

BBK

LONDON'S EVENING UNIVERSITY

THIS IS
A SAFE
AREA

THE CHANGING FACE OF LONDON

*How young people
renegotiate once-familiar
neighbourhoods*

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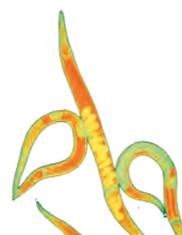
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MASTER'S WELCOME



WE HAVE CONTINUED TO MAKE THE CASE FOR PART-TIME, FLEXIBLE HIGHER EDUCATION

Universities seem to have been in the news constantly over the last year. Political debate about the role and value of higher education, the cost of a degree and university leadership regularly made the headlines in 2017.

Throughout it all, Birkbeck has continued to make the case for part-time, flexible higher education, holding conversations with policymakers and parliamentarians at every opportunity. Early in 2017, we successfully lobbied Parliament to ensure recognition for part-time study in the Higher Education and Research Act, which became law in April. In November, our students met Sir Michael Barber, who takes up his new role in April 2018 as Chair of the Office for Students, the universities' new regulatory body.

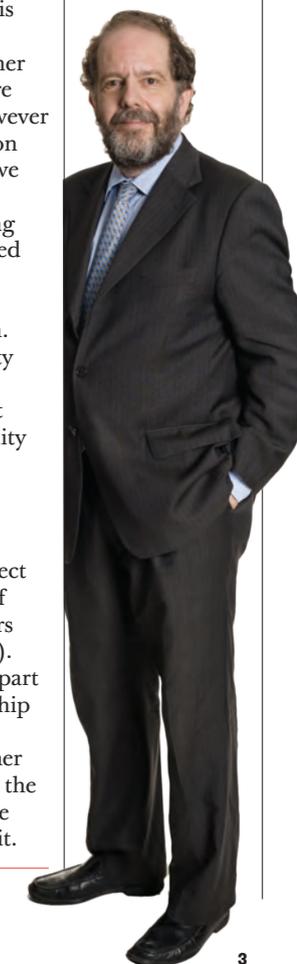
The College made preparations for the introduction in 2017 of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), the new assessment of the quality of undergraduate teaching in universities, and in June we were pleased to receive a 'Silver' award in the first ever TEF awards (p10). This accolade puts us above some Russell Group universities, and positions us well among other London higher education institutions. We are not resting on our Olympic-style laurels, however – a review of teaching and student satisfaction across the College is being carried out, and we will consider the results early in 2018.

Our number of full-time students (studying in the evening) has meant that we were ranked in some 2017 university league tables for the first time – a mixed blessing, as such tables discriminate against our open access mission. We nevertheless welcome the greater visibility that this gives to Birkbeck's unique evening teaching model and continuing commitment to our historic mission of providing top-quality higher education to working Londoners.

New developments on campus during 2016-2017 include the launch of our degree apprenticeship offering (p26). We were also delighted to welcome the first Compass Project students on campus, in this inaugural year of Birkbeck's initiative to offer 20 asylum seekers a fully funded place on a College course (p4). Their contribution to our community forms part of a long tradition of sanctuary and scholarship at Birkbeck (p6).

We look ahead to the coming year of further innovation and to more conversations about the future of higher education and how to ensure that it provides for all who can benefit from it.

Professor David Latchman CBE, Master, Birkbeck



A NEW DIRECTION

Launched in November 2016, Birkbeck's Compass Project offers 20 scholarships, along with a tailored package of additional support, to asylum seekers and refugees in London to enable them to take up a place on any undergraduate or postgraduate certificate course at the College. Our first cohort of Compass Project students began their studies in October 2017 and here, two of them talk about what it means to be offered this fresh start

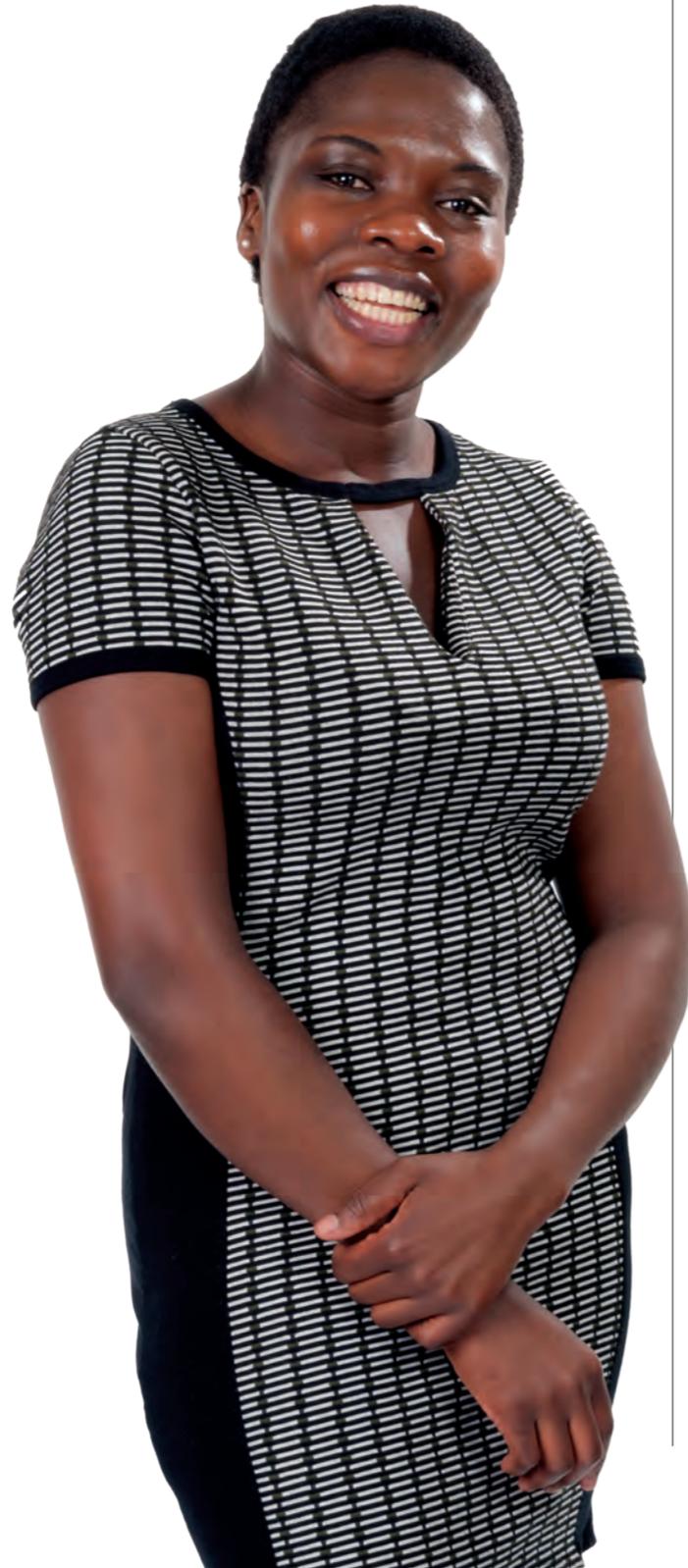
GLORIA TSITSI MADYIRA

"I am originally from Zimbabwe. I sought asylum in the UK because I feared persecution in my country, leaving after I was harassed, tortured and sexually abused by government authorities in Zimbabwe.

"My first few weeks at the University were so exciting and challenging. I have met students from different backgrounds and have learned new skills. The course work is going well. There are a lot of assignments and essays but my tutor, Heather Finlay, has been very friendly, supportive and sincere.

"I am undertaking a Certificate of Higher Education on the Nursing, Midwifery, Health and Social Care pathway at Birkbeck. If I am successful in passing my course, I hope to pursue a career as a nurse. Studying nursing is important to me, as it can provide me with knowledge I can use throughout my life regardless of my future path.

"The Compass Project is a chance to have a brighter future and accomplish my dreams. I would like to thank the Compass Project for their help on behalf of all asylum seekers, including myself."



Right: Gloria Tsitsi Madyira
Far right: Aghil Maniavi (photos Geoff Wilson)

AGHIL MANIAVI

"I came to the UK from Iran. I was an activist, working on a report about a secret prison where the authorities were keeping and torturing Ahwazi activists. They arrested one of my friends, and I had to run to save my life, as I was close to getting arrested, tortured and maybe executed.

"My first few weeks on the course have been good, but there is a lot of pressure too, as we had to start work on our assignments from the second week. I am getting used to it though, and currently everything is good.

"I think Birkbeck is a great choice to start your academic level studies. The environment is highly academic. What is more, most of the students have come to study with lots of experience, and this is what I really like. I strongly advise people who want to return to study to choose Birkbeck.

"The Compass Project has changed my life. I am studying Introduction to Politics, and I hope this Certificate of Higher Education course will enable me to progress to undergraduate studies, and ultimately to a PhD. I also hope the qualification I gain through this course will help me to improve my skills and get a good job in the future.

"Entering academia has always been my biggest dream. I had previously applied to university in the UK, and received three out of four offers. However, my residency status means I am not allowed to work, which means I couldn't afford the fees on my own. Being told I was awarded the Compass scholarship was the greatest news that I have had in the past few years.

"I wouldn't be able to enter higher education without this award – it's the biggest opportunity I've ever had."



Birkbeck is grateful to Allen & Overy, AlixPartners' The Foundation, the Blanes Trust and Santander for their generous support for the Compass Project

SANCTUARY AND SCHOLARSHIP

From the First World War onwards Birkbeck has offered a safe haven, and practical support, to refugees. Mike Berlin looks at a century of solidarity

There is an enduring tradition at Birkbeck of practical solidarity with refugees. Throughout the twentieth century and on into the twenty-first, a vital part of the College's work has been to provide a place where people fleeing persecution have been enabled to pick up their lives, resume their education and engage in scholarship.

The assistance that the College has given over the last 100 years has taken various forms, from language classes and training to temporary shelter. From the start of the First World War in 1914, Birkbeck offered places to Belgian refugees fleeing the German advance and provided free language lessons, part of an outpouring of popular pro-Belgian sentiment that attended the outbreak of war.

During the inter-war period and the rise of Fascism in Nazi Germany, the College offered help to refugee scholars and students fleeing

Below:
Art historian Nikolaus Pevsner
Right:
Hungarian refugees are welcomed to London by Birkbeck's Students' Union (British Pathé)

persecution. It did not act in isolation. During the 1930s and 1940s, Birkbeck was linked – by its London location and through its activist staff and students – with a network of refugee aid organisations. It worked with other institutions, in particular the Academic Assistance Council, to help refugee academics escape oppression and continue their research.

Throughout this period, many, mainly Jewish, refugees from Germany, Austria and Poland found a place at Birkbeck thanks to this advocacy, and their expertise enriched the College's reputation as a place of learning immensely.

Much of this can be attributed to the work of Patrick Blackett, a physicist working at Birkbeck in the mid-1930s, who was intimately involved in the Academic Assistance Council and advocated that it expand its remit to argue publicly for the rights of refugee professors, researchers and students. During Blackett's four years at Birkbeck, he made the Physics Laboratory in Malet Street, known as 'The Magnet House', a haven for brilliant young researchers fleeing persecution.

The contribution of the new arrivals was to be felt in virtually every department of the College. Most famously perhaps, the celebrated German art historian Nikolaus Pevsner came to Birkbeck in 1942 and helped to establish the College as a centre for the study of art and architecture during and after the war. Later still, the renowned historian Eric Hobsbawm, who had arrived in England aged 16 as a refugee from Berlin before the war, went on to become Emeritus Professor and President of the College until his death in 2012.

Birkbeck provided a haven, then, for many people whose lives were displaced by war, persecution and exile. Among the post-war cohort of students, there were a number of young émigré Londoners who had come to Britain as children or teenagers via the famous *Kindertransport*, many of whom had lost their families in the Nazi genocide. Birkbeck's unique



BIRKBECK PROVIDED A HAVEN FOR MANY PEOPLE WHOSE LIVES WERE DISPLACED BY WAR, PERSECUTION AND EXILE

system of part-time evening study helped them to pursue their studies, work and slowly rebuild their lives.

Practical help for these refugees often came from fellow students: in the late 1930s, student clubs and societies working through the Birkbeck Students' Union helped to organise basic accommodation. A similar effort was made after the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary, when the Students' Union helped to refurbish and run a welfare centre and hostel in south London for young adolescent Hungarians who had fled their birthplace. Teams of students canvassed donors and collected furniture, carpets, stoves and sinks, and helped to clear out and restore a large derelict house at Kingston Hill, Surrey, for teenagers escaping the violent aftermath of the uprising. This everyday act of student solidarity drew the attention of the BBC and British Pathé News. While it is important not to exaggerate the impact of these gestures, they were concrete expressions of a sense of common humanity which today's staff and students would recognise and share.

This tradition of support continues today with the Compass Project (see page 4), a new College initiative which this year provided 20 asylum seekers with scholarships for courses at Birkbeck. This will help them to achieve a valuable qualification, recognised in the UK, while also providing a platform for further university study. At the same time, the Compass Project students are being offered support, including help in getting to grips with a different academic environment and student culture.

It is hoped that the Compass Project will build on this century-old tradition of support for refugees, expand it and make it a permanent feature of the future of the College.

Birkbeck has an important role to play in supporting refugees through the Project, as well as engaging in public debate about the education rights of refugees, how British society can welcome them, and how the global injustices that force them to flee might be overcome.

Mike Berlin teaches in the Department of History, Classics and Archaeology and specialises in the social history of early modern London



THE ORIGINAL IT-GIRL

Software entrepreneur and philanthropist Dame Stephanie Shirley arrived in Britain as a child refugee in 1939, and studied at Birkbeck under computer pioneer Professor Andrew Booth. Made a Companion of Honour last year, Dame Stephanie reflected on her life and work as she delivered the 2017 Andrew and Kathleen Booth Lecture

You studied at Birkbeck as a postgraduate. Why has the College been so important to you?

The College has been instrumental to my worldly success; to my questioning, and to my quality of life. I attended as a postgraduate in the 1950s and I was so pleased to be awarded an honorary fellowship in 2002. Birkbeck helped me to join the meritocracy and, I'm glad to say, the stimulating mental effort of my time here became my mindset.

Like physical training for sports, minds have to be regularly exercised to get the most from them, and I've tried to maintain that level of intellectual firepower – knowing that bit more, thinking more analytically, working those extra hours and refusing to accept soundbites as a solution to intractable and long-term problems. I always aim to get the right answers for myself. I have Birkbeck to thank for that – at all times an agent of change and at the sharp end of higher education.

George Birkbeck's vision nearly 200 years ago was to offer the "universal benefits of the blessings of knowledge" to people like me, who were only able to study part-time. Birkbeck is continuing to do just that today and is now helping today's asylum seekers and refugees through the Compass Project. I'm lobbying for similarly improved opportunities for people with the so-called 'hidden' disorders, such as autism. I know Birkbeck has an ongoing focus on autism research, because I helped launch the Babylab, based on the concept of studying babies at risk. Long may Birkbeck continue its marvellous work.

What memories do you have of your time at Birkbeck?

It is a long time ago, but certain memories remain clear. I got embroiled in the early speech recognition work of Professor Booth himself, so I spent hours doing clever things like intoning into a tape recorder 'one ... two ... three ... four' – that was my contribution! So it is very much a personal privilege to have given this year's Andrew and Kathleen Booth Lecture.

You started your company FI in 1962 with an all-female workforce. How important was it in those early days to expand the opportunities available to women?

FI was founded to circumvent the gender issues at the time and for me to have a job which fitted in with my plans and family. I recruited professionally qualified women who had – as was then the norm – left the industry on marriage or when their first child was expected, and I structured them into a home-working organisation. We went for projects such as scheduling freight trains for British Rail, timetabling buses, and scientific stock control. Who would have guessed the programming of the black box flight recorder for supersonic Concorde would have been done by a bunch of women working from their homes?

Where did the drive to innovate and empower your staff come from?

As with many entrepreneurs, the driving force behind my creation of that company was from trauma in my life. Freedom is important to me because I am a survivor of the Nazi Holocaust. Although only a child, the experience left me with very, very strong values. I learned not to expect tomorrow to be anything like today and that gave me an openness to new ways of doing things. My survivor guilt – the need to justify why I was saved when millions died, including women and children – has fuelled my sense of the importance of people having the freedom to pursue their own fulfilment. From a very early age I became aware just how rare real freedom was for women at work, and in society.

Up to 2016, the annual Andrew Booth Memorial Lecture commemorated Professor Booth's work in creating some of the world's first electronic computers at Birkbeck.

From 2017, the 60th anniversary of the Computer Science and Information Systems Department at Birkbeck, the renamed Andrew and Kathleen Booth Lecture also honours Kathleen Booth's work on designing and programming these early computers

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Dame Stephanie
Shirley
(Justin Sutcliffe/
eyevine)



GLITTERING PRIZES

The new Teaching Excellence Framework measures the quality of teaching in UK universities. Professor Diane Houston considers Birkbeck's Silver award

In recent years, Birkbeck has been at the sharp end of government policy, with infrequent consideration being given by policymakers to the importance of part-time higher education, or to the complex needs of busy, mature students, who combine work or caring responsibilities with intensive study in the evening.

As the first full-time Pro-Vice Master for Education at Birkbeck, I was tasked in December 2016 with leading the College's submission to the new Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). The TEF is the brainchild of Jo Johnson, Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation. It has been introduced to assess the quality of teaching and learning in universities in England, similar to the long-established Research Excellence Framework (REF), which measures

research output and global impact.

The College was assessed over six core metrics: quality of teaching; non-continuation rates (often called the 'drop-out rate'); National Student Survey (NSS) scores for academic support; NSS scores for assessment and feedback; the percentage of students in further study or employment; and the percentage of students in highly skilled employment. The 'prize' was to be awarded a Gold, Silver or Bronze rating as result. The ability to increase tuition fees by the rate of inflation was also tied to a Silver or Gold outcome.

As a research-led, predominantly part-time institution, Birkbeck had a particularly challenging set of national benchmarks to meet in each of these categories, as we were compared directly to the Open University, which has industrial-scale

IT systems and online processes for delivering its learning and teaching.

Across the six areas of TEF assessment we had four very positive datasets to demonstrate outstanding outcomes for our students over the past three years, while remaining true to our mission of widening participation. Birkbeck's uniqueness, history and evolving student experience also allowed us to tell a very strong and authentic story about the two areas of challenge in our TEF submission: the complexity of delivering highly concentrated academic support in the 60 minutes before classes start at 6pm each evening; and giving detailed feedback.

We didn't try to spin the metrics we had. We were factual and open, highlighting that there are no other universities in the UK that are both

research intensive and offering an inspirational classroom experience in the evening.

When the results were announced in June 2017, Birkbeck was awarded a prestigious Silver award. The TEF panel's judgement acknowledged Birkbeck's work to attract and support students from diverse backgrounds, mature learners and those who would not otherwise have engaged with higher education, and to help them progress into postgraduate study or graduate jobs. It also noted our institutional culture, which "facilitates, recognises and rewards

excellent teaching and a curriculum at the forefront of research".

From bestowing an institutional award, the TEF is now evolving into offering subject-specific ones. Here at Birkbeck, a Student Experience Review is underway to address our two weaker NSS metrics. With a fair wind, we aspire to upgrade from Silver to Gold TEF status at both subject and institutional level.

Our staff, students and alumni should take heart from our Silver rating, as London institutions traditionally fare very poorly in student experience surveys such as

the TEF. As ever, Birkbeck punched well above its weight nationally; it was rated higher in TEF terms than Russell Group luminaries such as the LSE, Liverpool and Southampton Universities, which all achieved a Bronze rating.

The TEF is a government-endorsed measure of teaching quality and a much more credible measure of the student experience than the commercially driven league tables. In the 2018 TEF, we will continue to explain to policymakers what makes our student experience both distinctive and special.

BIRKBECK EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARDS 2017

Dr Grace Halden and Dr Sergio Gutiérrez Santos have been recognised for their outstanding and innovative approaches to teaching in the College's annual teaching award scheme, the Birkbeck Excellence in Teaching Awards (BETAs).

Dr Halden is a cultural historian and war scholar, specialising in modern and contemporary literature. As a lecturer in the Department of English and Humanities, she has taken strides to embed technology and creativity at the heart of learning within the MA Contemporary Literature and Culture programme. Her innovations include exploring and showcasing learning beyond summative assessments, such as the creation of a task in which students produce short films inspired by critical theory.

In 2016 and 2017, Dr Halden

organised 'The Contemporary: An exhibition', a pop-up museum designed to further enable students to display their extra-curricular creative responses to contemporary literature, culture and theory, using film, performance, photography, virtual reality and writing.

Dr Gutiérrez Santos, formerly a lecturer in Computer Science at Birkbeck and now Visiting Research Fellow in the Department of Computer Science and Information Systems, is particularly interested in the applications of artificial intelligence to teaching and learning.

Dr Gutiérrez Santos said that he considered his lecturing role to be one of supporting students to develop practical programming skills, helping them to evolve from complete novices to competent programmers, who can attack real-world problems.

Deputy Pro-Vice Master for Learning and Teaching Tim Markham added: "Competition for the 2017 BETAs was particularly fierce. It's always hard as a panel to decide between entries that come in from across the range of subjects we teach, especially as their innovations often spring from the challenges of teaching particular disciplines. But our approach is always to reward ideas that have legs, the kind of approaches that lecturers in different departments can learn from and potentially incorporate into their own teaching."

Left: Students at Birkbeck's Malet Street campus

Below: Drs Grace Halden and Sergio Gutiérrez Santos in Gordon Square





BIRKBECK'S BOOZERS

The pubs set up by the Birkbeck Bank helped sustain the College's forerunner, the London Mechanics' Institute. Richard Clarke explores the link between alcohol and the 'self-advancement' movement

Above: The Birkbeck Hotel in Highgate (Courtesy Hornsey Historical Society)

Visitors to Stratford East who venture beyond the confines of University Square and wander past – or into – the Birkbeck Tavern a mile or so north may wonder what, if anything, the pub has to do with Birkbeck, University of London. The answer is – a lot!

The Birkbeck Tavern is part of the Leytonstone Birkbeck estate, a development financed by the Birkbeck Bank. The Bank, known as 'The Birkbeck', was established in the premises of the College's forerunner, the London Mechanics' Institute (LMI) in 1851. The Bank grew out of the Birkbeck Land Society and Building Society (BLBS), one of the first of the 'permanent' building societies formed after the collapse of Chartism and the Chartist Cooperative Land Company, and a noted haven for savings of the provident working class. It was the brainchild of Francis Ravenscroft, whose bust rests on a window ledge in Birkbeck's Council Room today.

Ravenscroft (later to become half of the gown-makers Ede and Ravenscroft) entered the LMI as a student in 1848 and was elected to chair the Institute's governing body a couple of years later.

The LMI's minutes record that he initially rented a cupboard in the secretary's office. By 1866, the Bank had taken over the LMI's ground floor and, in 1885, it funded the Institute's move, as the Birkbeck Literary and Scientific Institute, to purpose-built premises nearby.

The Birkbeck Bank collapsed in 1911, becoming part of what is now the Royal Bank of Scotland. Before its collapse, it had played a significant role in the late Victorian suburbanisation of London. The earliest BLBS estates were laid out in the early 1850s in Highgate, Archway and East Dulwich. All three estates had taverns, the fabric of which still stands today.

The first was the Highgate Birkbeck Tavern, now a popular licensed 1960s music venue, The Boogaloo, but still with its Birkbeck mosaic intact on the threshold. The pub was first built as the 'Birkbeck Hotel' to catch passing traffic at the top of Archway Road, with the

BIRKBECK TAVERNS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN DESIGNED AS COMMUNITY FACILITIES

rest of the estate being developed piecemeal around Birkbeck (now Holmesdale) Road. Other Birkbeck taverns, such as the one in East Dulwich, appear to have been designed as community facilities that were integral to the fabric of the estates.

A plot for a public house was included in the design of the Holloway Road (Archway) estate and offered by ballot in 1855 along with the house plots. In the event, the BLBS itself built the tavern and obtained the licence for it, subsequently advancing money for its purchase. While several Birkbeck estates retain their middle-class character today, the Birkbeck Archway estate became a notorious slum prior to the Second World War and the subject of a sociological study before its clearance and redevelopment in the early 1970s by the Greater London Council. The fabric of the Birkbeck Tavern survives, however, together with some of the original BLBS terraces.





BEFORE ITS COLLAPSE, THE BIRKBECK BANK HAD PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE LATE VICTORIAN SUBURBANISATION OF LONDON



< Attempts were made to establish a tavern in Beckenham, near Birkbeck Station. It is possible that others may have been built (and remain to be discovered) on some of the other 35 Birkbeck estates across London.

The story of the Birkbeck pubs, and of the BLBS estates in which they were built, is more than just a curiosity in the history of the College. The foundation of the LMI in 1823 was characterised by bitter disputes between the champions of workers' self-education, represented by the LMI's radical instigators Thomas Hodgskin and J C Robertson, and Benthamite Liberals, in particular Henry Brougham, Francis Place and William Ellis; these disputes had long since been resolved in favour of the latter.

By mid-century, an individualist model of self-help had come to dominate the ideology of the College (and of 'polite' society more generally) in opposition to the collectivist vision of the LMI's founders.

By 1851, a decade after George Birkbeck's death, the LMI was also in financial crisis. Ravenscroft's use of the LMI's premises, as well as George Birkbeck's name, for the BLBS was not merely promotional. The BLBS provided the Institute with much-needed financial support and offered a vehicle for realising the promised rewards of self-advancement to its students.

The Birkbeck's promotional material (initially aimed primarily at men) emphasised how saving could provide the benefits not just of secure housing but also, prior to the 1867 Reform Act, of a vote. At the same time, Ravenscroft was keen to distance the BLBS from the taint of Chartism and emphasised the virtues of sobriety.

The presence of pubs on the Birkbeck estates raises a number of questions. At least some of the taverns appear to have been planned into the designs of the Birkbeck estates as social facilities, but if so, they were the only such facilities to be provided. This contrasts with the designs of quasi-philanthropic working-class housing estates, several of which included schools, meeting rooms, baths or wash-rooms (though these were frequently never built) but never pubs. There is no evidence of the Birkbeck estates having restrictive covenants on the sale of alcohol, unlike those developed by temperance societies of the period.

The presence of (or proposals for) taverns on the Birkbeck estates challenges a widely held view that abstinence – at least in public – was associated with respectability. While some argue that an absence of pubs was associated with status and enhanced property values, the estates of some other land societies did include licensed premises. Nor was abstinence universally associated with well-being, at least on the part

Left: The highly decorative dome of the Birkbeck Bank in 1902 in Chancery Lane, demolished in 1962. The panels feature portraits of artists and inventors (*Historic England*)

of the medical profession and insurance offices, who sometimes charged higher premiums to teetotallers.

Either way, the presence of taverns further distances the BLBS from temperance as a movement, with the Birkbeck societies addressing constituencies broader than those targeted by competing temperance building societies. The LMI itself was determinedly secular and the presence of pubs underlines the commercial nature of the BLBS.

By the 1870s, the 'British' model of private saving and speculative private building mediated by the building society (and pioneered by The Birkbeck) was being advocated widely as a solution to the housing crisis, homelessness and overcrowding – just as it is today. At the same time, for The Birkbeck's investors, a home and a mortgage provided a physical and financial complement to the ideological message of the LMI and its successors: that individual self-help, rather than collective action, was the best route to personal and societal progress.

Birkbeck was, if not conceived, then delivered in a pub, and it is fitting that pubs should figure in its history. Much remains to be discovered about this not-so-hidden history of Birkbeck in the London landscape – maybe even another pub? Either way, a celebratory drink (or three) in the Leytonstone Birkbeck Tavern would make a fitting adjunct to the College's preparations for its 2023 bicentenary.

Richard Clarke is the Ben Pimlott Writer in Residence for 2017 in the Department of Politics. More on the Birkbeck Boozers can be found at <http://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/12901> and <http://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/15058>



Right: The bust of Francis Ravenscroft, which sits in Birkbeck's Council Room

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

Birkbeck staff and the College itself have been awarded major grants and recognised by national and international bodies

AWARDS

The workings of the academic peer-review process are being investigated by a Birkbeck team led by **Professor Martin Paul Eve** through a US\$99,000 research grant from the Andrew W Mellon Foundation. The Reading Peer Review project will analyse the peer review database at PLOS ONE, the largest scientific journal in the world, to develop better ways of using expert opinion to assess and improve papers. Professor Eve, Department of English and Humanities, has also been awarded the Medal of Honour in the Humanities and Social Sciences by Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Belgium. It is awarded to laureates of exceptional academic or social distinction.



Birkbeck has been awarded £1.5 million over a five-year period by the **Wellcome Trust's Institutional Strategic Support Fund**, one of only 30 institutions in the UK and Ireland to benefit from such funding in 2016. The awards are focused on areas of strategic importance to Wellcome and the individual universities, within medical and clinical sciences, public health, social sciences and medical humanities.

A further Wellcome Trust award has gone to **Professor Joanna Bourke**, Department of History, Classics and Archaeology. She has been given its Investigator Award in Humanities and Social Science to look into the role of medicine and psychiatry in understanding, treating and preventing sexual violence from the early nineteenth century to the present.

Professor Frank Trentmann, also from History, Classics and Archaeology, has been funded to the tune of £60,000 through the Humboldt Research Prize. It is awarded to outstanding academics, with winners invited to spend up to 12 months on academic collaboration with specialist colleagues in Germany. Professor Trentmann has spent his time working on moral economy in Konstanz and Berlin.



RECOGNITIONS

Professor Claire Callender, Department of Psychosocial Studies, was awarded an OBE in the New Year Honours 2017, for services to higher education. Professor Callender has been a leading figure in research into student finance and debt over the past 20 years, and has also given evidence to the House of Commons Select Committees on a number of occasions.

Birkbeck's ongoing commitment to achieving gender equality across the College has been recognised with the renewal of its **Athena SWAN Bronze Award** by the Equality Challenge Unit for a further three years. The award was originally conceived to encourage the advancement of the careers of women in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicines (STEMM)

in higher education, but has broadened to other subject areas and now aims to tackle equality generally.

Professor Marina Warner, Department of English and Humanities, has become the first female president of the Royal Society of Literature since its foundation in 1820. The RSL is the UK's national charity for the advancement of literature, as well as honouring and encouraging great writing through fellowships and awards. Professor Warner has additionally been honoured with a British Academy Medal for her services to academia.

Professor Ian Crawford, from the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, has been elected Vice President of the Royal Astronomical Society. For the past decade, he has been secretary to the society, which was founded

Far left: Professor Martin Paul Eve

Left: A child taking part in work at the Babylab, part of the Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development

Below (left to right): Professor Jennifer Hornsby and Professor Lynda Nead

Right: Simon Davis

to encourage and promote the study of astronomy, geophysics and related branches of science. His research at Birkbeck has focused on lunar science and exploration and he is an adviser to the European Space Agency.

Psychologists **Professor Mark Johnson** and the late **Professor Annette Karmiloff-Smith**, Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development, were awarded the biennial William Thierry Preyer Award in June 2017 for their collaborative work. This recognises the achievements of distinguished psychologists in contributing to the better understanding of human development.

Birkbeck Fellow **Sir Tom Blundell** has been presented with the Ewald Prize, the most prestigious award in the field of crystallography, which is given once every three years for outstanding contributions and recognises his worldwide leadership in the field. Sir Tom, a former head of the Department of Crystallography at Birkbeck, is celebrated for his part in determining the structure of insulin and co-founding the biotechnology company Astex.

Professor Bill Bowring, Department of Law, has been made a Fellow of the Academy of Social

Sciences. Director of the LLM/MA Human Rights, he is an expert on legal and human rights issues in Russia and Eastern/Central Europe, specialising in minority rights. As a barrister, he has taken a number of cases to the European Court of Human Rights.

The European Consortium for Political Research has honoured **Professor Joni Lovenduski**, Department of Politics, with its Lifetime Achievement Award. For more than 30 years she has published widely on gender and politics, developing the field within political science, and has been at the forefront of research.

Professor Jennifer Hornsby, Department of Philosophy, has been elected as a Fellow of the British Academy, the UK's national body



for the humanities and social sciences. Professor Hornsby and **Professor David Feldman**, Director of the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism at Birkbeck, have also been awarded visiting fellowships at All Souls College, Oxford.

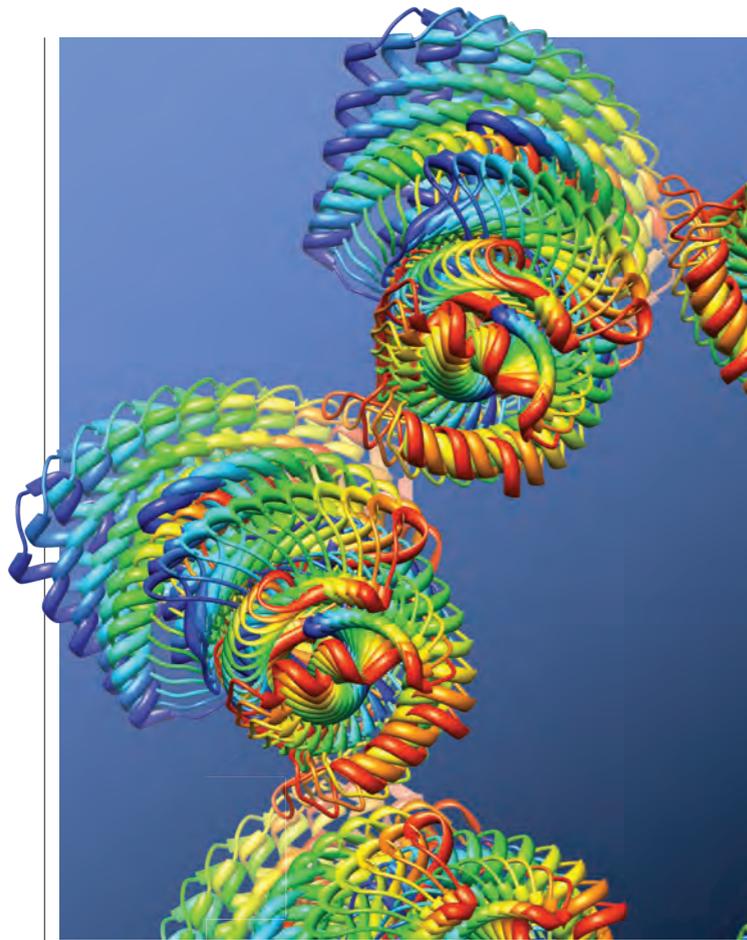
Eminent Birkbeck staff have received two honorary doctorates from Scandinavian institutions. **Professor Ulrike Hahn**, Department of Psychological Sciences, was made Doctor of Philosophy by the University of Lund in Sweden in recognition of her distinguished research career. **Professor Helen Saibil**, Department of Biological Sciences, was honoured by the Philosophy faculty of the University of Helsinki at a ceremony marking the centenary of Finland's independence.

Simon Davis, a Governor of Birkbeck, has been elected President of the Law Society of England and Wales, the leading body representing solicitors. He has already taken office as deputy vice president and will become vice president during 2018 and president in 2019. Mr Davis, a commercial

litigation partner at law firm Clifford Chance, has had a legal career spanning more than 30 years and has closely supported Birkbeck's Scholars' Evening.

Professor Lynda Nead, Department of History of Art, has been appointed by the Prime Minister as a Trustee of the Victoria and Albert Museum. She has published widely on the history of British art, including books on Victorian London, early film, and the art and culture of post-war Britain. She has served on advisory boards at the Museum of London, Tate and the Foundling Museum.





OUR EXPERTISE IN ELECTRON MICROSCOPY HAS ENABLED BIRKBECK RESEARCHERS TO TAKE A LEAD IN TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION OF MICROSCOPISTS

recognised by the award of the 2017 Nobel Prize in Chemistry to three scientists jointly for their developments in this field. A team of scientists at Birkbeck and the Institute of Structural and Molecular Biology (ISMB) – supported by colleagues in Estates and Computing – has now been awarded £2.34 million by the Wellcome Trust, enabling the College to buy a state-of-the-art cryo-electron microscope to conduct such experiments.

Since its invention in the 1930s, electron microscopy has steadily improved in power and sophistication, and recent advances have moved this method to the forefront of structural biology. In particular, rapid freezing of samples to liquid nitrogen temperatures (~195°C) allows sample preservation to be maintained inside the microscope, and provides some cryo-protection from the otherwise damaging effects of the electrons that are used for sample imaging. Understanding the structures of biological molecules and assemblies reveals their mechanisms and makes it possible to design drugs or treatments for diseases.

The research projects that will be done at Birkbeck on the new microscope are focused on molecular machines, including those involved in protein synthesis, protein folding and unfolding, and reversal of protein aggregation. These are important in maintaining our health and in protecting against neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer's.

Our expertise in electron microscopy has enabled Birkbeck researchers to take a lead in training the next generation of microscopists. Many current electron microscopy experts in the UK and abroad received their research training at Birkbeck, while UK and international students have benefited from the prestigious biennial European Molecular Biology Organisation (EMBO)-funded Practical Course in Image Processing for Cryo-Electron Microscopy. From next year, an online Postgraduate Certificate in Electron Microscopy will also be offered.

The launch of the new microscope will be celebrated as part of the biennial ISMB Symposium, to be held in June 2018.

Professor Carolyn Moores is Professor of Structural Biology in the Department of Biological Sciences

Above: Dynamics of a protein folding machine revealed by cryo-electron microscopy (Professor Helen Saibil)

FREEZE FRAME

Birkbeck's state-of-the-art cryo-electron microscope is vital to our understanding of molecular machines, says Professor Carolyn Moores

Within every cell in our body are many tiny machines that drive processes required for maintenance, movement, multiplication and maturation. This nanoscale machinery is vital for cell function and therefore for our health. Malfunction and breakdown of the machinery can cause disease, from dementia to cancer. To catch glimpses of these molecular machines at work, and to understand what happens when their function is disrupted, requires careful sample preparation, detailed imaging in three dimensions and sophisticated computational analysis.

Cryo-electron microscopy is a powerful technique for undertaking such studies – as

RACE AND THE LAW

Dr Nadine El-Enany and Dr Sarah Keenan, co-Directors of the Centre for Research on Race and Law, welcome its timely contribution to tackling racism

The Centre for Research on Race and Law (CRRL) was launched on 15 May 2017.

Its purpose is to bring together work in the School of Law and elsewhere in Birkbeck on the conceptual and practical connections between race and law, and to create a space for engagement with the public and with professional and grassroots organisations in tackling racism.

The Centre's members are drawn from across the College, including from the departments of Law, Criminology, Geography, and Psychosocial Studies.

The establishment of a Centre for Research on Race and Law at Birkbeck is a timely intervention into scholastic and public engagement. While in other disciplines the use of race as a core analytical concept is established, this is less so for law, which has tended to focus on narrower analytical frameworks, which make race implicit or peripheral rather than central and explicit. Yet, of the various discursive and material means through which race is

constructed, law is perhaps the most significant. There is, therefore, an urgent need for cutting-edge, rigorous analysis on the theoretical and material connections between race and law.

Law as a discipline in Britain and the global North has traditionally failed to address questions of race, focusing instead on questions of equality as confined to the field of human rights or discrimination law. These fields are limited in their understanding of racism as being an aberration from legal norms and primarily perpetuated by individuals, rather than structurally produced.

Critical Race Theory scholarship is less developed in Britain than in the USA, despite the fact that law is the principal means through which policies such as austerity, border control, surveillance and environmental exploitation – policies that disproportionately impact people who are racialised as non-white – are implemented and maintained.

The CRRL is already providing a space for the interdisciplinary conversations and collaborative projects necessary for the development of robust critiques of the ways in which law upholds structures of race and racism, and for thinking about anti-racist and decolonial strategies.

Following its successful launch event on racism and Brexit in spring 2017, the Centre held two events in the autumn. The first was to host the Feminist Legal Studies 25th anniversary lecture, at which feminist scholar Sara Ahmed spoke on the politics of complaint, exploring how sexism and racism become usual within institutions and what happens when we challenge abuses of power. The second event was a workshop examining the possibility of achieving anti-racist goals through strategic litigation.

This spring, the CRRL will be collaborating with the Vasari Research Centre for Art and Technology at Birkbeck to organise a conference exploring the way in which race is constructed and formed by contemporary surveillance practices and techniques.

The CRRL will continue to provide encouragement and a welcome space for all those who want to engage with race and law.

Below: © Cole Peters 2017



To keep up to date with the CRRL's activities, follow us on Twitter @CentreRaceLaw

EVENTS

Highlights of Birkbeck's public lectures, events and conferences in 2017



Science Week

'Attention, nature and nurture' was the theme of our Science Week **Rosalind Franklin Lecture**, delivered by Professor Gaia Scerif, from the University of Oxford, who shared her investigations into the interplay between attention, memory and learning, and the different ways children and adults deploy attention to optimise their memory.

The School of Science also opened its doors to students, staff and the public for a week of lectures, film screenings and discussions, with staff from the Department of Biological Sciences talking about fungi in heritage buildings, and a film and panel discussion on antibiotic resistance. Other highlights included Professor Mike Oaksford, Head of Psychological Sciences at Birkbeck, speaking on the 'source of human irrationality', and a discussion among Department of Earth Sciences staff on what controls the Earth's long-term climate.

Above:
Professor Gaia Scerif, who delivered the Rosalind Franklin Lecture

Below:
Left to right: Professor David Latchman, Professor Philip Powell, Lady Marshall, Lord Browne and Professor Joanna Bourke, at the Lord Marshall Lecture



Public lectures

Birkbeck's annual programme of memorial lectures includes the **Lord Marshall Lecture**, delivered this year by Lord Browne, speaking on 'Authenticity in business'. The lecture commemorates Lord Marshall, former Chief Executive of British Airways and Chair of Governors at Birkbeck, and his lasting influence on business and society. Lord Browne, one of the UK's leading business executives, began as an apprentice at BP, rising to serve as CEO before resigning in 2007 following newspaper reports about his personal life. He has since written *The Glass Closet*, which affirms the importance of people having the freedom to be their authentic selves in the workplace.

In February, eminent South African judge Dikgang Moseneke gave the annual **Patrick McAuslan Lecture**, in which he spoke of the contemporary challenges and the need to address economic inequalities in his country. Justice Moseneke began his university degrees while serving a prison sentence on Robben Island, with his friend Nelson Mandela, for opposing apartheid. He went on to draft the interim constitution that ushered in democracy and transition from apartheid. A transcript of the lecture is due to be published in 2018 as part of the School of Law's 25th anniversary celebrations.

Campaigner Peter Tatchell delivered the annual **LGBT History Month Lecture** in March, referencing the fiftieth anniversary of the Sexual Offences Act 1967, which decriminalised private homosexual acts between men aged over 21. He addressed ongoing problems that work against equality for LGBT people – from the difficulties facing LGBT refugees to ongoing failure to respond to homophobic harassment and bullying in school, and the day-to-day experiences of hate crime. Change, he concluded, needs people to come together saying 'enough is enough', to dream of what a better future might look like and then to engage in the struggle to make it happen.

A fascinating journey through the streets of Soviet Russia, exploring >

Arts Week

More than 1,300 people attended 61 events and two installations in Birkbeck's largest-ever Arts Week. Highlights included: live performance poetry by students and staff; a theatre scratch night, showcasing new short plays; a talk by John Beverley on the legacy of postcolonial criticism; and, in association with the Bethlem Gallery, an exhibition in Birkbeck's Peltz Gallery of works from the Adamson Collection, a renowned archive of objects made by residents of British psychiatric hospitals under the guidance of art therapy pioneer Edward Adamson. The exhibition, 'Mr A Moves in Mysterious Ways', was curated by Dr Heather Tilley (Department of English and Humanities) and Dr Fiona Johnstone (Department of Art History) in association with Birkbeck's Centre for Medical Humanities, and supported by a Wellcome Trust/Birkbeck ISSF (Institutional Strategic Support Fund) Public Engagement Award.

The School of Arts also hosted Birkbeck's first 'Three Minute Thesis' competition, which challenged the College's PhD students to present their research to a non-specialist audience in 180 seconds. The winner was John Siblon (Department of History, Classics and Archaeology), whose research focuses on representations of black colonial servicemen in the aftermath of the First World War. John said: "The competition was incredibly useful, as it focused my mind on why I undertook the thesis and what my findings could be used for."

Image:
Live performance, part of Arts Week (Dominic Mifsud)



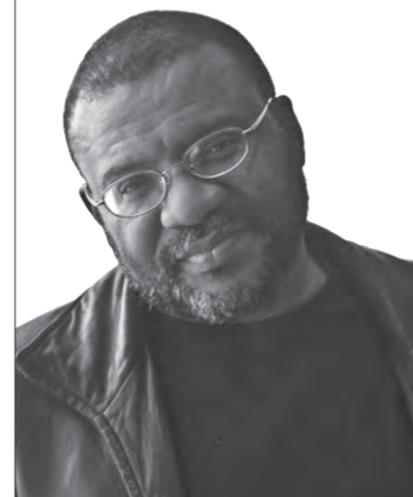
Above: Professor Ellen Ernst Kossek, who delivered the Alec Rodger Memorial Lecture
Right: Poet Kwame Dawes, who spoke as part of Law on Trial

< the bursts of capitalism and crime following Gorbachev's *perestroika*, and the latest changes to Russian society under Putin, was led by historian Catherine Merridale in her **Hobsbawm Memorial Lecture** in May on 'Russia's revolution and the destruction of the past'. Professor Merridale discussed the 'confusion' in Russia over how to mark the centenary of its revolution. She called on historians to act as witnesses to a past that is vanishing from public consciousness, saying: "Russia shows how history matters: politicians vie for it, national identity is built on it."

In July, Professor Ellen Ernst Kossek, from Purdue University in the USA, delivered the 2017 **Alec Rodger Memorial Lecture**, held annually

since 1983 in honour of Birkbeck's first Professor of Organizational Psychology. Drawing on her research into managing organisational change, workplace flexibility and the employment relationship, Professor Kossek discussed the challenges of establishing a healthy work-life balance, and how small interventions to improve employee motivation can have a big impact throughout an organisation.

The **Ruth Thompson Commemorative Lecture** in October, co-hosted with the Higher Education Policy Institute, celebrated the life of Dr Ruth Thompson, leading Treasury civil servant and Deputy Chair of Governors at Birkbeck, who died in July 2016. Claire Callender,



Professor of Higher Education Studies at Birkbeck, and economist Baroness Wolf of Dulwich, reflected on Ruth's contribution to higher education policy and discussed the future of higher education. Baroness Wolf advocated a major shift towards a more flexible higher education landscape, to support all students, through the creation of a lifelong learning fund. The envisaged fund could universalise access and bring about a radical improvement to widening participation in UK higher education, she suggested.

Law on Trial

Law on Trial 2017 invited expert scholars from around the world to discuss the intersection of legal

matters with religion. Philosopher Akeel Bilgrami, from Columbia University, USA, looked at the problems that the political and legal philosophy of liberalism encounter in dealing with religion. His lecture focused on Islamic identity and the case of free speech and blasphemy.

Other highlights included: poet Kwame Dawes speaking about the Rastafari religion and the 'Babylon system', relating spiritual, political and geographical features to diaspora, oppression and liberation; and Birkbeck PhD candidate Daniele D'Alvia and Professor Maria Aristodemou's exploration of Islamic finance and the relationship between Western financial habits and Sharia rules.

BIRKBECK AT WESTMINSTER

Highlights of Birkbeck's political engagement in 2017



House of Commons debate on night schools

Birkbeck's outreach work in Tottenham and Haringey was praised in Parliament in January during Tottenham MP David Lammy's debate on night schools. David Lammy stressed the importance of learning new skills in the modern economy and called for a national strategy on adult education, saying: "The jobs of the future have not even been created yet, so there is no way the education that people get in their teens and early 20s can prepare and support them through their whole lives."

Birkbeck Master David Latchman and Birkbeck staff met the MP later in the year to brief him as part of the College's lobbying work to ensure support for part-time and mature learners. They highlighted Birkbeck's outreach work in Stratford, east London and in Tottenham, where residents can gain a Certificate of Higher Education in Higher Education Introductory Studies, which on successful completion gives students a chance to enter a degree programme at Birkbeck.

Part-time students and the Higher Education and Research Act 2017

Speaking in January as the Higher Education and Research Bill progressed through Parliament, Birkbeck President Baroness Bakewell called on the Government to give part-time study a "much stronger role" in its thinking about higher education. Baroness Bakewell said she believed part-time study and lifelong learning were "the shape of the future" and would play an important role in the lives of people wanting to retrain in new skills.

Baroness Bakewell's comments were supported by Birkbeck Fellow, and former Master of Birkbeck, Baroness Tessa Blackstone, who said: "We have to get away from the notion that university and higher education is primarily about full-time study ... things are changing and we are going to see far more part-time students in the coming years."

The Higher Education and Research Bill became an Act of Parliament in April 2017, creating a new regulatory body for higher education: the Office for Students. During the parliamentary process, Birkbeck won the backing of members in both Houses, who raised concerns over the lack of specific support for mature and part-time learners.

Left: David Lammy MP
Below: Dame Joan Bakewell



An exceptionally large number of amendments to the Bill (more than 500) were proposed by members of the House of Lords. Proposing these, Labour's Lord Stevenson said: "We should try to open up the provision that is available in higher education ... to ensure that equal parity is given to those who wish to study part-time, and in particular mature students who very often need to be more flexible in what they do."

Director of OFFA visits Birkbeck

Les Ebdon, Director of the Office for Fair Access (OFFA), visited Birkbeck in July, where he met the Master, David Latchman, students and the Widening Access team. They discussed Birkbeck's continued role in promoting and supporting mature students into study, at a time when numbers are in crisis.

Students and prospective students who were introduced to Birkbeck via the College's outreach programmes shared their experiences with Professor Ebdon, explaining the importance of being able to speak directly to an adviser, to find out how to finance their studies and to be reassured about the practicalities of combining work, family and study.

Professor Ebdon praised Birkbeck's widening access initiatives: "The

experiences of the students I met with exemplify perfectly why tailored and individual pre-entry advice and guidance is so important for students who face additional challenges to completing successful degree study, such as combining it with family life, work or who have spent many years outside the formal education system.

"These students are inspirational in their commitment to building a better future for themselves and their families through the opportunities that Birkbeck offers."

Meeting at 10 Downing Street

Following the Prime Minister's announcement at the October Conservative Party Conference in Manchester that there is to be a review into higher education funding, Birkbeck Master David Latchman and Policy Adviser Jonathan Woodhead met with officials in the Number 10 Policy Unit in Downing Street. In "constructive" discussions, the Master emphasised the importance of part-time higher education and for the needs of older learners to be considered in any funding review or policy change.



BARNES ADMITTED THAT HE LIKED WIELDING THE AUTHORIAL TOOL OF A HIDDEN SECRET, ENLISTING THE READER AS A DETECTIVE OR A HISTORIAN



Julian Barnes
(Gary Doak/
Alamy Stock Photo)

THE BEGINNING OF A NOVEL

*Author Julian Barnes discussed his prize-winning novel *The Sense of an Ending* at the seventh Man Booker at Birkbeck event, writes Dr Ben Winyard*

In November 2017, prize-winning novelist Julian Barnes came to Birkbeck for the annual Man Booker at Birkbeck event. More than 800 students, alumni and staff – including many from the College’s popular and successful creative writing programmes – attended the event, while 2,000 copies of Barnes’s Man Booker Prize-winning novel, *The Sense of an Ending* (2011), were distributed beforehand.

This was the seventh year of this hugely successful initiative between Birkbeck and the Man Booker Foundation and, as Hilary Fraser, Executive Dean of the School of Arts, observed in her introduction, both institutions are committed to ‘the public good’ of bringing the very best of contemporary literature to the widest possible audience.

In a genial, urbane and erudite exchange, Russell Celyn Jones, Professor of Creative Writing at Birkbeck, discussed *The Sense of an Ending* with Barnes, interrogating him about the novel’s genesis, concerns and themes.

The Sense of an Ending is a meditation on the pleasures and perils of ageing, the slipperiness of memory, the contingency of identity and the sting of remorse. It is narrated in the first person by Tony Webster, an affable, very British everyman, who has happily – perhaps even smugly – sailed through life with as little friction and emotional upset as possible.

In the first part of the novel, we are treated to Tony’s blandly straightforward memories of his sixth-form and university days. In a bravura middle section, Barnes glosses over four decades of Tony’s very ordinary life in just five paragraphs, emphasising the swift passage of time and the terse eulogy of a man who has lived entirely according to his own fixed self-image as a ‘regular, reliable, honest chap’, in Barnes’s words. In the second half of the novel, Tony’s life is upended by revelations about the death by suicide, 40 years previously, of his precociously brilliant school friend, Adrian, and the return of his acerbic first girlfriend, Veronica.

In a tussle over Adrian’s lost diary, Tony endures a series of bruising encounters with an indignant Veronica, whose constant refrain is ‘You don’t get it, but then you never did’. The recovery of a half-remembered letter he sent Adrian in a fit of pique shakes his quietism, revealing a moment of youthful callousness that

belies his lifelong self-image as amiable, decent and morally equitable. Tony is also confronted with uncomfortable truths about a child secretly fathered by Adrian, which unleashes an irremediable sense of guilty responsibility for contributing to Adrian’s suicidal despair.

Barnes located the origins of the novel in his 2008 memoir, *Nothing To Be Frightened Of*, which explored his own intense fear of dying and death. While writing this piece, he shared with his philosopher brother a memory of their grandfather slaughtering chickens, which his brother remembered so differently as to present Barnes with two ‘incompatible’ memories. This powered his interest in the precariousness of memory, which has multiple implications for personal identity, but also for the writing of history more generally. *The Sense of an Ending* is thus shot through with concerns about causation, memory and the writing of personal and national histories. This ‘comic beginning’ to the writing of the novel was accompanied by Barnes’s discovery of a brilliant school friend’s death by suicide many years before, which encouraged him to explore how we can think of the dead as alive and fantasise about their un-lived lives.

Barnes admitted that he liked wielding the authorial tool of a hidden secret, enlisting the reader as a detective or a historian, who must piece together events from Tony’s memories. He also confessed to enjoying inflicting a revelation on his complacent narrator, unearthing Tony’s buried, youthful capacity for ‘great emotional violence’, as well as shocking the reader. Barnes confessed that he shares Veronica’s punitiveness, as we come to understand Tony’s profoundly damaging impact on her.

The audience was interested in the film adaptation of the novel – ‘Take the money and run!’ was Barnes’s droll advice – Barnes’s influences, readerly responses to Tony, his current reading and his interest in translated literature. This successful, enjoyable event confirmed once again that Birkbeck and the Man Booker Foundation are a natural fit, with both offering multiple opportunities for cultural exchange, intellectual advancement and literary enjoyment to a wide constituency.

Dr Ben Winyard is Senior Content Editor at Birkbeck

EARN AND LEARN

Government-backed degree apprenticeships combine university study and on-the-job training

Degree apprenticeships are a new educational route bringing together the best of higher and vocational training. Launched by the Government in 2017, they are designed to combine university study and invaluable on-the-job training, fostering the development of transferable skills and offering students a way to gain a qualification, long-term career progression and the possibility of higher earnings.

As a specialist in flexible, part-time evening study, Birkbeck is ideally placed to partner with employers to provide this new approach to vocational higher education, and in March 2017 the College launched its offering of three new degree apprenticeships. The Birkbeck degree apprenticeships are in Chartered Management, in Digital and Technology Solutions and a higher apprenticeship in Laboratory Science.

Delivered at the College's campus in Bloomsbury through face-to-face evening study, the degrees enable apprentices to fit their study around their work commitments. While Birkbeck's apprenticeships are available to students starting out on their careers, they are also well suited to mature employees, who are looking to develop and progress in their role.

Professor Philip Powell, Pro-Vice Master (Enterprise and Innovation), is a member of the Business and Administration Panel of the Government's Institute for Apprenticeships, which is leading the degree apprenticeships project. He said: "Apprenticeships are aligned with Birkbeck's historic mission to provide accessible, high-quality higher education to working people. Birkbeck students are typically working and studying, so we are used to the challenges that arise in these circumstances.

"Our apprenticeship programmes create a partnership between Birkbeck, the employer and the apprentice, enabling employees to achieve a degree and an apprenticeship qualification simultaneously."

In an economy that requires more professionally skilled graduates, and at a time of a growing skills gap between the richest and poorest, the Government is encouraging degree

apprenticeships as a valuable, alternative higher education route to those who wish to balance work and study. Tuition costs for apprenticeships are covered by the Government and by employers, making them a great way to 'earn and learn'.

Since launching its degree apprenticeships, Birkbeck has established a key partnership with Camden Council to deliver the programmes. Michael Pratt, the London Borough of Camden's Strategic Business Development Officer for Apprenticeships, said: "We have recently seen apprenticeships grow into a much wider in-work training option that can benefit people of almost any level of ability and experience. I am really pleased that Birkbeck is now providing degree-level apprenticeship training to Camden employees.

"It is great to be working with an institution that places so much value on offering a flexible approach to learning, enabling those in work to study degrees part-time and in the evenings. I can see apprenticeships being at the heart of providing the UK with skilled employees for years to come."

For further information on Birkbeck's apprenticeship programmes, see bbk.ac.uk/business-services/apprenticeships

Image:
(Unsplash)

SIR HARVEY McGRATH

Birkbeck's Chair of Governors talks to BBK about his role and the College year

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.

There have been some high-profile HE policy developments this year, including the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 and the creation of the Office for Students (OfS). How will these affect Birkbeck?

During the parliamentary debates over the Higher Education and Research Bill, Birkbeck highlighted the importance of part-time study and flexible learning opportunities, both to the individual and to our economy. We are pleased the Act requires the OfS to promote choice in the way university courses are taught – specifically including part-time study in those choices.

The OfS is the new regulatory body for HE and has been consulting on its future activities. Birkbeck has contributed to that consultation – students and staff also met the Chair, Sir Michael Barber, during his visit to the College in November – and we will, of course, continue to work with the OfS in this new regulatory landscape.

The cost of a degree continues to be a political issue. How does Birkbeck aim to deliver value for money to its students?

Birkbeck students often juggle study with work, family and financial commitments, so it's very pleasing that the College has this year renewed some excellent corporate partnership agreements, such as the Unum Access to University Fund, which is providing five £1,000 bursaries for undergraduate students in the current year, increasing to ten bursaries next year. The partnership represents an important contribution to Birkbeck's mission of making higher education available to everyone.

What would be your message to people unsure whether it's worth studying for a degree?

I am always impressed by the commitment of Birkbeck students to getting their degree. There are many studies showing the benefits of higher education, and I know that Londoners – of all ages and backgrounds – are continuing to value the opportunities Birkbeck offers.

Brexit remains a great unknown for UK university leaders. How is Birkbeck preparing for the eventual departure from the EU?

Despite the continuing uncertainties, Birkbeck has assured staff, students and research partners that the College remains an open, accessible and inclusive institution. The UK will remain in the EU for the next two years, as the Government negotiates with EU member states. Throughout this process, Birkbeck will aim to provide practical help and support and to safeguard the existing rights of our EU national students and staff, who make a vital contribution to the College and indeed, to the UK as a whole.

University governance has also been in the news. Can you tell us more about how Birkbeck's Board of Governors operates?

Birkbeck's Governing Body has responsibility for overseeing the College's activities, determining its future direction and promoting the fulfilment of its mission, the advancement of its values and the potential of all its learners. There are 21 Governors, the majority of whom are external and independent of the institution. We have a balance of skills and experience, encompassing financial, cultural, legal, community, business and educational perspectives. We have a Code of Conduct, which takes account of the specific role of Governors at Birkbeck and of principles of good practice in governance identified for the HE sector nationally.



I AM ALWAYS IMPRESSED BY THE COMMITMENT OF OUR STUDENTS



UNDERWRITERS ON THE STORM

Who pays out when unforeseeable catastrophes occur?

Rebecca Bednarek explores the global reinsurance industry

In 2011, I began researching an industry that I had not heard of before: reinsurance. Since then, I've been hooked! Like others, I had not realised that what enables insurance – the provision of which we take for granted in the UK – is the reinsurance industry.

Reinsurers are the organisations from which insurance firms of all sizes buy insurance, to insure themselves from particularly large or unexpectedly high losses. The industry deals with catastrophic natural and man-made events.

The example of the 9/11 World Trade Center attack is illustrative. The losses were so large, that it was not actually the insurance industry that paid the majority of these; it was the reinsurance industry. Given the increasing frequency and severity in natural disasters – such as the 2017 hurricane season, which caused unprecedented destruction in the Caribbean and was the first time in modern records that the USA had been hit by three storms that strong in the same season – this industry is more important than ever.

How reinsurers trade in such uncertain and unpredictable events was a big part of our research. My colleagues and I, led by Professor Paula Jarzabkowski from Cass Business School, explored this industry globally from an ethnographic 'fly on the wall' perspective.

Our approach was to look at how this market is made possible through the everyday practices of the reinsurers, who ranged from large continental European firms and syndicates in Lloyds of London, to comparatively new firms in Bermuda and Asia. We explored these practices and the various, globally held, social and cultural norms and assumptions that underpin them.

One such social norm is that reciprocal long-term relationships, whereby insurance clients and reinsurers can rely on each other through the longer term and through different pricing cycles and unexpected events, are critical. For instance, as the (potential) cost of a reinsurance deal is not known until after an event occurs, a longer-term relationship will accommodate prices being adjusted during the next renewal date, to allow payback following large-scale losses.

As we heard repeatedly, reinsurance is a relationship-based industry. Social interactions between reinsurers – and between reinsurers and clients – are vital. This was something

we experienced at first hand, when sipping Champagne on sun-drenched terraces in Monte Carlo and dancing at cabaret parties in Singapore during annual reinsurance conferences, as well as the various interactions over leisurely lunches in Continental Europe and the impromptu discussions in watering holes in the City of London. We came to understand this as the work of this market: work to build relationships and trust with clients, and work to find out as much information as possible that might assist the analysis of such 'unknowable' events.

As this suggests, this industry also depends on relationships between competing reinsurers. Because of the high degree of uncertainty and the potentially huge scale of any potential loss (for example, the estimated cost of the World Trade Center attack to the (re)insurance industry was US\$32.5 billion), multiple reinsurers take shares of a single reinsurance deal at the same price. While they compete fiercely over shares of the best deals, they collectively also rely on each other to independently price sensibly, in a way that reflects, rather than is blind to, the underlying risk – to support the health and collective sustainability of the market.

What our study ultimately teased out was a complex nexus of social practices that were essential to making this complex market for acts of God work. As changes – such as large 'bundled' global reinsurance deals and new alternative risk transfer products – impact this industry, it is worth reflecting that this delicate balance can easily be disrupted.

These new products, such as catastrophe bonds, do not rely on the long-term close relationships so central to reinsurance, but instead on other mechanisms, such as firm contracts specifying the parametric triggers that will (or will not) immediately release capital. The critical task for reinsurers will be to harness such new products, and to stay ready to meet an unpredictable, ever-changing, risk landscape.

Rebecca Bednarek is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Management. *Making a Market for Acts of God: The practice of risk trading in the global reinsurance industry*, by Paula Jarzabkowski, Rebecca Bednarek and Paul Spee, is published by Oxford University Press



SOCIAL INTERACTIONS BETWEEN REINSURERS – AND BETWEEN REINSURERS AND CLIENTS – ARE VITAL



The outer bands of Hurricane Irma start to reach Miami, Florida, on 9 September 2017 – one of three such storms to hit the USA in the same season
(Joe Raedle/Getty Images)



IS CARING IN CRISIS?

People respond generously to humanitarian crises, but they resent being emotionally manipulated into donating money, says Dr Bruna Seu

Image: David Sutherland



THE PUBLIC WERE DISSATISFIED WITH THEIR INTERACTIONS WITH NGOS, IN PARTICULAR THE OVER-WHELMING FOCUS ON MONETARY DONATIONS

You are on the train on the way to work, thinking about the day ahead. You open the newspaper on the seat next to you and on the front page there is an appeal for a humanitarian emergency – a distressed child is looking right at you and underneath the picture is the usual message: ‘Please give’.

How do you feel? What do you do? Do you stare at the child, mesmerised, horrified, feeling sad? Do you plan to give? Or do you feel irritated by yet another request to give money? Do you think: ‘Money is just a plaster on an open wound’? Or: ‘I must send a donation as soon as I can’? Or even: ‘This is outrageous, maybe I should go to that political meeting after all’?

These questions were my motivation, with my colleague Shani Orgad from the Department of Media and Communication at the London School of Economics, to carry out our three-year study. We wanted to find out about the moral and emotional responses evoked by humanitarian communications, and whether those responses relate to those intended by humanitarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Our study, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, found that, far from suffering from ‘compassion fatigue’, the British public are generous and engaged in helping others in need, both in their community and with distant sufferers, but they find it difficult to establish and maintain a meaningful connectedness with humanitarian issues over time.

We identified four key blocks in public responsiveness to humanitarian crises.

- We noted that when the information given is emotionally overwhelming, people self-protectively turn away and switch off, rather than helping.
- We also found that long-held and stereotypical views of distant sufferers and their country contribute to a sense of despondency and hopelessness. For example, in man-made humanitarian crises, particularly in the case of Africa and famine, most people felt that any intervention was futile. Members of the public also differed in terms of where they felt their responsibility stopped. Some felt that only they, their close family and their community were their responsibility; others believed in universal responsibility and brotherhood.
- Additionally, people needed to find meaning in the way they responded to humanitarian appeals and campaigns. For example, monetary transactions, which people recognise as important, are also perceived to increase the human distance between the public and sufferers. Many felt they would prefer to give their ‘blood, sweat and tears’, rather than money, because that would make

them feel they were having a more human relationship with the sufferer.

- A fourth block to action relates to a crisis in the relationship between NGOs and the UK public. People felt disillusioned by the marketisation of NGOs, which they experienced as operating as big business. People also resented what they felt was emotional manipulation by the NGOs to make them donate money.

These blocks were helpful indicators of the model of humanitarian interaction and communication that the public would prefer. We formulated this as the ‘3M model’, which proposes that the public’s connectedness with humanitarian issues can be sustained through appropriate emotions, understanding, and ways of caring that they are familiar with and which they practise in their daily lives. Consequently, humanitarian communications that aim to foster a long-term psychosocial connectedness should be emotionally manageable, cognitively meaningful and morally significant – the three ‘M’s of our model.

This was an important finding: to know that people apply local practices and principles of care, when considering how to help distant suffering, could help NGOs to design their communications with the public.

Interestingly, we know that NGO professionals also think that there is a huge distance between the UK public and beneficiaries – a distance that it is their goal to bridge or reduce through their communications. They also expressed dissatisfaction with existing ways of representing distant suffering. NGOs also held contradictory perceptions in terms of their relationship with the UK public: some admitted there was a problem, but others felt that the public trusted them.

Contrary to this view, we discovered that the public were dissatisfied with their interactions with NGOs, in particular the overwhelming focus on monetary donations of their ‘hit and run’ approach.

Additionally, the public see NGOs as wanting to over-mediate their relationship with beneficiaries, offering themselves as conduits for channelling the public response. This is resisted and distrusted by the public, who want to be able to relate to beneficiaries, rather than just giving and forgetting. This, they believed, would make humanitarianism a more ‘human’ affair.

Dr Bruna Seu is Reader in the Department of Psychosocial Studies. *Caring in Crisis? Humanitarianism, the public and NGOs* by Irene Bruna Seu and Shani Orgad, is published by Palgrave Macmillan (springer.com/gb/book/9783319502588)

FACSIMILE OR FICTION?

Is this the earliest known exact physical likeness of a human being? Dr Laura Jacobus explores the intriguing possibilities of a fourteenth-century statue



One of the great pleasures of teaching at Birkbeck is the chance to offer research-led teaching to a student body which is unlike any other in its responsiveness to learning. But this responsiveness cuts both ways, and on more than one occasion it has resulted in my research being prompted by my experiences of teaching.

In a recent edition of the journal *Art Bulletin*, I argued that a statue of the businessman Enrico Scrovegni, made around 1305, is the earliest known accurate image of any human being. My journey towards this conclusion began when I was teaching a class of second-year BA students, and essentially relaying a narrative of the history of portraiture that you would find in any textbook on Renaissance art.

I noticed that my class of usually engaged students had gone quiet and were looking baffled. When I turned and looked at the slide I was talking about, I could see why. Contrary to the textbook accounts, the portrait I was showing didn't look like a real person at all. His features were generalised and his expression was blank. My students had been able to see this with fresh eyes; their teacher had not. This experience prompted a series of questions for me: when and why were the first accurate portraits made, and how would we know one if we saw one?

Enrico Scrovegni was one of the wealthiest men of his era, and a colourful character – a bit of a scoundrel, who knew Giotto and (probably) Dante, two of the greatest painters and poets of all time. He owned the breathtakingly beautiful Arena Chapel in Padua, where three portraits of him can still be seen. But he lived at a time when ideas of likeness were not what they are today.

A 'portrait' was often no more than a generic representation of what a person was (for example, a king in official regalia), not a record of what a unique individual looked like. Enrico's surviving portraits all look much more like unique individuals than any previous medieval images, but of course that does not prove what he really looked like.

I reached the conclusion that two of his portraits – a statue and a tomb effigy – are indeed accurate physical likenesses, by digitally comparing them (with the help of Birkbeck colleagues Liz Drew, Nick Lambert and photographer Dominic Mifsud).

I found that although Enrico looks quite different as a young man in c.1305 and an elderly one in c.1335, the underlying bone structures of the two portraits are identical. This is something that no artist could ever have achieved by simply

observing their subject at a sitting. In fact, until the invention of photography in the nineteenth century, portraits were inevitably mere approximations of the sitter's appearance. No accurate three-dimensional portrait was possible, until the invention of 3-D printing earlier this century.

For comparable accuracy, a medieval sculptor would have had to take an infinite number of precise measurements of Enrico's face. It would not be feasible to do this 'in the flesh'; the only way was to make a plaster cast of the face, and take measurements from that using callipers.

A description of the process, written around 1400, tells us that the subject would have had to lie still, with breathing tubes up his nostrils, while the cast was made. The artist would try to keep the customer happy, by mixing the malodorous plaster with rosewater, and greasing his eyebrows, so that they didn't hurt when the cast came off.

We still don't know quite why this sudden interest in preserving a real individual's appearance occurred after at least a millennium of indifference to accurate portraiture. What makes it even more intriguing is that Enrico's sculpted portraits remained isolated instances of this kind of portrait for a long time. 'Facsimile portraits', as I have termed them, did not become common for another 150 years. This suggests that Enrico had a special reason for commissioning the statue – and that it may not have been an obvious, artistic one.

A clue might lie in the fact that the statue was inscribed as 'the true form of Enrico Scrovegni', and apparently had a seal attached to it to verify the description. A longer inscription accompanying the statue was included as evidence in a legal dispute over the patronage rights to the Arena Chapel more than 200 years later. Might his uniquely accurate and verified likeness have been commissioned to assert Enrico's ownership of the chapel where his statue stood? Its novel veracity might have served as much for legal purposes as artistic ones.

Still, its effects are far from legalistic. An encounter with the statue of Enrico Scrovegni has the compelling power to bring us face-to-face with someone who lived 700 years ago.

Dr Laura Jacobus is Senior Lecturer in the Department of History of Art. For more on this research, see "Propria figura": The advent of facsimile portraiture in Italian art, *Art Bulletin*, 99/2 (2017), 72–101, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00043079.2017.1251814>



WE STILL DON'T KNOW QUITE WHY THIS SUDDEN INTEREST IN PRESERVING A REAL INDIVIDUAL'S APPEARANCE OCCURRED AFTER AT LEAST A MILLENNIUM OF INDIFFERENCE TO ACCURATE PORTRAITURE

Below left and right: Is this 'the true form' of fourteenth-century businessman Enrico Scrovegni as a young man? (*Giuliano Ghiraldini*)



SEA CHANGE

Once Britain's smallest colony, later expanded into a fortress by Hitler, the tiny North Sea island of Heligoland saw two centuries of Anglo-German contact and conflict, writes Professor Jan Rüger

For generations, Britain and Germany have collided in Heligoland, a North Sea island half the size of Gibraltar and 30 miles off the German coast. For much of the nineteenth century this was Britain's smallest colony, a picturesque holiday destination at the fringes of mainland Europe, where the British Empire ended and the German-speaking world began.

Having acquired it from Britain in 1890, Imperial Germany turned the outpost into a fortress that expressed the ambition to force Britain into acknowledging Germany as a world power. But the Kaiser's battle fleet, built up over two decades, did little to compel the British to give way. Heligoland, demilitarised after the First World War, became a symbol of this failure. For the Nazis, it was a metaphor of the Fatherland's shameful humiliation by the Allies, 'a silent warning', demanding revenge.

After he took power, Adolf Hitler had the fortress rebuilt and vastly expanded, to demonstrate Germany's will to be bold with Britain. Comprehensively destroyed by the Royal Air Force, the island's ruins turned into an emblem of German victimhood and nationalism after the Second World War. When the UK released it into German hands in 1952, Chancellor Adenauer proclaimed that his country had 'finally been given back a piece of soil to which we Germans are attached with so much love'.

For the British, Heligoland provided a lens through which to interpret Germany. The island was a 'parable' for the Anglo-German relationship, wrote Austin Harrison, editor of *The Observer*, in 1907. The meanings of this metaphor changed dramatically in the course of the last two centuries. The forlorn colonial enclave, that



SITUATED AT THE FAULT LINE BETWEEN IMPERIAL AND NATIONAL HISTORIES, THIS ROCK IN THE NORTH SEA PROVIDES AN APT LOCATION FROM WHERE TO RETHINK THE ANGLO-GERMAN PAST

Above: Bird's eye view, Heligoland, c. 1890–1900, colour photo lithograph (US Library of Congress)

'gem of the North Sea', became a dark rock symbolising the German menace. H.G. Wells, Erskine Childers and a host of lesser writers used the outpost as a symbol of the German threat – and Britain's failure to stand up to it. Giving the island to the Kaiser had been a momentous mistake, argued Winston Churchill and former First Sea Lord Admiral John Fisher.

Situated at the fault line between imperial and national histories, this rock in the North Sea provides an apt location from where to rethink the Anglo-German past. Most histories of this relationship focus on the two World Wars.

There is no scholarly account that spans both the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. But, as I show in my book *Heligoland: Britain, Germany, and the struggle for the North Sea*, this was a decidedly ambivalent relationship long before Bismarck founded Imperial Germany and Wilhelm II decided to build a battle fleet against Britain.

What took place in the decades before the First World War was not an inevitable shift towards enmity, but an increase in both cooperation and conflict. Under radically altered circumstances, this state of interdependence re-emerged after the Second World War.

The Heligolanders themselves, wedged in between Britain and Germany, were keen to cultivate a separate, independent identity. In August 1890, they were told that they had turned from subjects of the British Empire into citizens of Imperial Germany. Yet they still had to be 'made German', as the Foreign Office in Berlin concluded. Their biographies remind us of the many ways in which Europe and the British Empire were bound up with one another: the imperial project was never isolated from mainland Europe, nor did it allow Britons to isolate themselves from the Continent.

History, as the great French historian Fernand Braudel once wrote, likes to 'make use of islands'. He meant this in a geographical sense: islands had, he argued, functioned as stepping stones for trade and migration throughout history. But the same is true in metaphorical terms. From the moment when Heligoland entered the European stage during the Napoleonic Wars, to the time when it slowly exited that stage towards the end of the twentieth century, it was never only a geographical reality in which people lived and died, but also a product of the imagination.

To visit Heligoland today is to walk through an archaeology of the Anglo-German past. The history of the two nations' relationship is etched into the island's rust-coloured, blotched sandstone cliffs. Tourists can take a 'historical path' along the craters left behind by the RAF. They can go on a guided tour of what is left of Nazi Germany's naval fortress: a subterranean maze of air raid shelters, shafts and tunnels. And they can buy historical souvenirs at the island's museum.

Heligoland has turned into a memorial, as have so many other German sites once dedicated to national glory and then destroyed by war.

Jan Rüger is Professor of History in the Department of History, Classics and Archaeology. *Heligoland: Britain, Germany, and the struggle for the North Sea* is published by Oxford University Press



AMAZON DELIVERY

Dr Luciana Martins reveals how bringing together indigenous knowledge and scientific research has prompted new perspectives on people and plants in Brazil

How can indigenous artefacts in historical collections in British institutions contribute to better knowledge of the Amazon? How can indigenous knowledge inform museum practice today?

These are some of the key questions being addressed by the research programme that I have been developing in collaboration with Professor Mark Nesbitt and Dr William Milliken from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, since 2015.

At the heart of our research are the biocultural collections amassed by the nineteenth-century botanist Richard Spruce, who spent 15 years travelling and collecting plants in the Amazon and the Andes. Our project aims to reanimate the artefacts that Spruce sent to Kew Gardens and other British institutions, which have huge potential as data for studies of ethnobotanical knowledge and ecological change.

As knowledge of indigenous peoples is key to understanding these materials, we have been building partnerships with indigenous communities, as well as with research institutes, in Brazil and the UK.

In our first project workshop, held at Kew in 2015, participants represented a wide range of methodologies and perspectives, including anthropology, botany and ethnobotany, archaeology, museum studies, cultural history, and indigenous cultures. The event, supported by the Global Partnerships Fund (UK Science and Innovation Network), provided the basis for developing a collaborative UK–Brazil research programme focused on the Spruce collections.

Then, in 2016, researchers from the Tukano, Tuyuka, Desana, Yebamasã, Baniwa, Koripaco and Pira-Tapuya indigenous groups from the upper Rio Negro took part in a training programme on plant knowledge at the Instituto Socioambiental in São Gabriel da Cachoeira, with the support of Birkbeck, Kew and the British Council. Subjects included plant classification, botanical and ethnographic specimen collecting, recording traditional knowledge, photography, data handling and botanical illustration. Indigenous participants shared their views on plants and their uses with ethnobotanists, anthropologists and cultural historians, presenting the results of their own research.

Our project has also enabled indigenous communities to reconnect with objects forming part of their own cultural heritage. Colleagues from Brazil have helped to digitise Spruce's notebooks, which are held at Kew, and have photographed all his ethnobotanical objects. These photographs and film clips of the Spruce collections at Kew formed the basis of animated discussions in the 2016 workshop about history, materials, cultural roles and change.



OUR PROJECT HAS ENABLED INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES TO RECONNECT WITH OBJECTS FORMING PART OF THEIR OWN CULTURAL HERITAGE

With the support of Birkbeck's Derek Jarman Lab, I produced a short film about one of the most remarkable artefacts in Spruce's collection, a shield made of *titica* vine. Cross-referencing Kew sources including manuscripts, herbarium samples and publications, the film, *The Many Lives of a Shield*, provides glimpses of the stories told by the peoples of the Rio Negro about the shield and the raw materials used to produce it, as well as the cosmologies associated with them.

I have used film as a method of re-sensitising audiences to the physical presence of artefacts, plants and social landscapes they inhabit – from the environmentally controlled settings of Kew to the hot, riverine surroundings of São Gabriel da Cachoeira in the Amazon.

The 2016 Amazon workshop made another important step towards defining the scope and content of a manual of biocultural research to guide future indigenous research initiatives in the region. Published initially in Portuguese, the 'Manual of Ethnobotany: Plants, Artefacts, and Indigenous Knowledge' is now being translated into Tukano and Baniwa languages.

Funded by the UK Newton Fund through the British Council's Institutional Skills programme, this collaborative project between Birkbeck and Kew has established an active partnership with the Rio de Janeiro Botanical Garden and the Instituto Socioambiental, with the support of the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi, Universidade Federal do Amazonas, and Federação das Organizações Indígenas do Rio Negro.

Our project has also informed a new exhibition at Kew's Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art, 'Plantae Amazonicae' by Kew artist-in-residence Lindsay Sekulowicz, supported by Arts Council England and running until March 2018. The exhibition represents Sekulowicz's own encounters with Spruce's ethnobotanical artefacts, herbarium specimens and notebooks.

Drawing upon my research on the visual archive of expeditionary travel, in collaboration with Kew's Science team, Sekulowicz's artworks are juxtaposed with indigenous objects and Spruce's meticulous field observations, becoming another part of the story of plants and people in the Amazon.

Left: Samples of *Eschweilera albiflora* were sent to Kew in 1851 by botanist Richard Spruce, who wrote: "...almost everything was new, and so many things were in flower, that I was obliged to confine myself to those which presented the greatest novelty of structure." (Luciana Martins)

Dr Luciana Martins is Reader in Latin American Visual Cultures in the Department of Cultures and Languages

HOME TRUTHS

Urban regeneration can leave residents feeling marginalised. Dr Melissa Butcher shows how young people in Hackney are renegotiating once-familiar spaces

The inner London borough of Hackney has become iconic of processes of urban redevelopment affecting cities globally. Changes in the borough, such as large-scale regeneration projects, incoming young creatives and middle-class professionals, and the growth of creative industries and other businesses, are in sharp juxtaposition to continuing markers of inequality and exclusion.

Public debates have raised concerns that this urban transformation is disrupting the social and cultural landscape of the borough. Many of Hackney's existing residents risk being displaced through eviction and demolition, soaring rents and property values, or simply no longer feeling they belong, as cultural frameworks shift along with the built environment. This experience of displacement generates everyday grievances, as the formerly familiar spaces of 'home' must now be renegotiated.

These conditions have been widely documented and debated in academic research, but that work is dominated by adult perspectives. Young people, however, while active users of public space, are often unheard, marginalised or misrepresented in consultations about the future of their neighbourhoods.

Our two-year 'Creating Hackney as Home' project, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, has aimed to redress this imbalance, by working with young people in east London to document how they experienced urban change and subsequently negotiated their place in this dynamic and precarious context.

Working with Hackney estate-based youth theatre company Immediate Theatre, and youth media organisation Mouth that Roars, we employed five peer research assistants, Matthew, Michael, Monét, Shekeila and Tyrell, all aged 16 to 18 at the time, as part of the research team. They were responsible for research, film and video diary production over the course of a year.

The youth team identified themes that interested them within the broader concept of 'Home', carrying out archival searches, interviews with family and other young people, meeting stakeholders, and making detailed observations of particular sites in Hackney.

They then worked with different genres of film-making, from documentary to spoken word performance, to produce their videos. From journeys through and across the city came explorations about the impact of gentrification, the history of black style in the area, reflections on growing up and out of space, and managing everyday cultural diversity. Once they were complete, we posted the films on the project website and held screenings to generate further discussion.

Our project findings highlight how young people in Hackney rethink their experience of home and belonging in a time of rapid change. Feeling at home came with the familiarity of streets, buildings, shops, memories and connections with other people, friends and family, developed over the course of their lives in the borough. As Shekeila noted, Hackney is "not just my home, it's a part of me".

But with processes of regeneration and gentrification, estates have been demolished to make way for new apartment blocks; old pubs and cafes have been replaced by upmarket retail outlets, bars and restaurants; and new demographics have established their presence, shifting the balance of both ethnicity and socioeconomic background in the borough. This transformation in the physical and socioeconomic character of Hackney led some young people to question whether they fitted into the emerging urban landscape.

Crucially, however, young people were found to be not necessarily averse to change itself, but to those changes that they felt left them, and other residents, marginalised. Their concerns centred on inequality, displacement and the speed of change. While disruption to the built environment and existing social networks was evident, we identified an ambivalence. On the one hand, there could be a sense of enjoyment at the opportunities for new experiences, the possibility to experiment with their identity, to dress differently, or to try new things. On the other hand, their marginalisation was evident in their inability to access the new facilities due to lack of money or lack of cultural knowledge.

Our findings highlight the need for urban planning and design to take people's emotional attachment to place into account, to consider the diverse experience and use of urban space, and to include young people in debates on urban futures.

Dr Melissa Butcher is Reader in Social and Cultural Geography in the Department of Geography. For more information on the project 'Creating Hackney as Home: Five reflections on a changing London borough', see hackneyashome.co.uk

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THIS TRANSFORMATION LED SOME YOUNG PEOPLE TO QUESTION WHETHER THEY FITTED INTO THE EMERGING URBAN LANDSCAPE



(All images by Dr Melissa Butcher)

SEARCH INGENUITY

A prize-winning search engine that can identify patterns in even the most complex ancient languages will help researchers to explore previously unexamined archives



Left: Aramaic incantation bowl with spell inscribed in a spiral from the centre outwards, late-Sasanian period, sixth to eighth century AD. This example of Aramaic text was researched by SAMTLA (© The Trustees of the British Museum)

How do you find something in a book or library or database, if you don't already know it exists? This is one of the major challenges for researchers when they want to question existing sources. Many people – not just researchers – will start with a Google search. This is helpful but it will only provide links to match the keywords you have already used, and offer some peripheral guesses driven by previous enquiries on the words. This is not enough for fundamental research, when we want to discover something wonderful, and not already known.

Since the invention of writing, humanity has amassed a wealth of artistic, cultural, religious and scientific knowledge, which has been etched in stone, inscribed on clay and wooden tablets, penned on parchment, typed on paper, and rendered on digital displays. Much of this is captured in small, specialist and incomplete sets of texts, such as Easter Island's Rongorongo symbols, which never show up in mainstream generic searches. Searching this wealth of knowledge is predominantly performed in English, but search engines generally ignore the nuances, such as different spellings and paraphrasing.

Dr Martyn Harris, Professor Mark Levene and Dr Dell Zhang, from the Department of Computer Science and Information Systems, have found a new way to search archives and other text collections. It throws up inferences and new links not already predetermined, while also removing a cultural bias inherent in much of our search technologies. Their prototype, affectionately called SAMTLA (Search And Mining Tools for Language Archives system), works on totally unstructured bodies of text, irrespective of the language, including those that are grammatically complex such as ancient Aramaic, medieval English, Chinese or Russian.

Languages are infinite in their ability to encode information about the same individual, concept or topic. This can be reflected by a variety of linguistic forms, specialised terminology, different vocabulary choices made by the authors, and changes to the spelling of words as the language evolves over time. For example, given the word *beginning* in modern English, SAMTLA will recommend searches related to older forms of the language, such as *bigynnyng* from the fourteenth-century Wycliffe Bible, and *begynnynge* from the sixteenth-century Tyndale Bible, both of which possess the same meaning as the modern form.

SAMTLA will scale as well, so it is possible to put in whole paragraphs of text to find other sections that are the same or similar. This helps to identify literary influences and the possible evolution of language and ideas.

Consider two examples (see below): shared passages that SAMTLA extracted from two separate chapters of the Bible. SAMTLA considers them to be semantically similar, despite the notable differences in the words used to tell the same story.

Mark, Chapter 3 (King James Bible, 1611)
*that came forth to be baptized of him
Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance,
and begin not to say within yourselves.*

*We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you,
That God is able of these stones to raise up children
unto Abraham.*

*And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees:
every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good*

Malachi, Chapter 3 (King James Bible, 1611)
*come to his baptism, he said unto them
Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:*

*And think not to say within yourselves,
We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you,
that God is able of these stones to raise up children
unto Abraham.*

*And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees:
therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good*

The SAMTLA approach looks at the morphology of words, and models their dependency. This achieves two advances: it describes the syntax of the language, which means that words or phrases that are not already known can be predicted or approximated; and, more significantly, it opens up the immense possibility of exploring both existing databases, through a new lens, as well as previously unsearched specialist sources that come in many different languages. As a result, we can start to search the full spectrum of human culture and words, without the need to write specialised software for each specific search requirement.

SAMTLA can be useful in multiple environments. Research has already been completed with the Wellcome UK Medical Heritage Library, investigating 100,000 volumes, and the archives of the *Financial Times*, which span the years 1880–2000. SAMTLA's research with the British Library, analysing 90,000 books, won it the runner-up prize in the research category of the British Library Labs Awards 2017, which recognise outstanding and innovative work using the Library's digital collections.

Wider use of SAMTLA could lead to the possibility of opening up the past and explaining the present more accurately, through an unbiased presentation of the data and meanings. This will enable us to explore – in greater breadth and depth – sources both old and new, and will subsequently better inform us about the world we live in now.

POPULISM: THE NEW NORMAL?

Dr Jason Edwards considers recent political elections and asks whether we are witnessing the rise of a new authoritarianism

Observers of politics have been watching events of recent years assiduously to gauge whether the tide of populism is advancing further or receding.

The shock victories for Brexit and Trump in 2016, Emmanuel Macron's emphatic defeat of Marine Le Pen in 2017's French Presidential elections, alongside the failure of Geert Wilders' Party of Freedom in the Netherlands to make a decisive breakthrough, led many to claim that populism's star was on the wane. Later in 2017, however, the strong showing for Alternative for Germany in the Bundestag elections, and the possible formation of a right-wing nationalist coalition in Austria, cooled such talk.

Yet this kind of speculation about the vitality of the populist surge can distract us from a more profound change that is taking place in politics: the decline of democracy and the rise of a new authoritarianism. 'Populism' is less a vehicle of this transformation, and more one of its primary symptoms. The difficulty with trying to chart the fortunes of populism in the short term is that there remains confusion about what it is.

Many political scientists and theorists struggle to conceive of populism as a political ideology with a substantive view of the world and a set of values about how the world should be. Because there are populists of the left and of the right, and perhaps even of the centre, it may seem as though the best we can do is to say that populists are those who claim to represent 'the people' against the elites. We might think of populism, accordingly, as being politically empty, a placeholder for a variety of different ideological positions and political movements.

Ernesto Laclau, the well-known theorist of populism, argued that the 'logic' of populism is in an important sense a basic condition of all politics. It is only with the presence of a 'we', the people, that there is the possibility of a struggle at the heart of politics – a perpetual contest between the powerless 'underdog' and the elites who rule over them. This position makes more sense of the variety of populisms that we



POPULISTS ARE THOSE WHO CLAIM TO REPRESENT 'THE PEOPLE' AGAINST THE ELITES

see across the world today, which are clearly 'political' in terms of contesting political power, committed to wresting it from elites.

But when populists are successful in gaining power, a new problem arises: can they remain populist? Surely, even if they claim to speak in the name of a unified people, the reality is that they only ever represent a part of the people and, once in power, come to govern as a new political elite.

The Princeton academic Jan-Werner Müller has argued recently that populists in power can – and indeed do – govern as populists. More precisely, he points to the way in which populists in government, in claiming to act in the name of the people, pursue common strategies of colonising the state, encouraging clientelism and corruption, and closing down pluralistic civil society. In that regard, populism in power

Above: Former UKIP leader Nigel Farage MEP during campaigning for a by-election in Heywood, Greater Manchester in 2014 (Oli Scarff/AFP/Getty Images)

does indeed look increasingly authoritarian and undemocratic.

Müller's account is plausible, but it overlooks the fact that the advent of these authoritarian modes of governing the people in their name predate contemporary populism by at least a couple of decades.

While populism today is often seen as a reaction against neo-liberal capitalism and rootless liberal cosmopolitanism, it has thrived using the tools that have been fashioned in the era of globalisation – not least, of course, the use of cyberspace. This allows secondary institutions, such as the press and established TV broadcasters, to be bypassed in a direct appeal to the people.

If we are witnessing the emergence of a new authoritarianism, then, it might be a grave mistake to believe that it can be averted simply

by facing down the populists. There are longer-term trends at work that are making the populist mode of government the new normal:

- mounting inequality in the distribution of global economic power
- the increasing absorption of machine intelligence into the routines of work, politics and everyday life, and
- the continuing atrophy of public spaces as the principal sites of common experience.

The turning-inward of populists to projects of national renewal and protection, far from addressing these dangers, is only likely to exacerbate them.

Dr Jason Edwards is Lecturer in Politics, and Programme Director of the BA Global Politics and International Relations, Department of Politics

AN OVERLOOKED RELATIONSHIP?

Family law has plenty to say about parents and children, but siblings are rarely in the foreground. In the first study of its kind in England and Wales, Professor Daniel Monk considers the shifting nature of 'siblinghood'



Left: Singer Liam Gallagher (left) and his brother, guitarist Noel Gallagher (right), of former British rock group Oasis (Kevin Cummins/Getty Images)



IT IS THE SIBLING RELATIONSHIP THAT PROVIDES THE PERFECT AND REPEATED FRAME AND VEHICLE FOR REPRESENTATIONS OF CONTESTED VALUES AND WAYS OF LIVING

Siblings are almost invisible in Family Law, but that never struck me as odd. After all, while what the law says about parents and children and spouses is a matter of debate, most people know and accept that law has, and should have, something to say about those relationships. But this is not the case for siblings. Indeed, when I tell students that some countries used to impose legal obligations on people to support their adult siblings, the reaction is generally one of visceral shock, followed swiftly by expressions of outrage.

These responses demonstrate that people feel very strongly about their siblings. This is hardly surprising. In stories in foundational and biblical myths and melodramas, it is the sibling relationship that provides the perfect and repeated frame and vehicle for representations of contested values and ways of living. The list is endless. Think, for example, of Romulus and Remus, Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, King Lear's daughters. In TV soap *EastEnders*, the Mitchell family alone has a panoply of full, half-, step-, adopted and social siblings.

Bitter conflict – frequently homicidal – is at the heart of many of these stories. In linking these tales to psychoanalysis, the work of Juliet Mitchell is acknowledged by all sibling scholars. But alongside these violent tales are representations of 'brotherhood' and 'sisterhood' that express unifying, communitarian ideals; think of civil rights activists, trade unionists, feminists and religious orders, as well as professions such as nurses and judges. These paint a very different picture of 'siblinghood' or 'sibship'.

A recurring refrain from scholars of siblings in sociology, history and anthropology is that their discipline has overlooked the issue. The historian Leonora Davidoff described siblings as a 'taken for granted ... absent presence'. In seeking to explain this, scholars all point to a dominant, overarching emphasis on parents and children, reproduction and vertical authority. This is true for law: they are never in the foreground and often not even in the indices, but once I started looking, I found siblings everywhere.

Concerns about getting too close inform prohibitions in criminal law and marriage restrictions, while scientific developments have resulted in medical law provisions about 'saviour

siblings' and 'donor conceived genetic siblings'. Housing, mental health and education law contain provisions that assume a benign degree of social connection. Alongside intestacy rights, in inheritance law, conflicts between siblings are the cause of an ever-increasing number of disputes. More surprising was finding siblings in taxation and commercial provisions; the assumption here is that their connectedness is potentially a mask for subverting regulation.

My current research, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, focuses on the treatment of siblings in the child protection system. It is now an established principle that where it is in their best interests, siblings should live together. In practice, they are frequently separated, and sustaining contact is challenging. Judges are reluctant to order that contact should take place, particularly when a child is adopted.

In making decisions about inter-sibling contact, expert judgments are often required to assess the quality of the relationship. What qualifies to be deemed a 'dysfunctional' sibling relationship is complex, as research demonstrates that the relationship is premised on ambivalence.

While sibling relationships are a discrete issue, they are affected by – and provide a space for thinking about – wider questions: the increasing number of children in care; the tensions between respecting birth family rights and policies that call for more and quicker adoption; and the structural and financial pressures on local authorities and legal practitioners.

In attempting to foreground siblings in law, an obvious path would be to draw on the language of rights. That 'sibling rights' are rarely spoken of reflects the fact that, socially and culturally, siblings are not a politicised identity category; people don't start sentences with: 'As a sibling ...'.

But there are good reasons for not wanting to simply transplant 'siblings' into existing models of thinking. One of the challenges is to find ways of bringing the significance of the relationship to the fore, without imposing on them a coherent picture or ideal. In other words: to continue to celebrate their inherent messiness.

Daniel Monk is Professor of Law in the School of Law

GUT REACTION

A study into how gut microbes process drugs and nutrients could help to improve cancer treatment outcomes

Healthy animals and humans play host to benign, beneficial but also potentially problematic microorganisms. Those microbes, known as ‘gut microbiota’, can be necessary for health, but they can also impair it, and can affect interventions aimed at improving our health.

While research into the role of gut microbes in cancer and chemotherapy is still in its infancy, the accepted view in the scientific community is that they play a key role in regulating many of the features of cancer development, progression and treatment.

A study led by Dr Filipe Cabreiro at the Birkbeck/UCL Institute of Structural and Molecular Biology (ISMB) has found that the activity of cancer drugs changes, depending



Optical micrograph of the soil-dwelling bisexual nematode *C. elegans*, the model organism used in the team's new three-way screening technique (James King-Holmes, Science Photo Library)

on the types of microbes living in the gut. The study, funded by The Wellcome Trust, the Royal Society and the Medical Research Council, involved scientists from Birkbeck, UCL, the European Molecular Biology Laboratory and the University of Helsinki.

Fluoropyrimidines, a common type of colorectal cancer drug, act by stopping DNA from being produced. This prevents cells from dividing in an uncontrolled fashion – a typical feature of cancer cells. These drugs are commonly given in a chemical form that needs to be broken down by the liver to become an active compound.

Although fluoropyrimidines have been a common cancer treatment for almost 60 years, there is no universally accepted dose, and genetics alone do not explain differences in patient responses to the drug. The authors of the study wanted to know whether these different responses could be caused by microbes changing how the body processes the drugs – or by something else entirely.

“We forget that there are many organisms living in our bodies that interact with the food and drugs we ingest. Until now, probing the relationship between host, microbe and drug has proved difficult. Often microbes are studied in isolation, which isn't realistic, but using our *in*

vivo method, we've had some striking insights into how drug activity can be bolstered or suppressed by gut microbes,” said the ISMB's Dr Timothy Scott, first author of the study.

The team developed a new three-way screening technique using *C. elegans* as a model organism. This nematode worm, arguably the most well-studied organism in the world, is widely used as a simple model for human metabolism, due to its evolutionary similarity to humans and its comparable relationship with microbes.

The extensive screening highlighted two distinct ways that bacteria change drug activity in the host:

- first, some bacterial strains can resemble the action of the liver, by helping to transform the drug into its active form, which leads to enhanced drug activity
- second, the bacteria affect the function of quickly dividing cells, sensitising them to the killing activities of the compound.

Since the publication of the ISMB's study in *Cell* magazine in April 2017, scientists in China and the USA have made similar findings in a study that involved human patients with colorectal cancer undergoing a co-therapy of fluoropyrimidines and oxaliplatin, another chemotherapy drug.

However, Dr Cabreiro notes the dangers of using co-therapies to treat disease. His team found that co-therapies for cancer may limit treatment success, if the host-microbe-drug interactions are not taken into account. An example of this is a combination of the anti-diabetic drug metformin, currently on human trials for the treatment of certain cancers, which reduces the efficacy of fluoropyrimidines, by inhibiting the positive actions of bacteria.

Dr Cabreiro believes that treatment strategies involving co-therapies must take into account not only host but also gut microbiota genetics.

The ISMB team's discovery highlights the potential benefit of manipulating gut bacteria and diet to improve cancer treatment, and the value of understanding why the effectiveness of drugs varies between individuals. Ultimately, their rigorous system could be used for pre-clinical screening of drug interactions between host and microbe, or for designing bacteria for drug delivery, which could revolutionise treatments.

“We've highlighted a critical missing component in our understanding of how drugs really work to treat disease. We plan on investigating this area further, as identifying which microbes are responsible for drug activity in humans, and their regulation by dietary supplements, could have a dramatic impact on cancer treatment outcome,” Dr Cabreiro said.

NEW PROFESSORS

A selection of professorial appointments and promotions at Birkbeck



Felicity Callard, Professor of Social Research, is the Director of the Birkbeck Institute for Social Research, having joined Birkbeck in 2017 from the University of Durham. Her research addresses twentieth- and twenty-first-century psychiatry, psychology, psychoanalysis and cognitive neuroscience.



Fiona Candlin, Professor of Museology, specialises in small, independent, single-subject museums – or ‘micromuseums’. Professor Candlin joined Birkbeck in 2000 as Lecturer in Museum Studies in the Faculty of Continuing Education, and is Principal Investigator on a project ‘Mapping Museums: The history and geography of the UK independent sector’.



Sarah Childs, Professor of Politics and Gender, joined Birkbeck in 2017 from the University of Bristol. Her research centres on the relationships between sex, gender and politics. She has written extensively on women’s political representation since 1997 and advises MPs, political parties and Parliament on gender and diversity.



Rosie Cox, Professor of Geography, was a founding member of the Birkbeck Gender and Sexuality group (BiGS) and is the author or editor of five books. Joining Birkbeck in 2003, Professor Cox’s research interests include paid domestic labour and care work, the home, gendered migration and alternative food networks.



Mark Crinson, Professor of Architectural History, joined Birkbeck in 2016 from the University of Manchester. His research focuses on colonial architecture and post-war British architecture, including aspects of documentary photography, race and architecture, and the Victorian industrial city.



Frederic Dick, Professor of Auditory Cognitive Neuroscience, is the Director of the Birkbeck-UCL Centre for NeuroImaging, having joined Birkbeck’s Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development in 2004. His work focuses on the cognitive and neural mechanisms that allow us to master complex audio-motor skills.



Steve Edwards, Professor of History and Theory of Photography, joined Birkbeck in 2016. His research interests include: nineteenth-century industrial culture; documentary; radical art and aesthetics in the 1970s; contemporary art; and art and social theory. He is a member of the editorial collective of the *Oxford Art Journal*.



Tim Markham, Professor of Journalism and Media, came to Birkbeck in 2006 and was Head of the Department of Film, Media and Cultural Studies 2011–2015. He is a sociologist with interests cutting across journalism, media, politics and philosophy. His current research is focused on what makes working in the media meaningful to those who do it.



Daniel Monk, Professor of Law, works with a number of public agencies on issues relating to home education, children’s rights and sexuality. He has worked at Birkbeck since 2003, where his research has explored a wide range of issues relating to families, children, education and sexuality.



Stewart Motha, Professor of Law, joined Birkbeck in 2012. His research is on law’s mediation of sovereign violence. In his forthcoming book *Archiving Sovereignty: Law, history, violence* he focuses on sovereignty in the Indian Ocean region, including case studies from Australia, the Chagos Archipelago, Sri Lanka and South Africa. Another strand of his research examines the intersection of law, religion and political theologies.



Angelica Ronald, Professor of Psychology and Genetics and the Director of the Genes Environment Lifespan laboratory in Birkbeck’s Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development, joined Birkbeck in 2007. Her research focuses on the genetic and environmental causes of developmental traits both within the typical range and also relating to neurodevelopmental conditions and psychiatric disorders.



Filippo de Vivo, Professor of Early Modern History, has authored many works on a variety of subjects, including the history of pharmacies, archives and letter-writing. He has worked at Birkbeck since 2003, where his research focuses on Italy and the Republic of Venice from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment. He studies the connections between communication and power, propaganda, rumours and the press.

NEW FELLOWS

Four members of the Birkbeck community received College Fellowships in 2017. The awards recognise outstanding service to the College or distinction in their fields. A full list of Fellows is at bbk.ac.uk/fellows



Professor John Annette President and Vice-Chancellor of Richmond University “Birkbeck is a unique higher education institution. I am proud to have contributed to its traditions of lifelong learning and public engagement in London.”



Derek Hicks Former Regional Consultant for the Higher Education Funding Council for England “Birkbeck ... has stayed true to its founding principles, despite having to evolve and adapt the way it delivers its unique contribution to higher education in London.”



Tricia King Vice President of Global Engagement, Council for Advancement and Support of Education “Birkbeck changes lives. One of the most diverse student bodies is helped by one of the most inspirational education communities to achieve significant life transformation.”



Geraldine Sundstrom Managing Director and Portfolio Manager at investment management firm PIMCO “Birkbeck offers a rare gift: a fair and equal chance to all, thanks to part-time studies. It is an immense privilege to be a small part of that grand mission.”

BIRKBECK BOOKS

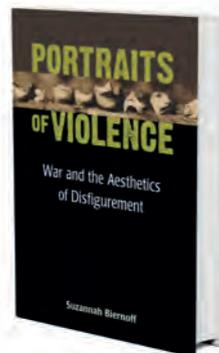
A selection of books authored or edited by staff



The Hirschfeld Archives: Violence, death and modern queer culture

Heike Bauer, Temple University Press

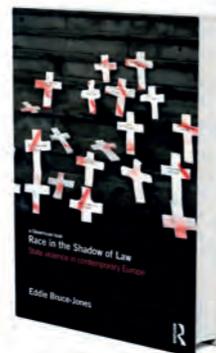
This major study – and winner of a Knowledge Unlatched award – examines the violence that has shaped modern homosexual rights in the West. Discussing little-known and forgotten writings by influential sexologist and activist Magnus Hirschfeld, founder of the world's first Institute of Sexual Science in 1919, Heike Bauer, Senior Lecturer in English Literature and Gender Studies, explores the difficulties of queer existence around 1900, but also shows that homosexual rights were haunted from the beginning by racism, colonial brutality and gender violence.



Portraits of Violence: War and the aesthetics of disfigurement

Suzannah Biernoff, University of Michigan Press

Suzannah Biernoff, Senior Lecturer in Modern and Contemporary Visual Culture, explores the image and idea of facial disfigurement in one of its most troubling modern formations, as a symbol and consequence of war. Opening with Nina Berman's iconic photograph *Marine Wedding*, which provoked a debate about the medical, military and psychological response to serious combat injuries, *Portraits of Violence* draws on a wide variety of sources. It simultaneously addresses a neglected area in disability studies, puts disfigurement on the agenda for art history and visual studies, and makes a timely and provocative contribution to the literature on the First World War.



Race in the Shadow of Law: State violence in contemporary Europe

Eddie Bruce-Jones, Routledge

This critical legal analysis of European responses to institutional racism draws connections between contemporary legal knowledge practices and colonial systems of thought, arguing that many people of colour experience the law as a part of a racial problem, rather than a solution to racial injustice. Based on a critical legal ethnography of anti-racism work in Europe, and with an emphasis on the German context, Eddie Bruce-Jones, Senior Lecturer in Law, positions Black and anti-racist perspectives at the centre of critically thinking through the intersection of race and law. He develops a critical discussion of the European legal frameworks aimed at regulating racism in policy and policing.



Raising Multilingual Children

Julia Festman, Gregory J Poarch and Jean-Marc Dewaele, Multilingual Matters

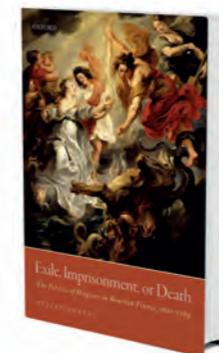
Have you ever been told that raising your child to speak multiple languages will harm their development? Are teachers or other professionals suspicious of your efforts? It is increasingly recognised among researchers that, far from harming a child's development, being exposed to multiple languages from birth or early childhood can result in linguistic, creative and social advantages. Jean-Marc Dewaele, Professor in Applied Linguistics and Multilingualism, and his co-authors, all multilingual speakers themselves and parents of multilingual children, call on their own experiences and the latest research on multilingualism to provide advice and inspiration for multilingual families across the world.



The Story of Colour: An exploration of the hidden messages of the spectrum

Gavin Evans, Michael O'Mara Books

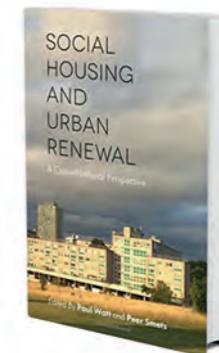
Why is green the colour of envy? Why do we 'feel blue' or 'see red'? Why do colours have different meanings for different cultures? Sometimes our grasp of a colour relates to the random way we define it. Light blue is called 'blue', but over the last century or two, light red has become pink, whereas in Russia light blue and dark blue are described as separate colours. Gavin Evans, Lecturer in Cultural and Media Studies, offers a lively, anecdotal treatment of the cultural mysteries of colour. He focuses on the way we respond to colours, the significance we give them – and how these things change over time and from place to place.



Exile, Imprisonment, or Death: The politics of disgrace in Bourbon France, 1610-1789

Julian Swann, Oxford University Press

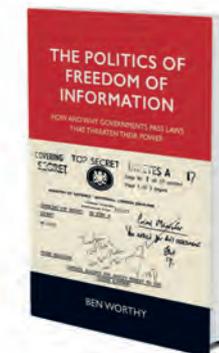
On the accession of Louis XIII in 1610, the Bourbon dynasty stood on unstable foundations. His realm was still prey to the ambitions of an aristocracy that possessed military force and was prepared to resort to violence to defend its interests. To establish his personal authority, Louis XIII was forced to resort to conspiracy and murder, and even then his authority was constantly challenged. Yet a little over a century later, such disobedience was impossible. Julian Swann, Professor of Early Modern History, examines the development of this new 'politics of disgrace', not only from the perspective of the monarch and his noble subjects, but also the great corporations of the realm and the wider public.



Social Housing and Urban Renewal: A cross-national perspective

Paul Watt and Peer Smets (eds), Emerald Publishing

Social housing estates became a prominent feature of the twentieth-century urban landscape. Many were built as part of earlier urban renewal 'slum clearance' programmes. During the last three decades, however, Western governments have attempted to change the image and status of these estates away from being zones of concentrated poverty, crime and other social problems. This has involved widespread demolition of social housing estates and their replacement with mixed-tenure housing developments. Paul Watt, Reader in Urban Studies, and his co-editor offer in-depth case study research on the processes and impacts of urban renewal on social housing in Europe, the USA and Australia.



The Politics of Freedom of Information: How and why governments pass laws that threaten their power

Ben Worthy, Manchester University Press

Why do governments pass freedom of information (FOI) laws? The symbolic power and force surrounding FOI makes it appealing as an electoral promise but hard to disengage from, once in power. However, behind closed doors compromises and manoeuvres ensure that bold policies are seriously weakened before they reach the statute book. Ben Worthy, Lecturer in Politics, examines how Tony Blair's government proposed a radical FOI law, only to back down in fear of what it would do. But FOI survived. This book looks at how the disruptive, dynamic and democratic effects of FOI laws continue to cause controversy once in operation.

Lucy Malone, with some of her mother's archive (*Lance Bellers*)

MY LATE MOTHER'S FUTURE WORK

BA Psychosocial Studies graduate Lucy Malone created an archive of her mother's past and planned artwork

When Lucy Malone's mother passed away suddenly in 2011, Lucy inherited all her belongings. For five years, these remained in boxes, stored in a barn in the Devon village where Lucy grew up. It wasn't until she undertook the Creative Archives module and then the practice-based dissertation offered as part of her Psychosocial Studies degree that Lucy felt ready to open the boxes and discover what was in the notebooks, envelopes and lists, in order to assemble an archive of her mother's artistic practice.

After taking the boxes to Brighton, where Lucy now lives, she began trying to make sense of a lifetime of objects. Lucy explains: "At first I struggled to understand why my mum had kept everyday items, such as pieces of paint-spattered wood or an old paintbrush, and to see how I could uncover her intention for them, or the meaning she attached to them."

The eureka moment came when Lucy discovered a list, entitled 'Future works', of the objects she had been puzzling over. Searching through other sketchbooks and lists, Lucy uncovered "quite abstract" references to other artists' work or obscure sentences underlined heavily, which she used to understand how her mother had planned to incorporate the objects into works of art. Lucy decided that not only would she create an archive of her mother's practice, but she would also complete these works herself and exhibit them.

Before starting the project, Lucy did not see

herself as an artist, but by the end she says: "My mum was always very firm in her belief that being an artist was an identity, not a job, and as I curated this exhibition, I realised that the way I was approaching my work was from the identity of an artist. In a way I was mirroring her work, but in another it brought out my own artistic identity; the finished pieces were at once my mother's work, a collaboration and in a sense also my own practice."

The exhibition was held at the Archivist's Gallery in Haggerston, east London, in May 2017. Lucy's work explored the relationship between memory, maternal loss and the belongings that a person leaves behind.

Lucy says: "During the Creative Archives module, I was particularly interested in how our concept of archives is changing. They're no longer seen as purely static records, but are now being used to subvert old ideas and create new ones. I wanted to use my exhibition to pluralise narratives about artists, women and family. I am passionate about fighting exclusivity in art, and I hope I can continue to do this as I develop my work as an artist and curator."



“

MY MOTHER WAS AN ARTIST, SOMETIMES BEFORE BEING A MOTHER, SOMETIMES INSPIRED BY BEING A MOTHER AND ALWAYS INSPIRED BY THE EVERYDAY, BY LIFE, BY OBJECTS AND BY THE WORLD AROUND HER



READY, STUDY, GO

Studying in the evening has enabled three Birkbeck students to compete at the highest level of their sport

Left: Sophie Bray (*Ady Kerry*)
Top right: Hannah Rose Thomson (*Hannah Rose Thomson*)
Bottom right: Jack Beaumont (*MatchTight*)



Sophie Bray MBE
MSc Occupational Psychology student;
British international field hockey
player and Olympic gold medallist

“Studying while living the life of a full-time athlete has given me an opportunity to create a balance in my life, and helped me to perform better on the field. It provides me with the necessary release from the pressure of elite sport and an outlet to pursue another passion. It has also taught me how to manage and plan my time most efficiently and effectively.”

“I am very grateful to Birkbeck for the flexibility they have given me in enabling me to complete my studies alongside my training, which includes competing abroad for many months of the year. The set-up and support from Birkbeck have also allowed me to fit my studying around my training. It allows me to put my training first, which is what I wish to do for the next few years, while I have the opportunity to compete and perform at the highest level.”

“I am currently a student on the Occupational Psychology MSc and hope to complete it by summer 2018. I am interested potentially in becoming a chartered Occupational Psychologist or in a role in human resources, but we shall see. Managing the transition to the working world after my career as an athlete is important to me, and having a career focus alongside my hockey will help me in the future.”



Hannah Rose Thomson
Second-year part-time student in
MSc Bio-Business; round-the-world
sailing champion

“I recently won an offshore race from Liverpool to Punta del Este, Uruguay, for the Clipper Round The World yacht race with my team, Team Greenings. Fortunately, the 35 days at sea – and the time before and after to work on the boat – sat within the university summer break, so I didn’t need to take time off from my studies and my employer was very supportive!”

“I’ve worked in health technology and innovation since graduating from

the London School of Economics in 2012, and I wanted the opportunity to study again and to consider and contribute to my field in an academic capacity. However, I was dedicated to continuing to work full-time.

“Birkbeck’s evening study model presented the perfect opportunity to do both, as well as to continue and accelerate my sporting commitments. My course director and supervisors have helped facilitate my offshore racing through agreeing to move deadlines forwards by six weeks, so that I can hand in my dissertation draft before setting sail!”

“During term-time, I run between work, home and university to stay fit. This works out as 70km of running a week, plus strength training. Life is pretty full-on, but that’s how I like it.”



Jack Beaumont
2017 BSc Criminology and Criminal
Justice graduate; Team GB rower

“Being an Olympic rower has been my dream since I was about 12 years old. It was always my plan to train full-time, with the aim of reaching the top. However, near the end of secondary school, one of my mentors told me that while I was doing a great job of climbing my mountain, I had to plan for my descent, otherwise I would struggle after I stopped competing.”

“Studying alongside training has not been easy. There were countless late nights, lots of yawning in lectures, and many evenings eating my dinner out of a lunch box on the Hammersmith and City line.”

“We have to be present for all training sessions, which meant that evening study was the only option if I was to study for a degree as well as having a realistic chance of selection for the 2016 Olympic Games. My lecturers and seminar tutors were very understanding of my situation.”

“Now I have finished my degree, I am planning on taking a bit of time away from studying. I am in training for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, where I aim to improve on my fifth place in Rio and turn it into something shiny!”

Jack is seeking sponsorship for his training. Please email jackbeaumont123@hotmail.com



SETTING THE BAR HIGH

Jolyon Maugham QC is a barrister and director of the Good Law Project, which leads high-profile legal challenges. He completed an MA in Modern Literature at Birkbeck and talks here about its impact on his life

I had been a lawyer for maybe five years when I enrolled at Birkbeck, having always slightly regretted studying law rather than literature. I was prone to quip that I was making up for a misspent youth, when I went back to do the MA in 2002.

I was at a stage in life where I had the space to explore something I was profoundly interested in. Before I studied law, I'd written a play for BBC Radio 4 and I'd done a feature on New Zealand poetry for Radio 3, both in my teens. I also thought studying at Birkbeck would be a very good way to meet interesting people.

As a student, you have a sense of when you are walking down a well-trodden path and when you're genuinely exploring – the latter were the classes I found most interesting. Certainly, my perception was that many of the teachers at Birkbeck are there because they love teaching and had chosen the College because the students have made a very positive decision to learn, rather than just fall into education for want of anything better to do.

I had a sense that Birkbeck was a place designed to deliver a very high-class learning experience to people in full-time employment and that was absolutely borne out by my experience. I got from it what I wanted. It caused me to engage with the world around me in a much more sophisticated and multidimensional way, and it has shaped how I communicate in my professional sphere as a lawyer, how I think about the world around me and how I approach legal problems.

A few years after leaving Birkbeck, I began to write about tax avoidance, which in the aftermath of the financial crisis was a very real public concern. It was a field I knew well and I wanted to participate in the public debate, so I took a conscious decision that I would say what I wanted to say. I said things even when I expected my clients would not be pleased to hear me say them, which is one of the many advantages of being self-employed – to be able to speak freely about issues that engage you. It has expanded from there, and I feel incredibly fortunate to now have a public platform.

It's hugely flattering that people are interested in what I have to say about the issues that drive

me. I'm doing a lot around Brexit, an issue that seems to have profound implications for the lives of those left behind after the financial crisis of 2008. I'm very engaged by questions about whether any of the political changes afoot will benefit those communities.

I'm also involved as the claimant in a lawsuit against Uber; should I succeed, and I think I will, that case will cost Uber a billion pounds. I am trying to articulate people's justified frustration that big US tech companies are dodging tax and getting away with it. I'm about to do some work about the iniquities of internships and insecure work.

I like Birkbeck's mission; that it offers an opportunity for people whose lives did not follow the traditional paths of the privileged classes to make better lives for themselves. People who grew up in households where there was no expectation to go to university, but who later come to see tertiary education as something that will enrich and develop their lives. I think of Birkbeck as being in exactly the same sphere of social justice as the work I do.

I'm now fortunate enough to be in a position to give Birkbeck some money every month, which I have done for a decade or so. I've also mentored a couple of Birkbeck students; one of those experiences was very successful. He is now a young barrister. It's a great privilege to have had that positive impact on someone else's life – another life, like my own, changed for the better.

Right: Jolyon Maugham QC
(Ali Kate Cherkis)



I THINK OF BIRKBECK AS BEING IN EXACTLY THE SAME SPHERE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AS THE WORK I DO



A SPORTING CHANCE

An MSc in Sport Management and the Business of Football has inspired Faz Hossenally to bring the American game into London schools

A business venture started by Birkbeck student Faz Hossenally is opening the way for American Football coaching to be delivered to children in the UK, starting with schools across London.

Faz, who studies MSc Sport Management and the Business of Football, started FloRéal Sports with friend Rani Lewinson, after identifying a gap in provision while researching her dissertation.

Faz said: “There were two modules on my MSc that I found particularly helpful in setting up FloRéal Sports: Sports in Society; and Sports Policy and Development. These modules helped me to understand that through improved policy and programmes, we can give children the chance to contribute to society through sport. Additional workshops on Entrepreneurship, delivered by Balloon Ventures at Birkbeck, gave me the creative tools and insight to develop my business plan.

“We chose American Football as a new sport to engage with young people in London, and we’re focused on enhancing adolescent development and helping young people reach their full potential. I am very proud of what we have achieved in a short space of time and we’re now looking for funding to ensure we can roll out our work across all 32 boroughs of London.”

The ten-week foundation programme started in January 2017 at Eastlea Community School in Newham. For an hour a week, Faz and Rani mentored Year 7 students in life skills such as organisation and time management, encouraging the students to put these skills into practice in the additional hour Faz and Rani then coached the students in American Football.

Faz explained: “We chose Eastlea because Newham is among the most deprived boroughs

in London. FloRéal Sports is aligned with Oakland, a deprived area of California, through the Fam1st Family Foundation. The USA-based organisation aims to improve the lives of children by mentoring them on the importance of education, literacy and self-esteem. Its founders, NFL [US National Football League] players Joshua Johnson and Marshawn Lynch, came to Newham at the end of the programme, to lead a training camp session to inspire the students.

“Johnson and Lynch are both from underprivileged backgrounds themselves, and have overcome many obstacles to reach their current success, playing for the New York Giants and the Oakland Raiders respectively. For many children in London today, this programme could mark the first step on the journey to overcoming similar barriers.”

Richard Tacon, Lecturer in Management, has supervised Faz throughout her degree, and addressed the students at a celebration event to mark the programme’s first year. He said: “It’s great to see Faz working directly within sport and seeking to use sport’s social and cultural significance to improve the lives of young people.

“The sport programmes here at Birkbeck are designed to provide students with detailed academic understanding of the sport industry and the practical capacity to work effectively in the sport industry. Faz’s co-founding of FloRéal Sports is a great example of this. We wish her success with all her work.”

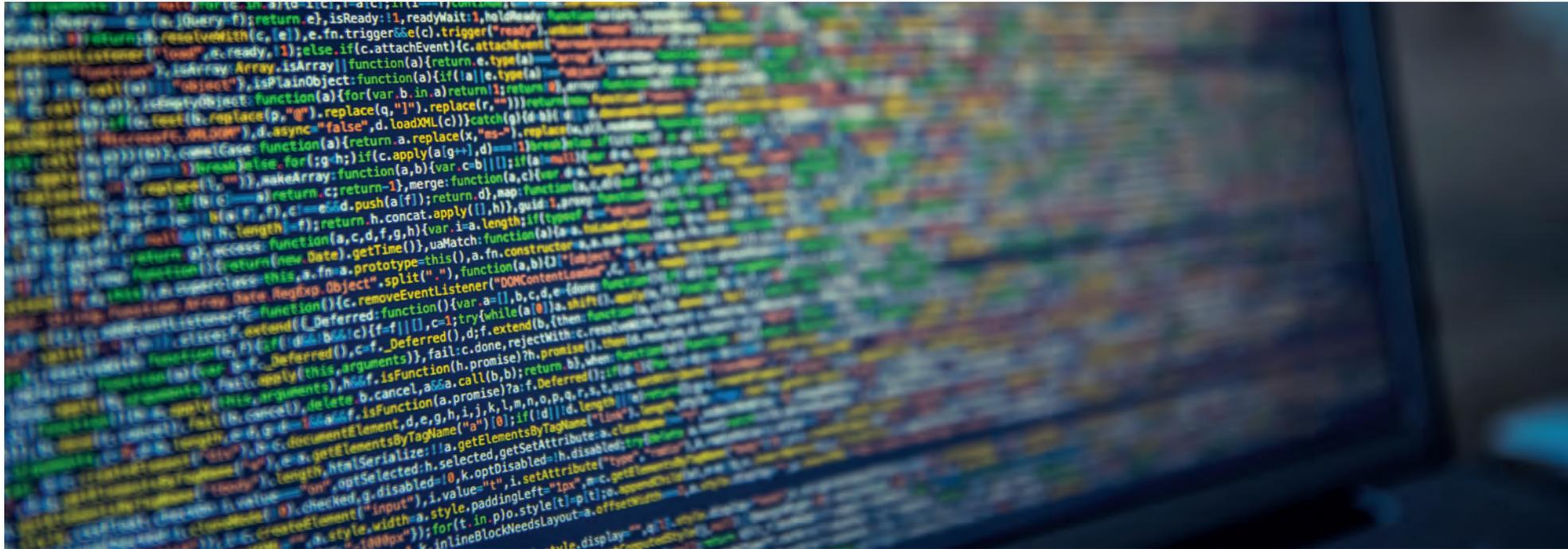
In 2018, FloRéal Sports begins a programme at Chobham Academy, also based in Newham. Faz and Rani plan to start the programme at a different school each year, with a different American footballer from the NFL acting as an ambassador for each London borough.



WE CHOSE AMERICAN FOOTBALL AS A NEW SPORT TO ENGAGE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN LONDON



Right:
Faz Hossenally
(Paul Cochrane)



WE BELIEVE THAT THIS APPROACH IS ONE THAT WILL WORK TO REDUCE THE SKILLS GAP

THE FUTURE'S DIGITAL

Birkbeck's unique UpSkill: Tech programme offers students the chance to increase their technology skills and prepare them for a career in today's fast-moving digital economy

As the technology industry has grown to become a major contributor to the UK economy, digital skills are becoming increasingly important. Backing the digital requirements of industries of the future is a key element of the UK government's long-term economic plan, but there is a talent shortage nationwide.

Funded by The J.P. Morgan Chase Foundation, Birkbeck has piloted its UpSkill: Tech programme, which encourages students to develop their interest in technology through skills workshops, coding courses, panel discussions and masterclasses.

In 2016–2017, the first full year of the programme, some 2,660 students registered with the programme, with more than 1,500 of these using an online learning platform, Lynda, to develop their digital skills. Almost 200 jobs were made available by employers through UpSkill: Tech, out of which 89 placements were made. Many more students participated in interviews for full-time and part-time tech roles,

and some 20 internships in the tech field were taken up.

The pilot has been so successful that Birkbeck has committed to continue the UpSkill: Tech programme beyond the three-year corporate funding generously provided by The J.P. Morgan Chase Foundation, which comes to an end during 2018. However, students will continue to enjoy the benefits of UpSkill as the Birkbeck Careers and Employability team will ensure that it remains a staple of our broader career offer. The programme is open to all Birkbeck students interested in careers in technology, regardless of degree discipline or level of study, as well as to students wishing to develop their existing digital skills.

Eleanor Mongey, Head of Student Services, said: "The UpSkill: Tech programme was designed to make students aware that you don't have to be technical or know coding languages to work in the technology sector. The UK has a digital skills gap, and we have a community of students who are active learners, willing and

wanting to make a change, so while the support and interest we have had from businesses has been fantastic, it is also not surprising.

"We were keen to focus on underrepresented groups in tech and we believe that this approach, coupled with a model of partnership with industry, is one that will work to reduce the skills gap."

A key aim of the programme is to expose students to the diversity of career pathways in technology and the wide range of employers – digital and non-digital – who offer opportunities. Birkbeck has also nurtured partnerships with organisations at the forefront of addressing digital illiteracy and promoting technology among underrepresented groups, particularly women. This includes 'Code First: Girls', 'Women who Code', and 'Girls in Tech UK'.

Jade Daubney, of creative technology consultants ThoughtWorks, has been closely involved in the programme. She said: "The UpSkill: Tech programme has been amazing for us to have exposure to some incredible students at Birkbeck. It has been a great opportunity for ThoughtWorks to have one-to-one conversations about life in the tech field, different roles and finding out what career paths the students are interested in."

"The diversity and attendance of Upskill: Tech has been great to see, and we have had a wonderful pipeline of people interested in future positions with us. I hope to continue building on our partnership."

IRFAT ALAM, MSc IN INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT GRADUATE

"I signed up to the Upskill programme through Birkbeck's Careers Service last year, in the final year of my MSc in International Management, as I wanted to keep all my options open for my future career.

"The 'Code First: Girls' course looked interesting – I didn't know much about coding and the different languages you can use, so the course was a great opportunity to learn new skills. And because of the College's partnership with the J.P. Morgan Chase Foundation, the Code First course was free to Birkbeck students!

"All of us on the course were from different disciplines, and I took a while to adjust, as the subject was so new. But the instructors were all from different backgrounds and were specialists in all different aspects of coding and coding languages, so they could really help us out and give us the individual support we needed.

"We learnt about the front-end development of websites using CSS, HTML and JavaScript, and how to design a website using Bootstrap. There were resources for activities we could do outside the classes. I'm a really visual person when it comes to learning, so need to read for myself, but it really helped to go to the weekly two-hour classes and hear the specialists explain how to do things. We got into groups to develop our own websites, using every skill from our classes, and gave presentations at the end of the course. It has really given me an interest in coding.

"Now that I have completed my Master's, I'm interested in working in the tech field, or perhaps as a business analyst for a consultancy.

"I would love to do something like technical support for one of the big companies that offer a variety of opportunities, or join a start-up, where there's flexibility and room for growth, with no hierarchy, so you can try out different roles and work out which is right for you.

"Code First has given me the confidence to pursue a career in tech, so I'm now just getting out there to network!"



CODE FIRST HAS GIVEN ME THE CONFIDENCE TO PURSUE A CAREER IN TECH



Above: (Markus Spiske on Unsplash)
Right: Irfat Alam (Geoff Wilson)



Looking back, I had it relatively easy – I was single, new to living in London and didn't know anyone, so I had nothing better to do with my time! Now that I have a family and a very busy job, it seems unimaginable – it's incredible what Birkbeck students do.

I enjoyed my time at Birkbeck. There were just 12 of us doing Applied Statistics, so I knew everyone in the classroom, and that had a huge impact on me. As I got to know people and heard their stories, it became clear that many people on the course had not had as privileged a background as my own, in terms of the opportunity to go to university at the age of 18. Hearing their stories made me enormously respectful of the effort involved in being there.

I know that for many people the credential of getting an MSc is important, but for me it was the knowledge I gained that was the major benefit of my Birkbeck degree. The statistics I learned over those two years impacted on the way I thought and the way I approached problems in my professional life. That statistics education has been invaluable throughout my career ever since.

I spent 17 years working at Winton, and was a board Director and the Chief Investment Officer from 2008. In the time I was at the company it saw tremendous growth, and I am immensely proud of the business that I helped to create.

In September 2017 I started my own investment management company, Havelock London, which makes use of data, statistics and technology to create savings and investment products. Using data and statistics is a way of making more disciplined decisions in business, and so the core of what I learned at Birkbeck is at the epicentre of my new venture.

The decision to give to Birkbeck stems directly from my student experience and seeing people around me so determined to get the benefit of an education that needed large financial commitment – and fees are even higher now. Anyone who is prepared to put in that amount of hard work deserves to have the opportunity to learn. Social mobility is very important to my wife Minaz and I. It's something we feel strongly about, hence our Learning Ladder, which funds students at Certificate, undergraduate and postgraduate level for three years.

Birkbeck's mission really speaks to us, plus it's not a huge organisation, so we feel we can witness the impact of our giving in a way that is perhaps not so easily achieved in a large international charity.

If you are interested in making a donation to Birkbeck, please email Chris Murphy, Director of Development and Alumni (c.murphy@bbk.ac.uk) or call 020 7380 3134 for more information

Above: Matthew Beddall at his home in Hammersmith (Paul Cochrane)

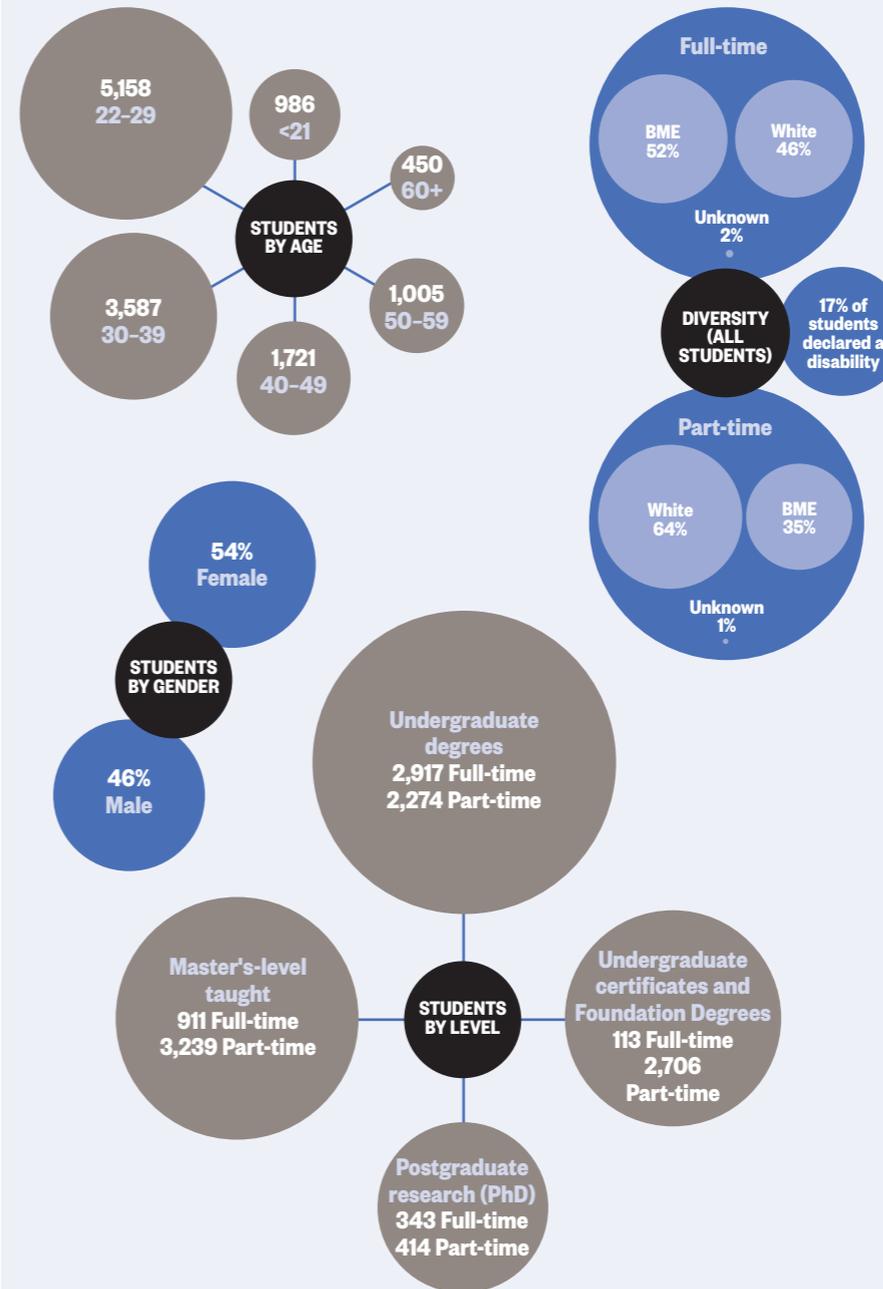
WHY I GIVE

Matthew Beddall studied MSc Applied Statistics and Operational Research at Birkbeck, graduating in 2003. He and his wife support the Matthew and Minaz Beddall Learning Ladder

I did my undergraduate degree in Maths and Computer Science at the University of Southampton and then got a job in London with Winton, the global investment management company. I was employed as a researcher, undertaking statistical work, and the company encouraged me to go on and do a Master's degree. The only way to do this was via evening study, and my then boss already had a connection with Birkbeck as he had sent employees there previously, so it was a natural choice.

BIRKBECK IN NUMBERS 2016–2017

Whether full-time or part-time, and regardless of age or educational background, students can find plenty of choice and opportunity at Birkbeck, for courses at all levels



THANK YOU!

£3,367,025

donated to Birkbeck

£2,324,797

left in wills to Birkbeck

14

corporate partners

1,349

Number of alumni and friends donating

345

Number of volunteers who gave time to Birkbeck

EMPLOYABILITY

41%

of all Birkbeck undergraduate students work full-time while studying, a further 24% work part-time while studying

(source: Birkbeck Enrolment Survey)

98%

of all Birkbeck students are in work or further study after graduation

(source: HESA DLHE survey)

All student data from Higher Education Statistics Agency 2016–2017 unless indicated

THE LAST WORD

Lord Willetts, Executive Chair of the Resolution Foundation think-tank, and Minister for Universities and Science from 2010 to 2014, reflects on recent higher education policy



**BIRKBECK
EXEMPLIFIES
PEOPLE'S
HUNGER FOR
LEARNING**

It has been a turbulent year for higher education. There is a new legal framework with the disappearance of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the arrival of the Office for Students. At the same time, HEFCE's research funding has been brought under a new body, UK Research and Innovation. These big changes have coincided with an extraordinary upsurge in media scrutiny of universities and their funding. Meanwhile, Brexit brings new risks both to the flow of students from the EU and to research collaborations and funding.

The new arrangements do not have the luxury of establishing themselves in quieter times, before they are tested. Instead, they are having to shape their new roles in very difficult circumstances. Now that universities get so little direct public funding for teaching – as instead it comes via fees and loans – it is right to move away from a funding model to a regulatory model that focuses directly on the interests of students. The great strength of the English system is the autonomy of our universities. For a century, a strong intermediary, originally the University Grants Committee, funded universities and stood in the way of governments that were tempted to interfere. It is important for the Office for Students to maintain that tradition.

At the same time, universities find themselves facing hostile media scrutiny and attacks from critics such as the former Government minister Lord Adonis. Some of the criticisms have been around for years. Since the 1963 Robbins Report into higher education, we have gone from 5% to 50% of people going to university. Throughout that time, the sceptics have said that too many people are going to university and it is not worth it for them. But by and large, more people getting more education is a good



thing – good for them and good for society as a whole. There is overwhelming evidence of the benefits of going to university. There are non-economic benefits (more tolerance) as well as economic benefits (improved productivity). There are social benefits (lower crime) as well as individual benefits (higher pay). Universities as a group should make a strong, confident case for the value of higher education. In my new book on universities I argue that we can learn from the way the case has been made for the importance of the first three years of childhood, when actually three years at university makes just as much difference.

Birkbeck exemplifies people's hunger for learning. Real commitment and self-discipline are required to combine work or family responsibilities with part-time study. Looking back on my time as university minister, one of my regrets is the fall in the number of part-time students. Extending fee loans to them has not worked as well as it has for full-time students. That suggests to me that we need more of a tailor-made regime to help them.

Then we can focus on the biggest educational challenge that we face – the terrible English problem of early specialisation. One of the many reasons for studying at Birkbeck is to broaden one's education after too narrow an education first time round. Going down to three A-levels means we have to take a decision aged 16 that most other countries expect people to take aged 20 or so. Many adults come to regret that early specialisation and go back to study to try to redress it. It is good to keep learning and studying as an adult, but it should not be from such a narrow base.

A University Education, by David Willetts, was published by Oxford University Press in November 2017

Above:
Lord Willetts
(John James/
Alamy Stock Photo)

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