times and broke more than 30 world records. She has sat on the boards of the National Disability Council, Sports Council for Wales, English Lottery Awards Panel and UK Sport, and is patron of numerous charities.

Four years after retiring from competitive sport in 2007, Tanni became an Independent crossbench Peer in the House of Lords, where she has since used her experience and knowledge during debates and spoken on a range of issues, including disability rights, welfare reform and, of course, sport.

*'I'm a big believer in helping others – giving them opportunities,'* she said. *'So, for example, I take young people on work experience. I'm also a really firm believer in education. My dad said that education gives you choices, and that's right: it gives people a chance.'*

Tanni's parents successfully fought for her to attend a mainstream school, and she went on to study at university before embarking on her glittering sporting career.

On her website, she describes herself as a 'Paralympian, crossbench Peer in the House of Lords, motivational speaker, broadcaster and mother.'

## Which role affords her the most happiness?

*'It's a combination of all of them,'* she said. *'But in terms of my sporting career, I would say it was more about satisfaction than happiness. If I look back, I wish I'd enjoyed a lot more of the moments along the way. But you don't, because you're on a mad, conveyor-belt four-year cycle. Before you've even left one Paralympics, you're thinking about the next one. You're desperate to go quicker and break more world records. In sport you have this limited amount of time, so you have to focus on what you want – and you're always re-evaluating your targets. The downside of all that is that you don't always get to enjoy the moment.'*

The moment she enjoyed most was Athens in 2004, her last Paralympics, where she won two gold medals. *'You get those moments when you're jubilant, but those are only moments, because then you think: "I've got to do that all over again". But Athens was probably the happiest I felt in a race.'*

Tanni, who lived and trained in Birmingham for four years from 1996 to

2000, thinks that as a nation Britain derives more happiness from watching sport than taking part in it – and much of her work today centres on promoting physical fitness and wellbeing.

*'There's a lot more I want to do around physical activity and becoming a healthier nation. I already do a lot of work around obesity, and try to get over the message that it's not just about diet; it's about exercise too. We can't go back to the 1970s, where women cooked meals from scratch because they didn't go out to work, but we can do more in terms of exercise. I'd like to give women permission not to put themselves last in the family, but to take time out for themselves, and I would also change a lot about PE in schools.'*

## It must feel good to have inspired many people over the years?

*'I hope I've inspired people and, yes, that does make me happy. I'm very much a "glass half full" person. I don't think there's anything I can't do because I'm in a wheelchair. If I want to do something, then I'll find a way to do it.'*

\* Born in Birmingham 1889, Thomas Baggs was an alumnus of the University of Birmingham who bequeathed a substantial sum to the University to provide an annual public lecture on the theme of 'happiness – what it is and how it may be achieved by individuals as well as nations'. The first lecture was in 1976.

# Building on strong foundations

## the new estates strategy 2016–2026

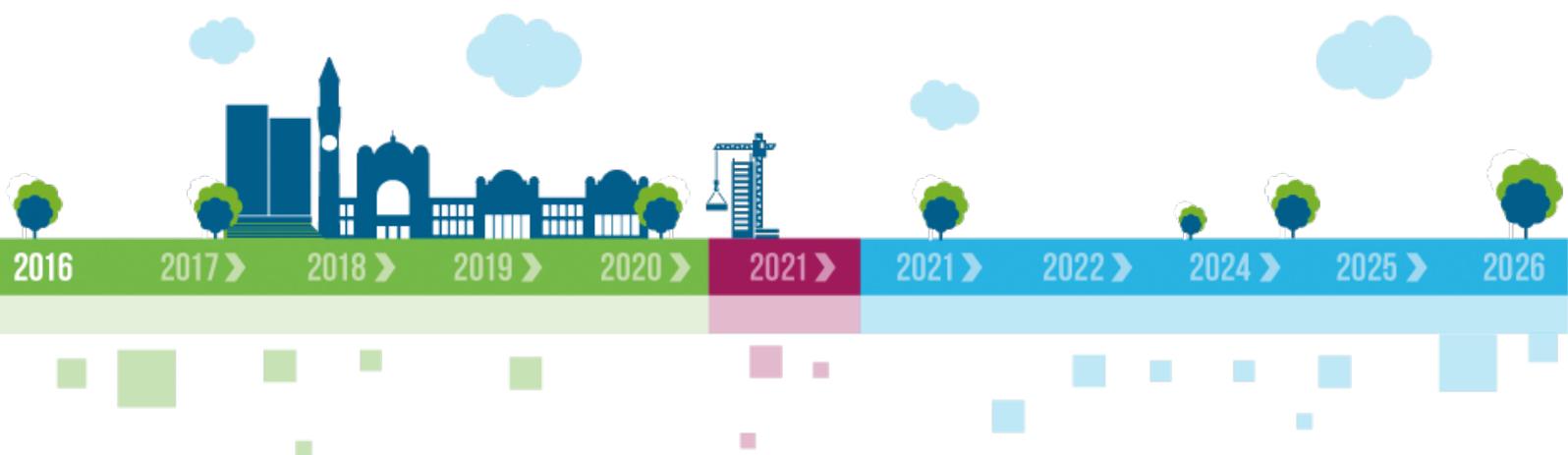
*As the new library opens, and the sports centre draws ever closer to completion, the current round of campus developments draws to a close. But with the University investing £365 million over the next five-year period, there are a raft of new projects about to start – and with them, a whole host of opportunities to improve the student experience further, deliver access to world-class teaching and research facilities and to welcome visitors onto campus to engage with the University's research and cultural assets.*

In the autumn, the new estates strategy will be unveiled, spanning a period of ten years. The first five years are mapped out and include the projects that will start within the next few months and beyond – but the strategy also includes the five years from 2021 to 2026 to encourage forward planning and consideration of what a campus and a University estate might need in ten years' time.

The five-year programme from 2016 to 2021 is now being mapped out after a call for projects and strategic priorities from all Colleges and Professional Services. The projects, which have now been identified

to be included in that programme will focus on four key areas, relating back to the University's Strategic Framework. The Strategy covers a number of key estates themes – important elements that will need to be considered for all developments over the ten year period, which are:

- Land and Property
- Compliance and backlog Maintenance
- Space and Efficiency
- The Student, Staff and Community Experience





The Green Heart project will be an important thread which runs through the student, staff and community experience theme, and the consultation into what should be incorporated into that theme is still ongoing. Staff can still have their say by visiting the project blog at [www.uobgreenheart.com](http://www.uobgreenheart.com). When complete, there will be further improvements to the Edgbaston campus, adding to the student, staff and community experience – not least the sense of arrival at the site, which will be far more appealing than at present, especially as a pedestrian.

The Green Heart project will make campus an even more pedestrian-friendly place than it is now – but car parking will be an important part of the estates strategy. Provision will be reviewed to ensure it still meets the needs of our community – but with a strong focus on sustainability, ease of use of public transport, and the interchanges between modes of transport will also be considered, for staff, students and visitors.

The estates strategy focuses on all of the University's property – not just the main Edgbaston campus, but also sites around Birmingham, and indeed the rest of the country. From the Selly Oak campus to the Raymond Priestly Centre and from the Vale to BIFoR, the strategy will focus on all aspects of our estate and how our various sites can all be developed and maintained as necessary to meet the objectives of the University's Strategic Framework.

The past few years have been an exciting time to be on any of our campuses, with our impressive library taking shape, a new and striking residence opening on the Vale, two refurbished wings of the Aston Webb building being completed with the Student Hub and Lapworth Museum opening, and research sites such as the Birmingham Institute of Forest Research (BIFoR) and High Temperature Research Centre (HTRC) opening. But the excitement is far from over as we enter a new phase of opportunities. From September, look out for more details on the strategy, what it might mean for you, and how you will be able to get involved and shape the debate.



# STAFF OPINION SURVEY HAVE YOUR SAY 2016

Thank you to everyone who took part in the new staff survey. Your feedback is valued and vitally important in helping to shape the future of our University. We hope you found the new slimmed-down format a more efficient way to share to your views and allow us, together, to continue making important things happen. We are pleased to be able to share the results with you.

## Department response rate:

Arts and Law	52%
Engineering and Physical Sciences	51%
Life and Environmental Sciences	46%
Medical and Dental Sciences	54%
Social Sciences	54%
Professional Services	57%

Staff were asked to respond to questions about their role, department and the University more broadly. Encouragingly, of the 12 statements that had also been included in the 2013 survey, eight showed an improvement. Most significantly, there have been 10% positive increases to the following statements:

- I have a clear understanding of the purpose and objectives of my work area (85% agreement)
- There is effective leadership within my School/Professional Service area (59% agreement)

Statement	2013	2016	Increase percentage
I have a clear understanding of the purpose and objectives of my work area	75	85	10%
There is effective leadership within my School/ Professional Service area	49	59	10%
I am proud to work for the University	78	81	3%
I understand how my work contributes to the success of the University	85	87	2%
Health and safety are taken seriously by the University	75	77	2%
I am clear about what I am expected to achieve in my job	82	83	1%
Equality and diversity are taken seriously by the University	69	70	1%
I am willing to go the 'extra mile' when necessary	93	94	1%

This year 54% of staff completed the survey, compared to 55% in 2013, which was the last time the University conducted an all-staff opinion survey. Overall, an additional 397 members of staff completed the survey this year compared to in 2013; reflecting the growth of our University over the past few years.

Two statements have remained the same since 2013, but two have deteriorated. Most significantly, there was a 17% reduction in the percentage of staff who feel supported in their professional development (55% agreement). This is broadly consistent across Colleges and Professional Services, and University leadership will be looking to identify the basis for this disappointing result.

Statement	2013	2016	Increase percentage
I feel supported with my professional development	72	55	-17%
I would recommend the University as a great place to study	75	73	-2%
The balance between my work and my personal life is about right	54	54	0%
I would recommend the University as a great place to work	66	66	0%

Reflecting on the Have your Say 2016 staff survey, Professor James Arthur, Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Staffing) said:

While it's great that a lot of the measures are moving in the right direction, the real value of the staff survey is in seeing where there's room for us to do things better, to make improvements for everyone working here.

Share  
your  
views

and help shape  
the future of  
your university

## Areas of Strength

(Score out of 5)

I AM CLEAR ABOUT WHAT  
I AM EXPECTED TO ACHIEVE  
IN MY JOB

4.07

I UNDERSTAND HOW MY WORK  
CONTRIBUTES TO THE SUCCESS  
OF THE UNIVERSITY

4.16

I HAVE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING  
OF THE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES  
OF MY WORK AREA

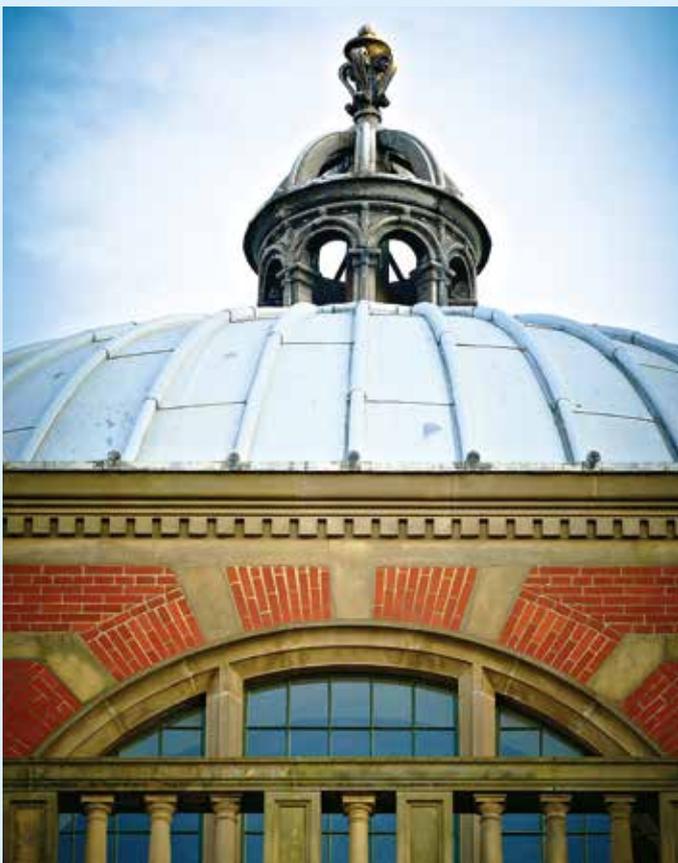
4.12

I AM PROUD TO WORK  
FOR THE UNIVERSITY

4.13

I AM WILLING TO GO THE EXTRA  
MILE WHEN NECESSARY

4.47



## College snapshots

### College of Arts and Law

High: 'I am willing to go the 'extra mile' when necessary' 92%

Low: 'The balance between my work and my personal life is about right' 41%

### College of Engineering and Physical Sciences

High: 'I am willing to go the 'extra mile' when necessary' 94%

Low: 'I receive regular feedback on my performance' 40%

### College of Life and Environmental Sciences

High: 'I am willing to go the 'extra mile' when necessary' 92%

Low: 'The balance between my work and my personal life is about right' 38%

### College of Medical and Dental Sciences

High: 'I am willing to go the 'extra mile' when necessary' 97%

Low: 'I receive regular feedback on my performance' 51%

### College of Social Sciences

High: 'I am willing to go the 'extra mile' when necessary' 93%

Low: 'The wellbeing of staff is taken seriously by the University' 40%

## Professional Services snapshot

High: 'I am willing to go the 'extra mile' when necessary' 94%

Low: 'I receive regular feedback on my performance' 57%

A more detailed breakdown of the Have Your Say results is available on the staff intranet.

# *New library is just weeks away!*

*The eagerly anticipated opening of the new Main Library is here. Following many years of planning, two years of construction and three months of physically moving stock from one building to another, the doors to the new library will be opening in time to welcome new and returning students to the University.*

The stunning new building, designed by Associated Architects and built by Carillion, has been carefully planned to ensure all students and staff benefit from a building fit for 21st century learning and research.

The new library is an inspirational place to study, filled with natural light from both the huge floor to ceiling windows and through the airy atrium with its glass roof. The open access section contains 12km of shelving arranged in an easy to navigate system while there is a further 50km of shelving in the Research Reserve on the lower ground floor, where knowledgeable Library Services staff are waiting to help researchers to access this material.

As well as access to a wealth of print and electronic material, the new, technology-rich Library is home to a variety of learning spaces to cater for different modes of study. All study desks allow students to work in the Library from their own devices with a power point at each desk and flexible training rooms have been incorporated to enable development of the important academic skills support.

When students return to campus in September, the building will be open for use and study 24-hours-a-day to enable students to fit their study into their schedule to best suit their own way of working.



# PIONEERING PG PLATFORM



The University's Postgraduate Recruitment team last month received a HEIST award (the Awards for education marketing) for 'Best Postgraduate Student Recruitment Initiative' for its Virtual Open Day platform, a project which has revolutionised our engagement with prospective postgraduates.

SINCE JUNE 2015, THE PLATFORM HAS RECEIVED  
**116,997 VISITORS**  
**MORE THAN 100 TIMES**  
THE COMBINED NUMBER OF ATTENDEES AT OUR  
ON-CAMPUS OPEN DAYS.

Offering relevant information in an attractive and easily accessible format is acknowledged nationally as a great challenge at postgraduate level. Particularly as courses are so diverse and prospective students have individual motivations for further study, finding and understanding the information needed to make an informed choice about postgraduate study is often extremely difficult across the sector.

The Postgraduate Recruitment team sought to address this need with the launch of the Virtual Open Day (VOD) platform in June 2015, complementing the University's 'Digital First' approach. The sector-leading platform tailors information to the needs of prospective postgraduate applicants by offering a suite of interactive, discipline-focused online material, pulling together the wealth of resources developed by the University into one easy-to-use, multimedia tool.

Over the past year teams have worked on more than 500 videos and 200 online events, delivering both subject- and country-specific chats as well as themed events for funding, accommodation and careers. These virtual events complement on-campus recruitment activities, and provide an internationally accessible and durable showcase of the exciting range of opportunities for further study that we have to offer.

The VOD platform has improved access to accurate programme information, taster lectures, student testimony, funding information, careers advice, course content and timetables. Working in tandem with live events, the targeted use of existing Birmingham postgraduates as mentors, contactable through the platform, has improved the student experience by offering the peer-to-peer support that they crave.

The first year of the VOD project has been a resounding success, meeting its objectives within just a few months. Since June 2015, the platform has received 116,997 visitors; more than 100 times the combined number of attendees at our on-campus open days. To date the platform has delivered 220 events, a total of 3,376 questions have been asked and immediately answered, and we have attracted more than 4,500 new sign ups to our mailing list. Visitors have spent an average of six minutes on these live events, with continued post-event visits to the site to review the curated Q&A sessions and video playlists; evidence that this easily accessible

information is crucial to the research and decision-making process.

The VODs have helped to maintain and grow demand for our postgraduate programmes during a challenging time within the Higher Education sector, enabling us to schedule and produce events quickly in response to programme launches, funding updates or to boost conversion in under-performing subjects. The scope of our recruitment activities has also increased with the introduction of the VODs, allowing us to widen our net to include groups with which we traditionally have little contact. The site has proven particularly popular with those who have left education: 41% were aged 25–34 and 28% aged 35+. This is a cohort that our traditional channels of communication, such as direct email and on-campus campaigns, struggle to reach.

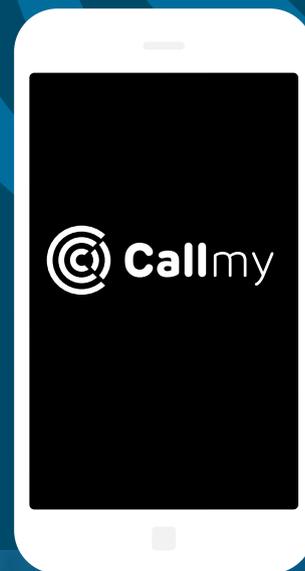
Now with a substantial bank of video interviews with current students, alumni, and academic staff for the majority of our postgraduate programmes, the team will continue to grow this resource during the next academic year and, due to its proven success, work is now underway to create an undergraduate version of the platform. The project remains a priority as new updates, adaptations and enhancements will be introduced throughout the year to address the continually changing needs of our postgraduate market.



You can see what the VODs look like at [www.pg.bham.ac.uk](http://www.pg.bham.ac.uk)



The University has invested in a new security app to contact staff, students and visitors to campus in the event of an emergency. *Buzz* chatted with Chris Hoad, Head of Security and Emergency Planning, to find out about the new service called Callmy.



### What is Callmy?

Callmy is an app-based mass notification system that you can download onto your mobile device, which will allow you, in the event of an emergency, to receive critical information from the University in a timely, efficient and secure way.

### Why is it needed?

Callmy will allow us to securely communicate, en masse, with the University community; staff and students. In the past, during emergency exercises we've encountered the problem of addressing how we get mass messaging out very quickly. In 2012, for example, when we had a site-wide power outage we used Twitter to good effect, but the problem with social media is that it's not secure and it can also get overlooked because you have to actively check into it. Additionally, the app will allow us to use geo-positioning, so we can target people in certain areas on and off campus. This will also allow us to communicate with colleagues travelling abroad, for example those who could find themselves in an emergency situation.

### Is it compulsory that staff have Callmy?

It is not compulsory for people to download. However, the University has invested in this for the benefit of our community, and its sole purpose is to enhance the safety and security of everyone on campus. It will become a means by which we communicate with everyone in an emergency and we therefore strongly encourage everyone to download the Callmy App.

### Can visitors to the campus use the app?

Visitors are part of our community, and when people come to campus we have a duty of care to ensure their safety, and so they are very welcome to make use of this app.

### How often will people receive messages?

The challenge for us is to ensure that we don't overload people with messages so that they become 'immune' to the notifications, but similarly we don't want people to be surprised when it goes off, having forgotten what it is. In order to keep it 'live', people will receive key security messages every few weeks, perhaps once per month.

### How can we ensure we're able to reach people who don't have smartphones?

In reality we know that the majority of people have a smartphone these days, and although Callmy will become the mass-notification system of choice, we will continue to put out urgent messages using our existing channels to ensure that emergency communications are received by as many people as possible.

### Is it suitable for use with visual impairment?

We can use dual messaging; the app allows us to send voice messages as well as text messages.

### When will it launch?

We'll launch it in time for the new academic year. During the summer we will be working on a marketing campaign to maximise engagement when we launch the app.

### How do people download it?

Please use the QR code below, or go to the app store for your mobile device and look for Callmy. It's available on Android, Apple iOS and Windows. You find the App by visiting: [www.callmy.com/callmy-mass-notification/get-app/](http://www.callmy.com/callmy-mass-notification/get-app/)



Download  
me today

Emergency alert



# THE BIRMINGHAM PROJECT

## WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

The Birmingham Project has been highlighted as the flagship of the University of Birmingham's Curriculum Review. It's aimed at first-year undergraduate students to enhance their employability skills through an interdisciplinary research project during the last two weeks of the summer term. The project was piloted in 2013–2014 with 60 students, and owing to its success it was expanded to take up to 200 students in 2014–2015 and over 200 in 2015–2016.

Led by our Academic Director, Andrew Davies (Head of Theology and Religion), and guided by a steering group that is chaired by the PVC for Education, the success of the Birmingham Project is largely due to our key collaborations with staff and services across the University and beyond. We simply couldn't do this without them!

### SO, WHO ARE THEY?

**The Academic Services Project Support Team** – based in the Centre for Learning and Academic Development and Learning Spaces, they are responsible for providing key project management as well as ensuring all of the operational tasks and activities for the Birmingham Project are carried out to the highest quality and in line with the overall vision.

**Challenge Leads** – experienced in leading groups and providing focus and guidance in a research topic of their interests, many academic and academic-related staff members work on the project as Challenge Leads.

**University of Birmingham Postgraduate Teaching Assistants (PGTAs)** – recruited through Worklink, our PGTAs gain hands-on experience at supervising student groups with their challenge and motivating them to achieve exceptional things.

Other key partners across the University include Timetabling, Venue Birmingham, the e-learning Hub Team, Academic Skills Centre, Creative Media, Careers Network and LRAT.

Global companies such as KPMG, PwC, Jaguar Land Rover, Deutsche Bank and IBM are on board, and each sponsors one of the five themes. Representatives from each company give their time in advance of, and during, the project and even provide a prize to the winning team at the final award ceremony.

### SO, WHAT DO THE STUDENTS ACTUALLY DO?

Firstly, they work collaboratively in mixed discipline groups of up to ten, to tackle a real world challenge. This year the challenges were based around five thematic areas:

- Designing the Future of Transport
- Building Local Community
- Celebrating Culture
- Shaping Global Society
- Innovation for a Smarter Planet

Next, they conduct ethical research to answer their challenge title and they develop an educational online resource, such as a mobile app, online magazine or a website.

Finally, they present their findings to a panel of judges who decide on a winning team per theme. Each winning team is presented with a prize from the external sponsors.

Two former Birmingham Project students recently took to social media to encourage others to take part:

**@abimason2** tweeted about the Project *'...get involved, don't underestimate how useful it will be. I have a summer internship at Bloomberg off the back of the project!'*

**@MasonCusack** tweets *'As a first year, I got my foot in the door with @IBM, gaining contacts that will benefit me throughout my university career!'*

*'It was great to see, and share, the enthusiasm of the students on the Birmingham Project; and I also learned a lot from the excellent work they produced.'*

**Bill Chaplin, Professor of Astrophysics**



*'Being part of the Birmingham project has been a great experience, particularly witnessing the creativity and enthusiasm of the student project groups. It can't be bad, as this my third year taking part!'*

**Dr Jonathan Catling, Senior Lecturer, School of Psychology**

### WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

Are you interested in leading a student challenge group in the future, to provide focus and guidance in a research topic that interests you or is pertinent to your field? Here's what we're looking for:

- Support for the students in their exploration of the challenge and advice on appropriate research methodology
  - Someone to enable and support the students' research
  - Constructive feedback to the students on their progress
  - Support for the PGTAs with student enquiries and issues
  - A judge for the final presentations, to help decide on the winning team
- If you're interested and would like to find out more about the project or ways in which you could get involved, please contact us by emailing [thebirminghamproject@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:thebirminghamproject@contacts.bham.ac.uk)

Follow us online and on social media:

- The Birmingham Project
- @TheBhamProject

Wordpress site

[www.thebirminghamproject.wordpress.com](http://www.thebirminghamproject.wordpress.com)

Intranet site

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/employability/bhamproject>

## CAMPUS CURIOSITIES



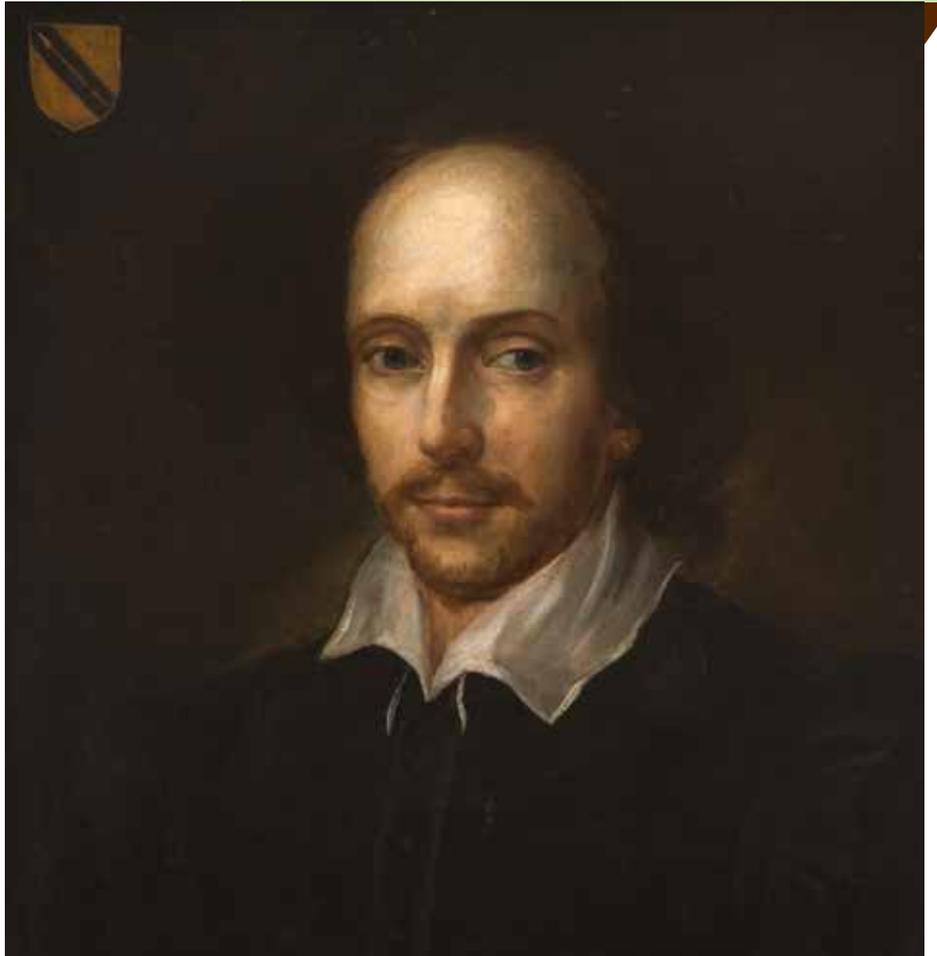
## Chancellor's column

I was privileged to speak at the Annual Conference of the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) earlier this month, held at Sheffield University. It was my first address as the newly appointed President of the organisation that represents the 500,000 international students in the UK, of which 170,000 are from the EU. Though it took place in the shadow of Brexit, it was a fortunate opportunity to share the message that international students continue to be a huge asset to this country and we will continue to do all we can to work towards policies that make international students feel welcome here.

No country in the world, except the United States, has as high a regard throughout the world as the United Kingdom for higher education. In my family, from Hyderabad, India, I belong to the third generation to be educated in India and now my son too has started his degree at a British university!

When international students return home, they become lifelong ambassadors of the United Kingdom. More provisions should be made to permit them to study here, as well as residing and working here when they graduate – it's a win-win situation. I have been urging the Government to remove international students from Net Immigration statistics and also to reinstitute the two-year post graduation work visa, as well as to set specific targets to increase the number of international students in the country.

The University of Birmingham is proud to be one of the most international universities in Britain with over 5,000 international students, and almost 30% of our faculty are international.



### What is it?

Portrait of William Shakespeare with the arms of John Shakespeare (18th century). Part of the Campus Collection of Fine and Decorative Art, Research and Cultural Collections.

### Where is it?

Shakespeare Institute, Stratford-upon-Avon.

This portrait of William Shakespeare, painted in the 18th century, closely resembles the so-called Chandos portrait in the National Portrait Gallery. When Shakespeare's reputation grew in the 18th century, artists used the portrait as a model for their images of the Bard, as it had been painted during Shakespeare's lifetime. 'Bardolatry', as the fervent admiration of Shakespeare is sometimes called, has its serious origins in the 18th century, for example with Garrick's Shakespeare Jubilee in Stratford-upon-Avon and Goethe's celebration in Germany.

In this portrait Shakespeare is pictured as we have come to know him: a dark-haired, bearded gentleman with a receding hair line. His somewhat reserved expression and the display of the Shakespeare family coat of arms in the top left corner create a superior and somewhat elevated impression; his is a picture of the Bard, as opposed to William Shakespeare, the man.

### Learn more

Please see <http://rcc-redmately.tumblr.com> to find out more about how the Bard and his works have been celebrated in the medium of textiles. You can also visit [www.birmingham.ac.uk/rcc](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/rcc) to find out more about the Research and Cultural Collections.



# news|views

Our regular feature gives *Buzz* readers a quick tour of the latest University news hitting the headlines and activity among our online community.

If you would like to work with the press office, or find out more about how they can help you promote your research, email [pressoffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:pressoffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk) or call 0121 414 6029

## in the news...

Many articles about Birmingham research and expertise appear in local, national and international press every day. Here are just a few examples of our recent highlights.

In the final hours before the EU Referendum, the BBC, ITV, Sky News, Channel 4, Bloomberg, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Guardian*, *Daily Mail*, and the *Mirror* were among the national and international media outlets on campus covering the campaign. Days later, a BBC *Question Time Special* aired live from the Great Hall.

The poll provided an opportunity to showcase the breadth of the University's expertise to a global audience: Professor John Fender and Dr Anthony Hopkins appeared on a BBC Radio 5 Live panel, Professor Tony Yates was on BBC's *Daily Politics* and Dr Tereza Capelos talked to *The Financial Times* and *Buzzfeed*. Professor David Dunn was interviewed by *El Mercurio* newspaper in Chile while Professor Scott Lucas was on Channel NewsAsia.

**Dr Nando Sigona appeared on BBC Radio 4's *Have Your Say*, discussing journalistic stereotypes of refugees.**

The role of Birmingham physicists in helping to detect a second set of gravitational waves made headlines around the world, including the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Guardian*.

**Asteroseismologists, including Dr Andrea Miglio, who captured the sounds of some of the oldest stars in our galaxy using data from the NASA Kepler/K2 mission, received widespread coverage in outlets including BBC World Service, Times of India, and Daily Mail.**

Dr Nick Hawes spoke to the *Telegraph*, ITV, and the BBC about the possible role of autonomous robots in the workplace as 'Betty' the robot started work as an office manager in Milton Keynes.

**Professor Laura Piddock was interviewed on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme, BBC 2's *Victoria Derbyshire show* and in *The Atlantic* on the latest report from the O'Neill Review on antibiotic resistance. Professor Piddock was also a guest on BBC Radio 4's *In Our Time*.**

Professor Martin Freer was interviewed on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme and BBC *Breakfast* on the 'cold economy' and the likely future developments.

**Locally, the re-opening of the Lapworth museum featured on BBC Midlands Today, ITV Central, and in the Birmingham Post.**

## Join the UoB online community

Follow us on Twitter at @unibirmingham. If you use social media at work and would like to increase your visibility, find out more at: [intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/socialmediaguidelines](http://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/socialmediaguidelines)



## feeling social...

For our first undergraduate open days of the year in June, the aim of our campaign was to showcase what happens at the University during Open Day.

In the run up to the events we shared useful information, informative videos and tried to build a buzz about visiting campus using images and short video clips of students revealing why people should visit an open day.

Our main social channels were given an 'Open Day' look, with messaging, banners and a dedicated Facebook event page to share lots of useful information directly with our audience.

On the day, our social team went out on campus to give a feel for what happens at our open days – sharing short videos of behind the scenes at the new library and the buzz on Chancellor's Court, asking visitors to share a hashtag with us to represent their day as well as by taking lots of photos of talks, key events and people.

We also trialled a 'Facebook live video' with a Student Ambassador walking the viewer around Chancellor's Court, which proved to be very successful.

Post-event, all of the content was shared across the social channels and added to digital storyboards to share online and via emails to prospective students.

## Luke Gunn... in my own words

Luke Gunn is Head of Athletics at University of Birmingham Sport.



My role is to hire and manage coaches across all disciplines. I work alongside the elected club committee, engaging with the membership and surrounding community while forging links with other athletics establishments, events and initiatives within the city and region; but essentially my role is to ensure our own Athletics team has what it needs to perform, and that our members are well looked after.

A selling point is that we're not typically viewed solely as a 'sport university' – people come here to get a good degree in a great city while also furthering their sporting ambitions. However, within the individual sports the University is well known for our achievements. Hockey, for instance, is so well revered that parents send their children here specifically for that.

The British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) leader, Loughborough, is probably 25 years ahead of us, although our recent investment and ambition should move us from third place, and firm us up in second position. The new sports centre will enable us to match current performance (people are often surprised to see how well we do with the facilities we have, but the new centre will take us to another level), help recruit new students, and be a huge selling point. It's really well placed to engage with the wider community; a project the Athletics club already does this effectively with is the 5k run on campus to raise money for Parkinson's UK – this will happen again on 9 October 2016. We plan to engage with the children in the new University of Birmingham School in ever developing ways, we are keen to get their studentship involved in athletics – offering opportunities locally.

Sport offers enormous potential for the University. Hosting the Jamaican team during London 2012 demonstrated its power to raise profile internationally – overnight – and this has helped make the case for investment. The fact that we hosted their track team is one of the reasons we've been promised a new track.

In preparation for this season, I've been putting in lots of miles; between 90–100 per week. My typical weekly routine also includes interval sessions on the track, gym conditioning sessions, yoga, and technical hurdle sessions. I've also had two stints of training at altitude in Albuquerque, New Mexico and Font-Romeu in south France; a necessity for any endurance athlete trying to compete with the best in the world. However, in my spare time, I like to unwind, judging a good Sunday if I can find time to read a newspaper cover to

cover. I enjoy playing golf; I love alone time with music; but often you can just find me sitting in the corner of a café doing a crossword.

Just before this magazine was going to print I learned that I haven't secured a place on Team GB for the Steeplechase. It's a huge personal disappointment having also missed London 2012; even though I had the qualifying time. However, I am delighted to say that we've got a record number of Birmingham-related athletes competing in Rio! I'm sure that Rio, with all its colour and carnival, will be a spine-tingling, career-defining moment for them.

Alumna Non Stanford in the Triathlon is a realistic gold medal contender, as is Ciara Horne in the women's track pursuit cycling team. Current student, Lily Owsley, is the wonderkid of GB Hockey, and joining her are alumnae Sophie Bray and Ellie Watton (in reserve). We haven't had a current student qualify for the Olympics in athletics for over 30 years; my wife, Hannah England, just missed out in her final year here as a student. Hannah later made it to London 2012. This time round, fellow alumna and Hannah's training partner, Sara Treacy has qualified – she is coached by Bud Baldaro (University athletics coach). Simon Mantell has been selected for the men's hockey on Team GB, James Rodwell will play for Team GB's Rugby Sevens team, and seasoned Olympic archer Naomi Folkard will be joining them.

Athletics has been a constant in my life for 19 years. Bud, who I've been working with for 13 years, is the main driving force behind my success, and one of the reasons I came here as a student. In recent years I've really benefited from the University's flexibility, allowing me to go away to train and work remotely – I owe them a lot for such support. The University also offers strength and conditioning support, sports psychology, and I rate the fantastic High Performance Team as the best within all universities in the UK.

My biggest success is making three Commonwealth Games in a row, which starts to make me feel quite old. I've also won four national titles in a row. The one thing that's missing for me is the Olympics.

We need more characters like Usain Bolt to inspire the next generation. Growing up I was in awe of Haile Gebreselassie and Paula Radcliffe, but as I've gotten older I've been fortunate to take inspiration from the people and places I've encountered, in and outside athletics. ]