

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2022

buzz

WHAT'S INSIDE?

- Uncovering T. rex's jaw-dropping bite and a 'Monster' year for palaeontology at Birmingham
- Memorable staff moments from the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games
- Welcoming Memory Studies Scholar from Ukraine
- Cost-of-Living Crisis



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

WELCOME TO BUZZ 193

Whilst I was booking in my annual 'use up the rest of my annual leave' time off in September, I worried I'd left myself painfully short of time to claw together this magazine: I thought I'd bitten off more than I could chew. You've already seen the cover and can see where this is going, can't you? So let's cut straight to...

So we scaled up the operation and asked Jenni Ameghino to write a feature on the new T. rex discovery led by Dr Stephan Lautenschlager; a creature for whom biting off more than it could chew was never really a problem (the T. rex, not Dr Lautenschlager). Dr Lautenschlager discovered that the T. rex's ferocious bite may have been down to its unusual oval-shaped eye socket. It's a really fascinating discovery and you can read more about it on page six, where you'll also unearth how it's been something of a 'monster' year for palaeontology at Birmingham.

Birmingham has been bursting with new statues this summer. From the Four Lads in Jeans outside an All Bar One, to mechanical bulls, and the return of King Kong, there really has been something for everyone. We've got a shiny new one too, and it's absolutely divine. We fully expect the new statue of Uranus to have already caught your eye? If it hasn't, there's a good chance you've seen it multiple times already and each time thought: 'Oh lovely, another new statue on campus!' Well, can I shock you? It's actually the same one. As Jenny Lance pens for us; the statue changes depending on the angle you're viewing it from, and it explores the way we make sense of the Universe. *Father Sky/Uranus*, to give it its full title, is part of a planetary series called 'Divine Principles' and is based on the Greek god of the sky. It should serve to remind us that sometimes changing our approach can help us to see things from a different perspective. Food for thought.

Speaking of which, we fed more visitors this summer on campus than at any point in our history (I've not fact-checked that but I'm confident enough to leave it in). Has there ever been a bigger event on campus than the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games? My colleague, Emily Peers, herself a volunteer at the Games, has been collecting some of your amusing and heart-warming stories from this summer's main event. It was a true spectacle that wouldn't have been possible without the thousands of volunteers, and I know how proud Emily was to have been part of it, as she's hockey mad. I hope these stories make you smile.

Something else that should make us all feel proud – although it stems from such horrific circumstances – is that colleagues in the University's Institute for German and European Studies have been working tirelessly to help bring a displaced Memory Studies scholar to Birmingham from Ukraine. Professor Sara Jones and Dr Klaus Richter have secured a fellowship to bring Maryna Rusanova from Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University to the University of Birmingham, where she'll join fellow Ukrainian researcher, Natalia Kogut. We send our best wishes to Maryna and Natalia: we look forward to welcoming them and hope that they are able to return safely home to their country soon.

The cost-of-living crisis in the UK is on everyone's mind at the moment. It affects us all, but will disproportionately impact those people and families who are already struggling to manage. Professor John Bryson shares his thoughts on the current situation and what's fuelling it. We also share some of the steps that the University is taking on sustainability to reduce our carbon footprint, and Sue Knight, Head of Student Wellbeing and Therapeutic Support, shares a new science-based initiative that teaches students key skills in making healthier life choices.

Thank you to all our contributors, and to the team in Creative Media whose creativity – and patience – knows no bounds. Just like the tyrant lizard king, we've had to make this one snappy: Enjoy *Buzz* issue 193, on time, to be devoured.

Best wishes
Matthew Collins (Editor)



Dramatic ‘Father Sky’ Wows on Campus

A striking new bronze sculpture has been drawing attention from staff, students and visitors alike since its installation over the summer.

Father Sky/Uranus is on loan to the University for a year from Pangolin London, writes Jenny Lance, Curator of Art at Research and Cultural Collections. It stands on a plinth vacated by the long-term loan of Barbara Hepworth’s *Ancestor I* that graced campus for more than 50 years.

Standing nearly two metres tall, *Father Sky/Uranus*, by Glasgow-based artist Zachary Eastwood-Bloom, depicts a human figure which dramatically changes in appearance as the viewer moves around it. The sculpture addresses how we make sense of the world around us and how these ideas change over time, and explores this through the juxtaposition of modern digital technologies with classical Greek sculpture.

The sculpture was selected by the University of Birmingham to coincide with the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and brought to mind some key links with the hive of activity which unfolded on the sports pitches. The sculpture is a combination between classical human form and an abstracted blurred shape, giving the sculpture an incredibly dynamic appearance. It moves with you as you move around it. The materiality of the sculpture, sculpted in bronze, added to this resonance, referencing the medals awarded for extraordinary physical endeavour.

It is part of a series of works called *Divine Principles* born out of a year-long residency with the Pangolin Bronze Foundry, and is based on the planets of the solar system. To create these works, 3D digital models of Greek gods were sourced and digitally distorted using satellite images of the planet of the same name. The title references the Primordial Deity Uranus who, according to Greek mythology, was the personification of the sky. As you walk around the sculpture the figurative image of the God Uranus blurs into the distorted satellite images of the planet.

Through the intersection of art and science, classical and modern, this sculpture explores how humans have attempted to understand the universe from the molecular to the planetary through religion, mythology, geometry, and science.

Find the *Father Sky/Uranus* piece on campus in the Green Heart



Father Sky/Uranus
Zachary Eastwood-Bloom (b.1980)
2017
Courtesy of the artist/Pangolin London



Academic Sanctuary for Displaced Ukrainian Memory Scholar

Maryna Rusanova, an associate professor at the Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University, who had to leave her home and job following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, has taken up a Memory Studies Association fellowship in the University's Institute for German and European Studies (IGES).

At the time of writing, Maryna Rusanova has been making a journey towards sanctuary in Birmingham following the Russian invasion of her homeland. Just before this magazine went to print, Maryna arrived in Birmingham (pictured, right).

After the occupation of Lugansk by Russian troops in 2014, Maryna's University was evacuated to Starobilsk in the Luhansk region of Ukraine. Then, in March this year, when Russia's military invaded Ukraine, the work of the University was suspended and Starobilsk soon came under the control of Russian troops. Earlier this summer, she told our colleague, Olivia Barfi, how the University was 'partially evacuated' to Poltava

but that many of her colleagues and students remained in Starobilsk, where evacuating the city has since become 'impossible'.

Her journey, as you can imagine, has been fraught with worry.

'It was difficult for me to constantly go down to the shelter with our dog. An additional complication was that I have multiple sclerosis and last year I underwent surgery for cancer.'

Friends helped her to move to Warsaw temporarily, then on to Portugal where some of her students living there helped her to find accommodation. She then learned about the Memory Studies Association (MSA) who had a fellowship for scholars at risk.

'My colleagues, knowing that I am researching the problem of antisemitism, sent me information about the MSA Fellowship: "Memory Scholars at Risk".'

It was the MSA who then put Maryna in touch with colleagues in the Department of Modern Languages at the University.

Professor Sara Jones was part of a group of Birmingham academics within the IGES who applied with Dr Rusanova for the fellowship, which offers individual funding of 4,000 Euros.

'I think all of us – and especially those of us with a connection to the region – were devastated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The IGES team wanted to help in any way we could, and we felt that a fellowship might be the best way to do that. I am a long-standing member of the Memory Studies Association, so found out about the possibility for matched funding through them.'



From left: Dr Klaus Richter, Dr Maryna Rusanova, Professor Sara Jones and Dr Ruth Whittle



Buzz caught up with Professor Sara Jones last month, ahead of Maryna's arrival in Birmingham

The field of Memory Studies must regularly deal with the issue of the forced displacement of people. It must feel very sobering, not only to welcome a fellow academic from Ukraine who has been forced to leave their country, but also one who shares a similar academic interest? You must also feel really proud to be able to help in this way?

Memory Studies is a really diverse field, but you are right that we often deal with the darker sides of human experience, including war and forced migration. Perhaps for that reason, people working in the field often feel a particular commitment to supporting those who are the victims of mass violence. I have spent a lot of time working with different kinds of first-person testimony and sought ways to ensure those voices are heard and continue to be heard. However, this was the first time that I have felt called upon to support someone fleeing violence in the 'right now'. We in the IGES expressed our interest in the MSA scheme early on, but they were only able to match us with Maryna one day before the deadline. I would never have thought it possible to pull something together in such a short space of time, but colleagues across the IGES were enormously supportive and we were determined that we should at least try.

I do feel proud that we were successful in our efforts, but also very grateful that I've been given the opportunity to work on this project with Maryna – something I would not have otherwise been doing. The work we are doing together is important for understanding and helping to combat discrimination and racism in the UK and will add a new dimension to my larger project on Central and Eastern European migration. We've also been given permission by the AHRC to expand (and enrich) that work to include interviews with Ukrainians who are now in the UK – that's allowed me to appoint another Ukrainian researcher who has fled the war, Natalia Kogut.

Can you tell us a little bit about the practical support that is being provided?

Maryna is currently working on the fellowship remotely, while based in Portugal. The IGES has been supporting Maryna with her visa application and also making arrangements for her accommodation and desk space when she makes it to the UK. I've also e-introduced her to the team working on the 'Post-Socialist Britain?' project and we are making plans to include Maryna and her work in a panel at the Memory Studies Association conference in Newcastle in July. There have also been the initial practical and administrative arrangements for when she gets here, including ethical review and further funding applications to the College to support the dissemination of a survey that is a central part of the research (CAL will provide £1,000).

Like Sara, Klaus and the IEGS team, I'm sure everyone is looking forward to welcoming Maryna to the University and sends her and Natalia our best wishes.

We hope to speak with Maryna and Natalia in a future edition of Buzz.

The MSA put us in touch with Maryna and a small team of us worked with her to put together the application for a "Memory Scholars at Risk Fellowship" for Maryna to work on the project: "Antisemitism in Post-migrant Britain."

The project combines my interest in memory, migration, and Central and Eastern Europe with Maryna's interest in antisemitism.'

Another member of the IEGS team, Dr Klaus Richter, Reader in Eastern European History, explains how unifying the work to bring Maryna has been for the department:

'Setting up the fellowship together with the MSA has really brought the whole IGES team together. It was truly humbling to see how so many colleagues wanted to help. Maryna's research interests align perfectly with what we do here in Birmingham, within the frame of Sara's project and beyond. She is a perfect fit for our institute.'

'It was difficult for me to constantly go down to the shelter with our dog. An additional complication was that I have multiple sclerosis and last year I underwent surgery for cancer.'

Maryna Rusanova



POST-COVID RECOVERY FUND

The Covid pandemic brought about lots of changes to the way we do things at Birmingham. One change that people may not be aware of is the Post-Covid Recovery Fund, set up to help early career academics re-establish their research in the wake of the pandemic.

We asked Professor Jo Duberley, DPVC for EDI to tell us more about this fund and why it was set up.

I had been in post for around six months when the first lockdown began. Almost immediately, I started to hear stories of the impact that Covid was having on the research careers of those with caring responsibilities, particularly women: a journal editor noticed that submissions from women almost disappeared.

To find out more, I held five focus groups with staff at various careers stages from different academic disciplines, and who were managing different domestic situations. During these online sessions, people spoke to me from kitchens, gardens and even stairwells; giving a vivid picture of their experiences of combining home working with caring responsibilities. Staff talked about the pressures of trying to work whilst caring for preschool children and home-schooling older children. Some staff were caring for children with special needs or health conditions and filling in for specialist support that was not available. Many staff had partners who were working in front line roles, for example in the NHS, whilst some were caring for partners who had mental health issues, long-term illnesses or Covid. Others were supporting parents or relatives who were shielding.

In addition to the tiredness, guilt and stress that this was causing, early career academics in particular were extremely worried about the longer-term impact on their research careers. They were concerned about probation and promotions, and if delays to publishing their work could lead to research findings being overtaken and the risks of losing touch with their field and collaborators.

I wanted to find a practical way of supporting this group of staff, and, after discussions with College DoRs, representatives from Research Planning and College Equality Leads, the idea of a one-off grants programme, targeted at ECRs was born. The Provost, Tim Jones, backed this idea and committed £200,000 in funding.

I was particularly keen that the grants should be easy to apply for, and I am grateful to the Research Support team for setting this up. I also wanted the assessment to be flexible and sympathetic to the range of different needs. The assessment team of our Equality Leads, led by Professor Jon Rowe did this admirably. In all, 56 awards were made ranging from £5,000 to just under £500.

I carried out an evaluation of the fund this summer and was inspired by the ways in which our Early Career Researchers had used this fund. Here are just a few of their stories.



Paloma Garcia

School: Institute of Cancer and Genomic Sciences

Type of funding applied for: Giving Back Time

What did you use the funding for?

We had recently had a publication submitted to eLife. The reviewers agreed on the novelty of the research but recommended that we carry out some further experiments. The award covered the expenses of experiments needed to answer the reviewers' comments.

What difference did it make?

The award had a massive impact – we got our paper accepted in eLife.



Maria Dauvermann

School: Psychology

Type of funding applied for: Pilot Data

What did you use the funding for?

The funding enabled me to design my first pilot research study, building my research programme as an Assistant Professor using a web-based testing license for the remote data collection of cognitive data.

What difference did it make?

The immediate impact of this Award is already noticeable with a grant application to the Springboard Award, which builds on this study. In addition, using this licence for accurate computerised testing of cognitive functions has resulted in a new research collaboration.



Hamish Hei-Man Yeung

School: Chemistry

Type of funding applied for: Giving Back Time

What did you use the funding for?

As a newly appointed lecturer at the start of the pandemic, the award 'gave me back time', which I was able to use to complete a research project: finalising data analysis, bring together results into a coherent manuscript, and submitting the paper to a peer-reviewed journal.

What difference did it make?

We had the paper accepted! This will provide verified proof-of-concept results for future grant applications.

Pilar Rojas Gaviria**School: Birmingham Business School****Type of funding applied for: Supporting Teaching, Technical, Research, Academic and Professional Services****What did you use the funding for?**

I could focus on delivering on a grant I obtained from the Academy of Marketing and carrying out a major revision of a manuscript submitted to *Gender, Work & Organization*.

What difference did it make?

The impact has been significantly positive as I could resubmit my manuscript, deliver on my grant, and recuperate my trust and rhythm of work for my research projects. But, perhaps, beyond this the funding was a symbolic way to officially acknowledge that the University of Birmingham could support me in getting back on track.

Leah-Nani Alconcel**School: Metallurgy and Materials****Type of funding applied for: Mobility****What did you use the funding for?**

I had originally planned to use my funding to make a two-day visit to the European Space Agency (ESA) facility in Madrid to present my recent work on the Cluster mission magnetometer calibration. Unfortunately, due to Covid, the facility remained closed. Instead, I was able to present the results from the work virtually at the 2022 European Geophysical Union conference, reaching both the ESA colleagues I had intended to visit, and an external audience.

What difference did it make?

It provided me with a conference abstract and presentation, exposure to a broader international community, and invitations to join collaborations with external colleagues, including a role on an organising committee for a session at EGU 2023. I was also invited to present the work at a mission-specific symposium in November 2022.

Renate Reniers**School: Birmingham Medical School****Type of funding applied for: Giving Back Time****What did you use the funding for?**

The funding has enabled me to hire two temporary RAs who are helping me to correct, verify, and quality check clinical and neuroimaging data.

What difference did it make?

Without this funding the work would not have been completed for a very long time. We are currently planning publications and funding applications based on this data. This was fantastic opportunity to receive much needed support. A small amount can make a huge difference.

Harriet Thompson**School: Social Policy****Type of funding applied for: Equality Bridging Fund****What did you use the funding for?**

It allowed us to support our Mexican partners with the activities/ outputs stated in our joint British Council-CONACYT bid, but which had been delayed/disrupted by Covid. In particular, it supported activities such as submitting a final report to British Council, amending a toolkit draft, and organising engagement workshops and meetings with stakeholders.

What difference did it make?

Even though it was relatively small in value, this award has a lot of soft impacts: it signalled a commitment to equitable partnerships and finishing work that we had jointly committed to and this has had a positive impact on my research in terms of my longstanding partnerships with organisations overseas. It has also helped with regaining some momentum, after the major disruptions caused by Covid.

The connected project, 'Capabilities-led energy poverty alleviation via innovative community solutions', was supported by a Newton Fund Impact Scheme grant, ID 541110746, under the Newton Fund-CONACYT partnership. The main partners were the University of Birmingham, University College London, and the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

Santosh Kumar C. M**School: Biosciences****Type of funding applied for: Equity bridging fund****What did you use the funding for?**

My project was significantly affected by the pandemic and it was listed as one of the majorly affected projects in the School of Biosciences. The funding enabled me to extend my stay by 40 days and address the objectives listed in the proposal.

What difference did it make?

In addition to enabling me to complete my research objectives, winning this award also enhanced my confidence and gave me something that I can add to my CV.

Sophie Broadway-Stringer**School: Cardiovascular Science****Type of funding applied for: Pilot Data****What did you use the funding for?**

The funding has enabled me to establish the use of a new technique in our laboratory which we have previously not been able to use due to cost. This has enabled the collection of pilot data for future study.

What difference did it make?

It has given me a chance to drive an independent project of my own.

T. REX'S JAW-DROPPING BITE DUE TO 'OVAL EYE SOCKETS'

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM RESEARCH REVEALS CLUE TO SUCCESS OF LARGE DINOSAUR PREDATORS

Tyrannosaurus rex (aka tyrant lizard king) is renowned for being possibly the most ferocious dinosaur ever to walk the earth.

With its vast size, terrifying teeth, and jaws so powerful that they could crush to a mush just about anything they encountered during the late Cretaceous period, some 68 million years ago, it's no wonder this creature occupies a special place in the prehistoric hall of fame.

While it was by no means the only theropod – the first of approximately 200 species of the most successful dinosaur having appeared around 200 million years ago – it remains arguably the most well-known of the so-called great lizards. So just what made it such a successful eating machine?

New research from the University of Birmingham, the results of



which have recently garnered widespread publicity at home and abroad, has revealed evidence that this remarkable predator may have owed its astonishing bite capacity to something as simple as the structure of its eye sockets.

The study by vertebrate palaeontologist Dr Stephan Lautenschlager, which was published in *Communications Biology*, found that while in most dinosaurs the eye socket was just a circular hole in the skull housing the eyeball, the unusual elliptical – or oval – eye sockets in the skulls of dinosaurs such as *T. rex* could have evolved to help the skull to absorb impact as they pounced on prey.

The limitations of the Covid pandemic meant that visiting museums housing dinosaur collections was out of the question during the study period. Instead, Dr Lautenschlager analysed the shape of the eye sockets of approximately 500 different dinosaurs and related species. Using computer simulations and stress analysis, he tested what purpose these unusual eye socket shapes could have.

'The results show that only some dinosaurs had eye sockets that were elliptical or keyhole-shaped,' he says. 'All of these were large, carnivorous dinosaurs with skull lengths of one metre or more.'

His research demonstrated that a skull



Skull and life reconstruction of *Tyrannosaurus rex* with original eye socket and eye (left) and reconstruction with circular eye socket and hypothetical eye (right). (Image credit: Dr Stephan Lautenschlager, University of Birmingham)

with circular eye sockets was more prone to high stresses during biting. However, if these were replaced with other eye socket shapes, stresses were considerably reduced, allowing top predators, including *T. rex*, to evolve high bite forces without compromising skull stability.

'I discovered that the structure of the eye socket channelled the bite stresses so that they were equalised across the bones of the skull,' he explains.

The study also showed that most plant-eating species and juvenile individuals retained a circular eye socket. Only large carnivores adopted other morphologies, such as elliptical, keyhole-shaped or figure-of-eight-shaped eye sockets.

Dr Lautenschlager adds: 'In these species, just the upper part of the eye socket was actually occupied by the eyeball. This also led to a relative reduction of eye size compared with skull size.'

He also investigated what would have happened if eye size had increased at the same rate as skull length. In such a case, the eyes of *T. rex* would have been up to 30 cm in diameter and have weighed nearly 20 kg (instead of estimated 13 cm and 2 kg).

Dr Lautenschlager reports that the media interest generated by the story has already brought enquiries from international medical researchers in the field of ophthalmology, keen to explore whether the research has implications for the treatment of eye disorders in humans.

'MONSTER' YEAR FOR PALAEOONTOLOGY AT BIRMINGHAM

It has been something of a 'monster' year for palaeontology stories from the University.

A study published late last December, which made headlines worldwide in the early part of the year, detailed how a 66-to-72-million-year-old embryo found inside a fossilised dinosaur egg had shed new light on the link between the behaviour of modern birds and dinosaurs.

The embryo, dubbed 'Baby Yingliang', was discovered in the Late Cretaceous rocks of Ganzhou, southern China and belonged to a toothless theropod dinosaur, or oviraptorosaur. Among the most complete dinosaur embryos ever found, the fossil suggested that these dinosaurs developed bird-like postures close to hatching.

Scientists found the posture of 'Baby Yingliang' was unique among known dinosaur embryos — its head lying below the body, with the feet on either side and the back curled along the blunt end of the egg. Previously unrecognised in dinosaurs, the posture was similar to that of modern bird embryos.

Led by scientists from the University of Birmingham and China University of Geosciences (Beijing), the research team from institutions in China, UK and Canada published their findings in *iScience*.

Another story, published in *Nature* in September, revealed that the first appearance of shark-like 'jawed fish' may have happened some 15 million years earlier than previously thought.

A handful of fossil teeth from a completely new species, uncovered from rock samples found in China, suggested jawed fish emerged some time at the end of the Ordovician, or beginning of the Silurian period, around 440 million years ago.

Previously, the earliest jawed fish to be positively identified, included species from the upper Silurian era, 424 million years ago.

The fossil samples were found and analysed by researchers at Birmingham, the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology, part of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Qijing Normal University (QJNU), China.

Meanwhile, a new study of a tiny Triassic fossil reptile published last month revealed it to be a close relative of the species that would become pterosaurs.

The research, published in *Nature*, involved scientists led by Dr Davide Foffa, Research Associate at National Museums Scotland and now a Research Fellow at Birmingham. Working with colleagues at Virginia Tech, the team used Computed Tomography (CT) to provide the first accurate whole skeleton reconstruction of *Scleromochlus taylori*. The fossil was first found over 100 years ago in the north-east of Scotland.

The results showed new anatomical details that conclusively identified it as a close relative of the pterosaurs — iconic flying reptiles of the age of the dinosaurs.



BEHIND THE ABSOLUTE SCENES

With the Commonwealth Games now behind us, we were interested to see if any of our staff or student volunteers had unique and fun stories to share from their time at the Games. We were inundated with messages, some funny and some heart-warming.

Unusual Superpowers: The foam-idable hand of Kate

What surprised me most as a volunteer at the Commonwealth Games was the power of a foam hand! As an Event Services volunteer at Smithfield, I had a varied role – one day I would be directing people to their seats in the volleyball, the next I would be in the festival site with a selfie-frame and face paint, the next I would be managing the queues outside the entrance. My foam hand was my superpower! It gave me authority to direct people (and be listened to); it gave me a reason to engage with anyone willing (or unwilling!) to give me a high-five; and it gave me an excuse to make a fool of myself in public (as pointed out by Simon Thomas (TV presenter) to 2,000 beach volleyball spectators!). Most importantly, my foam hand gave me a way to make people smile – people of all ages, from all backgrounds, from across the country and around the world. I have never seen so many smiling faces in Birmingham than during the Commonwealth Games and it was fantastic!

Kate Whiston,
Senior Market Insight Officer



Knocked for six

I had a great time at the Games as an Accreditation Team Member. I got to volunteer in the Athletes' Village where the cricketers were staying! I finished my time as a volunteer with a fully signed mini-bat from the whole England squad and got to meet a few of the Aussies after they won their gold medal match.

Joe Preece,
Research Fellow

Lifesaver! Thank you Perry much

My time at the Games was spent volunteering as a medic at Smithfield. After a particularly difficult case of treating a cardiac arrest patient, Perry came over and gave us all a big hug. He thanked us for all our hard work and put a smile back on our faces.

Louise Staffell,
Programmes, Administration
and Engagement Manager



Dancing the Bulléro, Lucy Caton and her partner, Ozzy

I was part of the volunteer cast for the opening and closing ceremonies. When I attended the audition I expected to be cast as a marshal, standing on the track directing athletes, as I'm by no means a professional performer! I was hugely surprised to be cast as a 'bull chain woman', one of a group of 50 women who pulled the Raging Bull into the arena. We had to keep the bull secret so as not to ruin the surprise on the day, but it's been hugely rewarding to see people as mesmerised by 'Ozzy' (as we named him) as we were when we were first shown him, and his entrance being described as the most dramatic moment of the ceremony.

Lucy Caton,
Research Development Manager (Managed Funds)





No use crying over spilt milk

I was quite fortunate to be an Information Services Team Member based in the

Athletes' Lounge for Hockey on campus.

One particularly early start, our milk supply had gone off. And by milk supply, we had a massive milk 'vending-machine-type-thing' for athletes (mainly Team Scotland) to use for 'protein shakes on top of milk' for hot drinks. The issue was, as volunteers, we weren't supposed to touch the food and drink in the tent, but as luck would have it, we had been in to make sure the hot water was still hot. As it had also been hot overnight we checked that the prized milk wasn't off.

We'd spent such a long time arguing with our supervisor about the milk being off, that members of 'team staff' were coming back to us feeling ill after a cup of tea – and both Scotland teams were due into the tent post-training sessions imminently, so we were on a countdown. Eventually, I just had to run across campus carrying two big-four-pinters of milk to replace what we had. And then sure enough... the temperature rose, so no one wanted a hot drink all day, and Team Scotland never popped in. So it was all for nothing. After that though, our manager never complained about us 'testing' the food and drink again.

Emily Peers,
Marketing and Communications Officer



'Thanks, Cheerio!'

I volunteered with the CWG Games Family (committee members, officials and dignitaries) based at the University; meeting, greeting and escorting dignitaries in the lounge and seating areas in hockey and squash. I had a nice chat with Dame Louise Martin who came to watch hockey early on and then had a lovely 'Thanks, cheerio!' from Prince Edward as he left the Games Lounge. Many of the committee members I spoke to were so chuffed about how well the Games were going after all the months of intense work they'd put in, even the weather was complying and this feeling grew and grew as the week went on. I was fortunate to watch the women's hockey final after a shift, which was quite emotional as I'd been at many of the women's hockey matches and felt like it was such a well-deserved and poignant win for England, women and the University!

Cathy Dakin,
Senior Research Administrator



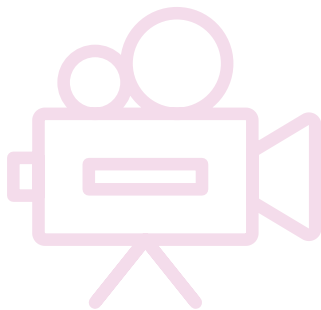
'I WAS HUGELY SURPRISED TO BE CAST AS A "BULL CHAIN WOMAN", ONE OF A GROUP OF 50 WOMEN WHO PULLED THE RAGING BULL INTO THE ARENA.'



I'm ready for my close-up!

My role volunteering at the Games as a Sport Specific Team Member (Technology) involved working in pairs recording the score and basic statistics for the Table Tennis and Para Table Tennis at the NEC. My second day had started off fairly routinely, when all of a sudden my team leader raced up to me in a panic. Other volunteers hadn't returned from their break and I was needed on the televised table to 'fly solo', scoring England men versus Bangladesh. I didn't have time to panic as I ran into the packed arena and got orientated – not forgetting to get my good luck 'Perry' drawing from my daughter out of my bag! All the while, on the other side of the arena, England's women were involved in an epic encounter with Nigeria and the partisan crowd were making a deafening sound. Fortunately for me, the match I was assigned passed without incident and I even earned praise from the Longines representative for how I coped. For once I was grateful that my work gives me plenty of experience maintaining accuracy under pressure! England won the match comfortably and went on to claim the bronze medal a couple of days later; I am glad I helped in my own little way! When I got home I was delighted to see I'd made the BBC iPlayer coverage and appeared to look like I knew what I was doing (the reality being a little different). Over the next few days I'd go on to appear in the background on TV several more times, but it never quite had the excitement as the first time.

Simon Jephcott,
Senior Management
Information Analyst



Rubbing shoulders with royalty

Prior to the Games, I had never even seen a celebrity in person, but volunteering at the Opening Ceremony changed that. My role as a Protocol Team Member was to greet guests in the hallway leading to the VIP lounge. These guests included Malala Yousafzai, Prince Edward, and the now King Charles and Queen Consort Camilla. It was a surreal experience. Though I must admit, my favourite part was watching RaSP (Royalty and Specialist Protection) in action – speaking into their earpiece and looking very intimidating. It felt like something out of a movie.

Zarah Allam,
Graduate Management Trainee



Proud as punch

During my time as a volunteer at the festival site in Victoria Square, I had the most fun two weeks. I met King Charles, got to work out with Mr Motivator, danced on the stage with Perry the Bull and even got photobombed by Friendly Fire Band doing their now legendary 'It's a Brum Ting' song.



It was such a lovely experience speaking to everyone from across the world, and even local Brummies who hadn't ventured into the city since before the pandemic. My favourite was talking to parents of athletes who were not only having a great time exploring Birmingham but were so incredibly proud of their children, which really reminded me of campus during graduation.

Hayley Grey,
Head of Operations Computer Science



The Cost-of-Living Crisis



The cost-of-living crisis that the UK is currently enduring is plunging more and more households and families into poverty. We asked John Bryson, Professor of Enterprise and Economic Geography, to help us understand what's fuelling this and if there's any advice he could share on making some household savings.

All households experience the cost-of-living crisis differently, with these differences reflecting household earnings, previous investments in resources, social practices, and lifestyles. In the UK, a cost-of-living crisis commenced in late 2021 and represents a decline in 'real' disposable incomes, adjusted for inflation and after taxes and benefits. Inflation is being driven by rapid escalation in energy prices partly linked to increased demand from Asia combined with the impacts of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Supply chain disruptions are also a factor related to factory shutdowns during lockdowns and an increase in global shipping costs as shipping companies reduced capacity by 11% as a pandemic adaptation strategy.

The cost-of-living crisis must be considered through an intersectionality lens. Intersectionality highlights that social inequality and people's lives are shaped by a combination of factors that work together and influence one another. One implication is that poorer households are experiencing, on average, higher inflation compared

to better-off households. Part of the explanation is that poorer households spend more of their income on energy and may also be living in poorly insulated properties.

The University has acknowledged the role it should play in alleviating some of the negative impacts of the cost-of-living crisis by providing an additional temporary supplement of 2% of salary. This is the type of action that is associated with responsible businesses; all employers should consider their employees during this crisis. Policymakers and politicians should listen to those members of the community who are most in need and try to avoid misdirecting resources by assuming that they understand what is required rather than trying to understand the lived experiences of households that were just about managing and those which are now no longer able to manage.

For households, there are many interesting tips being provided by politicians and journalists who may never have lived in a 'just about managing' household. I purchased my first house in 1990 when mortgage rates were 15%. I could just about afford the repayments. As soon as I was paid, I shifted as much as possible to an interest-bearing savings account and then would transfer money to meet the mortgage repayment. This was a time of extremely careful budget management in which there was no spare money.

During the first Covid lockdown, my household experimented to reduce expenditure on food with the savings given to support community initiatives targeted at households in need. We developed a carefully constructed 14-day menu and kept to this for six months. This involved no waste, batch cooking and the use of a freezer and microwave. The outcome was that we spent £2.40 per day on food for a household of three. This was 2020 and the figure would now be much higher. However, we learnt much about waste reduction and energy efficiency. This experiment involved altering existing behaviours and practices with small changes resulting in significant savings. All businesses and households should reflect on their existing practices to identify small savings. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the most vulnerable households will be unable to make even very minor changes.



John R. Bryson,
Professor of Enterprise and
Economic Geography,
Department of Strategy and
International Business,
Birmingham Business School,
5 October 2022

Focus on Sustainability

For our community at the University, sustainability is about using our available resources and living in a way that provides the means for us all to live a happy and healthy life, without preventing future generations' ability to do the same. This is why we have declared a climate emergency, and included sustainability as a priority in the 2030 Strategic Framework.

There is work going on in all corners of the University, from student initiatives to research, from making campus Net Zero to influencing businesses in our region. Here, we showcase just a tiny portion of this brilliant work.

External Relations: A recap on our political engagements



In October, the University participated in both the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool and Conservative Party Conference (CPC) in Birmingham. At CPC we hosted private roundtables and panel events with parliamentarians, thinktanks, charities, business partners and local government representatives, with topics such as keeping 1.5° alive, decarbonising energy, and sustainable business practices. We also hosted high-profile engagements at Tyseley Energy Park. This included a roundtable at the Birmingham Energy Innovation Centre with Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer, Shadow Business and Consumer Minister Seema Malhotra, and business representatives from the Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce to discuss innovation, energy innovation and Green energy. We had a tour of the site with Lord Callanan, Minister for Business, Energy and Corporate Responsibility, to learn more about the recently launched Pathways for Local Heat Delivery policy commission report.

Research and Policy: Keeping 1.5°C Alive

The University has recently released a report called Keeping 1.5°C Alive. In light of the climate crisis, this offers clear and actionable policy recommendations grounded in research, which are vital if we are to keep average global temperature increase below 1.5°C. This report makes recommendations that could not only help the environment and communities, but also capitalise on the innovation and technologies involved in a Net Zero future. Earlier this year, we were pleased to launch the report at a roundtable event at the House of Lords and discuss the key finding and policy recommendations with politicians and business leaders.



Tyseley Energy Park

The opening of Tyseley Energy Park this year is demonstrating and facilitating new technologies around clean energy. They have created commercially viable refuelling stations for electric and hydrogen vehicles, including West Midlands Buses. They are also delivering heat decarbonisation solutions to neighbourhoods in east Birmingham to alleviate fuel poverty, an extremely pressing issue at this time.

Campus Services: A message from our Sustainable Travel Officer, Edward Shelley

The university-wide travel survey was carried out last month, which many of you would have (hopefully!) taken part in. The survey is a unique opportunity to understand how staff and students travel to campus, and why they make the commuting choices they do, and directly informs our sustainable travel plan.

A lot has changed since the last travel survey in 2018. In 2020, when I started in post, we relaunched our low-emission vehicle salary sacrifice scheme, and raised the cap of our Cycle-to-Work scheme to £3,000 under a new supplier. 2021 saw the arrival of Gear Up, Voi scooters and West Midlands Cycle Hire on campus, and the start of cycling skills training. This year I have added folding Bromptons, an e-bike, child seats and child trailers to our staff loan bike scheme, and we'll see the first of a new number of cycle storage facilities open!

I look forward to reading this year's survey results and developing new measures to enable and encourage colleagues and students to take the most sustainable commuting choice.



Creating the World's Smartest Campus

As part of our collaboration with Siemens, the Edgbaston campus is receiving building services upgrades that will help the University reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions. The first phase of our major energy efficiency programme is underway, and includes installing LED lighting, automatic radiator valves, sensors, and energy management software in 25 of our most carbon intensive buildings. This will see an incredible 5% reduction in carbon emissions for campus!





Top Tips to Save Energy

The rapid increase in energy costs is a key driver in the squeeze on finances being felt by all during this cost-of-living. Here are some top tips of things you can do to reduce energy usage, alleviating prices at home and supporting the University while at work.

At home

- Turning your thermostat down by 1 degree can reduce gas use by up to 8%.
- For some boilers, you can adjust the flow temperature, to reduce gas use by 6-8%.
- Adjust radiator valves so you only heat rooms to the appropriate temperature.
- Are any radiators cold? If so, they may need to be bled to work properly.
- Switch off appliances at the mains when not in use, rather than standby mode.
- Visit moneysavingexpert.com for more information.

At work

- Turn off small items (monitors, laptop, phone chargers, etc) at the switch when not in use.
- Ensure lighting and standalone air conditioning systems are turned off at the end of the day.
- Does your office have any unused freezer or fridge space? Try to fill fridges and freezers up and switch off any 'spare' units.
- Please notify the Estates team if your building or area is too hot or too cold.
- Please do not use equipment such as portable heaters – these cost around £1 per hour to run, much more than our general heating.
- Don't print something unless you absolutely need it in hard copy – refer to a digital version instead or, if someone needs a copy, email it or share it via Teams or SharePoint.



The University will be sharing more energy saving advice and signposting to the possible support available to you in the coming months.

While we celebrate the brilliant work highlighted in this feature, we acknowledge there is still far to go, and are continuously developing ways to be more impactful. We hope we have demonstrated just a small piece of the ongoing work happening all across the University to achieve our ambitious targets.



SMART Recovery®

Sue Knight, Head of Student Wellbeing and Therapeutic Support, writes for *Buzz* about a new science-based initiative that teaches students key skills in making healthier choices.

I think it's fair to say we have all tried to make changes to our lifestyle at some point in our lives. So we know how difficult it can be to stop doing something, give something up or start a healthier lifestyle by ourselves. There are now so many different things which might take over our lives – substances like alcohol or drugs or behaviours like gambling, online shopping, gaming, screen time or porn addiction. University can be an exciting time of discovering new hobbies and interests but, often away from the normal routine, it can also be a time where we get caught up in habits and behaviours that, over time, start to have a more negative impact on life.

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Service is very happy to be offering students the opportunity to attend SMART Recovery groups through the next academic year. We are the first University who has run this programme, involving a core team of facilitators who have been undertaking the Facilitator training and who will be running group sessions every Wednesday from 1.30pm – 3.00pm beginning Wednesday 5th October through term time.

SMART recovery is a practical and science-based group that aims to teach participants key skills in cutting down, stopping, and making changes in their lives to build a healthier routine. It focuses on four specific areas: building and maintaining motivation, tools to cope with urges, managing thoughts, feelings and behaviour and building a healthier lifestyle.

Each group session begins with a check-in, and a chance for members to reflect on how things have been for them. Then, facilitators and members work together to explore and discuss tools and ideas that might be helpful over the following week and offer support to each member that wishes to participate. Members are welcome to attend the SMART group every week, or just as and when they want to, until they feel they no longer require any support. There is no need to book or sign up for a specific set of sessions.

SMART recovery does not involve any spiritual aspects like many fellowship style recovery and addiction groups, although participants from these are welcome at SMART groups in conjunction with their other support. It is one key aspect of SMART; that the experiences and support from facilitators and other group members, in combination with specific tools and techniques being explored, can really help people to make and sustain the changes they want in their lives.

For more details about SMART Recovery and community groups available, please see Self-Help Addiction Recovery | UK Smart Recovery and for details of University of Birmingham's student SMART recovery group Workshops and Groups (birmingham.ac.uk).

For students who are in recovery and looking for a community of like-minded individuals there is also the Addiction Recovery Programme (birmingham.ac.uk) *Better Than Well*, which can offer support, activities and a chance to find a welcoming community.

With so many ways in which we can all find our lives affected by addiction, we hope that any students who may be struggling with any aspect of addictive or problematic behaviour will find the innovative support offered at the University helps them to make positive changes.



Sue Knight,
Head of Student Wellbeing
and Therapeutic Support

The University has introduced a series of wellbeing initiatives for our students, with programmes like Better Than Well and SMART Recovery. For staff wishing to access support, Our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) offers professional and confidential support 24 hours, seven days a week.



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