



August/September 2019



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Tiny
Tickers

Vice-Chancellor's *view*

The last days I spent with my father were the weekend of the Green Heart Festival. He was delighted to come down and to join in the events of that wonderful weekend. As ever, we talked about many things including, of course, this university.

His sudden death a fortnight later has left me reflecting on many aspects of my father and his life. Dad was a working class boy from Burnley. The son of two unemployed weavers who moved to Blackpool in search of a new life. He was a bright child but, in his own words, he was a 'lad of the streets'. He lived a life outdoors, playing sport, and engaging in all manner of extraordinary escapades. He was a great storyteller and held generations of our family and friends

enraptured by stories of what he did when he was a lad.

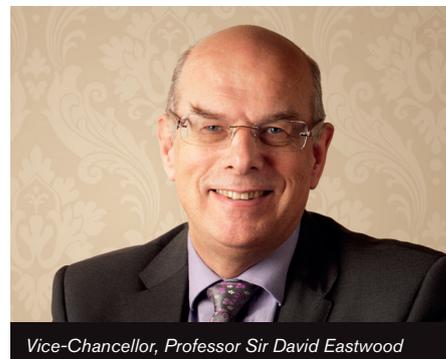
He greatly esteemed the working class values that supported him, and his respect and admiration for his parents knew no bounds.

After failing his school certificate (the predecessor of 'O' Levels and GCSEs) his life changed. As well as meeting my mother, the love of his life, his life was transformed by education and by teachers, specifically one teacher. He discovered literature, he discovered language, and he discovered music. All of these, in different ways, were to make and shape the rest of his life.

After repeating his school certificate he went on to the Sixth Form, and then to read English at the University of Manchester where he was awarded a First.

Looking through the lens of Dad's life, his is one of the many instances where education in general, and universities in particular, are transforming. We now call this widening participation, though back in the 1950s it was probably more a matter of universities simply seeing talent in high-achieving students from a variety of backgrounds. Certainly then there was much to be done. After graduation, Dad wanted to explore the possibility of staying on to do doctoral research. The Head of Department said to him, revealingly, 'Eastwood, teaching will probably better suit you'. Others, less well qualified, did go on to do research. Dad was almost certainly deemed more suited to teaching because he was a working class lad with a strong northern accent. He went on to be an outstanding teacher.

In Dad's generation there were many, though talented like him, who did miss out, and for whom a selective system of education and a tiny university sector found no place. Lives were impaired and the country thereby impoverished. There is much more that we now need to do in still further widening opportunity. There are communities and young people from a variety of backgrounds who still feel excluded from universities and from the opportunities that we provide. We should be unflinching in our efforts to reach out and to embrace them. Whether that is best done through Access and Participation Plans I much doubt. Universities are bigger



Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir David Eastwood

than that and our calling more important than that. Nevertheless, reflecting on my father's life and opportunities he had cannot but reinforce my commitment to universities being places where all who can benefit should be welcomed.

On reflecting on how Dad learnt and how he explored the world of ideas is equally revealing. He was steeped in his subject, with a deep love of language and literature. What was also striking to anyone who met him was the breadth of his intellectual interests. Growing up he would often share with me insights into everything from ancient philosophy through to some of the fundamentals of physics. He was shaped in a world where curricula were much broader, and interestingly deeper, and there was a greater encouragement than perhaps there is now to look and read widely and to explore other academic disciplines and ways of thinking.

In our current world of narrow specialisation, where young people are forced to choose, where concepts such as 'general studies' are derided, and where students and those who teach them become, perhaps inadvertently, complicit in a narrowing of the curriculum and a ferocious commitment to learning for the test. Much that was characteristic of the way in which people like my father learnt and developed has been lost.

Does this matter? I think it does. It means that universities become much less institutions of general curiosity and enquiry, and are in danger of becoming more like factories that produce particular 'product'. As what we know becomes still more expansive and more complex, some of these tendencies are perfectly understandable. They should, however, be complemented by a reengagement in that openness to

YOUR BUZZ

Next edition 3 October 2019

Copy deadline 4 September 2019

Contact us

university-buzz@bham.ac.uk

Buzz online

intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/buzz

Follow us on Twitter

twitter.com/buzzunibham



Edited by Matthew Collins

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: Professor Andrew Ewer (centre) with Carla Amos (left) and her sons Joe and William, and Claire Doggett (right) and her children, Sebastian and Gabriel.

continued from page 2

other ideas and curiosity about the way in which disciplines far removed from the ones in which we specialise operate and develop.

The consequences of that breadth that my father had, some of which came from those who taught him and the way in which he was taught, some of which came from his own almost auto-didactic instincts, made him simultaneously a remarkably interesting person to talk with and a remarkably interested person in the world around him. To the very end, he was sustained by reading, by reflection and by vigorous conversation. His education, and in particular his university education, had given him so much that he shared, but equally had given him so much that sustained him. That, I think of as a very personal reminder of why universities and what we do matters so much and must be preserved in the face of those who would turn universities into mere 'Providers', of skills and peddlers of other peoples' products.

So my last weekend here at Birmingham with Dad will remain precious. He loved this place and relished seeing what was happening in our university. Reflecting on Dad and why he thought universities were such profoundly important places has reminded me that we do so much so well, and yet there is always more that we should share and some things that we can do even better.

*Vice-Chancellor,
Professor Sir David Eastwood*

BIRMINGHAM PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP SERIES

CHANGING THINKING FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

A new series of events for Birmingham Professionals has launched this summer. Designed to bring Professional Services colleagues together from across the institution to engage with a wide range of topics, the Birmingham Professional Leadership Series will demystify how the University operates, highlight what's changing across the sector and explore how we can navigate these changes and adapt for your future success.

Four themes will be covered by the series:

- Me in 3 – my path to career success: the highs, the lows and everything in between
- Mentoring: what's in it for me?
- Demystifying the University: everything you wanted to know but didn't know who to ask
- The secret of happiness: tips for managing and leading in a complex environment

Each session will include an engaging presentation led by colleagues from across the University and time to ask questions and meet new people. Open to all Professional Services staff, whether you're currently in a Leadership role or not, the Birmingham Professional Leadership Series is an excellent starting point for anyone who would like to know more about how the University operates. Want to know more? Visit intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/leadershipseries for details and to sign up.

Please note that there will be a maximum of 40–50 places per event so you will need to register to secure your place.

REF NEWS

INFORMATION ON APPLYING FOR A REDUCTION IN OUTPUTS

The University is committed to supporting all staff in their research careers, regardless of age, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity status, race, or religion or belief. At the same time, it is recognised that an individual's capacity to undertake research may be affected by a number of circumstances. Such circumstances might include, but are not limited to, career stage, caring responsibilities, one or more periods of parental leave, illness (mental or physical), part-time working,

and/or whether an individual is on a fixed-term or a permanent contract.

Academic colleagues who will be returned to REF and believe they may be eligible for a reduction in outputs due to special circumstances are invited to voluntarily disclose such circumstances in line with those described in Appendix 4 of the Code of Practice.

Information on the declaration and how to apply can be found at intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/planning/rpt/REF-2021/REF-CoP.aspx

REF CODE OF PRACTICE SUBMITTED TO RESEARCH ENGLAND

The University has now submitted its REF Code of Practice to Research England for formal approval. The Code covers

processes associated with determining which staff should be submitted to the REF, discusses how we will go about agreeing what outputs should be submitted, and also covers the aforementioned staff circumstances – those instances where any of a range of circumstances has impacted on a member of staff's ability to produce research outputs over the assessment period (from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2020), and how we will take such instances into account. The Code is available online at intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/planning/rpt/REF-2021/REF-CoP.aspx

We expect to hear whether the Code has been approved or requires amendment by 16 August 2019.

Birmingham and Waseda digital/cultural symposium



In July, at an international symposium in London, experts from the University of Birmingham led by Dr Matthew Hayler, joined counterparts from Waseda University to explore how classical works can be revitalised with the assistance of digital technology.

The symposium focused on works such as the Yokai Hikimaku kabuki theatre curtain and its influence on manga.

The curtain, which features various Japanese demons called yokai, has recently been digitised by the Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum at Waseda University.

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International) Professor Robin Mason said: 'The UK is one of Japan's top research partners. It is vitally important for both the University of Birmingham and our country to develop

closer engagement with our counterparts in Japan, especially in areas of shared research strength.

'Our collaboration with Waseda University continues to bear fruit, as there is much common ground between us. This joint symposium on using digital technology to revitalise classical works is tremendously exciting and I look forward to our future collaboration in this area.'

JOIN IN

COMING SOON

Find out what your University's new fundraising and volunteering campaign could offer to you, your work and your students.

02.10.19

Can't wait? Want to volunteer?
Email Joe McDowell at j.m.mcdowell@bham.ac.uk
or call 0121 414 8136



THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES ARE COMING!

The Games come to Birmingham between 27 July and 7 August 2022. Keep an eye on sportandfitness.bham.ac.uk for more information.

With just under three years to go until the Birmingham 2022 Games hit the city, the buzz in Brum is starting to gather momentum. With the two-year-old Sport & Fitness club hosting the Squash event, and the two international-standard water-synthetic pitches prepped for the Hockey, there will certainly be a strong presence here on campus. But what do we know about the Games at the moment, and what does it mean for UoB?

What are the Commonwealth Games?

First hosted in 1930, the Commonwealth Games are the biggest international multi-sport event behind the Olympics, and are held every four years involving athletes from the Commonwealth of Nations. From the first event in Canada in 1930, where 11 countries and 400 athletes took part, the Games have developed over the years, seeing a whopping 71 nations and territories and 6,600 athletes and team officials attending last year's Games in Australia's Gold Coast, plus almost 15,000 volunteers who contributed to the running of the event. There were a total of 275 events, in 18 sports and seven para-sports, which were watched by over 1.5 billion viewers.

Why Birmingham?

A voluntary association of 71 nations and territories, the Commonwealth itself is a diverse and dynamic group, and more than 60% of the Commonwealth citizens are under 30. What city better encompasses all of these virtues than Birmingham, known for its rich heritage and diverse and vibrant community?

One of the youngest cities in Europe, Birmingham is well known for always offering a warm welcome to visitors from around the world. The 22nd Commonwealth Games will demonstrate the very best of Global Britain to the world, showcasing the region's strengths of being connected and accessible, youthful and inclusive and with a focus on regeneration and rejuvenation. Birmingham is perfectly positioned to attract people to the Games and to ensure that the benefits of hosting extend from the city and region, to the UK and the Commonwealth. Plus, 95% of the competition venues are already in place, making Birmingham both prudent and innovative – which was key, following the failure of the Durban bid, which was originally in place for 2022.

Furthermore, Birmingham's Games are set to be the most inclusive ones yet. The addition of three new sports: women's cricket, beach volleyball and para table tennis, means that Birmingham has the potential for the largest ever para-sports programme and more female medallists than ever before, representing a great story not just for Birmingham 2022, but for women's sport in general.

How will the University be involved with the Birmingham 2022 Games?

The University's Sport & Fitness club includes six squash courts with adjustable walls for the larger doubles courts; and its 2,000m² indoor arena will house a spectacular all-glass court surrounded by over 2,500 spectator seats.

The water-based hockey pitches will have over 4,000 seating capacity during the Games, with the stunning backdrop of the University's iconic red-brick buildings.

The other sports facilities, including the 50m training pool and eight-lane athletics track creates an ideal performance environment to make it a popular venue for pre-Games preparation for participating nations. With it all being on campus – a five-minute walk from the University train station and well connected to national rail networks – it makes for the perfect Games venue. In addition, the opportunities the Games will bring in terms of catering, accommodation, volunteering and workforce, will mean that when these elements start to be put in place, there will be a number of UoB staff, students, community and alumni involved. Hopefully, even some of our current students and alumni will also be attending the Games as competitors!



Research [IN FOCUS]

Animal [RESEARCH]

For some of us, it may not be something we have particularly thought about, for others, it may be an uncomfortable truth; that animal research has played a vital role in the development of virtually every medicine that human beings today take for granted. It's something that many of us don't like to talk about or even think about and, with so many claims surrounding this issue, how can we distil the myths from the facts?

What really happens in research involving animals?
And are there viable alternatives?

When communicating animal research, there are often some misnomers around the terminology. The term 'animal testing' is often associated with the testing of cosmetic products, however, testing cosmetic products and their ingredients on animals was banned in the UK in 1998. All research carried out in the UK and EU is solely for scientific, medical and veterinary research.

Here at the University of Birmingham, we performed 51,750 procedures involving animals in 2018, with the use of 47,939 mice, 626 rats, 2,989 zebrafish and 196 Xenopus toads. It is important to note that of these numbers, around 30% are used for research procedures, while 70% are for breeding. The main areas of research that the University focuses on using

animals are immunology, cardiovascular, neuroregeneration, cancer, psychology and metabolism.

This figure is probably higher than you imagined. It might even shock you. You may not have even been aware that the University uses animals in its research at all. That wouldn't be entirely surprising because for decades animal research is something that people have been reluctant to talk about. Today, organisations like ours are becoming more open about the ways in which animals are used in scientific, medical and veterinary research.

Buzz attended a workshop hosted by the University's Communications and Reputation team and the Biomedical Services Unit (BMSU) to find out about animal research at the University.

51,750

PROCEDURES INVOLVING ANIMALS IN 2018



47,939



2,989



626



196

If you would like to find out more about the use of animal research at the University, please visit: www.birmingham.ac.uk/facilities/bmsu/index.aspx

This is what we [LEARNED]

The building our animals are housed in doesn't look particularly different to other buildings on campus, and many people probably don't know that it exists at all. The facility is subject to regular unannounced inspections from the Home Office, which has the power to shut down the facility if standards are not met. Around 30 staff work here, and 356 individual researchers are currently working on 80 projects.

Because we use animals in research, we are required to have an Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB). Each organisation that conducts animal research must, by law, have this body to ensure that research complies with legislation and ethical practices. The AWERB exists to:

- Propose reductions in the numbers of animals used
- Propose refinements to the procedures to reduce suffering
- Propose replacement of animals, wherever possible
- Advise on the care and accommodation of animals

The AWERB is made up of scientists involved in animal research and lay people. Our lay members are not the most obvious of candidates and include vegans and those affiliated to faith groups. For such individuals, sitting on the AWERB is a matter of being able to influence policy from the inside. I expect the moral paradox conflicts many of us, but it's somewhat reassuring that people with such care and compassion are involved in trying to make the best of a practice that most people hope science will one day put an end to.

As well as lay representatives, under the Animals Scientific Procedures Act 1986 (ASPA), the University is required

to ensure the AWERB panel consists of a person responsible for compliance, a veterinary surgeon, animal care and welfare officers, training officers and information officers.

At the workshop, animal care and welfare officers gave an overview of 'a day in the life of a senior animal technician' working in the facility that houses the animals in research.

They talked through the various sections that housed the animals, and of the strict cleaning, feeding and health checks. The technicians brought along a mouse container to demonstrate how the mice are housed, and they're similar to what you'd expect for a family pet: light and with bedding and space for entertainment and sleep. It's hard to convey how passionate these technicians are about caring for the animals.

Research and technological advances are allowing us, in some areas, to reduce the number of animals used. Where in some organisations rats were once suspended from their tails to study musculoskeletal damage, at the University of Birmingham our researchers, funded by the NC3Rs, are growing bone models from stem cells in the lab to find treatments to conditions like osteoporosis, which will significantly reduce the use of animals in this research area.

We do, however, still need to use animals to find solutions to some problems that technology and computer models can't yet replicate. For example, treatments and diagnosis of the most common heart rhythm disturbance are being developed using the hearts of mice.

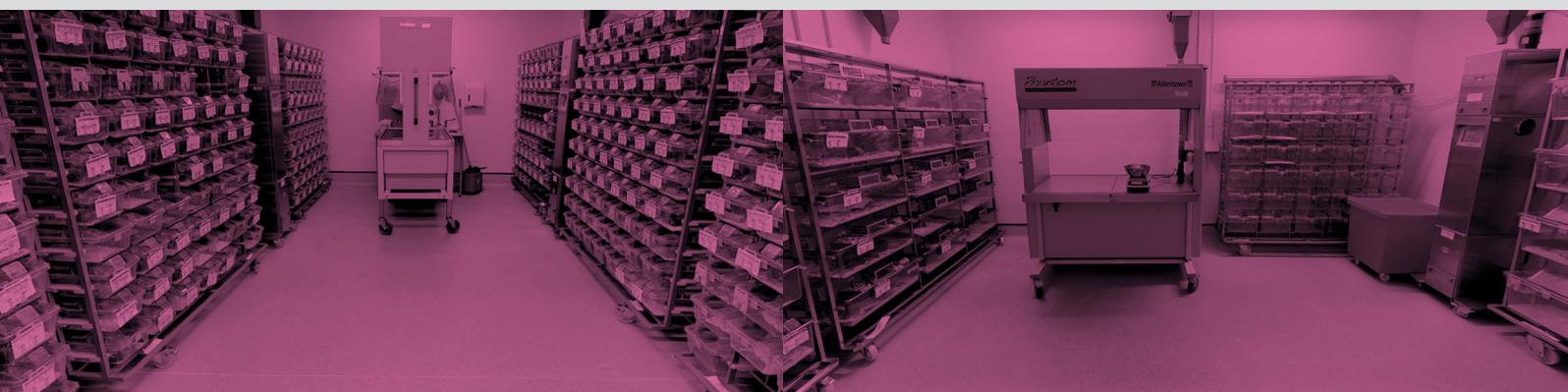
AWERB scrutinises every application to use animals in research to ensure that there are no possible alternatives to the

use of animals and that studies are carried out to the highest standards of welfare and care, following the '3R's' principles of replacement, reduction and refinement: the 3Rs are a widely accepted ethical framework for conducting scientific experiments using animals humanely.

At the workshop, we also learned that we are signatories of a Concordat on Openness on Animal Research, launched by Understanding Animal Research, and, along with 120 other organisations we have committed to help the public understand more about animal research by fostering a culture of openness. Our commitments as part of the Concordat are as follows:

- **Commitment 1:** We will be clear about when, how and why we use animals in research
- **Commitment 2:** We will enhance our communications with the media and the public about our research using animals
- **Commitment 3:** We will be proactive in providing opportunities for the public to find out about research using animals
- **Commitment 4:** We will report on progress annually and share our experiences

Being open about the use of animals in research can only be a good thing. That's not to normalise animal research as something that becomes detrimental to the pursuit of alternatives; but to be aware of how your medicine and treatments have been developed, and to be informed, accurately, of how we as a university treat and look after the animals that our researchers use.



**F
I
L
M** **B**

Birmingham Centre for Film Studies



SOME STORIES REQUIRE COURAGE, A DEEP BREATH AND A LEAP

Buzz went to speak with Dr Ruth Gilligan and Professor Rob Stone from the Department of Film and Creative Writing to find out what happened when Film and Creative Writing started hanging out together.



Rob and Ruth at the premiere in *The Electric Cinema*

What followed is a collaborative, interdisciplinary project that is creating empathy among young people (and supporting a REF impact case study). *Some Stories* is a feature-length documentary by B-Film: The Birmingham Centre for Film Studies that centres on the work of award-winning novelist and Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at the University of Birmingham, Dr Ruth Gilligan.

Ruth, as part of her research and her involvement with the New York-based collective of writers and activists – led by the internationally acclaimed author Colum McCann – Narrative 4, brokered a story exchange between teenagers in Birmingham and in Limerick, Ireland.

The project involved three Birmingham schools – Holyhead, Joseph Chamberlain College and Earls High School. Fifteen students from the three schools visited

Limerick in November 2018 for a long weekend to work with 15 students from Gaelcholáiste Luimnigh (an Irish-language school). They took part in creative writing workshops, art workshops, cultural excursions and, most importantly, a 'story exchange'.

During a period of deep political polarisation and conflicting narratives around Brexit – and significantly between the UK's future relationship with Ireland – these 30 students used their weekend to swap stories about identity, fears, beliefs and hopes and discovery.

'The principle behind the story exchange is to share a story with your partner, step into their shoes and to tell it back in the first person to an audience as if it were your own,' says Ruth.

'It's designed to foster understanding and empathy based on Narrative 4's

vision of "Fearless Hope Through Radical Empathy" – to harness the power of storytelling to break down barriers and shatter stereotypes, and in turn to transform society by developing the next generation of empathetic leaders and citizens.'

The weekend was captured on camera by a team of film-makers, led by the University of Birmingham's Professor Rob Stone, and turned into the inspirational documentary *'Some Stories'*.

'Originally we hadn't planned to film the project, but I got chatting to Ruth over a coffee and her infectious enthusiasm inspired me to assemble a small film crew with Will McKeown, a PhD student in Film Studies at UoB and Dr Jimmy Hay of the University of Bristol, and fly over to Ireland.'

'We did three days of solid filming, but from very early on we realised that we were

'I have been working with Narrative 4 for almost five years now, but this was the most inspiring project I have ever been part of. Amidst the endless conversations around Brexit, borders and barriers, to see the generosity and openness between the British and Irish students was extremely powerful and profoundly moving. Their stories gave me hope.'

Dr Ruth Gilligan



Ruth presenting an excerpt from *Some Stories* at Hay Festival

What the students said:

'It has changed the way I think about people from different ethnic backgrounds as it has made me realise we are all the same and that change can be created through small actions.'

'Since the project, I have been more open to people around my school and tried to avoid making harsh judgements about others before knowing them.'

'Narrative 4 has helped me understand that all people regardless of age, gender, culture are the same and experience similar emotions. It's helped me realise that I do in fact have a voice and stories of my own to tell; it's helped me realise we all matter.'

'I'm more confident in myself, I take more pride in what I do, I'm much more understanding and empathetic and more sociable, and I'm less affected by people's perceptions about me now.'



Cast (participants) in *Some Stories* at the Screening

During the 2019 Being Human Festival, on Saturday 23 November, from 1.30–4.30pm, in Screen One of the Electric Cinema, there will be a 'one-year-on' screening event at the Electric Cinema plus a special panel discussion featuring some of the participating students and teachers who will talk about the experience and its lasting impression on them. The event will be free (though online booking will be required).

The full-length feature will be released on Vimeo in the future, and Buzz will share the link with you via our *Buzz Bitesize* newsletter.

capturing something that was emotionally very powerful,' says Rob. 'It took me five months to edit, and thanks to the Impact Support Fund in the School of English, Drama and American & Canadian Studies (EDACS) it was converted into a digital cinema package.'

The sessions were independently observed by *the Guardian's* Stephen Moss who witnessed a lot of tears, too many for Ruth's solitary pack of tissues to handle. In his review of the story-exchange

sessions, he found far deeper issues in play than Brexit: *'loss, grief, the pressures put on teenagers, their urge to conform, the masks they have to wear to survive, their struggle to find themselves.'*

Unsurprising, then, that the film premiere at Birmingham's iconic Electric Cinema on 7 May drew a strong emotional response from the audience. With introductory remarks from Ruth, James Lawlor of Narrative 4, and Rob, the event was attended by the students who participated

in the project, along with writers and community organisers from across the UK.

Rob has sent *Some Stories* to film festivals, including the Richard Harris International Film Festival, Cork's Test and the Dublin Independent Film Festival; Ruth also spoke about the project at this year's Hay Festival of Literature & Arts, where she showed an eight-minute excerpt of the film <https://vimeo.com/336183978>

transforming our campus



CAMPUS DEVELOPMENTS: A CHANCE TO TAKE STOCK



Three years into the 2016–21 Estates Strategy, campus has changed significantly. Starting with the completion of the Main Library in 2016 and Sport & Fitness in 2017, along with Bournbrook Pavilion, then followed by the opening of the Collaborative Teaching Laboratory (CTL) in 2018 and the launch of the Green Heart in 2019, there has been an unprecedented level of activity. The Old Gym reopened earlier this year, refurbished to provide teaching space as well as office space. In amongst this high-profile activity, there has been significant focus on improving the quality of teaching spaces for students, refurbishing them, and centralising their operation, in partnership with colleagues in Academic Services. Maintaining, updating and refreshing facilities on a campus this size is a major operation.

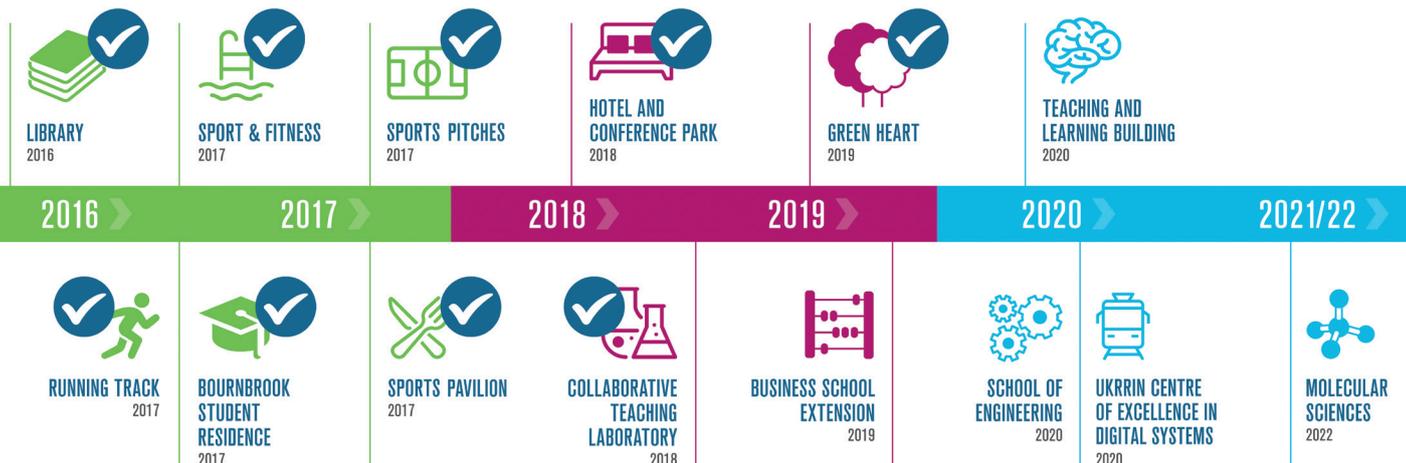
Now is a good opportunity to celebrate success. The Green Heart Festival Launch Weekend brought thousands of people onto campus – almost half of whom had never attended a University event before

– to learn about research, enjoy musical performances and relax on campus. The CTL has won three architectural awards at RIBA West Midlands this spring – Building of the Year and a Sustainability award, as well as a prize for the architect.

Looking ahead, the Teaching and Learning Building, housing two lecture theatres and ten seminar rooms, as well as ample study space, will open to students in January 2020. This will be a huge addition to campus, giving students the very best experience. Before that, towards the end of 2019, the National Buried Infrastructure Facility, located behind SportEx and Estates West will be completed, providing a unique space for leading-edge research. Around the same time, the Business School extension will be finished, allowing better spaces for staff. Refurbishments to Frankland, which will provide high-quality music practice rooms and a recording studio, as well as teaching spaces and offices, will also come to an end later on in 2019. By September 2020,

the new School of Engineering and UK Railway Research and Innovation Network UKRRIN facility will open, bringing together many disciplines into one state-of-the-art building. Looking even further ahead, the Molecular Sciences Building, which will go on part of the land made available following the demolition of the Munrow Sports Centre, will begin development in 2020, with completion due in 2022. This will provide a hub for the School of Chemistry, as well as facilities for colleagues in Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences (GEES).

At the heart of all of this work is the experience of our students, staff and the community. To find out more, visit: www.birmingham.ac.uk/building



CAMPUS CURIOSITIES

What is it?

Kente textile, Ewe, 20th century, Research and Cultural Collections

Where is it?

Research and Cultural Collections Study Centre, 32 Pritchatts Road, (viewable by appointment, please email rcc@contacts.bham.ac.uk)

This cloth was made by weaving narrow strips of fabric on a horizontal treadle loom, which were later stitched together edge-to-edge, a technique unique to the type of textile known as Kente. This Kente comes from the Ewe people of Ghana and Togo. Renowned for their rich array of colours and geometric designs with representational inlaid motifs, Ewe Kentes are revered by their wearers as symbols of pride. This particular Kente is likely to have been worn by a man, wrapped around the body and draped over the left shoulder. Kente cloth is worn on occasions of ceremonial importance. In Ewe culture, representational bird motifs such as

the ones found on this textile have an associated proverbial meaning, recalling the saying 'a bird that grows feathers will always fly' – perhaps this specific Kente was commissioned to mark a rite of passage into adulthood.

The art of weaving is found across the continent and has flourished in Western Africa since the 11th century when Muslim merchants came to do trade. When exposed to Islam, religious codes of modesty inspired a more voluminous silhouette; large textiles came into fashion, local textile production was enhanced and its longevity ensured.

Find out more

This piece was written by Oskar Lundin, the 2019 International Museums and Collections Award recipient from Lund University. You can find out more about the West African textile collection and the work carried out by Oskar during his placement by visiting our blog: <http://rcc-redmarley.tumblr.com>



Chancellor's column

We held 23 graduation ceremonies this summer and I was privileged to preside over some of them. As always, I come away from each ceremony not only buoyed by the happy atmosphere of celebration by the graduates and their families but also inspired. As someone who has built a business from scratch, I have seen that one of the characteristics of an entrepreneur is non-stop, restless innovation and always trying to do things that are different and better. Over the past years that I have been privileged to be the Chancellor of our great university, I have seen the non-stop progress and the way in which the University never stands still. So much of this is tangibly visible including the new ultra-modern library, the amazing sports centre with Birmingham's first 50-metre pool and facilities that will be used in the 2022 Commonwealth Games, the Green Heart, the University hotel...

And this attitude is also continually demonstrated by our students. Be it in the Annual Guild Awards where the students showcase their wide-ranging creative talents, and the way in which our students don't just excel in their studies, don't just excel in their extracurricular activities but also put back into the community through volunteering and leadership roles – always going the extra mile!

What I also always notice at our degree ceremonies is how international we are as a university. As the President of UKCISA (UK Council for International Student Affairs), which looks after the 450,000 international students in the UK and by virtue of being the co-chair of the UK Parliament's All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for International Students, I have observed how our university showcases the immense benefit that international students bring to our universities, to our

communities and to our country. Not only do they contribute £26 billion to the economy but also enrich the experience of our domestic students and becoming lifelong and generation-long ambassadors for the UK. I have been a beneficiary of this, and I am a result of it, as both my grandfather and my mother graduated from the University of Birmingham leading to me attending a British university and now my children attending British universities too – four generations!

Thank you, the University of Birmingham for never standing still and for living our motto – *Per Ardua Ad Alta 'Through Efforts to High Things'!*

Lord Bilimoria is the founder and chairman of Cobra Beer, Chancellor of the University of Birmingham and the founding Chairman of the UK India Business Council.



Saving babies' lives

By the time you're reading this, the UK's National Screening Committee will be considering responses to a public consultation on its decision not to include pulse oximetry in the Newborn and Infant Physical Exam (NIPE), which every newborn baby undergoes: the University has been leading the call to reverse this decision.

Pulse oximetry screening is a safe, non-invasive, painless and simple test that has been shown to identify, consistently, babies with life-threatening heart defects before they become seriously unwell. It takes less than five minutes and involves a small probe wrapped around the baby's hand and foot and connected to a small, handheld machine that measures the baby's oxygen levels by shining a light through the skin.

The screening is currently used in around 40% of maternity units in the UK, after being devised through the PulseOx study, which was led by Professor Andrew Ewer, Professor of Neonatal Medicine at the University of Birmingham and Honorary Consultant Neonatologist at Birmingham Women's Hospital – where they have been routinely screening babies with pulse oximetry since 2009.

The PulseOx study involved 20,000 babies across the West Midlands and found that it was successful in diagnosing serious heart conditions developed in the womb, and other important conditions in newborn babies such as infections and breathing problems. These can go undetected during antenatal ultrasound scans and initial examinations, but PulseOx alone identified 165 babies with potentially serious illness that could have otherwise been missed.

Participants in the PulseOx study included members of staff from External Relations: Claire Doggett, Head of Campaigns and Reputation and Carla Amos, Director of Student Recruitment and Marketing. Claire said: *'I remember*

signing up to the trial and feeling really grateful that my new baby was going to be able to take part in this new screening opportunity. I had a really difficult time giving birth and don't recall the test being carried out – probably because it was so quick and painless – but I do recall vividly the huge sense of relief that my first-born baby, Sebastian, had no signs of any serious heart conditions. When offered the screening again for my second child Gabriel, I immediately said yes! It was a massive reassurance, which is something all new parents seek in those early days. Time has flown by so fast – Sebastian is now about to start secondary school and it is shocking that this screening is still not offered to all newborn babies 11 years on from that first trial.' Carla said: *'I recall signing up for the trial – it seemed such an important thing to do and the potential impact was huge. My sons were born a number of weeks before their due date, and even though they were premature we could still take part; it was in no way invasive, and given the range of checks and tests that newborn babies have to go through, was such a minor procedure. The outcome was a positive one for us but if heart defects had been identified in either of my sons the time saved in diagnosing the condition would've been critical.'*

There is a fear that the UK National Screening Committee's guidance will exacerbate the inequality provision and deter hospitals from implementing screening; potentially missing out on the early diagnosis of conditions in thousands of newborn babies.

According to Professor Ewer:

'Pulse oximetry screening in the UK is a postcode lottery and less than half of the babies born are offered this test depending on the hospital of birth. This is despite there being very strong global evidence that pulse oximetry screening is beneficial and cost-effective and that potential harms are not serious or common.'

'Between 1,400 and 2,100 babies in the UK are born with a critical congenital heart defect each year. With these conditions, the baby can look apparently healthy after birth but suddenly present with life-threatening collapse and many may die as a result.'

'Less than half of these conditions are diagnosed before birth and routine examinations miss up to one-third. Early identification significantly improves the outcome for these babies and in many cases can be life-saving. The same is true for the early identification of serious infections and breathing problems.'

'We'll share the outcome of the public consultation in due course, but in the meantime, I wanted to say a huge thank you to everyone who has supported us in shining the public and media spotlight on this critically important issue.'

To find out more about the campaign, and our work with charity partners, including Tiny Tickers, please visit www.birmingham.ac.uk/pulseox-screening