

BBK

LONDON'S EVENING UNIVERSITY



IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

HUMAN-CROCODILE RELATIONS
UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

BIRKBECK'S MAGAZINE 2016
Issue 35 bbk.ac.uk

On the road

TOURING THE UK'S
MICROMUSEUMS

The Compass Project

A NEW START FOR ASYLUM
SEEKERS IN LONDON

The Birkbeck Hours

MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPT
UNEARTHED

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Change is all around us, but at Birkbeck we do not forget that we are also agents of great change.

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Master's welcome

In a turbulent national and international environment, Birkbeck kept a steady course during the academic year 2015–2016.

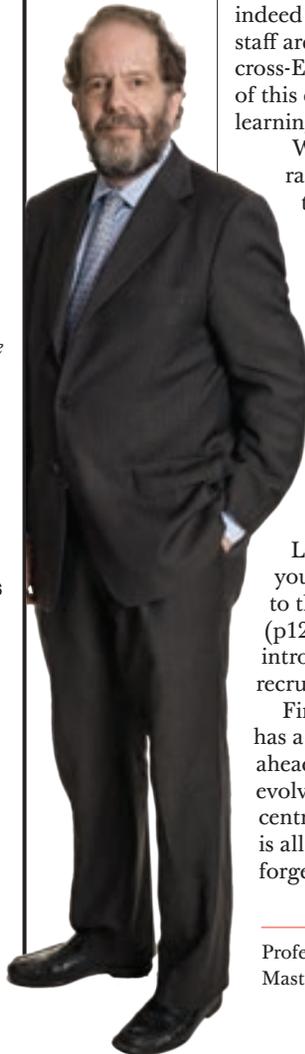
Political interest in our universities has never been greater. As a specialist in providing evening higher education, Birkbeck has often been at the sharp end of higher education policy changes, the most recent of which is the Higher Education and Research Bill. At every opportunity as this has moved through Parliament, we have continued to highlight the importance of part-time education, both for the individual learner and for our economy.

Yet this has been overshadowed by the uncertainties for universities that have followed the UK's vote in June 2016 to exit the European Union. Like all UK universities, Birkbeck welcomes many students from the EU – and indeed the rest of the world – and many of our staff are from EU countries and are involved in cross-EU research projects. We are very proud of this diversity, which enriches the vibrant learning experience at Birkbeck.

We don't yet know what the full ramifications of the UK's vote to leave the EU will be. We will be monitoring developments closely, and have welcomed the news that EU students beginning in the 2017–2018 academic year will continue to be eligible for government loans throughout their course.

The uncertain context aside, we continue to innovate. We are offering a new bespoke programme to improve access to higher education for asylum-seekers and refugees (p8–9); we are working with other University of London colleges to encourage parents of young people who are thinking of applying to those institutions to study at Birkbeck (p12–13); and this year, we have also introduced Birkbeck Talent, our in-house recruitment agency (p16–17).

Finally, you will see that this year's *BBK* has a very different look and feel. As we look ahead to our 200th anniversary in 2023, we are evolving, not ageing; our coat of arms remains central to our new look (p10–11). Change is all around us, but at Birkbeck we do not forget that we are also agents of great change.



Professor David Latchman CBE,
Master of Birkbeck

Attitude not age

No matter what their age, students at Birkbeck have determination, drive and passion for their subject in common. Two students talk about their experiences

Since the foundation of Birkbeck nearly 200 years ago, the College has been a place where people from all walks of life can come together to build the future they want. Since 2012, when Birkbeck began offering full-time undergraduate degrees, the student community has diversified further, with soaring numbers of young students enrolling at Birkbeck straight after finishing school.

Today, step into Birkbeck's Bloomsbury and Stratford campuses and you will see classrooms full of students from a broad spectrum of ages, cultures and career backgrounds. To celebrate this diversity, two shining ambassadors from either ends of the age spectrum – Sol (aged 72) and Joshua (aged 20) – ask each other about their experiences of learning at Birkbeck.



“

Undertaking a BA is something I've always had in mind. It's been my own quest.”

”

“

In all honesty, I could be 80 years of age and I would still want to do a BA. Whatever happened, I was going to have that piece of paper which said I have an undergraduate degree.

”

Sol Elimer, aged 72, BA Arts and Humanities

When Sol Elimer from Totteridge, London graduated from Birkbeck with a BA Arts and Humanities, it represented the completion of a lifelong goal.

“This was a tremendous achievement for me. Undertaking a BA is something I’ve always had in mind. It’s been my own quest,” she says.

Growing up in Spain in the 1940s and 1950s, opportunities were limited for women who planned to pursue higher education – let alone someone who was keen on art. Sol forged ahead with a career in medical administration, and when she moved to London in 1965, stepped into finance roles in education. She ultimately rose to the impressive position of registrar at two London colleges.

Sol did all this while raising two daughters, battling bouts of illness, perfecting her English language skills, and also attending art classes. Nor did she lose her ambition for undertaking a university degree. When her daughters had flown the nest and achieved degrees themselves, Sol turned her attention towards her own needs – and towards Birkbeck.

“Birkbeck has always been there. I knew it was only a matter of time,” she adds.

Sol hugely enjoyed her time studying at the College, though initially found it challenging to write academically in English. In doing the course part-time and drawing on the support of her lecturers, she was able to ease her way into her studies.

In November 2015, she collected her degree, marking the successful completion of her “quest”.

“In all honesty, I could be 80 years of age and I would still want to do a BA,” she said. “Whatever happened, I was going to have that piece of paper which said I have an undergraduate degree.”

Looking ahead, Sol now plans to focus her attention on producing her own artworks.



“

I believe as a young student myself, we're conditioned to believe that we need to go through university learning theory for three straight years and only afterwards get practical work experience when undergraduate study is over. Instead, Birkbeck allows us to have the best of both worlds.

”



Joshua Moses, aged 20, LLB student

“The most challenging aspect was overcoming different individuals’ reactions to me not going to a ‘traditional university’,” says Joshua Moses.

The 20-year-old student from Camberwell in south London joined Birkbeck’s full-time undergraduate Law programme straight after leaving high school. The idea of evening education was a source of some initial confusion for friends and family, who equated university purely with daytime learning.

“Once I informed them of the opportunity I would have to make myself more employable by gaining hands-on experience in the process of studying, they got to see a glimpse of the bigger picture of not just studying theory.”

For Joshua, who is currently in his third and final year of the LLB, evening education was actually the main motivation for choosing Birkbeck.

“My lectures happen between 6pm and 9pm, so that meant the rest of the day allowed me to work on my future. This allowed me to manage my time for myself. I’m able to use my free time in the day to gain valuable volunteering experience in practical legal settings, which helps me to transfer the skills I’m studying in the evening into a practical workplace environment, thus preparing me for life after my degree.”

As someone who has become something of an ambassador for the College, Joshua hopes he can help to broaden the minds of school leavers to the many educational and career pathways that are open to them. “I believe as a young student myself, we’re conditioned to believe that we need to go through university learning theory for three straight years and only afterwards get practical work experience when undergraduate study is over. Instead, Birkbeck allows us to have the best of both worlds.”

Joshua asked Sol ...

What advice do you have for students, young and mature?

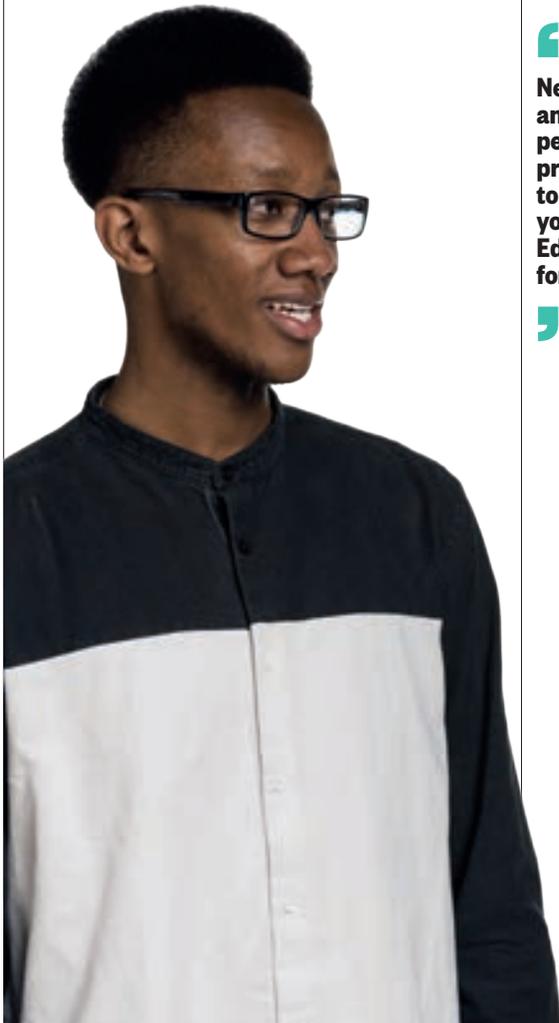
Sol: “I would say to them to pick something that they like, a subject that they will enjoy and be interested in, and to just do it. Because it’s a springboard to other things, and the satisfaction that comes with it is like a ray of sun.”

What challenges have you found as a mature learner?

Sol: “What I would say is that as you get older, the retentive process of your brain becomes more vulnerable. That can make you feel insecure. I think it’s just something you need to be aware of, but not worry about. What’s important is to allow yourself time, read things over a few times, and to make notes.”

What was your favourite thing about your degree?

Sol: “What was fantastic for me was that it opened a door to literature. In this way it really enhances and opens up your mind. And on top of that, there was also the fantastic support from the teachers. If you want them, they are there.”



Sol asked Joshua ...

If you imagine your future, what does it look like?

Joshua: “I imagine my future to consist of doing what I love to do most; which is advocating on behalf of others and finding solutions to some of the most complex legal issues out there.”

What advice do you have for older students?

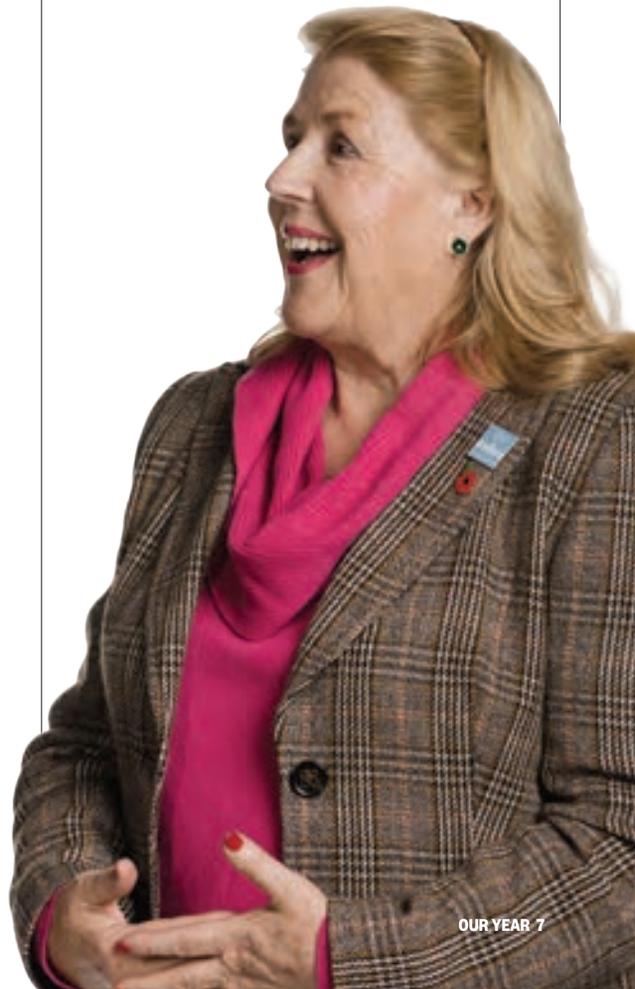
Joshua: “Persevere and achieve. You may hear misconceptions like ‘you’re too old to study’, or ‘university is for young students’, but never allow another person’s prejudice to become your burden. Education is for all.”

What motivates you?

Joshua: “Other people’s life experiences motivate me most. Knowing that someone has been through a challenge, or had an experience that I have not had, helps me to navigate my way through life by learning from that person’s experience and drawing from their ability to drive through whatever that experience may be – good or bad.”



Never allow another person’s prejudice to become your burden. Education is for all.



The Compass Project

A new initiative offers a life-changing opportunity to asylum seekers in London



Aylum seekers and refugees in London will have the opportunity to change their lives, thanks to the Compass Project at Birkbeck initiative.

This new venture will enable Birkbeck to offer 20 asylum seekers per year a fully funded place on any undergraduate or postgraduate certificate course. This will help them to achieve a valuable qualification, recognised in the UK, while also providing a platform for further university study.

Overcoming barriers

“Asylum seekers are a vulnerable group, with many having experienced incredibly traumatic events before their arrival in the UK,” says Rebecca Murray from Article 26, a charity that the College consulted before launching the programme and which works with universities to provide advice and guidance on supporting students who are seeking asylum in the UK. “Education offers the prospect of rehabilitation, of providing hope for creating a new life.”

“Their immigration status means asylum seekers are treated as international students, so they have to pay tuition fees at an international rate,” explains Murray. “Secondly, asylum seekers aren’t eligible for student loan support for their studies from the Student Loans Company, meaning no financial backing to pay their tuition fees or maintenance.”

“They also have to navigate what can seem to be a bewilderingly complex academic system and culture,” she adds. “The unfamiliarity can be overwhelming.”

The new Birkbeck programme aims to help overcome these barriers through offering both funded places on its courses for asylum seekers taking part in the programme, and a specifically tailored programme of additional support to smooth their transition to universities in a British context. This will include help in getting to grips with a different academic context and student culture.

Pastoral support

“There is a real need for what we are now offering,” says Caroline McDonald, Head of Widening Access at Birkbeck. “Traditional higher education, which often means full-time daytime study, just isn’t feasible for asylum seekers or refugees. These are people who are arriving in the UK who, more often than not, have had a severely disrupted education, yet are intelligent, enthusiastic and keen to resume their studies.”

A group of academics and administrators from across the College, who wanted to help forced migrants, worked together with the Widening Access team and Article 26, as well as with Student Action for Refugees (STAR)



Education offers the prospect of rehabilitation, of providing hope for creating a new life.



– which includes students from Birkbeck – and Haringey Council, to tailor the pastoral elements of the programme. A previous partnership with the Council has already successfully increased the number of people from Tottenham studying certificate-level qualifications at Birkbeck; and the College has already welcomed one academic fleeing the conflict in Syria through work with the Council for At-Risk Academics (Cara).

Open days offering specific advice on legal aid, recognition of foreign qualifications and careers advice, as well as ongoing support from a personal tutor and a student buddy to help new students to adjust to student life in Bloomsbury, will be some of the additional services offered as part of the new initiative.

A springboard to a brighter future

As a key partner in the project, the Z Foundation is providing funding over three years to support the outreach programme, helping to ensure that it becomes a sustainable part of Birkbeck’s work to build links with underrepresented communities at the College. A link was forged through Birkbeck alumnus Liam Colley, Partner at business consultancy AlixPartners and a graduate of the College’s MSc Economics programme.

“Partnering with Birkbeck appealed because of the College’s strong record in providing higher education for Londoners who might not otherwise have a chance to study at university,” says Colley. “The entire approach of the College is structured towards recognising that students come to their studies with a life, with work and commitments outside of the library or seminar room – and to supporting those that might have additional needs and require support with their studies as a result. This is particularly important in the case of asylum seekers.

“I’ve experienced first-hand the benefits a cosmopolitan mix of people in the classroom can offer – it is such a rich environment to learn from, not only academically but professionally and culturally, too – ideal, in fact, for anyone wanting a springboard to a brighter future and to rebuild their life in London.”

Professor David Latchman CBE, Master of Birkbeck, adds: “The generous support of the Z Foundation, together with additional funding we have allocated from the College to match their donation, will ensure that this initiative becomes embedded in Birkbeck’s work to reach out to vulnerable communities in London in the years ahead. It is a fitting continuation of our mission started by George Birkbeck nearly 200 years ago: to bring education to every Londoner, regardless of means or background, who wants to better themselves.”

Left: Refugees line up to board the Ariadne ferry at the port of Mytilene in Lesbos, Greece (Tom Stoddart/Getty Images)

The Birkbeck College coat of arms

This year, our coat of arms has come under new scrutiny. Birkbeck is enormously proud of its heritage and for almost 200 years our mission – of giving working Londoners access to world-class education – has remained unchanged. In developing the colourful new look of *BBK*, we re-visited our coat of arms and explored its meaning.

An institution's coat of arms offers a glimpse into the history of the people and places involved in its establishment and development; Birkbeck's was awarded to the College in 1949. It contains various elements that reveal aspects of the College's history and continue to resonate with its mission and work today.

The coat of arms continues to be an important emblem for the College, usually appearing now without the crest, for example in the College's logo. The owl – perhaps the most recognisable element of the coat of arms – is a central device in Birkbeck's new visual identity and now exists not only on our logo, but will appear in many other places, such as on the College's social media channels.

Crown and anchor

The crown and anchor represent the public house on the Strand, London where the first public meeting at which the College was founded (originally as the Mechanics' Institution) was held on 11 November 1823. Around 2000 people flocked to the Crown and Anchor Tavern on the Strand to witness Dr George Birkbeck and his supporters, including Jeremy Bentham, JC Hobhouse MP and H Brougham MP, discuss education for the working men of London.

Lamps

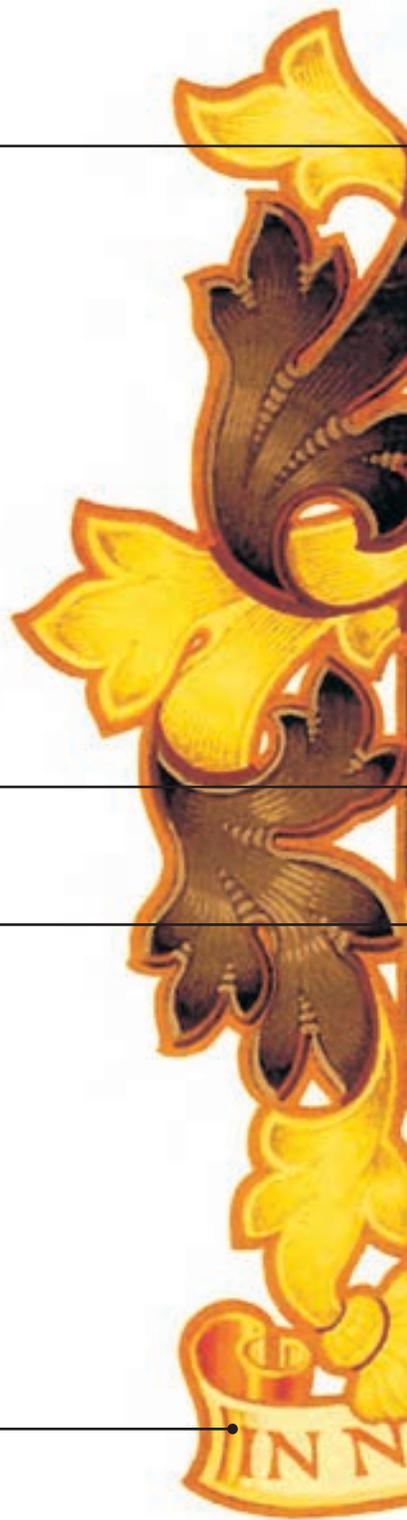
The lamps are the customary symbols of learning – and even more apt for a College where study takes place after dark.

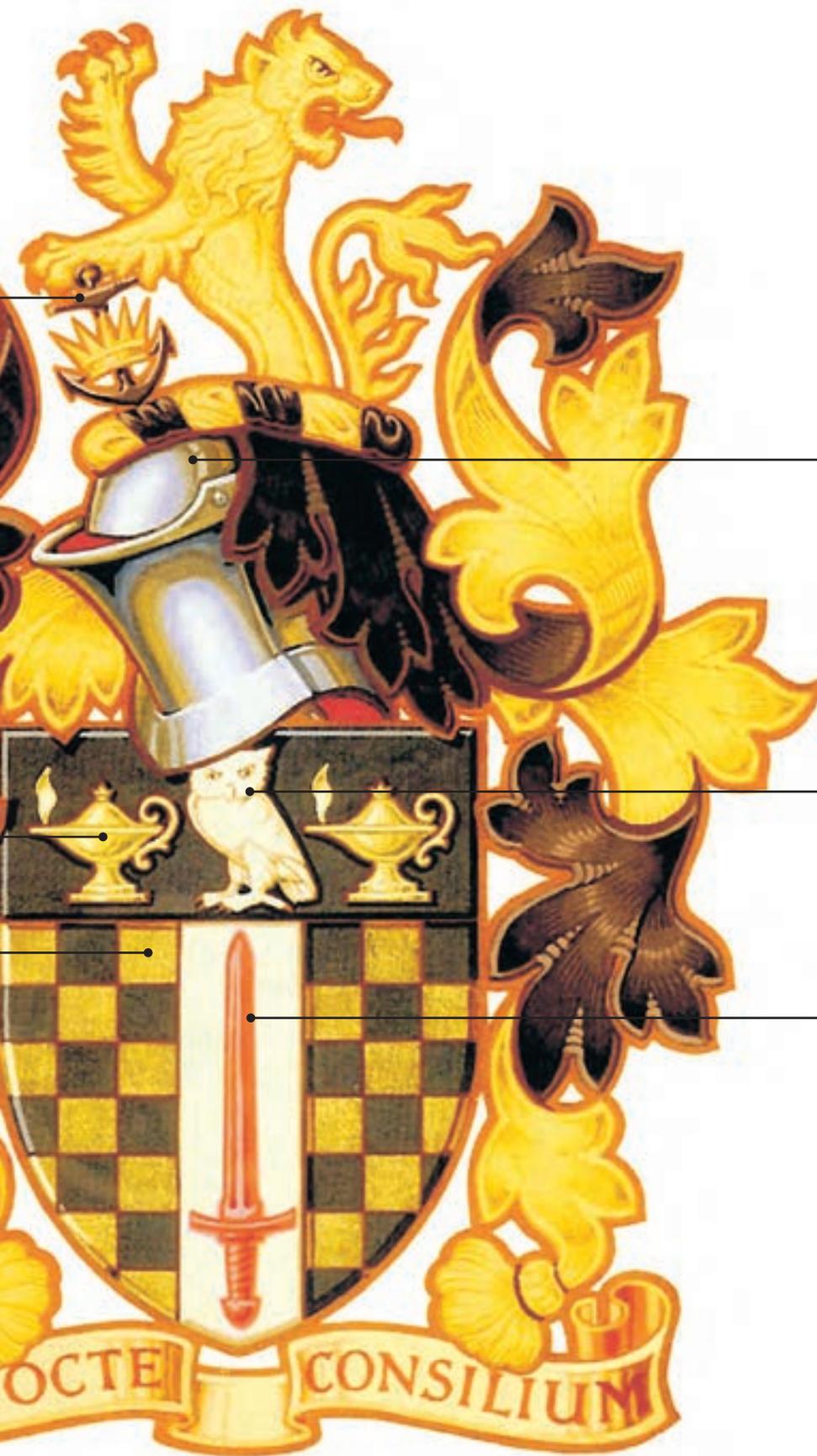
Chequy

The chequered background (known as chequy), like the lion in the crest, is a reference to the Coat of Arms of the Birkbeck family. The College took on its founder's name in 1866, changing from the Mechanics' Institution to the Birkbeck Literary and Scientific Institution.

In nocte consilium

The College's motto loosely translates to 'advice comes in the night'. One of its first usages is found in a 16th century book of emblems, accompanying an image of an owl – associated with the goddess of wisdom, Minerva – published in Geneva by the printer Jacques Chouet.





Helmet

The helmet in the crest is included in all Coats of Arms awarded to corporations.

Owl

The owl represents Minerva, a symbol of knowledge and wisdom – two qualities which the College continues to impart to its students through its research-led teaching. The fact that owls are nocturnal creatures is also appropriate for a College whose students study by night.

Sword

The sword appears by special permission of the Corporation of the City of London to record the fact that for the first century and a quarter of its existence the College building stood within the boundaries of the City. The College was initially located in the Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane. It moved to the Breems Building in Fetter Lane in 1884, and from this location to the current site on Malet Street/Torrington Place in 1952.

Following in their children's footsteps

An exciting collaboration aims to introduce Birkbeck to parents of disadvantaged young people thinking about university, and encourage them to consider the College as an option for themselves

Over its nearly 200-year history, Birkbeck has developed innovative means of highlighting its unique model of study to new groups, making it possible for non-traditional students with the desire and aspiration to gain a university qualification.

A new initiative launched by the College, in partnership with other institutions which are part of the University of London, seeks to reach the parents of secondary school pupils who are unlikely to attend university and who are being targeted by these institutions to encourage them to apply.

Caroline McDonald, Head of Widening Access at Birkbeck, says: "Supporting and recruiting students who are the first person in their family to go to university is one of the key criteria identified by the Office for Fair Access for measuring universities' success at widening participation.

"In light of these criteria, we know that parents attending events with these young people at other colleges most likely won't have had experience of university and may believe that it's not for them – when, through studying in the evening at Birkbeck, it can be."

In a two-pronged approach, while other University of London institutions focus their attention on young people through tailored open days and outreach programmes, Birkbeck's Widening Access team also comes along to these events to engage parents, who themselves haven't attended university and may never have thought it is something they could aspire to as well. The team delivers workshops and runs information stands to introduce the parents to Birkbeck and

to the prospect of studying themselves.

"If we are going to make progress towards improving social mobility, then it is important to see parents not just as gateways to children, but as recipients of educational achievements in their own right and as a part of the long-term solution to tackling inequalities among disadvantaged groups," says Caroline McDonald. "They are an audience that we really wanted to reach with the message that it's never too late, and that Birkbeck offers a way of learning that could fit around their role as parents and other responsibilities."

"As well as the opportunity to do something for themselves – improving their personal confidence as well as potentially their careers – studying at Birkbeck gives parents the opportunity to exemplify the power of university education to their children," she adds.

Family learning

Bebie Waller (pictured right) attended an outreach event at UCL in April 2016 with her 14-year-old son Jack. While there, she went to a talk by Birkbeck's Widening Access team. Bebie says: "I had an epiphany. It sounded really exciting and I thought – that could be for me!"

Bebie is now enrolled on a Certificate of Higher Education in Film and Media Studies. Shortly before starting her studies, she said: "I'm really excited about studying film, because it's been my passion my whole life. My son thinks it is terrific that I am going to university and has really encouraged me. It is so nice to know that he is behind me and now we can study together!"

The collaboration with other institutions within the University of London falls under a strand of widening access work called 'Family Learning'. This ensures that Birkbeck's learning and outreach activities encompass the needs of both adults and young people, so that the College continues to provide opportunities for mature learners, while also attracting younger students who would not choose to follow a path of traditional daytime study.

Right:

Bebie Waller in Gordon Square gardens, Bloomsbury



“

My son thinks it is terrific that I am going to university and has really encouraged me. It is so nice to know that he is behind me and now we can study together!

”

Awards and recognitions

Birkbeck staff have been recognised by major grants and by national and international academic institutions



Awards

Research by **DR PHILIP POGGE VON STRANDMANN**, Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, into the processes that maintain our long-term climate and keep the Earth habitable has been awarded a €2m European Research Council grant. The five-year grant will support research into the carbon cycle using novel 'non-traditional' isotope geochemistry and advanced Earth System modelling. Dr Pogge von Strandmann has also been awarded the 2016 Max Hey Medal by the Mineralogical Society, which recognises excellent research by early career academics in the fields of mineralogy, crystallography, petrology or geochemistry.

Two Department of Psychology

academics investigating the complexities of human perception have won Leverhulme Trust grants together valued at nearly £400,000. **DR CLARE PRESS**'s study will look at the 'paradoxical' influences of prediction on perception. **DR MARIE SMITH** and her co-investigators will investigate human face recognition processes – our ability to 'read' information from faces – where these processes are compromised by the presence of the neuro-development disorders Williams Syndrome and Down Syndrome.

A Leverhulme Artist in Residence award has been awarded to **PROFESSOR ZHU HUA**, Department of Applied Linguistics and

Communication, enabling her to work with visual artist Ella McCartney to explore multi-modal aspects of translinguaging – the boundaries between language and visual images – and how people engage with a visual mode of communication.

A Leverhulme Research Fellowship for **DR CAROLINE GOODSON**, Department of History, Classics and Archaeology, will enable her to research places of agriculture, such as vegetable gardens, orchards and vineyards, found within Italian cities in the early Middle Ages. The identification of how gardens came to be in the city, and who owned them, will provide a new view of society and politics in medieval cities and the converging economic interests around them.

THE PEARS INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF ANTISEMITISM has been awarded a €100,000 grant to lead a pan-European research project commissioned by the EVZ Foundation, Germany. The project, 'Immigration, Antisemitism and Toleration in Western Europe Today', involves research in the UK, France, Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands.

Academics in the

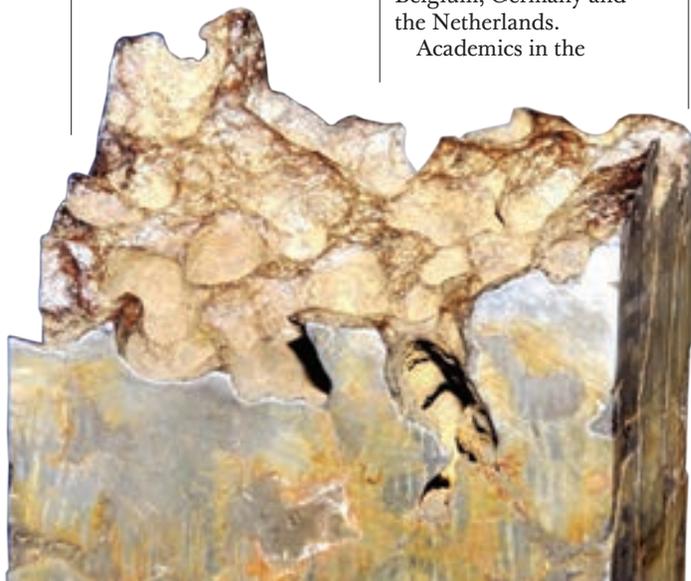


Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences have been awarded a grant by the Science and Technology Council to support their Moon, Mars and Mercury research projects. The grant, awarded to **PROFESSOR IAN CRAWFORD**, **PROFESSOR HILARY DOWNES** and **DR PETER GRINDROD**, will support their work on what meteorites can tell us about the other planets of the Solar System. Identifying the locations on Mars from which Martian meteorites found on Earth are derived will help us to understand the geological evolution of Mars.

A Fulbright All Disciplines Award has been given to **DR WILLIAM ACKAH** (pictured above), Department of Geography, Environment and Development Studies. Dr Ackah will spend his Fulbright year at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, carrying out research on the impact of urban regeneration schemes on African American church congregations.

Recognitions

PROFESSOR MARTIN ELMER, who leads the Brain and Behaviour Lab in the Department of Psychological Sciences, has been elected a Fellow of the British Academy, the UK's national academy for the promotion



of the humanities and social sciences. Professor Eimer's Fellowship was awarded in recognition of his outstanding research into facial perception and recognition and its impairment in prosopagnosia, or face blindness.

Athena SWAN bronze awards, which recognise commitment to tackling gender inequality in higher education, have been awarded to two departments in the School of Science.

Professor Carolyn Moores accepted the award for the **DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES** in December 2015. This was followed in April 2016 by a bronze award for the Department of Psychological Sciences. Dr Belinda Brooks-Gordon, Assistant Dean for Equalities in the School of Science, said the Athena SWAN journey was "necessary and satisfying".

PROFESSOR HILARY DOWNES, Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, has been elected President of the Mineralogical Society of Great Britain and Ireland for two years.



PROFESSOR JEAN-MARC DEWAELE, Department of Applied Linguistics and Communication, has been elected President of the International Association of Multilingualism for 2016–2018.

Literary accolades have been bestowed on **PROFESSOR NIKOLAUS WACHSMANN** (pictured below), Department of History, Classics and Archaeology, for his book, *KL: A history of the Nazi concentration camps*. As well as being named the *Wall Street Journal's* Best Book of 2015 and the *Kirkus Review's* Best History Book 2015, it has won the 2016 Jewish Quarterly Wingate Literary Prize (the only prize of its kind in the UK, which attracts nominations worldwide), the US-based Mark Lynton History Prize 2016 and the 2016 Wolfson History Prize. Professor Wachsmann has also received follow-on funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council for his project 'The Nazi concentration camps: An online resource'.

PROFESSOR SUE JACKSON, Director of the Centre for

Transformative Practice in Learning and Teaching, has been appointed a Principal Fellow with the Higher Education Academy in recognition of the strategic impact of her work and her commitment to wider strategic leadership in teaching.

THE RT HON SIR TERENCE ETHERTON, Visiting Professor in the School of Law, has been appointed Master of the Rolls. The appointment makes Sir Terence head of the civil judiciary and the second most senior judge in England and Wales.

PROFESSOR EDWARD MELHUISH, Department of Psychological Sciences, was made an officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the 2016 Queen's birthday honours, for his services to social science. An established figure in the study of social and communicative development from birth to adulthood, Professor Melhuish has been influential in shaping government policy on early education and care, parenting, child poverty and disadvantage, and child development and social policy.

ELIZABETH CHARLES, Assistant Director of E-Services and Systems at Birkbeck, has become the first member of staff to gain certified membership accreditation from the Association for Learning Technology (CMALT), a peer-based professional accreditation scheme developed for people working in learning technologies.

PROFESSOR JACQUELINE BARNES, Department of Psychology, has been elected a Fellow of the Academy of

Social Sciences for her outstanding contribution to social science. Professor Barnes' research looks at children's behavioural and emotional development, and the importance of community characteristics in development and evaluation of government services for families and children, including Sure Start and the Nurse-Family Partnership scheme.



BIRKBECK EMERITUS PROFESSOR MICHAEL THOMPSON has won the Royal Society of Chemistry Anne Bennett Memorial Award for Distinguished Service. The award recognises his outstanding contribution to the development and recognition of the work of the Society's Analytical Division and its Analytical Methods Committee.

Images (clockwise from top left): Globe (*iStockphoto.com*); Dr William Ackah; OBE medal (*Ministry of Defence*); Mother together with her sick son (*iStockphoto.com*); Professor Nikolaus Wachsmann; a 100-pound Mundrabilla meteorite sample found in Australia in the 1970s (*NASA Image & Video Library*)

Birkbeck's got talent

To connect businesses hungry for skilled employees and students looking to take the next step in their career, Birkbeck has established a new in-house recruitment agency, Birkbeck Talent. Student Gina Liapati, studying MPhil Management, describes her experience of finding work at an enterprise software company

Looking for a job through Birkbeck Talent made complete sense to me. I came to the UK from Greece with a previous Master's degree orientated around communications, and I wanted to combine that with a role relevant to my studies at Birkbeck in the Department of Management.

When I approached Birkbeck Talent, I was working in a restaurant to get by, and was desperate for a job in marketing. By the time I went to the team there, I had sent out over 60 applications for roles in the sector and I was getting really despondent that I would ever find work.

When I approached Birkbeck Talent, they referred me to the Birkbeck Careers and Employability Service, who helped me to structure my CV. Birkbeck Talent put me forward for relevant roles that had been hand-picked for people like me. Then, when I was offered an interview, they gave me a mock interview, so I had the opportunity to perfect my interview technique before meeting with the employer.

Within a month, Birkbeck Talent had helped me to secure a position at Craft.co, a small start-up that helps young professionals land their dream jobs – what a coincidence! I learnt so much from the CEO, Ilya Levtoy; even more importantly, Ilya believed in me and gave me the confidence to achieve my career aspirations.

When I finished my internship with Craft,

“

My employers have really understood my commitments, as they had recruited me through Birkbeck Talent and already knew I'd be juggling studying with my work.

”

Below: Gina Liapati at Salesforce



I approached Birkbeck Talent again. As I had acquired a whole range of new skills, Birkbeck Talent put me forward for other marketing roles, including one with a leading enterprise software company, Salesforce.

I really enjoy coming to work – the culture is very employee-centric and there's a great social scene, with lots of parties, snacks and team activities. I'll start my day by catching up on developments from the previous day. My role is as a marketing intern, so I work with both managers and marketing specialists in my department to support their marketing campaigns and help put these into action to market their product, reaching the people clients want to target.

In both of these roles, my employers have really understood my commitments, as they had recruited me through Birkbeck Talent and already knew I'd be juggling studying with my work. My course, which has included modules on areas like brand management, has come in extremely useful in my current job.

So as well as finding a position I love, I'm getting experience which links in with my studies. What will stay with me forever, though, is the boost to my confidence. That's priceless.

For more information on Birkbeck Talent, including working with the service to recruit students, visit bbk.ac.uk/talent

3,239
*students
registered
with
Birkbeck
Talent*

447
*employers
involved*

685
*roles
worked on*

708
*students
attended
interviews*

304
*students
placed in
paid roles*

*Data correct as of
20 December 2016*



Key feminist thinkers

Why has Birkbeck attracted so many high-profile feminist public intellectuals?

In 2016, Routledge published a book entitled *Fifty-one Key Feminist Thinkers*, which included Birkbeck academics Professor Laura Mulvey and Professor Dame Marina Warner.

They feature alongside distinguished figures such as Sappho, Doris Lessing, Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir and Mary Wollstonecraft, and were the only two living British women to be included.

As Professor Hilary Fraser, Dean of the School of Arts, noted: “It is no accident that they and other distinguished feminist public intellectuals choose to work at Birkbeck. The work they do speaks to the enlightened ethos and radical tradition that defines us.”

Alongside Professor Mulvey and Professor Warner the College has provided an academic home for other feminist public intellectuals, including Joanna Bourke, Jacqueline Rose, Esther Leslie, Sasha Roseneil, Gail Lewis, Lynne Segal, Sue Jackson and our President, Baroness Bakewell.

Asked by *BBK* about their reasons for choosing to work at Birkbeck, the women were united in identifying the College’s student body and its attitude to widening participation as one reason. Professor Joanna Bourke said: “The unique nature of our student body has contributed to our feminist profile. Birkbeck facilitates discussion and debate between generations of students and teachers. We bring our life experiences to the classroom, which helps us interrogate the realities of society in a rigorous way.”

Professor Jacqueline Rose agreed: “It is above all, even if by no means only, women whose educational and career paths are interrupted or, to put it most simply, who often need a second chance”. Professor Warner added: “The flexibility of evening teaching makes a huge difference to women coming back to education”.

The College’s reputation for fostering feminist approaches to research across the disciplines has also played a part in drawing these key thinkers to Birkbeck. Professor Rose cites the fact that



she had already collaborated with many feminist thinkers at Birkbeck before joining the College in 2014.

Professor Mulvey says that although she knew little of Birkbeck’s history when she joined from the British Film Institute in 1999, she did know that the College had ‘rescued’ Rosalind Franklin, the pioneering crystallographer whose work was vital to discovering the structure of DNA, when Franklin couldn’t find a place where she could be taken seriously. So Professor Mulvey had always thought of Birkbeck as having this “wonderful heroic moment that stood out in the history of women and academia”.

Above:
Laura Mulvey
(Karen Knorr)



The work they do speaks to the enlightened ethos and radical tradition that defines us.



Professor Mulvey feels that, at a time when some institutions are bending under the pressures of new management systems and current demands, Birkbeck has succeeded in maintaining intellectual standards and remaining a hospitable environment for academics who do not necessarily think along conventional lines.

Professor Bourke sums this up, describing the College as “a hotbed for radical thinking”. She concludes: “Feminism was, and remains, the most emancipatory politics of modern times. It is both a way of thinking and of acting. Both flourish in an environment that is dedicated to improving the world.”

MAY ADADOL INGAWANIJ studied for her PhD with Professor Laura Mulvey. May is a moving image theorist and curator specialising in Southeast Asia and now teaches at the Centre for Research and Education in Arts and Media, University of Westminster. May tells *BBK* how Professor Mulvey’s work has influenced her own intellectual development and career:

“Laura gave me far more time than is usually admitted in the instrumentalised format of present-day PhD study to try to name the blindness of the spectacular royalism in Thailand that I had grown up in. For much of this time I don’t think either of us was sure I would manage to write the thesis, but eventually I got there, and only because she never stopped taking me seriously, and gave me time to try things out, to make mistakes but eventually get back to the table to string together some more words. She trusted this student, and in this precious pedagogical sense taught me to think and write. I have such fond memories of climbing the stairs to her old attic office for tutorials that often took the form of long pauses to give time to let a thought come stumbling.

“An essential part of Laura’s ’68 cinephilia is left-wing internationalism. I discovered Indian films in one of the first classes I had with her. Later, I came to see that the way she prioritised teaching films from the south, and her writing and support of student research to help grow this field, was a legacy of that moment’s third-worldist passion. Her feminism shaped the field of film studies, and equally her spirit of friendship and curiosity.

“As a teacher, Laura inhabits the distinctiveness of cinema. The scale of its international circulation as the twentieth-century’s industrial art form necessitates that film studies be grounded in intellectual and pedagogical ethics of openness to the world. With this comes the possibility of making unusual connections. I’ll not forget the sense of vertigo reading Laura’s text on Douglas Sirk for the first time. I felt the wonder of seeing anew the films I’d loved since childhood. I had discovered them early in life because my parents had cried over them in Bangkok’s CinemaScope theatres during the 1950s and 1960s, and they had carried these films inside them long enough to be compelled to make videotape recordings off the TV for me to watch in the 1980s.

“Above all, Laura teaches me that it is imperative to be at once a mother, feminist, teacher, thinker. And she continues to show that you must never, ever stop.”

Events

Highlights of Birkbeck's public lectures, events and conferences in 2016

Science Week

Birkbeck's inaugural Rosalind Franklin Lecture, given by distinguished Oxford crystallographer Professor Elspeth Garman, was one of many highlights of this year's Science Week. Her illuminating talk – 'From chocolate to drug discovery: what crystallography has done for the world' – provided a context for Dr Rosalind Franklin's research and explained why the work of crystallographers is essential to scientific and medical advances.

The School of Science welcomed members of the public, staff, students and their guests to nine lectures throughout the week, as well as: a film screening and a discussion of *Life Story: the Race for the Double Helix*; a panel discussion on what inspired Birkbeck women scientists in their careers; tours of the Department of Earth Science's new petrology lab; and tours of the Department of Psychology's Mace Experimental Research Laboratories in Neuroscience, where different techniques are used to investigate perceptual, motor, cognitive and emotional processing.

bbk.ac.uk/scienceweek



Stiglitz: "Inequality is bad for democracies"

Nobel Prize-winning economist Professor Joseph Stiglitz (below left) declared that "inequality is bad for business, bad for the economy, bad for our democracies, and bad for society" in a lecture hosted by Birkbeck's Department of Politics. "Inequality is a political choice, not an economic necessity," he added.

Introduced by Birkbeck Professor of Public Policy Deborah Mabbett, Professor Stiglitz – University Professor at Columbia University in New York – described the enormous growth in inequality over the last 30 years, especially in the USA, with the UK mirroring that trend. The lecture was followed by questions from the audience chaired by the Rt Hon John McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor and an alumnus of the department.



Law on Trial

One week before the UK's June 2016 referendum to decide its future in Europe, the European Union was 'put on trial' at the School of Law's annual week-long programme of public lectures and panel discussions.

Experts from across Europe joined Birkbeck academics to offer an examined critique of the political, legal and financial implications of the upcoming referendum result. The timing transformed the week's programme into enlightening and mind-changing discussions on the futures of everyone living within and without the continent of Europe.

'Law on Trial 2016: the European Union at the Crossroads' brought together academic staff, recognised internationally as authorities in their field, to investigate issues that have challenged the notion of an ever closer union between European Union member states.



bbk.ac.uk/lawontrial

The Alec Rodger Memorial Lecture

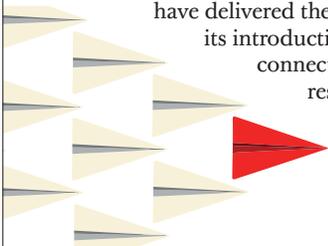
The annual Alec Rodger Memorial Lecture was delivered by Dame Sandra Dawson, speaking on 'Bridging the Gap: From Weber to Where?' to an audience of academics, students and professionals. The annual memorial lecture is held in honour of Birkbeck's first Professor of Organizational Psychology, Alec Rodger. Speakers with a distinguished record in academia, public service or industry are invited to cover topics relating to the field of Organizational Psychology.

Drawing on her experiences in academia and industry, Dame Sandra discussed the challenges for leadership and the perennial question of how to bridge the gap between the leader and the led. She also spoke extensively about how her own experiences, in a variety of contexts and institutions, have helped to edify her understanding of leadership.

As the current Non-Executive Chair of Oxfam, and having also held non-executive positions at Barclays, JP Morgan and the Riverside NHS Trust among others, Dame Sandra's observations brought a wealth of experience to accompany a life-long academic interest in the field. She joins a list of distinguished guests to

have delivered the lecture since its introduction in 1983, connecting Birkbeck research with

senior figures from private and public positions.



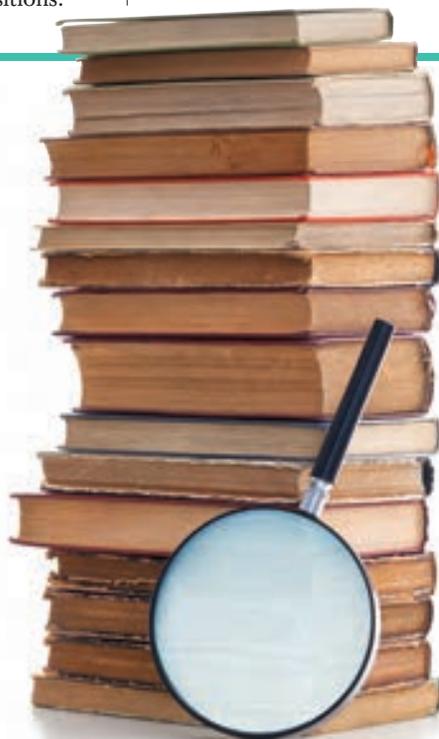
Universities Minister Jo Johnson visits Birkbeck

Universities Minister Jo Johnson (above, right) visited Birkbeck's Bloomsbury campus in January 2016. He met with Professor David Latchman, CBE, Master of Birkbeck (above, left), as well as many of the College's students of varying ages and backgrounds, and heard their experiences of the transformative power of part-time higher education.

Arts Week

Theatre and performance, architecture, photography, portraiture, poetry and fiction all featured prominently in this year's annual festival of the arts at Birkbeck. One focus this year was an exploration of the meaning of the contemporary – in a pop-up museum Birkbeck postgraduate students explored its meanings through art, photography and dramatic performance, while events highlighting teaching and research in the School of Arts included discussions on how the arts can most effectively engage with the concerns that dominate today's world.

Another of the festival's themes, exploration, was celebrated with an interdisciplinary event probing the

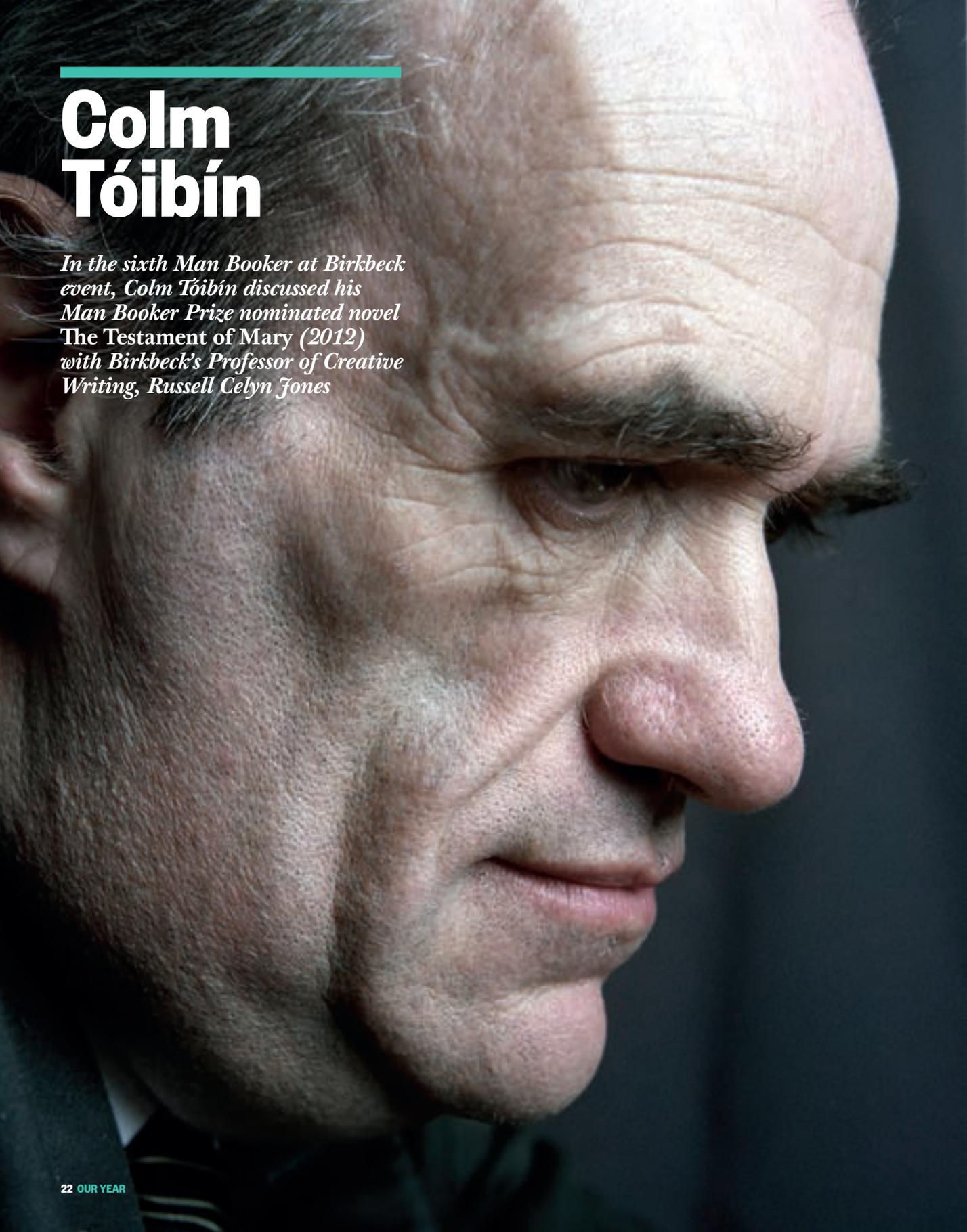


photographic experience of space, and an event with award-winning journalists to launch Birkbeck's new MA Investigative Reporting.

Walks through Modernist Bloomsbury and London's West End were led by experts in the history and architecture of the areas.

Elsewhere, Birkbeck academics Colin Teevan and David Eldridge talked about their scripting of, respectively, *Rebellion*, an acclaimed five-part television drama set against the events of the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin, and *The Scandalous Lady W*, a BBC dramatisation of the story of Lady Seymour Worsley.

bbk.ac.uk/artswEEK

A close-up, profile photograph of Colm Tóibín, looking downwards and to the right. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of his skin and the contours of his face. A teal horizontal line is positioned above the text.

Colm Tóibín

*In the sixth Man Booker at Birkbeck event, Colm Tóibín discussed his Man Booker Prize nominated novel **The Testament of Mary** (2012) with Birkbeck's Professor of Creative Writing, Russell Celyn Jones*

Tóibín's novel takes us back to the moment at which Christianity was born, an historical event heavily obscured by accreted layers of myth, competing proofs and intervening centuries of weighty theological debate, doctrine and practice.

For Tóibín, the task is no less than recovering, or reimagining, the full voice of Mary, the mother of Jesus and the Mother of God or *Theotokos*, the 'Birth Giver of God', in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, among others. Tóibín imagines her less-than-exalted, oblique responses to the life and death of her son and the foundational moments that articulated and established a radical, world-changing new theology and movement.

Tóibín's Mary is not the benign, silent icon we might know from Renaissance paintings or alabaster icons in hushed churches, with her sympathetic half-smile, commiserating upraised eyes and benevolently inclined head. This is a human – perhaps all-too-human – Mary, who wrestles with grief, incomprehension, anger, disappointment and guilt.

Mary is deeply ambivalent about her adult son, who, in one of the novel's most visceral moments, publicly rejects her, while she is insultingly dismissive of his followers, describing them as maladjusted miscreants and dropouts – men "unable to look a woman in the face".

The two disciples – possibly St Paul and St Thomas, although Tóibín is ambiguous – who hover over and guard Mary in Ephesus, after the crucifixion, earn her particular opprobrium; she even threatens to stab them if they dare to sit in the chair of her dead husband. Mary's refusal to understand herself in divine terms is Tóibín's quietly devastating challenge to Roman Catholic theology – there is no Annunciation or Nativity in this story.

Tóibín was raised in the Roman Catholic Church, and he described his youthful recitation of the Rosary as his "introduction to beauty in language". For Irish Catholics in the middle of the twentieth century, as for many Christians in different places and different periods, the Virgin mattered a great deal, as she had suffered human pain and so would listen and respond kind-heartedly to the prayers of ordinary sinners. "Nobody prayed to God the Father", Tóibín wryly observed. Tóibín thus felt a keen understanding of the need of early Christians to worship a mother figure.

The public reaction

Inevitably, there was interest from the interviewer and the audience about public reactions to such a controversial novel. Although affable and droll throughout, Tóibín was steely when asked about his right to pen such a story, absolutely asserting



Tóibín joked that a recent root canal treatment had felt akin to the writing process (although he admitted that this simile may have been born of the Valium he was given by his dentist).



his liberty to write about religious subjects. He joked that there was no outcry "in pagan England" and that the reception "wasn't really troublesome in Ireland", where a more avowedly liberal cultural environment has been fostered.

He remarked that the greatest outrage came in the United States, where people picketed the theatre where the story – which began life as a one-woman play – was first performed. Tóibín sympathetically observed that the emphasis on identity in American society means people "take enormous exception" to anything they feel is undermining their individuality.

Although the outcry was relatively muted – "there was no fatwa", Tóibín jested – he seemed entirely uninterested in becoming a poster boy for vociferous debates about religion and freedom of speech: "It wasn't brave", writing the novel, he said – "it was opportunistic". "Where there is faith, there must be doubt" and the literary imagination thrives in the spaces of silence and ambiguity that inevitably accompany any official historical retelling of events.

The pain of the writing process

For would-be writers in the audience, including students on Birkbeck's Creative Writing programmes, Tóibín joked that a recent root canal treatment had felt akin to the writing process (although he admitted that this simile may have been born of the Valium he was given by his dentist). He emphasised that writing involves "all the dull, dull, dull drilling of detail" and that pattern, form and structure may only become apparent at the end of the writing process.

He admitted that "technique is not enough" and, although he was willing to describe writing as "mystery", it is "not transcendently" so, he insisted. For Tóibín, the mystery is how an "idea, an image, a memory or a thing becomes, of its own accord, a rhythm". He urged students to write what they feel compelled to write. Writing thus emerges as a process of accretion and problem-solving. "Every sentence becomes a way of solving the problem the previous sentence gave you."

A rewarding partnership

This was the sixth Man Booker at Birkbeck event and this sprightly exchange confirmed yet again the success of this ongoing, rewarding partnership.

As Hilary Fraser, Executive Dean of Birkbeck's School of Arts, observed in her opening remarks, the Booker Prize Foundation and Birkbeck both share an ongoing, deep commitment to broadening knowledge and bringing the best of contemporary culture to the widest possible audience.

Left:
Colm Tóibín – *The Testament of Mary*
(Steve Pyke)

Sir Harvey McGrath

Birkbeck's Chair of Governors talks to BBK about his role

Sir Harvey McGrath has been Chair of Birkbeck's Board of Governors since 2010. He also holds Chair and Deputy Chair roles at a number of other educational institutions and business organisations and is a trustee of several charities. He was knighted in the 2016 New Year Honours for services to economic growth and public life.

What attracted you to the role of Chair of Governors at Birkbeck?

Given my own background, I have long been interested in helping people from all backgrounds to access a quality education. I grew up in Belfast and was educated at state school, before attending Cambridge University – an experience which utterly transformed the way I looked at the world. This is what Birkbeck does for its students, and the College captured my interest.

What are the governance challenges you have encountered that are specific to a university?

Actually, universities are increasingly like businesses, and in governance terms face similar issues. However, the biggest challenge – government policy change – is arguably more significant in education than in many businesses, and this has certainly been true for Birkbeck.

Can you tell us about how you, as Chair, work with the other governors on the Board?

We work together through a combination of formal governor and committee meetings, more informal events such as drinks and dinners and, of course, through our one-to-one discussions.

What is your proudest achievement as Chair of Governors at Birkbeck?

Helping the College to manage through the consequences of the introduction of fees for part-time students, which has had such a negative



impact on enrolments in part-time degrees nationally. Through the introduction of three-year evening degrees, developed in response to the drop in part-time enrolments, the College has been able to ensure that future students will still have the opportunity to access life-changing education, even if they are not attracted to the idea of (or are not able to) study at a traditional daytime university. It has also secured the College's future, despite the difficulties caused by the new fees policy.



The biggest challenge – government policy change – is arguably more significant in education than in many businesses, and this has certainly been true for Birkbeck.



Birkbeck's Deputy Chair of Governors, Ruth Thompson, sadly passed away in July 2016. Can you tell us about working with Ruth, and the contribution that she made to the College?

Ruth was a dear colleague, whose career in the Civil Service, latterly as the Director-General for Higher Education, gave her great understanding and insight. This never displayed itself at Birkbeck as dogmatic or intrusive, but rather as logical, gentle but intelligent persuasion. Always impeccably prepared, Ruth was a pleasure to work with, and made an important contribution as Deputy Chair, a member of key committees, and indeed in her review of governor effectiveness.

Central Saint Martins Birkbeck MBA launched

*A different way of thinking
creatively about business*

Birkbeck and Central Saint Martins – in the first collaboration of its kind in the UK – have partnered to create a new type of MBA, based on the premise: how can you think differently to solve today’s major problems, while contributing to making people’s lives better?

The new MBA, which will be taught on a part-time basis, including online and intensive weekend sessions, challenges the orthodox business school approach and instead focuses on cross-disciplinary collaboration.

The new programme aims to ensure that creativity is maintained in the whole process of thinking, experimenting and application, but with an approach accessible to those without a creative background.

Combining the design ethos of studio teaching with seminars and online learning, both institutions aim to bring together the expertise of Birkbeck’s School of Business, Economics and Informatics with the approaches and thinking of a world-leading art and design school, Central Saint Martins: creating a course that brings together creative thinking with a rigorous business and economics base.

“Business schools have recognised that traditional MBA models are increasingly less able to equip participants for the challenges they face,” says Professor Philip Powell, Pro-Vice-Master (Enterprise and Innovation) and Executive Dean, School of Business, Economics and Informatics at Birkbeck.

“Yet, business schools have struggled to adapt their offerings. Birkbeck and Central Saint Martins, by offering a new MBA unencumbered by legacy courses, hope to provide a blueprint for contemporary management education.”

With the first cohort of students joining the course in autumn 2017, the programme will

run for 18 months and will be taught at both institutions, with an emphasis on building skills of leadership and strategic management. Teaching will include intensive three-day blocks of study taught over weekends, with online support and input in between.

The workshop elements of the course will employ design thinking as a way of addressing some of the so-called ‘wicked’ problems facing business leaders in the next two decades – issues that are unique, are of indeterminate scope and scale, are frequently symptoms of another problem and are difficult to devise a ‘solution’ for.

As well as preparing business leaders in this way, the programme will continue to draw on the established core of organisational and entrepreneurial skills generally associated with the MBA curriculum. Indeed, it is hoped that the course will create a new network of entrepreneurs and leaders, with hybrid skills and approaches, operating in a world in which innovation, intellectual flexibility and creativity are central to the development of new industries, products and services.

“In an ever-changing and ever more complex world, business leaders and entrepreneurs are going to need new ways of thinking and doing,” adds Professor Jeremy Till, Head of Central Saint Martins and Pro Vice-Chancellor of University of the Arts London. “In a radical departure from the standard business school model, we have designed the course to combine core business skills with the creativity and experimentation of an art and design school.”

For further information or enquiries about the programme, please contact
Dr Pamela Yeow: p.yeow@bbk.ac.uk



Business schools have recognised that traditional MBA models are increasingly less able to equip participants for the challenges they face.



Below:
University of the Arts building in Granary Square, London
(© University of the Arts London)





Blue lights, ticking clocks

Research from Birkbeck is helping the London Ambulance Service to make every second count

Sirens blaring, blue lights flashing, an ambulance rushes down a London street, racing to reach someone in need of help. It's a familiar sight in the capital, with the London Ambulance Service, which coordinates the 800 ambulances comprising London's fleet, working around the clock to ensure that anyone in the city can be reached within a target of eight minutes.

"Every second is crucial, from as soon as someone places a call," says John Downard, Assistant Director of Information Management and Technology at the London Ambulance Service. "Those eight minutes start ticking as soon as a call comes through to us."

A vital part of reaching people is ensuring that ambulances are stationed around London to reach people within this crucial timeframe – a fantastically complex task, with ambulance availability, their location, road conditions and road closures constantly changing.

The Service was coming under increasing pressure to work smarter to accommodate the 1.5 million calls it receives each year in the capital, in the context of a radically changed reality of traffic flow compared to the fixed assumptions built into its existing computer system. It was in this context that Marcus Poulton, now a PhD student at Birkbeck and who was working at the Service on its call-handling system, realised that he could tie in his research with improving how ambulance dispatch was being organised.

Along with his supervisor, George Roussos, Professor of Pervasive Computing at Birkbeck,

Above:
An ambulance racing to an emergency at night outside King's Cross (Alamy)

Right:
A heat map showing the coverage of ambulances in London (John Downard, London Ambulance Service)



Poulton built upon his familiarity with the Service's system and, using the research facilities available at the College, set about devising a solution.

"The first stage was to analyse patterns in traffic flows around London," says Poulton. "We examined flows and how they change over a typical day and then looked at a slightly longer timeframe – a week – to see how flows change, too, between different days.

"The traffic conditions across London have a direct impact on how best to deploy ambulances on any given time and day," he adds.

Following the analysis, Poulton and Roussos developed an algorithm that would enable the Service to take a more comprehensive overview of ambulance dispatch, anticipating 'hot-spots' where incidents could occur based on historical data as well as real-time updates. Additionally, the system now integrates looking after crew welfare, by proactively dispatching crews to rest breaks, so that these are built into operations, rather than occurring outside the system's parameters.

"Based on our analysis of historical data, we

know that we can anticipate a higher than usual number of incidents in the West End on New Year's Eve, for example," says Poulton.

GeoTracker – the software developed based on the research findings – is now in use in the Service's London control room. The software displays data as a heat map, showing in real time areas of the city where ambulances can reach anyone within the eight-minute target, as well as spots where ambulances need to be manually deployed on standby, ensuring that one can reach people in need should an incident arise.

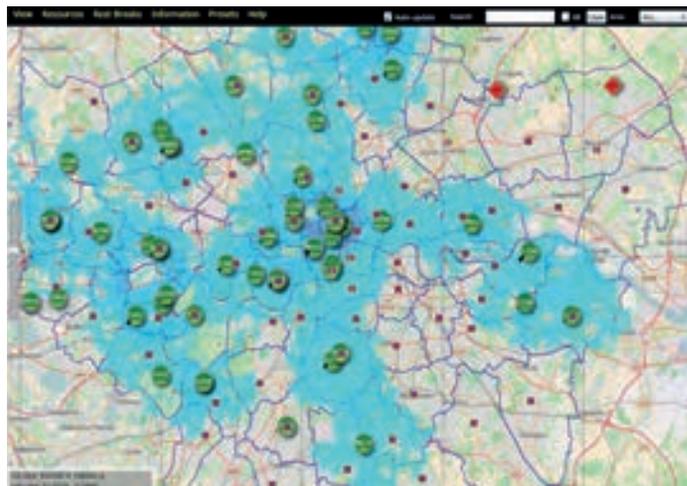
Following the successful deployment of the software, a more formal relationship has been established between the Department of Computer Science and Information Systems and the London Ambulance Service, to continue to improve the software and, from that, the deployment of ambulances in London. "We have now established a formal research collaboration agreement between the Department and the Service, which will enable the Service to share data with our research team and for us to share the results of our analysis with them," says Professor Roussos.

Poulton is now working to update the data underpinning the algorithm, to keep the Service's response to incidents as efficient as possible, in a city that is constantly changing. As well as having public benefit, his work has been published and presented with Professor Roussos at the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers' 25th International Symposium on Personal, Indoor and Mobile Radio Communications, with a further paper forthcoming.

"The work from Birkbeck has changed the way we map and deploy ambulances for the better," says John Downard from the Service, "and that means helping to save lives. I can't think of a more important application of research than that."



The work from Birkbeck has changed the way we map and deploy ambulances for the better.



Predator, pest ... or pet?

Varied attitudes to crocodiles across Africa require location-specific solutions to prevent attacks, writes Dr Simon Pooley

Crocodile attacks, particularly by large animals, are always traumatic and can be fatal or can result in permanent disability with devastating personal and social consequences. Most occur in rural areas in developing countries, with limited resources for prevention or medical treatment of attack victims.

Africa's Nile crocodile (*Crocodilus niloticus* and *C. suchus*) is usually portrayed as the worst culprit when it comes to crocodile attacks on humans and livestock. This assertion is insufficiently supported by data, but credible in that this species is so widely distributed across regions where humans and their domestic animals are dependent on natural water sources shared with crocodiles. Adult Nile crocodiles can attain 4.5m in length and weigh more than half a ton, and they are superbly designed to prey on mammals like us.

In my recent research I have explored European encounters with Nile crocodiles in Africa (c.1840–1992), and Africans' relations with Nile crocodiles from c.1840 to the present. Crocodiles came to the fore in the scientific and popular literature of the Anglophone world during the period of hunting and exploration in Africa from the mid-1800s. A survey of the language in 75 books by 54 authors published from 1839 to 1931 which feature detailed mention of crocodiles in Africa, revealed widespread loathing and fear of crocodiles. The adjectives used to describe them relate almost exclusively to fear, to disgust, or to size and power.

Crocodiles came to the attention of the colonial authorities in the 1920s, when commercial fisheries were developed on Africa's Great Lakes. They were regarded as a threat to fish stocks and fishing nets. Thus, in 1933 when international legislation on African wildlife conservation was adjusted to protect species formerly described as vermin, crocodiles remained persecuted. At the same time, hunters were beginning to supply the fashion and luxury

travel goods industries with crocodile skins.

Crocodile hunting boomed after the Second World War, until by the 1960s even hunters were worried about the future of their resource. Conservation legislation was instituted from the late 1960s, and commercial crocodile farming was pioneered in Zimbabwe in the same period. By 1992, the sustainable use of crocodiles was central to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Crocodile Specialist Group's conservation plans for the Nile crocodile. From being regarded as loathsome, dangerous and useless, and then as a threat to economic interests, crocodiles have become tolerated for their commercial value, and to a lesser extent for their scientific and intrinsic value (in protected areas).

In striking contrast to this European history of human–crocodile relations and representations, African conceptions of, and interactions with, crocodiles are enormously diverse. Exploring this is important, because a cursory reading of the European literature would suggest that crocodiles were universally despised. In fact, there were – and are – numerous African lineages



“

From being regarded as loathsome, dangerous and useless, crocodiles have become tolerated for their commercial value, and, to a lesser extent, for their scientific and intrinsic value.

”

Below: A 10-year-old boy with a live crocodile, named Kheng, in Phichit province, Thailand, August 2002. The boy's father caught the reptile while fishing, and kept it as a pet, considering it a source of comfort and companionship. Similar relationships exist between Africans and Nile crocodiles, examples including the famous Lake Victoria crocodile Lutembe and local villagers, and at sacred pools in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Mali in West Africa. (*Reuters/Jason Reed/Alamy*)



and clans who identify with the crocodile as a totem animal, and explanations of the reasons for crocodile attacks are fascinatingly diverse. Some regard these attacks as accidents or natural occurrences; for others, crocodile attacks are the result of the disapproval of the ancestors; they can represent the dispensation of supernatural justice on immoral persons. For many, the biological animal is not to blame. Rather, agency is attributed to the evil acts of witches or wizards, or those procuring their services, who bewitch or become crocodiles to carry out their murderous intentions. In some places, like Lake Baringo in Kenya, or several sacred crocodile pools in West Africa, humans and crocodiles have long enjoyed amicable relations. In others, like Sesheke in Zambia, swimming in the Zambezi is suicidal. Africans also have many uses for crocodiles: ornamental, magical and medicinal.

In some regions, local attitudes to crocodiles are predominantly hostile, usually because of impacts on human lives and livestock, perceived competition for fish and damage to nets. In such regions, education about crocodile behaviour, protective structures and lethal control must be considered. Until recently, advice on preventing and handling crocodile attacks focused on warnings and technical fixes like safe enclosures for bathing or drawing water. My research suggests that in many instances, however, such efforts to mitigate negative human–crocodile relations will be improved through better understanding the ecological, social and cultural dimensions of the history of local human and crocodile interrelations. The challenge is to find ways of studying humans and predators together: to explore their co-produced sociabilities.

Generic advice on how to avoid attacks based only on biological and behavioural studies of crocodiles, or analyses of attack data using standardised social science categories like livelihood, age and gender, miss some important dimensions of human–crocodile relations in particular places. Instead of taking a generic technical view ‘from nowhere’, in order to mitigate human–predator conflicts, we need to take a place-based view ‘from somewhere’. We need something like an ethnoherpetology (studying the behaviour of humans and reptiles in interrelation) of particular communities of crocodiles and humans.

Dr Simon Pooley is Lambert Lecturer in Environment (Applied Herpetology) in the Department of Geography, Environment and Development Studies at Birkbeck. His post is funded from a bequest by Dr Michael Lambert, former Fellow of the College and a pioneer of the field of applied herpetology. For more information in leaving a legacy to support Birkbeck's research, email alumni@bbk.ac.uk

Embroidered minds

Research by Professor Marjorie Lorch has enabled a new look at art and creativity in Victorian Bloomsbury

A daughter airbrushed from history, a conspiracy of silence shrouding family secrets – the story of William Morris’s family has all the elements of a bestselling thriller.

Yet the story of his life, that of his family – especially his daughter Jenny – and the shadowy connections between them and the doctors at the National Hospital for Paralysis and Epilepsy are a mysterious, real-life tale of shame, science and creative redemption that is as good as any novel.

William Morris is best known today as one of the most celebrated and influential leaders of the Arts and Crafts movement of the Victorian era. His showroom and studio in the heart of Bloomsbury – at 26 Queen Square – bustled with the rich and fashionable, who were eager to adorn their homes with his latest wallpaper and furniture in the late nineteenth century.

Yet little has been made of the fact that, for several years, the Morris family home was above the firm’s premises at 24 Queen Square, next door to the newly founded neurological hospital.

William Morris and epilepsy

At the centre of this mystery about William Morris is his daughter Jenny, who has been glossed out of many Morris biographies due to the need for secrecy about her lifelong epilepsy. This was the starting point for the journey of the late novelist Leslie Forbes, who gathered together a group of artists to collaborate on the “Embroidered Minds” project in 2016.

Marjorie Lorch, Professor of Neurolinguistics at Birkbeck, was invited to contribute to the collaboration her research expertise on language and cognitive disorders – and a particular interest in the pioneering work of early neurologists at the National Hospital in Queen Square.

“We explored the possibility that William Morris may have used the neurological expertise from his neighbours for Jenny,” says Lorch. “Indeed, it has also been speculated that

William Morris himself had a form of epilepsy, and there is evidence that he consulted a clinician about it.”

The scientific centre for those clinicians was the National Hospital. Originally, the small hospital was based in one house in the square; as its fame and services grew, its premises expanded into neighbouring buildings. The current premises of the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery include the site of Morris’s original workshop and home. The link between Morris and the hospital remains today: the former chairman’s room in the late Victorian main hospital building still has Morris’s firm’s wallpaper and furnishings.

“By setting up this specialist hospital in 1860, its founder – Jabez Spence Ramskill – was able to bring together a large number of patients with the same conditions, enabling the doctors there to systematise knowledge in two very fast developing fields – firstly, treating paralysis; and secondly, epilepsy,” says Lorch.

Creative speculation and inspiration

Imagining the mix of people in this small part of Victorian Bloomsbury, with this innovative hospital sitting alongside other institutions dedicated to medicine, art and craft, and the support of working women and men, together with Morris’s mysterious family, provided inspiration for creative speculation about Jenny Morris’s life on the square.

Professor Lorch did extensive historical research on the nineteenth-century neurological discoveries at Queen Square on aphasia – a condition that causes problems in understanding and producing speech – and combed the hospital archives to give the artists on the “Embroidered Minds” project creative inspiration. She provided the background on artefacts in the hospital museum that were used for early diagnostic tools and treatments.

Led by Leslie Forbes, the collaboration also included Professor Lorch’s colleague Dr Renata Whurr, a former speech and language therapist at the National Hospital with a PhD from Birkbeck.

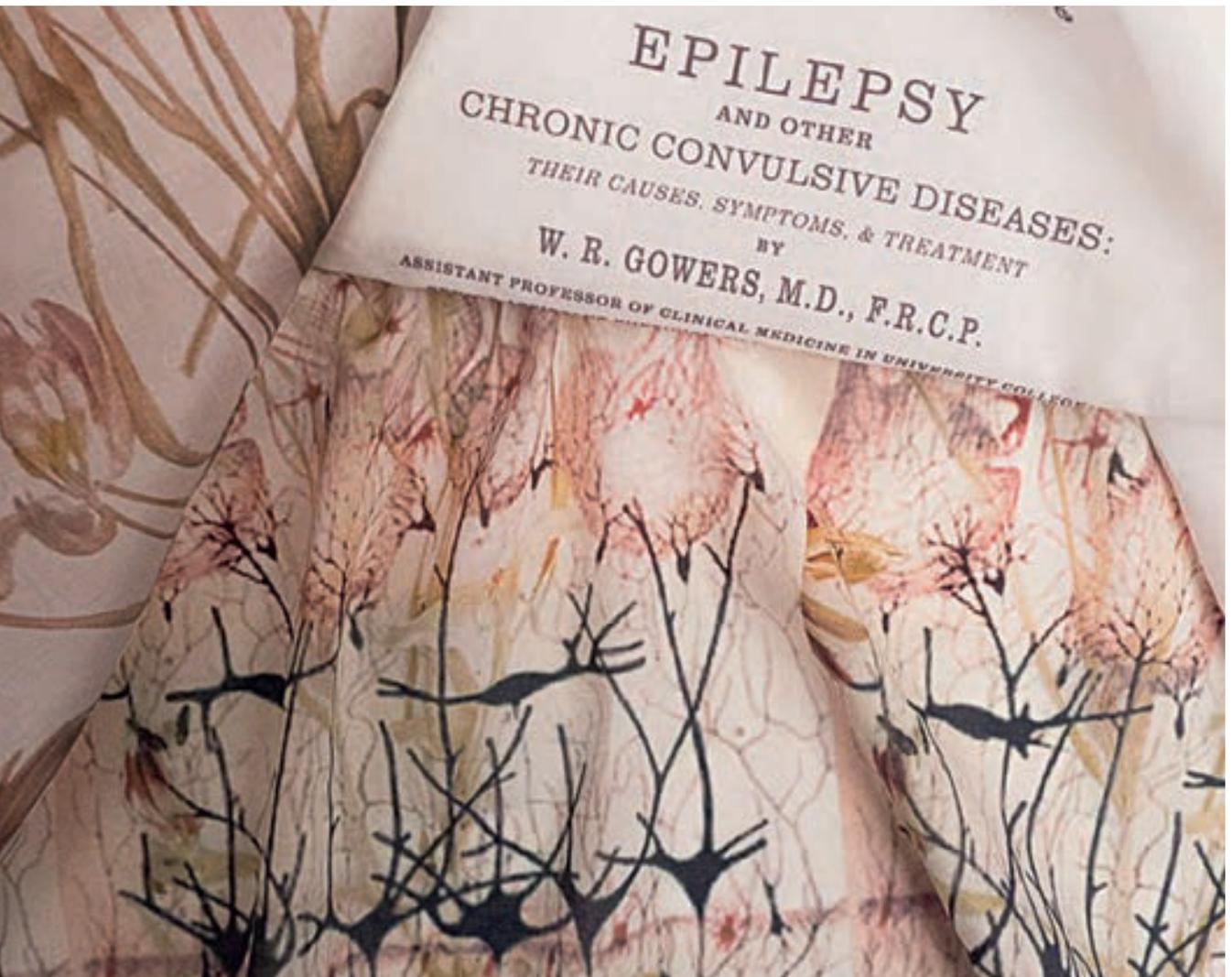
An exhibition of the artworks and associated stories created by Jan Marsh, Sue Ridge, Julia Dwyer, Caroline Isgar and Andrew Thomas as part of the collaboration was mounted at the Queen Square Archives and Museum from November 2015 to February 2016. The *Aphasia Wallpaper* by Ridge won the 2016 *Printmaking Today* prize.

A compelling story

An accompanying novel by Forbes has now been published: *Embroidered Minds of the Morris Women* imagines Jenny interacting with her neurologist, “Doctor Q”, as she tries to unravel her medical

“Epilepsy, especially in women, was completely taboo in the Victorian period.”

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Above:
Detail from a
post-seizure dress
created for the
'Embroidered
Minds' project

and family histories.

"It's a compelling story to imagine that the studio provided a convenient base for Morris's daughter to continue to clandestinely receive medical attention from the epilepsy experts next door," says Professor Lorch, speaking about the inspiration for the novel. "Epilepsy, especially in women, was completely taboo in the Victorian period and Jenny's future – and possibility of marriage – would have been in severe jeopardy if her condition was widely known. It would have also tainted her father's great public reputation. A conspiracy of silence between doctors, the family and, to an extent, Jenny herself would have been vital in that context."

"We have tied the threads of the evidence. History inspired us to create something new, while honouring the stories of the Morris women, which are lesser known," concludes

Professor Lorch. "We have embroidered history in a way which enables space to reflect on how art, creativity and the working of the mind can be woven together."

Sadly, Leslie Forbes died in July 2016 following a major epileptic seizure. The collaborative project will continue as Leslie had intended. For more images from the exhibition, visit queensquare.org.uk/archives/collection/21

Embroidered Minds of the Morris Women, A Novel, Part One: Don't remember is available by emailing embroideredminds@sandsthomas.co.uk (£9.75 plus p&p).

For further reading on the nineteenth-century understanding of language and the brain, visit bbk.ac.uk/linguistics/our-staff/academic-staff/marjorie-lorch

Image:
Toddler looking
at tablet screen
(iStockphoto)



Toddlers and touchscreens

A new study investigates how touchscreen use affects learning and cognitive development

Any parent knows that a sure-fire way to get ten minutes to unpack the shopping or put on a load of laundry is to give your child a smart phone or tablet. A study led by Dr Tim J Smith in the Department of Psychological Sciences has shown that 51% of children aged 6–11 months use a touchscreen daily, rising to 92% for those aged 26–36 months.

Given the ubiquitous nature of these devices in our everyday life, and children’s enthusiasm for using them, many people question what impact their use has on learning and cognitive development.

The TABLET (Toddler Attentional Behaviours and LEarning with Touchscreens) project, funded by the Leverhulme Trust and conducted by Dr Smith and collaborators at Birkbeck’s Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development and King’s College London, hopes to fill the current evidence gap around touchscreen use by young children.

TABLET has collected data from over 700 families in the UK, via an online survey and face-to-face sessions at the Birkbeck ‘Babylab’. The first findings, published in August 2016 in *Frontiers in Psychology*, found no significant association between touchscreen use and either walking or language development, but that the age at which toddlers first scroll the touchscreen is closely associated with how early they are able to stack blocks – a measure of fine motor control.

Dr Rachael Bedford, a co-investigator on the project, explains: “Scrolling is an indication of active engagement with what is on the screen and is closely related to non-digital measures of fine motor control. What we can’t tell yet is the direction of this relationship – are fine motor

skills enhanced by the use of touchscreens, or are children with advanced fine motor skills more likely to use touchscreens earlier?”

The team is currently following up these findings using in-depth, lab-based assessments of development to try to identify the mechanisms by which toddler touchscreen use may impact on various aspects of development, including attention control, social behaviour, temperament and sleep. The eventual aim is to provide an evidence base that can inform future guidelines on appropriate use of digital technology in early childhood.

Dr Smith explains: “What we and other research labs are starting to observe is that the content and context of how children are using these devices is important, rather than just the volume of use. If apps are designed to be age appropriate, educationally informed, encourage interaction with a peer or parent, and clear limits are set for how long a child is allowed to spend on a device, touchscreen devices may play a constructive part in child development, while minimising any negative consequences.”

The TABLET project is ongoing and is continuing to recruit children aged 6–36 months who have exposure to touchscreen devices, as well as children who do not have any exposure.

To find out more or to get involved, visit bbk.ac.uk/tablet_project and follow @TABLETproj on Twitter

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The age at which toddlers first scroll the touchscreen is closely associated with how early they are able to stack blocks – a measure of fine motor control.

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Peace-making in Colombia

Dr Oscar Guardiola-Rivera reflects on what is needed to bring about a lasting peace in Colombia

Below: People sew white cloths with names of victims of the Colombian conflict painted in ash, at the Bolivar Square in Bogotá, on 11 October 2016. (Jose Miguel Gomez/AFP/Getty Images)

A few years ago, I had the chance of discussing with the late Eric Hobsbawm, pillar of the Birkbeck Department of History, Classics and Archaeology, a subject dear to him: peace in Colombia, the country where I grew up. We ranged over the origins of Colombia's half-century of conflict, lying deep within the longer history of conflicts over land between the Colombian government on the one hand and paramilitary groups and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) on the other.

A peace deal to end the conflict is going through the Colombian Congress at the time of writing (November 2016), having been revised by lawmakers following its initial rejection by popular vote in October 2016. The dissolution of ties between traditional, ethnic or rural communities and their surrounding environments is key to understanding the conflict. To understand the search for peace, it is vital to consider the impact that such traumatic



history has had in corrupting the country's institutions.

The 1991 Constitution

The search for peace took on real momentum for the first time back in the 1990s, when a group of students and young academics working across academic disciplines were shocked by the never-ending chain of assassinations of community and political leaders who were in favour of change, as well as assassinations of union and environmental activists.

Out of that group grew a student movement that seized on the idea of calling for a constitutional convention that would counter the tide of polarisation and institutional delegitimation. The vicious circularity of the war has had a damaging impact on democratic legal institutions as well as the identity of Colombians; especially the stereotypical division of rural versus urban Colombia.

The result was the 1991 Constitution, widely



To understand the search for peace, it is vital to consider the impact that such traumatic history has had in corrupting the country's institutions.



held to be the platform upon which long-lasting, legitimate peace could be built.

A power-sharing mechanism

As a spokesperson for the student movement at the time, using a short-wave radio located in the basement of Casa de Nariño, Bogotá's presidential palace, I was one of those who talked to members of the FARC secretariat. We proposed that they participate with their own representatives in the bottom-up initiative of discussing and writing the new constitution. Those exchanges made it very clear that putting an end to the conflict would involve some kind of non-exclusionary power-sharing mechanism. That is the first element of the legacy of the 1990s movement-building.

Getting to peace

Getting to peace means shedding one's own powers and re-describing the values attached to them: rewiring behaviour by looking at one's self from the point of view of the enemy. It requires generosity. It requires us to ask the difficult question "What are our most sacred values?" and the much more difficult gesture of letting go of the part that might link some of those values with the habits and mimetic practices that make war "addictive". This is the second part of our legacy to peace-making in Colombia, and the reason why the 1990 student movement has become a reference point for the recent mobilisations that brought together urban student organisations and indigenous peoples after the 'No' vote in the referendum of 2 October 2016.

Breaking the spell

At the time of writing, these grass-roots organisations are moving closer to a key achievement: blending urban and rural movements and concerns, thereby breaking the spell of the stereotype and the duality that has so profoundly marked the destiny of the Colombian conflict. In doing so, they are morphing into self-organising assemblies or "negotiating-tables", which replicate and multiply the progress made at formal peace talks between the two sides started in Havana in 2012 among and between the grass roots.

These might converge with institutions such as *Juntas de Acción Comunal* (district council) and *Cabildos Abiertos* (open meeting) which, given their legal configuration and wide spread throughout Colombia, have provided the basis for the more or less swift renewal and approval of the Havana accords, thereby salvaging the process and getting it to the point we have arrived at today. A peace achieved this way would be a fitting peace.

Dr Guardiola-Rivera is a Reader in the School of Law



Learning in womanist ways

Dr Jan Etienne explores the developing trend of older black women engaging in learning – both formal and informal – in her new book: Learning in Womanist Ways: Narratives of first generation African Caribbean women. She is the daughter of first-generation African Caribbean migrants from St Lucia and teaches on the MSc Education, Power and Social Change



How does it feel to be older, black and female – with a desire for purposeful learning for the benefit of the wider community? The narratives of over 100 first-generation African Caribbean women, interviewed across 11 UK cities as fieldwork for *Learning in Womanist Ways*, uncover the reality of learning at a time when being black, female and older is often associated with deteriorating health, poverty and isolation. Womanism is feminism from a black woman's viewpoint and acknowledges that the traditional feminist lens does not always include the perspectives of black women.

The women interviewed have faced a number of challenges in their lives but showed remarkable resilience. They arrived in the UK as British citizens of Caribbean Commonwealth countries in the 1950s and 1960s with the

expectation of a better life. New arrivals faced economic and social hardship, encountered racial discrimination in their search for employment and housing, and many of their children faced racism in the school system. However, throughout such negative experiences, they maintained a desire for purposeful education.

Examples of the types of learning that I uncovered include: studying for degrees and, at the same time, volunteering in the community – often as mentors; studying at local community centres for certificates in communication skills to confidently play their part at tenants' meetings and on regeneration boards; and developing computer literacy skills to engage with others in providing support to black mothers who are experiencing the impact of crime. These women's educational successes in later life came about as a result of their long years of experience of marginalisation in both the UK and early British colonial education systems.

When we are learning in womanist ways in social settings – what I term 'Matriarchal Learning Hubs' – our conversations include repetition of oral expressions, frequent use of Caribbean patois and various dialects of the Caribbean matriarch. Older black women were constantly engaged in lively banter as they reflected on life 'back home' and jokingly chastised each other and the younger women – in womanist ways. Although friendly interruptions, laughter, reflection and strategies for community action are common, at times their banter would turn to anger and despair as they discussed race relations, the problems facing black youth in the UK, and their responsibilities as mothers, grandmothers and aunts. They would ponder on issues of social responsibility and trust in the wider black community and then return to amusement and laughter. I found their formidable attitudes and the originality of West Indian colloquialisms generated confidence and inspired others.

In order to capture the authentic voices of the women interviewed and to expose the essence of Black Matriarchal Learning Hubs, their conversations are set out in the book as dramatic scenes in a script, like acts in a play – complete with asides and a narrator. Listening to the voices of older black women sheds light on the influence and roles of older black females active in community settings, as well as the significance of learning and 'community' in the lives of the women. Their conversations reveal solidarity in black sisterhood, but highlight a primary concern for the wider black community: that black women prioritise their efforts to combat racism prior to focusing on sexism and gender inequality.

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black women over the age of 50 have enrolled in the past 3 years – almost three times as many as a decade ago

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Womanism is feminism from a black woman's viewpoint and acknowledges that the traditional feminist lens does not always include the perspectives of black women.

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Hisland La Touche, BSc Social Sciences with Psychosocial Studies graduate

“Further education and gaining knowledge were always things I thought about but life got in the way. At the age of 49, I enrolled at Birkbeck. Returning to education as a mature student was extremely challenging but this experience gave me the opportunity to believe in myself and my academic abilities and recognise my true potential. It helped improve my self-confidence and gave me the skills to understand on a different level how society shapes different individuals to fit into different moulds. It is the best educational journey I ever took.”

Above:

From left to right: Jan Etienne, Hisland La Touche, Dawn Joseph and Palmela Witter

Dawn Joseph, 47, MA Criminal Law and Criminal Justice student

“Following my A levels in 1987 I left home, so was thrown into the world of work and education was no longer a priority. In 2010, I enrolled on Birkbeck's BSc Social Sciences. The road was not easy. As a mature student, life has a bad habit of getting in the way. But I stuck it out and graduated in 2015. I definitely achieved more than I hoped for by attending Birkbeck. In addition to a degree, I have increased confidence, made connections and even some good friends along the way. It was worth every bit of blood, sweat and tears!”



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An individual who shouts encouragement as his friend carries out an assault can himself be convicted of assault.

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Joint enterprise: a wrong turn

Much greater clarity and transparency are needed in the prosecution of “joint enterprise” cases, found a recent report from the Institute for Criminal Policy Research (ICPR) at Birkbeck. Co-author Dr Jessica Jacobson explains the need for reform.

Joint enterprise is a doctrine of criminal law which permits two or more defendants to be convicted of the same criminal offence in relation to the same incident, even where they had different levels of involvement in it.

For centuries, it has been an established aspect of the criminal law that an individual who assisted or encouraged another (the ‘principal’) to commit an offence can be held liable for that offence as an ‘accessory’. Hence, for example, the getaway driver in a burglary can be convicted of burglary along with those who entered the premises; and an individual who shouts encouragement as his friend carries out an assault can himself be convicted of assault.

In recent years, the doctrine of joint enterprise has come under increasing scrutiny, with critics arguing that individuals were being convicted and sentenced for the most serious offences – including murder – on the basis of highly peripheral involvement. Until very recently, a particular concern has been the type of joint enterprise commonly known as ‘parasitic accessory liability’, which evolved through case law over the past three decades.

This form of accessory liability arose where two or more individuals together embarked on an offence, in the course of which one committed a further offence that could have been foreseen by the other(s). For example, if a householder were fatally stabbed by one of two burglars,

the second burglar could potentially be held liable for murder, if she had foreseen that her accomplice might commit this act.

The many critics of parasitic accessory liability pointed out that it permitted defendants to be convicted of offences in relation to which they had no intent to assist or encourage, and in the commission of which they were not involved.

Ultimately the Supreme Court, in its ruling in the case of *R v Jogee* [2016] UKSC 8, came to the conclusion that the law had taken a ‘wrong turn’ in allowing defendants’ foresight of the possibility that an associate might commit an offence to be treated as equivalent to their intent to assist that offence. Following *Jogee*, a defendant who is convicted as an accessory to an offence must be proven to have intentionally assisted or encouraged the principal’s commission of the offence.

While the *Jogee* ruling’s abolition of parasitic accessory liability is to be welcomed, many challenges remain in relation to the prosecution of joint enterprise cases in future. It can be a highly complex task to determine – both in terms of legal principle and with respect to the evidence in any given case – what amounts to one individual’s intentional assistance or encouragement for another’s criminal act.

There will doubtless be continued controversy over where the boundaries of accessory liability should be drawn, and over the appropriate levels of punishment for those convicted of serious offences as accessories.

To find out more about joint enterprise, see *Joint Enterprise: Righting a wrong turn?* (www.icpr.org.uk/media/42184/joint_enterprise_righting_a_wrong_turn.pdf) by Jessica Jacobson, Amy Kirby and Gillian Hunter. This 2016 report is on a study conducted by the ICPR in partnership with the Prison Reform Trust, with funding from the Nuffield Foundation.

Image: Scales of Justice, Old Bailey, London. (Anthony Baggett/Thinkstock)

A revolution in museum philosophy

Dr Fiona Candlin, Reader in Museum Studies in the Department of History of Art, visited 'micromuseums' all over the UK, giving a new perspective on their contribution to national and local culture

During the 1970s and 1980s, the number of museums in the UK almost tripled from around 900 to about 2,500, if not more. This massive boom did not simply enlarge the sector, but radically changed its character.

Up until this point, the majority of museums had been large, publicly funded institutions that were located in the capital or in regional city centres, were staffed by paid professionals, and were devoted to subjects that fell within the traditional disciplines: art and design, science, archaeology and history. In contrast, most of the new venues were independent and did not receive core funding from the state. They were located in towns, suburbs and villages, and were established and run by community and special interest groups, by businesses, families and private individuals, often working on a voluntary basis. They also differed from their traditional counterparts in their choice of subject, and their collections focused on single objects or themes, such as lawnmowers, fairground organs, ornamental plasterwork, fishing or Romany life.

By the 1990s, small, independent, single-subject museums – which I call ‘micromuseums’ – were the most prevalent type of museum in the UK and far outweighed the number of public sector venues. Reflecting on this changed landscape, the eminent critic Kenneth Hudson remarked that it “amounts to a revolution – the word is not an exaggeration – in museum philosophy and its practical application”.

And yet, while micromuseums certainly transformed the sector, they attracted very little scholarly attention. Commentators in the ‘heritage debates’ of the 1980s variously

interpreted the museums boom as a symptom of cultural malaise or of popular historical consciousness, but whatever their diagnosis, they rarely considered individual venues in any detail, and certainly not the small ones.

More recently, a few scholars have considered micromuseums in terms of community, and while these analyses are thoughtful, their focus can suggest that such venues are only important to a particular group or locale. Micromuseums almost never feature in wider debates on curation, museum architecture, visitors, collections or ideas of the institution.

To my mind, this academic neglect homogenises and limits our conceptions of what museums are and might be. It is to disregard enthusiasts, non-professional curators and grass-roots museum work, and to ignore the possibility that museums could take different forms and still make significant or innovative contributions to national and local culture. It also keeps museology within the zone of officially recognised culture and, for me, this raised the question of whether the study of micromuseums could, in fact, revolutionise ‘museum philosophy’ and, if so, how. Less dramatically, would researching the Southport Lawnmower Museum or the National Coracle Museum in Ceredigion, instead of the Louvre or the British Museum, be a way of reconceptualising dominant debates in museum studies?

And so I set off, driving a camper van the length and breadth of the UK, visiting museums of witchcraft, Bakelite, vintage wirelesses and Irish republicanism, and I concluded that yes: analysing micromuseums did have the potential to transform and develop the discipline.

Dr Candlin and Alex Poulouvassilis, Professor of Computer Science, have now been awarded £1,012,460 by the Arts and Humanities Research Council for a new project to map and analyse the emergence, character and development of the UK independent museums sector from 1960 to 2020.



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“I set off, driving a camper van the length and breadth of the UK, visiting museums of witchcraft, Bakelite, vintage wirelesses and Irish republicanism.”

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British Vintage Wireless and Television Museum, Dulwich, London

Once the Vintage Wireless Museum and the home of Gerry Wells, who collected the sets in the course of his work as a repairman and engineer. Until he died recently, going to the museum meant visiting Gerry, pictured here with friend and fellow-enthusiast Frank Goddard.

Lurgan History Museum, County Armagh

Public sector museums in Northern Ireland steered away from any mention of the Troubles, and even now their exhibitions rarely contain objects relating to that history, only photographs. In contrast, the Lurgan History Museum collects items that relate to independence and republicanism.



Bakelite Museum, Somerset

Plastic objects are in abundance, and many of the displays are visually captivating or deliberately surreal. Here, a legion of plastic flasks marches across the tops of the display cases.



The Museum of Witchcraft and Magic, Cornwall

Opened in 1961, its founder, Cecil Williamson, was a witchcraft practitioner, as was the subsequent curator, and the objects are displayed accordingly. Here poppets used for cursing are placed on a protective hag stone.



British in India Museum, Lancashire

Almost all the items on display are gifts, with few having any value or historical significance, but their donors cared about these objects and the museum has duly looked after them.

Seismic diplomacy

Collaborative research across borders – despite international political tensions – is necessary in the face of the overwhelming power of nature, says Dr James Hammond

Anyone who was caught up in the chaos surrounding the eruption of the Icelandic volcano Eyjafjallajökull in 2010 – shutting down most of Europe’s airspace in the process – knows that volcanoes can have impacts well beyond their

immediate surroundings.

Now, imagine a volcano that nearly 1,100 years ago had an eruption 100 times larger than Eyjafjallajökull and that has recently shown signs of renewed activity. I think we would all agree that it would be vital to study it to safeguard communities – both near and far – which could be affected and to understand when, and how, it might erupt in the future.

However, what if that volcano were in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) – or North Korea, as it is more commonly known?

This was the challenge I faced, when I was invited, along with my colleague Professor Clive Oppenheimer at the University of Cambridge, by scientists in the DPRK to visit and develop a project to study Mount Paektu, a strikingly large volcano on the DPRK–China border. As I am a volcanologist with an interest in imaging inside volcanoes and a taste for travel, this was an opportunity that was too good to miss.

From the start, it became clear this was never going to be a straightforward research project to study a volcano. Rather, it took two years of discussions with our DPRK colleagues and the

Below: The crater of Mount Paektu
(James Hammond)





**Science
collaboration
is possible
even during
significant
political strain.**



UK and US governments to design a project that met our science goals while accommodating international sanctions. During this time, joint US–South Korean military exercises, DPRK nuclear tests and missile launches raised tensions, but our project plans kept moving forward – showing that science collaboration is possible even during significant political strain.

In 2013, we deployed six very sensitive seismometers around the volcano and collected a number of rock samples that are currently being analysed in labs in the UK, France and the US. The seismometers record ground motion from earthquakes all over the world, allowing us to build images of the interior of the volcano. These data, analysed by DPRK scientists during a one-month stay in the UK, have led to the first collaborative paper of its kind, published in the journal *Science Advances*.

Our collaboration continues, as big questions remain about the volcano, such as what the character and frequency of past eruptions are, or even why the volcano exists at all. Unusually, it doesn't fit standard models of how volcanoes emerge – it is a long way from a tectonic plate

boundary, where plates colliding or moving apart can lead to volcanic activity.

With this in mind, we have also held a workshop in Pyongyang – attended by colleagues from the UK, the US, Canada, Germany and China, together with scientists from the DPRK – to develop new projects to study Mount Paektu and to learn more about its origins and to monitor its ongoing activity.

Unlike humans, volcanoes don't recognise borders. At their worst, their effects on us are devastating and indiscriminate. Mount Paektu is one of a distinct class whose potential is such that continuing to study and monitor it is crucial, regardless of international tensions.

The success of our team in overcoming these tensions, and in trying to better understand this enigmatic volcano, shows the research community at its best.

Dr James Hammond is Lecturer in Geophysics in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences at Birkbeck. His research focuses on using seismology to image the Earth, from global scales to individual volcanoes.





Enriching connections

*Birkbeck is redefining
public engagement
to foster its open and
collaborative approach
to research*

Universities are being urged by all major funders of research in the UK to go beyond their ‘ivory towers’ and to engage with the public, by interacting with communities to share and develop ideas for research. This is described officially as ‘public engagement’.

For Birkbeck, this is not a new concept. We have always looked to our communities to learn together and to strengthen our teaching and research, even though we’ve never called it ‘public engagement’ as such.

Our researchers already work with students, community groups, cultural and political institutions, businesses, social action organisations and a whole host of others to create vibrant, fascinating and important research. Our great outward-facing engagement activities are too numerous to list here, but our successes this year include:

- Scientists collaborating to develop a theatre production with young people
- Historians working with teachers in schools on new teaching methods and resources
- Academics curating and advising on exhibitions and public event programmes
- Researchers involving local communities in research practice.

Now, as research funders put more emphasis on this kind of activity, we are presented with a great opportunity. As a College, we want to celebrate our work and build on our traditions of learning with our communities to enrich what we already do well and to be even better. We are working together to encourage and foster new engagements and to better support existing work.

Strengthening Birkbeck’s unique connections with its communities

Enhancing the visibility and cohesion of our research engagement requires dedicated

resources, so we now have a new committee that will focus on supporting public engagement and enhancing the impact of our research. We are developing a College-wide vision to provide clarity on how current work fits in and can be taken further.

As part of this project, we have recently won funding from the Wellcome Trust for infrastructural funds to help us develop our strategic approach, building on previous funding from the Trust awarded in 2015.

We will use these and other resources to recognise, highlight and promote researchers’ involvement with our communities.

We are also encouraging doctoral students and postdoctoral staff training and competitions, such as the ‘Three-Minute Thesis’, which will be launched in 2017. These competitions challenge doctoral students to speak compellingly about their research and its significance in just three minutes. Competitions are held in universities worldwide and enable students to practise engaging publicly.

Birkbeck is a place where we connect, collaborate, challenge received wisdom, and build on the expertise of life experience as well as official knowledge. We have always used this to help explore new fields and to develop new practices – and now we have the opportunity to celebrate our approach and make the most of it.

As we strengthen our approach to engaged research, we would like to involve you, as members of our intellectually curious Birkbeck community, in helping us to develop our ideas and strengthen Birkbeck’s unique connections with its communities.



Birkbeck is a place where we connect, collaborate, challenge received wisdom, and build on the expertise of life experience as well as official knowledge.



Left: A large group of people standing side by side around the world
(Malte Mueller/
Getty Images)

To find out more and for regular updates, please visit: bbk.ac.uk/research/public-engagement. Mary-Clare Hallsworth, Birkbeck’s Public Engagement Officer, and Professor Miriam Zukas, the College’s Advocate for Public Engagement, will keep you informed on the website.

New professors

Four members of Birkbeck staff were promoted to the post of Professor in 2016



Rosie Campbell
Professor of Politics

Professor Campbell joined Birkbeck's staff in 2003 after having briefly taught at UCL, returning to Birkbeck where she had previously completed her PhD on gender and voting behaviour in Britain, under the supervision of Professors Joni Lovenduski and Peter John.

Professor Campbell is currently the principal investigator of the Economic and Social Research Council-funded 'Representative Audit of Britain', a study of all candidates who stood in the 2015 British General Election. She is also co-investigator of the Leverhulme-funded 'Britain's New Political Class', a study of prospective parliamentary candidates between 1945 and 2015; and the 'Representative Style' project (funded by the Danish Council for Independent Research), investigating whether there has been a personalisation in the way that politicians conduct their business.

Professor Campbell is Vice Chair of the UK's Political Studies Association. She teaches modern British politics, parliamentary studies and research methods. She regularly comments in the media.



Martin Paul Eve
Professor of Literature,
Technology and Publishing

Professor Eve joined Birkbeck in 2015. He specialises in contemporary American fiction (primarily the works of Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo and David Foster Wallace), histories and philosophies of technology, and technological mutations in scholarly publishing.

He is well known for his work on open access and higher education policy, and has appeared before the House of Commons Select Committee Inquiry into Open Access. He has written for the British Academy Policy Series and has been a member of many steering and strategy groups related to this subject.

Professor Eve has also developed several digital humanities/computational projects and is the author of four books, the most recent of which is *Literature Against Criticism*, published in 2016. From 2015 until 2020, Professor Eve is a member of the English Association's Higher Education Committee.



Maya Topf
Professor in
Computational Biology

Professor Topf joined Birkbeck in 2006. She is head of a laboratory at the Birkbeck/UCL Institute of Structural and Molecular Biology, where she leads a team of eight scientists.

Her research is focused on the development of computational methods that combine experimental data with bioinformatics and modelling approaches to characterise the structure of protein complexes in the cell. The structures are analysed to understand their function and the effect of disease-causing mutations. The group is particularly interested in using data from cryo-electron microscopy and mass spectrometry techniques as well as other data on protein-protein interactions. Interests in specific biological systems include complexes from herpes viruses, bacterial secretion systems, pore-forming

toxins, microtubules and microtubule-binding protein, and ligand-gated ion channels. This research is vital to improving our understanding of how protein complexes function in healthy and diseased cells and can help to identify new targets for drug discovery.



Jerry White
Professor of History

Professor White has been researching and writing London history since the mid-1970s. His early formation as a historian was with Raphael Samuel and the History Workshop movement, and for many years he combined part-time research with a full-time career in local government, mainly in inner London.

Professor White frequently advises media organisations as a London expert and regularly reviews books in the *TLS* and the *Guardian*. His research looks at London history from 1700 to the present.

His 2014 book *Zeppelin Nights: London in the First World War* won the Spear's Social History of the Year award. His latest book, published in 2016, is *Mansions of Misery: A biography of the Marshalsea Debtors' Prison*. He is currently embarking on a full-scale history of London in the Second World War.

Enhancing emotional resilience

An app jointly developed by Birkbeck PhD student Suzi Godson aims to tackle teenagers' anxieties through enabling them to share their concerns in a safe, supportive environment

Relationships, sex and people's emotional lives have long interested Birkbeck PhD student Suzi Godson, who is also the advice columnist for *The Times*.

"Through my career as a sex and relationship expert, I have become acutely aware that young people are launched into today's world of social media and pornography with no statutory sex or relationship education," she says.

"On top of that, there is an epidemic of anxiety affecting teenagers at the moment, yet a complete vacuum of support for them to find support and reassurance," Suzi adds. "Schools are crying out for help to deal with it."

This is what led the advice columnist to launch a new app, MeeTwo, specifically to address these issues, with the support of the Birkbeck Business Engagement team. MeeTwo enables young people aged 13–18 to access fully moderated peer support from other young people anonymously, so they can share their anxieties and concerns in a safe, supportive environment.

"We want to give kids some control over how they are feeling, by providing them with a tool to develop emotional resilience," says Suzi. "It's about enabling young people to learn how to manage their moods and emotions, how to relax and how to tackle stress."

The app, which was entered into the Santander University Entrepreneurship Awards by the Birkbeck team, was runner-up in the Technology and Mobile Applications category, winning Suzi and her business partner, Kerstyn Comley, a cash prize and a package of tailored support.

MeeTwo is currently being trialled as part of a pilot project involving 1,000 students across ten London schools, with backing from Birkbeck's Department of Psychological Sciences and the

Anna Freud Centre at UCL. As well as offering peer support through human moderation of users' posts, the app will direct young people to pastoral care at their school or towards specialist services in cases of serious concern.

It's just one of the myriad of interests that Suzi has in the psychology of human relationships. She completed an MSc Psychology at Birkbeck and is currently undertaking a PhD at the College, examining divorce among older women facing an empty nest.

"There's been a huge surge in later-life divorce worldwide in recent years," says Suzi. "I've been looking at the factors behind this among older women experiencing marital difficulties and those who have already divorced, to try to understand the new phenomenon."

"Mid-life is a time of huge transition for many women. They are redefining themselves, frequently away from a defining role as a mother, and questioning their identity. Often, their marriage comes under the spotlight, too."

It was the world-leading research at the Department of Psychological Sciences that brought Suzi to Birkbeck, in particular the pioneering research methods of Professor Jonathan Smith, who developed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. This approach investigates how someone in a specific context understands a specific phenomenon – in this case, their marital relationship – through in-depth interviews.

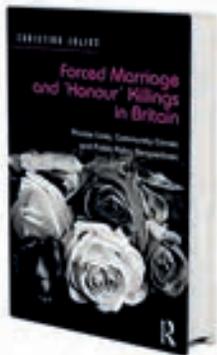
"To go back to education later in life is such a luxury," says Suzi. "My PhD feels like a natural extension of what I do every day – interviewing people and thinking about relationships."



To find out more about MeeTwo, visit meetwo.co.uk

Birkbeck books 2015–2016

A selection of books authored or edited by staff



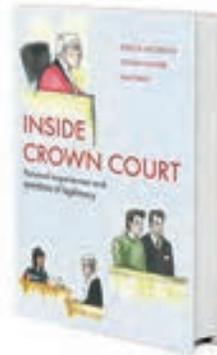
Forced Marriage and 'Honour' Killings in Britain: Private lives, community crimes and public policy perspectives

Christina Julios, Routledge
Christina Julios, Associate Lecturer in Social Sciences, Community Development and Public Policy, explores the contemporary phenomenon of forced marriage and 'honour' killings in Britain, set against a background of increasing 'honour'-based violence within Britain's south Asian and Muslim diasporas. She uses five key case studies and draws from a wide range of narratives, including those of 'honour' violence survivors, to trace the development of the 'honour' question over the past two decades. In considering changes in public awareness and government policy, including legislation, Dr Julios raises fundamental questions about the future direction of a post-multicultural Britain.



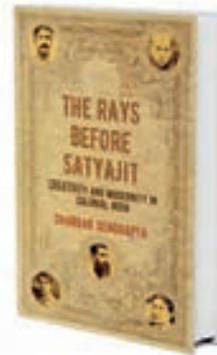
Empire of Things: How we became a world of consumers, from the fifteenth century to the twenty-first
Frank Trentmann, Allen Lane/Penguin

What we consume has become the defining feature of our lives: our economies live or die by spending, we are treated more as consumers than workers, and even public services are presented to us as products in a supermarket. In this densely researched study, Frank Trentmann, Professor of History, unfolds the extraordinary history that has shaped our material world, from late Ming China, Renaissance Italy and the British Empire to the present. Wide-ranging and richly detailed, *Empire of Things* explores how we have come to live with so much more, how this has changed the course of history, and the global challenges we face as a result.



Inside Crown Court: Personal experiences and questions of legitimacy
Jessica Jacobson, Gillian Hunter and Amy Kirby, Policy Press

Within the criminal justice system of England and Wales, the Crown Court is the arena in which serious criminal offences are prosecuted and sentenced. Jessica Jacobson, Co-Director of Birkbeck's Institute for Criminal Policy Research, Senior Research Fellow Gillian Hunter and Research Fellow Amy Kirby provide a vivid description of what it is like to attend court as a victim, a witness or a defendant. They explore the interplay between the different players in the courtroom and the extent to which the court process is viewed as legitimate by those involved in it. Using up-to-date ethnographic research, they bring to life the range of issues involved.



The Rays Before Satyajit: Creativity and modernity in Colonial India
Chandak Sengoopta, Oxford University Press

Although filmmaker Satyajit Ray is internationally known, few outside Bengal know much about the contributions made by his forebears to fields as diverse as printing technology, nationalism, children's literature, feminism, advertising, entrepreneurial culture and religious reform. In this first study in English of the multifarious interests and accomplishments of the wider Ray family, Chandak Sengoopta, Professor of History, interweaves the Ray saga with the larger history of Indian modernity and its contradictions.



Crossing Boundaries and Weaving Intercultural Work, Life and Scholarship in Globalizing Universities

Adam Komisarof and Zhu Hua (eds), Routledge

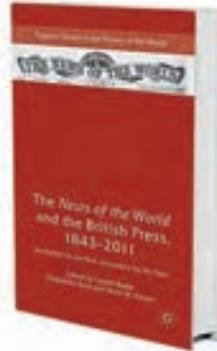
Co-editors Zhu Hua, Professor of Applied Linguistics and Communication, and Adam Komisarof generate a fresh view of the process of globalisation, by examining how work, scholarship and life inform each other among intercultural scholars as they navigate their interpersonal relationships and cross boundaries physically and metaphorically. The authors reflect upon their own intercultural experiences through theoretical frameworks and concepts – many of which they have proposed and developed in their own research.



Boys Will Be Boys? An interdisciplinary study of sport, masculinity and sexuality

Andy Harvey, The Inter-Disciplinary Press

Drawing on literary studies, sport history, sociology and psychoanalysis, Andy Harvey from Birkbeck's Sport Business Centre, offers new perspectives on the ambivalent intersections between male team sports, heterosexual masculinity and gay men. Charting a course that starts in English public schools of the mid-nineteenth century and ends with an examination of masculinity and sexuality in contemporary professional football, Harvey considers rugby league in the 1950s, American football in the 1970s and English football terraces in the 1990s.



The News of the World and the British Press, 1843-2011: Journalism for the rich, journalism for the poor

Laurel Brake, Chandrika Kaul, Mark Turner (eds), Palgrave Macmillan

This collection of essays, co-edited by Laurel Brake, Professor Emerita of English Literature and Print Culture, is the first scholarly treatment of the *News of the World* from news-rich broadsheet to sensational tabloid. Providing a detailed examination of its history, the contributors uncover new facts and discuss topics including Sunday journalism, gender, crime, political cartoons, the mass market, investigative techniques and the Leveson Inquiry.



The Psychoanalytic Craft: How to develop as a psychoanalytic practitioner

Laurence Spurling, Palgrave Macmillan

Laurence Spurling, Senior Lecturer in Psychosocial Studies, examines why developing as a psychoanalytic practitioner is so often laden with anxiety. He shows that case descriptions and examples in traditional psychoanalytic textbooks often give a misleading picture of practice, because they explore what practitioners ought to do rather than what they actually do. He identifies the missing element of these accounts of therapy – the 'craft' aspect of psychoanalytic work – and shows how these features of clinical thinking can be explored in clinical practice, in supervision and in teaching.

Poetry and prose: new creative writers

This year, two creative writing scholarships made possible by Kit de Waal and an anonymous donor were awarded for the first time to two students on Birkbeck's part-time MA Creative Writing programme.

Set up to support students who would not otherwise be able to afford to do the course, Stephen Morrison-Burke and Charlotte Forfieh were chosen as the first recipients of the fund.

Here, Stephen and Charlotte share some of their work.

The boxer and the honeybee **Stephen Morrison-Burke**

Einstein said if each bee dies,
then man has just four years alive,
those honeybees they slave and strive,
and dance to keep their verse alive,
and glide with such simplicity,
in front of crowds for all to see,
when all is done but who are we,
to mock the humble honeybee.

but fools they swat and curse and jeer,
and smile when death is ever near,
they ride the wave vicariously,
don't see the war beneath the sea,
don't feel the pain to taste the sweet,
nor understand the alchemy,
this world has yet a world to weep,
for our dear friend the honeybee.

please know the value
of a flower,
and choose it over
speed and power,
oh I agree a marvellous sight,
to float just like a butterfly,
and sting just like a bee in fights,
but bees they sting and sacrifice,
and what a way to trade a life,
and what a way to lay the night,
for who will stand and care to see,
the fall of our dear honeybee.

Maestra

Charlotte Forfieh

In San Francisco, you swapped tea for coffee. You shopped local and baked gluten free. Dolores Park you made your own; you picked up compliments and come-ons as you walked around The Castro. You learnt how to curb your wheels, how to eat tamales. You wrote odes to the ocean. You bought Apple and left Microsoft behind. You stayed busy, and I stayed close, hovering in the haloed sun as it shone down on the bay. Three months rolled by, then four, then six, taking with them your rose-tinted sunglasses. Reality bit. It always does. Your poetry dried up. You took the flowers from your fro. And you got to know your lover.

You began to think of yourself as stupid.

Despite the care with which you drew up the daily shopping list, you always managed to return home with the wrong kind of tortilla chip, the wrong brand of vitamin water. Your inexpert chopstick-use embarrassed him; he told you this one red-lantern night in the House of Nanking. You shared an uncomfortable look with your waiter and dined out no more. As with food, so with music. The devil may have all the best tunes but in San Francisco you stopped dancing. Every day, his music. In the end you resorted to sonic subterfuge. You would race to the laptop as soon as he left the apartment and fly through your favourite songs on iTunes, songs he called sophomoric and dated. With your head pressed up against the speakers you would listen hard for clues, aural signposts that might lead you back home.

Watch, wink, whisper. I trapped fog as it rolled over the Golden Gate Bridge and sent it to you on the wind. It matched your mood. I was in the cryptic messages spray-painted on sidewalks for lost soles to scuff. I was in the touch of your masseuse at Kabuki Springs and Spa. When things became especially bad, you would head to City Lights, choose a friend and burrow down into their welcoming embrace. Words meant for you snaked up and down those laden bookshelves. Words meant for you leapt off the page and encircled your bowed head.

“...You’ve got to...”

“... learn...”

“...to leave the...”

“... diner...”

“... when...”

“...love’s...”

“...come off...”

“...the menu...”

“Don’t worry about the food, either,” your niece says, as tears well in your sister’s eyes. “Don’t worry about any of it. All you need to do now is say goodbye.”

Goodbye. Yes. I rejoiced when you left him for London, your sweet gritty city. What better place is there to

begin again than the start? It’s going to be alright, we angels said as we danced in the rain. The end of the affair was in sight.

And then the strangest thing:

Emails and letters bridged the space between you. Care parcels of organic Xocolatl, cocoa butter and Dr Bronner’s liquid soap arrived at your door. You Skyped with delight. You willingly, gladly, defiantly impoverished yourself: you used credit cards for necessities and luxuries alike – one day a tube ticket and the next handmade Italian shoes. You were a free-willed wild child and you would be damned if long-distance would defeat you. You plotted your return to the States, as if the previous months had not happened.

I hastened to look for your lover’s angel, hoping she’d show me his blueprint. We angels can be anywhere – on the head of a pin, in the clouds, in the faces of strangers. I searched high and could not find her. I searched low and word reached me: he had no guide, or to put it most accurately, no guide from my side. A dark angel danced on your lover’s shoulder. An adversary.

To read more about Charlotte’s work, visit writelinesblog.wordpress.com



Medieval manuscripts unearthed

The fascinating history of one of Birkbeck's oldest medieval manuscripts has been unearthed by Professor of Medieval Studies at Birkbeck, Anthony Bale. Over the page, he explains the story behind the 'Birkbeck Hours'



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The 'Hours' are the hours of the monastic day, from matins to compline; each hour had a set of prayers associated with it.

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from matins to compline; each hour had a set of prayers associated with it, structuring the day through prayer for people who wanted to build the structure of monastic life into their everyday routine. There is much yet to be found out about the manuscript, but we are starting to piece together its history, from medieval France to Birkbeck's library.

The 'Birkbeck Hours' was given to Birkbeck in 1977 by Eileen Fox, the widow of Dr Charles Fox (1897–1977), a man with a long-standing connection to the College. Indeed, Fox's own bookplate – showing a fox in the library – remains inside the front pages of the manuscript.

Fox's generous gift to the College recalled his time spent at Birkbeck in the 1920s and '30s. Fox had been born in the East End of London, and attended the Coopers' Company School, Bow Road. He then won a scholarship to the City of London School, and from there, in 1915, he won a scholarship to Cambridge. His studies at Cambridge were interrupted, as he joined the British Expeditionary Forces in France; wounded in action, he returned to Cambridge, completed his degree, and was appointed to a lectureship in Mathematics at Imperial College in 1919. The next year, he became Lecturer in Mathematics at Birkbeck, where he stayed for over 25 years, until 1948.

The Foxes emigrated to Canada in 1949; Fox taught Mathematics at McGill and Concordia universities until he was in his late 70s. In his one and only published book, *An Introduction to the Calculus of Variations* (1950), Fox wrote that, "During my many years of teaching at London University I felt that none of the existing texts covered the subject as I would like to teach it and so I undertook the task of writing one of my own" – a commitment to teaching, and its connection to research, that resonates through Birkbeck to this day. Fox's legacy lives on in the Fox H-function named after him, incomprehensible to those of us in the humanities, but apparently of continued importance in mathematics.

Fox's gift to the College of a precious medieval manuscript is only one part of the story of the 'Birkbeck Hours'. Given its long history, it is a story that will continue to unfurl as we investigate the words and images within its ancient pages.

Animation artist Shay Hamias and Professor Bale have been awarded funding by the Leverhulme Trust for a ten-month residency for Hamias to be based in Birkbeck's School of Arts from January 2017. Their project will explore medieval manuscripts – including the Birkbeck Hours – as a source, inspiration and critical intertext for contemporary animation.

Among Birkbeck's small collection of medieval books, the most eye-catching is the recently unearthed 'Birkbeck Hours', a tiny, delicate, and very pretty fifteenth-century French manuscript, written on vellum. I rediscovered the manuscript in 2015, having found it stored in the College's vault but uncatalogued, along with several other medieval books.

The 'Birkbeck Hours' is a fine example of what was the most common kind of book owned and used during the Middle Ages, the Book of Hours. Each Book of Hours contains a collection of biblical texts, prayers and psalms, alongside illustrations and decorations. The 'Hours' in the name are the hours of the monastic day,

Above: Detail of the Birkbeck Hours



Understanding these data is key to public interaction with government policies, strategies and economic development.



Painting with data

A new data journalism project aims to make it easier for the general public to understand Egyptian government data

Birkbeck student Amr Sobhy felt strongly that there was a lack of open data about the budget of his home government in Egypt, and that the average citizen had a fundamental lack of understanding about the country's economic situation. This led the MSc Public Policy and Management student to develop 'Mwazna' – an online application that visualises the Egyptian state government's budget in a way that makes it easier for the public to access and understand it.

The application was shortlisted in the open data category of the 2016 Data Journalism Awards – the flagship annual awards of the Global Editors Network, which recognise outstanding work in the field of data journalism. The competition received 471 projects from over 50 countries. Mwazna was judged to be within the best 63 projects overall and among the best

six projects in the open data category.

To develop Mwazna, Amr and his colleague Tarek took a 161-page financial statement released by the Egyptian government and turned it into a simple, easy-to-understand and interactive online experience. In creating the open platform, which visualises complicated data such as financial information in the form of interactive infographics, they aimed to empower both citizens and open data advocates and researchers.

Amr, whose MSc dissertation looked at how technology and online advocacy tools impact on good governance, said: "Financial data in particular are scarce, difficult to understand and need a larger context to be well understood. Understanding these data is key to public interaction with government policies, strategies and economic development."

Mwazna has been very well received, even being welcomed by the Egyptian government. Officials from the Ministry of Finance have called for potential cooperation on future visualisation of budgets. Looking forward, Amr and Tarek hope to create an open-source tool to democratise access to budget visualisation.

Amr, who received a Chevening Scholarship from the UK government to study at Birkbeck, said: "The course helped me to understand the larger narratives through which power functions in politics; how governments perform effectively when their activities are open and transparent to citizens; and the potential role that technology has to play to create this space of interaction".

Above, left: Amr Sobhyr works on Mwazna

Cancer and comedy

Birkbeck BA Theatre and Drama graduate develops a show about her experience of cervical cancer



“

Sometimes it's easier to educate and inform people – especially on uncomfortable subjects – through something creative.

”

When she was just 24, and in the third year of her BA Theatre and Drama Studies at Birkbeck, Karen Hobbs was diagnosed with cervical cancer. Despite the shock of her diagnosis and the challenges of the subsequent treatment, Karen managed to finish her degree last summer and she even used her experience as the basis for her final-year project – a show called *Tumour Has It*.

Karen took *Tumour Has It* to the 2016 Edinburgh Fringe, where throughout August she performed to around 600 people, taking them through her experience of cancer, challenging the stigma of having a gynaecological disease, raising awareness and celebrating life.

Karen says: “The most important thing that I learned at Birkbeck is that theatre should respond to social issues. There is still a lot of stigma around the type of cancer that I had, and I think that sometimes it's easier to educate and inform people – especially on uncomfortable subjects – through something creative.”

After her Edinburgh Fringe run, Karen reflected: “It was really daunting, as I'd never even been to Edinburgh before, but I loved it. Having the chance to perform the show so many times during such a short period meant that I became much more confident in my performance, as during the previews in London I'd been doing the show once every few weeks. Although I knew the show was good, as I'd spent so long working on it and getting feedback from tutors and fellow theatre-makers, I'd always been unsure whether I was good enough to perform it. By the end of the Edinburgh run, I had realised that I was, and although there will always be some nerves before a performance, I was able to really enjoy the experience as well.

“The show naturally attracted a lot of people who had a direct experience of cancer, and after the shows I had some very emotional conversations with audience members. It can be quite hard to bring your spirits up again after those emotionally difficult encounters, but I would never want to not have them – that is what the show is all about.”

Karen is now working with the Eve Appeal, a charity raising awareness and funding research into gynaecological cancers. She continues to perform *Tumour Has It*, saying: “The more we can talk and laugh about these things, the more awareness we raise, and ultimately the more lives we can save. I will keep performing the show as long as people want to see it.”

You can listen to Karen speaking about her experiences at Birkbeck and about the development of the show on Birkbeck's Soundcloud channel: soundcloud.com/birkbeck-podcasts/karen-hobbs-on-cancer-and-comedy

Finding a new home

A Postgraduate Certificate in Elected Member Professional Development helped David Simmonds to a future role in resettling Syrian refugees in the UK

David Simmonds CBE became involved in student politics during his undergraduate degree. Shortly after he moved to London to take up a graduate trainee role, the opportunity to stand for Hillingdon council arose. David became the youngest elected councillor in the UK, when he was elected to Hillingdon council, aged 22, in 1998.

Today, David is deputy leader of Hillingdon council, and Chair of the Local Government Association (LGA) Asylum, Refugee and Migration task group, among other board and committee responsibilities. David's recent successes include completing the challenging task of finding homes for the 20,000 Syrian refugees that the UK government agreed to accept by 2020.

David cites this as an example of how local and central government can work successfully together, combining central government's access to funding and local government's connection to what's happening "on the ground". He says: "After the Government made its announcement, it was obvious that there was nobody in Whitehall with the practical experience of finding homes for people, ensuring their social care needs were met and securing school places for their children. Of course, councils do that day in day out, so clearly that was the solution."

Improving communication between different levels of government is something that David feels passionately about. He provides a raft of examples, from public health to economic regeneration, where councils have the knowledge and agility to respond quickly but can be held back by slow-moving central government.

In 2003, Hillingdon was used as the test case for a judgment that clarified the responsibility of councils towards unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. The borough has a high



Local and central government can work successfully together.



number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, because Heathrow is located there. David says: "I had been an LGA cynic, but after the Hillingdon judgment, they were really useful and enabled me to speak to ministers and senior officials to get a deal around the funding for the work with the unaccompanied children in our care. I realised that it is a fantastic organisation, bringing together the enormous expertise found across the sector."

Of his time at Birkbeck, David says: "The course enabled us to think about what we do in a theoretical way and then find practical solutions. We looked at local government in other countries and how we could apply that to what we do in Britain. Understanding different systems changes the way you think about how your council and public services engage with people."

With a new government now in place, there is no longer a specific minister for Syrian refugees, but the challenge of supporting refugee children alongside Syrians arriving in increasing numbers remains. However, at the helm of the LGA task group, David will continue to work with central government and local authorities as they navigate this "nightmarishly complicated" challenge.

Below: David Simmonds (*John Moore*)



New Fellows

Four members of the Birkbeck community were made Fellows of the College in 2016



Stuart Popham

Stuart Popham had a 35 year career as a solicitor with the law firm Clifford Chance where he was a partner for 27 years, the last eight of which he served as the firm's Global Senior Partner.

Since retiring from law in 2011 he has been the Vice Chairman for Banking in Europe for Citibank and a non-executive director of Legal & General plc. He is currently the chair of Chatham House (The Royal Institute of International Affairs) and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

He was made Queen's Counsel (honoris causa) in 2011. Stuart has previously served as chair of the CBI London Council, on the advisory council of the Said Business School, University of Oxford, as a trustee of the Barbican Trust and on the Southampton University Business School advisory group.

Stuart's first engagement with Birkbeck was as a member of the Stratford Campus advisory group in 2004; he became a governor

in 2011, serving on the Audit, Remuneration and Nomination committees until stepping down in September.



Sue Jackson

Professor Sue Jackson joined Birkbeck in 2001 as lecturer in Lifelong Learning and Citizenship, in the then Faculty of Continuing Education. She has served as Head of School of Continuing Education, Director of the Birkbeck Institute for Lifelong Learning, Director of the Centre for Transformative Practice in Learning and Teaching and Pro-Vice Master for Learning and Teaching.

Having returned to education as a mature student studying part-time, Sue is committed to research in, and the practice of, transformative lifelong learning which is exemplified at Birkbeck. In 2007 she became Professor of Lifelong Learning and Gender. Her research interests include lifelong learning and learner identities, especially regarding the

intersections of gender, social class and age. Sue is a National Teaching Fellow and a Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.



Miriam Zukas

Miriam's passion for teaching adults began when she was asked in 1978 to teach an extramural class on behalf of the University of Leicester and has infused her teaching and research career ever since.

Beginning with her first full-time post in 1980 in the University of Leeds Department of Adult Education and Extramural Studies, she has taught hundreds of adults in higher education, from those starting out on New Opportunities for Women and Access courses to doctoral students studying alongside their full-time posts. Most have studied part-time.

Miriam fulfilled a lifetime ambition when she came to Birkbeck in 2009 to take up the post of Executive Dean of the School of Social Science, History and Philosophy.

Having recently stepped down from that post, she continues at Birkbeck as Professor of Adult Education. Awarded a National Teaching Fellowship in 2008, Professor Zukas is also Visiting Professor in the School of Education, University of Leeds.



John Biggs

John was first elected to Tower Hamlets Council in 1988 and became Leader in 1994. In 2000 he was elected as the first Greater London Authority Assembly Member for City and East London, chairing the Assembly Budget and Performance Committee.

Following his election as the Executive Mayor of Tower Hamlets in June 2015, he has a new role working to strengthen the good reputation of the Borough and the confidence of its communities; in working to increase the availability of affordable housing for residents, to improve access to employment and training opportunities for local people, and to improve the physical environment of the borough.

A graduate of Chemistry and at postgraduate level in Computer Science and Law, John has worked as an analyst in the City and as Director of a political pressure group; he is also a member of the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) Board.

John was appointed as an independent governor of Birkbeck in 2009 and served until earlier this year on the Estates and Finance and General Purposes Committee.

For a full list of our Fellows, visit bbk.ac.uk/fellows

Under the spotlight

Upgraded facilities and a growing reputation are seeing the Peltz Gallery at Birkbeck go from strength to strength, with 2016 exhibitions looking at the complaining body and the phenomenon of 'cinephilia'

Now in its third year and with a growing reputation as a gallery that consistently tackles politically and historically contentious topics, the scope of the Peltz Gallery's exhibitions have grown consistently over the last two years, thanks to continued generous support from Elizabeth and Daniel Peltz, OBE. With their support, the gallery – based in Birkbeck's School of Arts in Gordon Square – has been able to upgrade lighting, humidity and temperature-monitoring facilities, improving conservation of the works on show. Looking forward, in tandem with improved insurance coverage, this will facilitate loans of more fragile and sensitive artefacts from major national and international collections.

Exhibitions this year have brought a new, and in some cases radical, perspective to their subject matter.

The complaining body

When we complain, what is the physical impact on our bodies? And what happens to us when we feel unable to complain? These questions were explored in a month-long art exhibition at the Peltz Gallery in February 2016.

'Manual Labours: The Complaining Body' (image top right) ran as part of an 18-month research project investigating the physical and emotional effects of complaining, receiving complaints and not being able to complain in the context of work. Initiated by Dr Sophie Hope of the College's Department of Film, Media and Cultural Studies, the research project involved a series of workshops with call centre workers in a London borough council, commuters on a train station platform in Worcester and staff dealing with student complaints in a UK university.

"The emotional labour involved in listening to



and managing complaints, the social and cultural conditions of complaining, and the reasons we don't complain all have physical impacts on the body as a site of resistance, absorption and expulsion," explained Dr Hope.

"Our research explored the normative discourses of the good, healthy, productive body which are disrupted by the complaining body. The uncomplaining body is often in fact a sick body, having to perform a healthy body and happy self. The exhibition reflected on stories of how and why the complaining body is performed, silenced and internalised."

Lights, camera, action

A selection of the curious and unseen artefacts from The Cinema Museum's collections formed the basis of 'A Museum of Everyday Life: Cinephilia and Collecting' (image below, right), an exhibition showcasing the intricate handmade archives, indexes and scrapbooks painstakingly recorded by filmgoers and cinema obsessives, from the Second World War to the present.

The exhibition looked at how these fascinatingly personal, creative and intricate collections begin to form a kind of life writing or autobiography, documenting the everyday lives of cinema enthusiasts. From Vic Kinson, an amateur cinephile, who amassed an archive of over 36,000 index cards – each card intricately detailing the careers and personal lives of the film stars he saw on the silver screen, to Graham Head, who painstakingly snipped off squares of celluloid from every reel of film he projected and kept them in little brown envelopes.

Ghosts of violence

Other exhibitions held at the Peltz Gallery throughout 2016 included: 'RELAPSE – Identity' (image far left), an exhibition exploring the concept of sexuality and sexual identity as constructed and performed through social rituals; and 'Tejas Verdes: I was not there', a collaborative project between sociologist Margarita Palacios and visual artist Livia Marin.

Bringing together Palacios' research on violence and Marin's work around loss and care, the project consists of visiting several ex-detention and extermination sites in Chile and the performing of an aesthetic intervention in each of them. "The artist's intervention in the Gallery consisted of a set of ghostly peeled resin casts taken from sections of the built environment of Chile's detention centres – traces of presence now absent," says Professor Annie Coombes, Director of the Gallery.

More information about the Peltz Gallery's exhibitions, the Director's latest report and details of how to visit can be found at bbk.ac.uk/peltz-gallery



Obituaries

The College pays tribute to former colleagues Helen Bolderson, Barbara Hardy, Glyn Humphreys, Helen Reece, Ruth Thompson and Annette Karmiloff-Smith



Helen Bolderson (1930–2016)
Honorary Research Fellow

Birkbeck Research Fellow Helen Bolderson, who died on 8 March 2016 aged 85, had 30 years' experience as a researcher in social policy. For many years, she taught on the Master's degree course in public and social administration at Brunel University, specialising in social security.

An only child, Helen Bolderson was born in Berlin and travelled to the UK as a refugee in 1938. She took a BA in sociology and an MA in social work at the London School of Economics and then worked as a child protection officer, before returning to the LSE to do a PhD. On retiring from her teaching post at Brunel University in 1995, she continued to work on research contracts there until the early 2000s. Thereafter she became a Research Fellow at Birkbeck.

Helen was published in the *Journal of Social Policy*, *Policy and Politics*; and the

Journal of Social Welfare Law.

Friends in academic life and former students recall her as a caring and dedicated teacher, a hugely supportive mentor and a precise, unflappable and highly professional colleague.



Professor Barbara Hardy (1924–2016)

Emeritus Professor of English Literature

Barbara Hardy, who died on 12 February 2016 aged 92, was Emeritus Professor of English Literature at Birkbeck, and one of the most distinguished Victorian scholars and literary critics of her time.

Born in Swansea, Barbara Hardy studied at University College

London, graduating with a BA in 1947 and MA in 1949. She was appointed Assistant Lecturer at Birkbeck in 1951, moving to Royal Holloway as Professor in 1965, before returning to Birkbeck in 1970 as the first Geoffrey Tillotson Professor of English Literature. She had been Reader-elect when Tillotson, the distinguished specialist in eighteenth-century poetry, was chair of the Department of English.

In 1959, she published the highly acclaimed *The Novels of George Eliot: A study in form*, which set the foundations for her distinguished career and did much to revive academic interest in Victorian literature.

Barbara Hardy was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 1997 and a Senior Fellow of the British Academy in 2006. She published a memoir, *Swansea Girl*; a novel, *London Lovers*; and three volumes of poetry, *Severn Bridge*, *The Yellow Carpet* and *Dante's Ghosts*. Her final book, on Ivy Compton-Burnett, was published in March 2016.

Her former colleague Professor Peter Mudford recalls that Barbara ran a happy and stimulating department, "where the best interests of her students were always pre-eminent". This was shown in her lifelong enthusiasm for Birkbeck, where she continued to run the Poetry

Workshop long after her retirement.



Professor Glyn Humphreys (1954–2016)

Watts Professor of Experimental Psychology, University of Oxford, and Birkbeck Fellow

Birkbeck Fellow Glyn Humphreys, Watts Professor of Experimental Psychology and Head of Department at the University of Oxford, will be remembered for his enormous contributions to understanding the cognitive effects of stroke and its rehabilitation.

Professor Humphreys, who died suddenly on 14 January 2016 aged 61, came to Birkbeck in 1979 after completing a PhD at Bristol to join the neuropsychology group. In his ten years at Birkbeck, Glyn Humphreys made a significant contribution to the department by setting up the Master's in Cognitive Neuropsychology. He became Professor in 1988 and in the same year won Birkbeck's Ronald Tress Prize for advancements in his field. On leaving Birkbeck in 1989, Glyn Humphreys became Professor of Cognitive Psychology and Head of Department at the University of Birmingham, before joining the University of Oxford. He was made a Fellow of Birkbeck in 2007.

Professor Mike Oaksford,



Friends in academic life and former students recall her as a caring and dedicated teacher a hugely supportive mentor and a precise, unflappable and highly professional colleague.



Head of the Department of Psychological Sciences at Birkbeck, said: “Glyn Humphreys was a giant in the many areas of psychology he touched on during his career, especially his contributions to the cognitive neuroscience and neuropsychology of attention and perception. “He was a great friend of the Department and of the College.”



Helen Reece (1968–2016)
Lecturer and Reader in Law,
Birkbeck, 1998–2009

Helen Reece, who died on 26 October 2016 aged 48, was a lecturer, and subsequently Reader, in the School of Law at Birkbeck from 1998 until 2009, when she left to take up a position at the LSE.

Internationally acknowledged as one of the most original family law scholars of her generation, and the recipient of numerous prizes, Helen Reece’s work has been essential reading for students across the country for more than 20 years. Her intellectual rigour and fearlessness in challenging orthodoxies and conventions, wherever they came from, was legendary.

Her research, which was deeply principled, explored the regulation of intimacy. Helen Reece pushed forward debates about divorce, adoption, parenthood, domestic violence and the law of

sexual offences. A writer of great clarity and a passionate defender of free speech, she was that rare thing – a genuine public intellectual.

Her former colleague, Birkbeck Reader in Law Daniel Monk, said: “As a teacher and colleague Helen was admired and valued for her kindness, generosity and integrity. Her early death is a tragedy and she will be greatly missed.”



Dr Ruth Thompson (1953–2016)

Deputy Chair of Governors

Birkbeck’s Deputy Chair of Governors, Dr Ruth Thompson, who died on 9 July 2016 aged 63, was first appointed an independent Governor of the College in 2009, after she retired as Director-General for Higher Education in the then Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills.

A career civil servant, she also worked in senior roles in the Department of Trade and Industry, HM Treasury and the Department of Social Security. In 2011–2012 she was interim Chief Executive of Partnerships for Schools, a non-departmental public body of the Department for Education.

Ruth Thompson was a member of the Higher Education Policy Institute, and in 2014 she co-chaired an inquiry for the Higher Education Commission on the future financial

sustainability of higher education. She was also a Governor of Staffordshire University and a Board member of London TravelWatch.

At Birkbeck, Ruth was a member of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and of the Remuneration Committee and she took on the Deputy Chair role in 2014. She led the Review of Governor Effectiveness in 2013 and co-chaired the Review of the Department of Economics, Mathematics and Statistics in 2015.

“Ruth made an enormous contribution to Birkbeck in her time as a Governor, combining her tremendous intelligence and analytical skills with good humour,” said Professor David Latchman CBE, Master of Birkbeck.



Professor Annette Karmiloff-Smith (1938–2016)

Professorial Research Fellow, Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development

Annette Karmiloff-Smith, Professorial Research Fellow at the Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development in the Department of Psychological Sciences, who died on Monday, 19 December 2016 at the age of 78, was a seminal thinker in the field of child development.

Having started her career as a UN translator in Geneva, her interests soon turned to the emergence

of language in children. She trained under Barbel Inhelder and Jean Piaget at the University of Geneva, where she was a member of the International Centre for Genetic Epistemology.

After a spell at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen, Professor Karmiloff-Smith moved to London in 1982, conducting research at the Medical Research Council Cognitive Development unit on typical cognitive development. In 1998, she moved to the UCL Institute of Child Health, where she headed the Neurocognitive Development Unit, and in 2006 she moved to the Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development at Birkbeck.

“Annette always emphasised the importance of development itself when trying to understand both typically and atypically developing children,” said Professor Denis Mareschal, from the Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development. “This theoretical work led her to take substantial steps forward in understanding the abilities of children with Williams and Downs Syndromes.”

“Annette was hugely loved by her students and colleagues and received dozens of accolades during her career, including a Fellowship of the British Academy, Fellowship of the Cognitive Science Society, Fellowship of the Academy of Medical Sciences and honorary doctorates from universities across the world,” he added. “She will be greatly missed.”

For more obituaries, visit:
bbk.ac.uk/alumni/alumni-community/tributes

Why I give

Anne McFarlane studied MSc Psychodynamic Counselling at Birkbeck, graduating in 2002. In May 2016 she made a generous gift to the College which is supporting 13 postgraduate students



“

Being able to retrain, requalify and relearn in later life is a wonderful thing, and I'm pleased to be supporting an institution that makes this possible.

”

Enrolling on the Master's Degree at Birkbeck offered me the opportunity to change career and experience the joy of learning and developing in middle life.

Straight from school I had studied Nursing and Social Science at the University of Edinburgh and I took a career break while raising my family. When the time came to return to work, I decided that I didn't want to go back to nursing. I already had voluntary experience as a counsellor and decided that I would like to retrain as a psychodynamic counsellor. We were living in Kent at the time and I had prospectuses for nearly every university offering courses in the South East. I had heard, though, that Birkbeck's programme was the best, hardest and the most academic. Give me a challenge and off I go – so I decided to apply to Birkbeck.

Being in my 40s and returning to academic study was daunting, but I felt really well supported by the course tutors. The course was exactly what I needed at that time; it met all my expectations and I loved it. I was able to self-fund and did not have to hold down a full-time job while studying. Some of my colleagues on the course had different pressures and challenges. The course was taught on a Monday, but it quickly required more and more time for the readings, the tutorials and the placements. I was continually impressed by the huge commitment and investment my classmates were making.

After I graduated, my family moved back to Scotland and I quite quickly secured a job at the University of Edinburgh, running a staff counselling service, as well as developing other pieces of portfolio work. My Birkbeck qualification served me really well, as the quality of the programme was well recognised.

I have almost stopped working now, and had been reflecting for some time on how to support Birkbeck, as my time there had been so important. In May 2016, I received a telephone call from Birkbeck during their annual telephone fundraising campaign. I spoke to a student who is currently studying on the course that I did, and that was the trigger for me to actually get on and make the donation.

I decided to support postgraduate students, as I know that financial support for study at this level can be difficult to obtain. I think that being able to retrain, requalify and relearn in later life is a wonderful thing, and I'm pleased to be supporting an institution that makes this possible for students.

If you are interested in leaving a legacy to Birkbeck, please contact Jessica Goulson in Development and Alumni on j.goulson@bbk.ac.uk or call 020 7380 3114 for more information

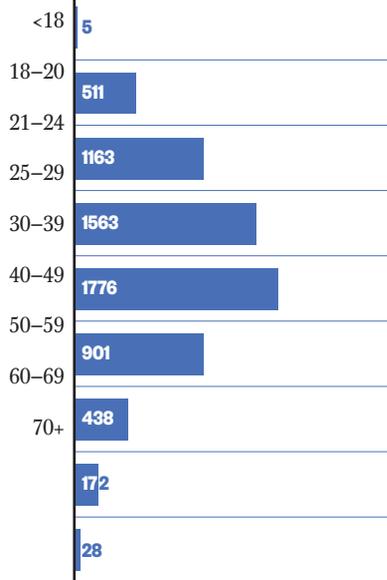
Birkbeck in numbers

Source: All student data from Higher Education Statistics Agency 2015–2016

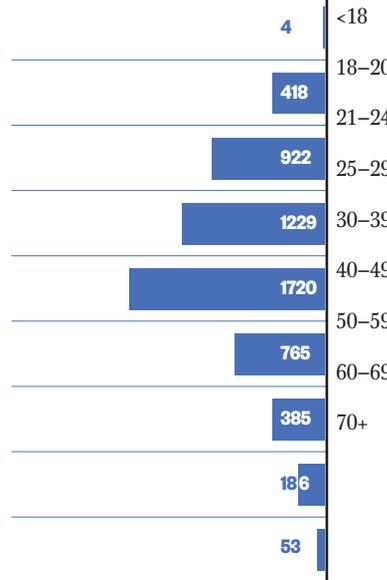
If you think you might not fit in at university, think again. Birkbeck has a course for you, no matter what your age or educational background or whether you want to study full- or part-time

The typical Birkbeck student

Female age (total 6557)



Male age (total 5682)



Thank you!

£1,997,292

donated to Birkbeck in 2015–2016

£543,006

left in wills to Birkbeck

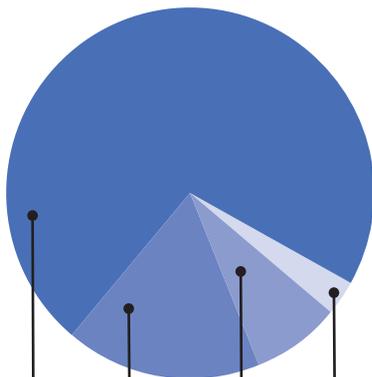
8

corporate partners

1,543

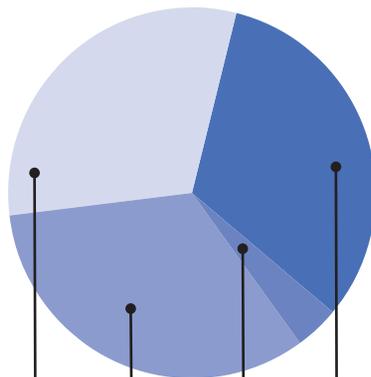
Number of alumni and friends donating

Full-time students by level (total 3809)



2758 Undergraduate degree
651 Postgraduate taught
290 Postgraduate research
110 Other undergraduate

Part-time students by level (total 8430)



2638 Undergraduate degree
2766 Postgraduate taught
333 Postgraduate research
2693 Other undergraduate

Birkbeck bursaries

40%

of full-time undergraduate students are in receipt of Birkbeck bursaries

32%

of part-time undergraduate students are in receipt of Birkbeck bursaries



The last word

Baroness Joan Bakewell, President of Birkbeck, gives BBK her view on the changes to higher education making their way through Parliament

Birkbeck is an outstanding place. What's more, it is outstanding for particularly good reasons. It offers the very best education – with quite outstanding tutors and lecturers – for people who wish to study part-time, in the evenings. This suits increasing numbers of people, who want to continue study into their working lives, or who have missed out in their younger years. All are welcome. And when I meet the students at Graduation, I am always thrilled to see what a diverse range of people have chosen Birkbeck.

Birkbeck is an important part of the higher education sector in this country. And that sector may be about to go through some tough times. Not only are the consequences of Brexit for the whole European academic life unclear, but we are also facing a Higher Education and Research Bill that has the potential to transform university

Above:
Baroness Bakewell congratulates a student at a 2016 Graduation Ceremony

status in this country. While aspects of the Bill, such as the increased emphasis on teaching, through the Teaching Excellence Framework, are welcome there are still concerns that this Bill may lower the standards and reputation of Britain's universities throughout the world.

One of its proposals is to allow the creation of new universities by diverse groups, such as charities or private companies, judged to have the expertise to be given degree-granting powers. The details of the Bill, recently debated in the House of Lords (where incidentally it had many opponents, including me) are something that should concern everyone. I invite you to follow them on the UK Parliament website (www.parliament.uk), where you can also read Birkbeck's submission to the Bill Committee, made in October 2016.

I believe our prevailing culture is in danger of conceding the original purpose of university education as it was shaped by our academic history. That history was built on the principle that university education is a universal good, both for the individuals who attain degrees and for the societies in which they then live and flourish. That principle inspired founder George Birkbeck's vision of the "universal benefits of the blessings of knowledge" back in 1823. All are enriched by generations of informed and enlightened people, schooled in their specific subjects but also learning through the years at their university the values of tolerance and understanding that underpin democratic institutions. These values are precious indeed. They exist in partnership with the purpose of providing skilled employees for the labour market.

Here Britain's universities can claim to teach the very best. It is no surprise that society looks to our universities to provide the skills needed to run our economy, our medical and scientific communities, our justice system, and the vast range of our arts and culture. These not only benefit Britain but also extend our influence worldwide. Countries around the globe send their most promising students to the UK, knowing that a degree from a British university will be a passport for life in seeking their own and their country's well-being. To see that reputation watered down by a sudden influx of new and unproven institutions risks doing damage to the entire sector. That is why those of us who lead the higher education sector are pledged to keep up the standards under which the many members of the Birkbeck community – both current students and graduates – have flourished.



I believe our prevailing culture is in danger of conceding the original purpose of university education as it was shaped by our academic history.



In January 2011, Baroness Bakewell took her seat in the House of Lords as Baroness Bakewell of Stockport. She became President of Birkbeck in April 2013.

BBK

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