We are about to have both a debate and a vote on whether we should have an elected mayor for Birmingham. This is not a minor local matter – it takes us to the heart of the kind of political system we have inherited and asks us whether we want to change, and how we want that change to be governed.

Since the 1830s, Britain has been a remarkably centralised state. The explanation for this, of course, complex but three key elements stand out.

The first is the very particular history and constitution of our parliament. The British constitution has evolved and, despite references to Magna Carta, the 1688 Revolution, and the Acts of Union, we have no formal constitution for the British state.

The history of our constitutional evolution has been a history of the emergence of the sovereignty of parliament in general, and the House of Commons in particular. Virtually other systems have, through formal documents, ‘constituted’ their state (think, for example, of the American Constitution, or, more recently, what happened after the 1989 revolutions in Europe). In Britain, constitutional evolution has been focussed on the struggle for parliamentary sovereignty. Westminster parliament established its primacy over the monarch, over the other territories of these islands, and over local government and local institutions. This is very different from what happened in Europe and in North America, for example.

What emerged is what I have called the doctrine of the sufficiency of parliament. The struggle for rights, for liberty, and for representation has been largely a struggle for the right to be represented in parliament. The supremacy of parliament, and latterly the House of Commons, has not really been challenged, though judicial review and European institutions have limited the previously unfettered sovereignty of the House of Commons.

The second reason for our becoming a highly centralised state is that meaningful tax-raising powers have, since the 1840s, resided with central government. In the 1830s all attempts to give local government serious tax-raising powers were seen off, or an increasingly inadequate rating system persisted. From 1846 local government has been supported by central government grants, and with those subventions has come central control. If local government is to be powerful and autonomous, it requires financial freedoms, so that localities and their electors can decide on priorities.

From time-to-time, the British state has considered devolution. This is one such moment. Powers have been devolved to Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, and further devolution or even independence may yet follow. It is, incidentally, indicative that Scotland’s claim to independence is based in part on North Sea oil revenues giving it tax-raising potential. As I have said, money matters.

Alongside this, the Coalition has raised the issue of elected mayors, and the ensuing debate is a debate we are helping to shape here in the University. Of course the University can’t and won’t take a position on elected mayors, though many of our staff will and many of us will have a vote on 3 May in the referendum. What the University will do is play our part in ensuring this is an informed debate and that, as a city, we can make an informed decision.

Advocates of elected mayors argue that a mayor will breathe new energy, focus, and purpose into local government. The mayor will embody and promote the city’s interest in the politics of our city, in the challenges we face and the opportunities we have with

We hope that Birmingham will be raised, and we will do. We hope that Birmingham will be raised, and we will do.
Raising the profile of science

Buzz would like to welcome clinical anatomist, author and broadcaster Dr Alice Roberts to the University. Alice joined on 1 February as our first Professor of Public Engagement in Science. She has become familiar to many of us through her regular appearances as a science presenter on TV programmes including Coast, Time Team and Horizon, as well as The Incredible Human Journey, and Origins of Us. Alice’s new role will see her work across all of the University’s disciplines. In addition to lecturing and PhD supervision, she will help to further work in promoting our academics and their research, and encouraging public engagement with science.

Alice originally studied Anatomy before completing a Medical degree and a PhD in palaeopathology. Prior to her appointment at the University of Birmingham, she was Director of Anatomy at the NHS Severn Deanery School of Surgery, a Research Fellow at Hull York Medical School, and an Honorary Fellow in Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Bristol. In 2011 she was elected an honorary fellow of the British Science Association.

University celebrates joining Athena Swan

The University has recently joined the Athena SWAN Charter, promoting sustainable careers and an awards system for female academics in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects. The Athena Working Group, led by Professor Adam Tickell, has undertaken a self-assessment of current working practices with a view to achieving a bronze university award for Birmingham. The results of the application will be published in March 2012.

To launch this exciting new initiative, Professor Tickell hosted a lunch for colleagues across the five Colleges, including Heads of Schools, members of the HR community and the Women in Academic Medicine group. The guest speaker, Professor Averil Macdonald, has worked within the Athena SWAN scheme since 2007. Averil is well known for her work in promoting the public engagement of people the fascination and careers opportunities of Science. Professor Macdonald also presented Professor Yvonne Elsworth, of the School of Physics and Astronomy, with her Institute of Physics award. The Payne-Gaposchkin medal is awarded for distinguished research in plasma, solar or space physics.

Professor Elsworth’s prize was awarded for her research into the development of Helioseismology into a unique quantitative tool to probe the deep interior of the Sun, illuminating stellar structure and evolution. For further information on Athena Swan and how you can get involved visit www.equality.bham.ac.uk/staff/athena.shtml or www.athensawon.org.uk

profile

Mike Gilbert… in my own words

“Little did I realise when I first visited the University of Birmingham in the autumn of 1968 that it would lead to an association with the University that is now entering its sixth decade. When I was accepted at Birmingham I was unaware how truly life changing the University would be from both a professional and personal perspective. My relationship with the University began with my undergraduate degree in Physics, and has progressed through many iterations to my current position as Treasurer of the University Council.

After graduating in the early 1970s I took what may have been considered an unorthodox route for a Physics graduate and joined Coopers Brothers & Co (now PricewaterhouseCoopers) and qualified as a chartered accountant. I was fortunate enough to work on, and on becoming a partner be responsible for, a number of iconic Midlands businesses and organisations including Cadbury’s, Land Rover, Jaguar, The National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham International Airport and of course The University of Birmingham. I was also responsible for graduate recruitment throughout the 1980s. This brought me back into contact with the University and allowed me to gain insight into development and careers aspects of the student experience.

During the 1990s I became a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants’ board for accreditation of examination courses. I also assumed responsibility for a number of Higher Education related tasks in the Midlands, and from 1993 to 2000 held that role here at the University of Birmingham.

In 2005 I was invited to join the University Council and a year later became its Treasurer. This role, involves having oversight of the University’s finances, and I am also Chair of the University’s Investment Committee which oversees the policies relating to around £80 million of long term endowments – a role which I have thoroughly enjoyed!

I also have many personal connections with the University. My degree was not the only positive outcome of my time within the School of Physics, I was also lucky enough to meet my wife Anne in a lab in the Poynting Building, where she was studying. Anne subsequently studied for her PGCE at Birmingham ensuring that I maintained my connection with the campus in the early 1970s.

My youngest daughter is currently studying Geography at the University, although at present she is training with the GB hockey squad in preparation for the Olympic Games!

The campus has a wow factor that has not diminished since that first day I set foot in Chancellor’s Court in 1968. I still get the same buzz of anticipation and expectation, as I did on that very first visit. To me the Birmingham campus gives a sense of stability and stature, but also innovation and creativity and it is those characteristics which have held away for me.

Since becoming Treasurer I would like to think that I have helped to shape the future direction of this world class university in ways that are now very demanding times for Higher Education. It is undeniable that the sector is under severe funding pressures, but I feel that the University is ideally placed to survive and thrive throughout these austere times.

I am firmly committed to the goals and underlying ethos of the University’s Strategic Framework, and believe that delivering academic excellence should remain at the heart of all we do. We also need to continue to develop our status on the international stage. The diversity and experience of Birmingham’s staff and students are key facets of its unique character and an aspect I hope that we can build upon in the future.

I am very glad to have been afforded the opportunity to maintain my connection with the University and to play a part in the civic, national and international building blocks which form the corner stone of our longer term plans with Birmingham and the city at their heart.

I was delighted to receive an honorary degree from the University in December 2011 and to have the opportunity to share highlights from my long relationship with Birmingham with new graduates. Who knows – perhaps one of them will be returning to campus in 40 years time to make a speech of their own!”
Life, the Universe and everything

Bryoney Johnson learns how Birmingham academics are at the forefront of projects answering key questions surrounding fundamental theories in physics.

Most of us will have heard the words CERN, Large Hadron Collider (LHC), and Higgs Boson in, everything from news items to blockbuster films, but it can often be difficult to separate science fact from fiction and figure out exactly what these terms mean. What exactly is the difference between ‘matter’ and ‘antimatter’? What exactly is a quark? How and why are conditions which would have existed just a millibillionth of a second after the Big Bang? This will allow ALICE researchers to better study a state of matter known as quarkgluon plasma, which is believed to have existed soon after the Big Bang – and is more popularly known as ‘primordial soup’.

ALICE is a collaboration of 1000 physicists and engineers from 33 different countries. Playing a leading role in such a large, international collaboration and exploring the frontiers of physics is extremely exciting for the whole ALICE team here at the University of Birmingham. Due to our previous experience and expertise, we were asked to design and build one of the most crucial components of the ALICE detector – its trigger electronics (or electronic brain). This selects which particle collisions to record within a tenth of a millibillionth of a second after each collision.

In November 2010 and 2011, we collided lead nuclei together at almost the speed of light, making the highest temperatures and densities ever reached in an experiment. As well as analysing a wealth of new data, we have already started to plan upgrades for the ALICE detector for implementation in 2018/19. We will also be carrying out our first radiation tests on some new prototype detector chips this year.

Dr David Evans, Reader in High Energy Physics

ATLAS

Birmingham physicists are part of a 3000 strong team of scientists working on the ATLAS experiment and researching the fundamental forces and particles that have shaped the universe since the beginning of time. Perhaps the most well known aspect of ATLAS research is the search for the Higgs boson, the elusive particle that could fill in a vital missing link in the accepted theory of particle physics and could tell scientists why everything in the universe has mass.

The ATLAS collaboration must surely be one of the most exciting places to be in science at the moment. With the performance of the LHC in 2011 and the expectations for 2012, we can be fairly confident of answering the long-standing question of the Higgs boson in the next year or so. That will be a huge achievement for the LHC as a whole, and also for us as an institute. Birmingham group members are at the heart of the Higgs search analyses and also built the electronics which allow us to select Higgs candidates from among massive collision rates with ridiculously short decision times.

It’s also important to remember that the ATLAS experiment is doing far more than just looking for Higgs bosons. We’ve published well over 100 papers on all sorts of aspects of particle physics. One of my favourites was the discovery, made largely by Birmingham physicists, of a less famous new particle, named the chi_b(3P). It was the first such discovery by the LHC, but it wasn’t the last.

Professor Paul Newman, Head of Particle Physics Group

LHCb

LHCb, or the ‘Large Hadron Collider Beauty Experiment’, explores what happened after the Big Bang to allow matter to survive and build the Universe we inhabit today. Just one second after the Big Bang, antimatter had all but disappeared and LHCb researchers are investigating the differences between matter and antimatter that allowed only matter to survive. The LHCb detector studies a particle called the ‘beauty quark’ to help explain the formation of all we see around us today – from Galaxies to all life on Earth. ‘The Birmingham group has recently joined LHCb, and we are already leading the analysis of a rare decay of a particle containing the beauty quark and plan to present these results at Summer Conferences this year. Rare decays are the best place to search for new physics since, as the name suggests, they are predicted to occur very rarely and so sizeable deviations are a clear indication of something new. This is a very exciting time for LHCb, we are looking at many possible rare decays and processes, meaning that the space where new physics can exist is getting more and more constrained every day.’

Cristina Lazzeroni, Reader in Particle Physics

For further details on LHC experiments visit www.lhc.ac.uk/default.aspx. To find out more about the role of the University of Birmingham at the LHC visit www.ep.ph.bham.ac.uk.

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LGBTQ NETWORK

LGBTQ Network, Head of Counselling in the Counselling and Guidance service, discusses the University LGBTQ network, and why we shouldn’t fear to say queer.

Work plays a huge part in most people’s lives. We often spend more hours a week with our colleagues than with our families, and so the people we work with, and the relationships we build with them, are important to us all. Being able to feel relaxed and open about ourselves is key to doing a good job, to feeling content at work, and to being able to participate fully in the opportunities that work presents. I feel that it’s especially important that staff who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, or queer (LGBTQ) should feel that the University is a safe, welcoming space where they are treated equally and with respect. As one of the convenors of the staff LGBTQ Rainbow Network, I’m committed to maintaining the visibility of LGBTQ issues and concerns across the University.

Some people might think ‘why do they need a network for that?’ Heterosexuals don’t have one! But it’s often too easy for all of us, even staff who are LGBTQ, to slip into the stereotypical ‘heterosexual assumption’. This is the basic narrative that assumes the default position for everyone is that they are straight, married, and have kids, unless we are told otherwise. Time was that it would have been impossible for there to be a staff network encompassing gender and sexual diversity; and I feel credit is due to the University that it has ‘moved with the times’ and is fully committed to equal opportunities for all of its staff.

With my formal ‘work hat’ on as head of the counselling service I’m also aware that for many students, coming out as LGBTQ or Q is still not always an easy, straightforward process. Although much has changed in society since I struggled to come out in the days of Mary Whitehouse, Gill Knight and Section 28, many students still dread telling parents, or flatmates. The counselling service provides extensive student support in the form of our online forum, Qchat, the support group that runs every year, and individual support through counselling. It’s important for our students to know that the counselling service, and indeed the University as a whole, is not just a tolerant, and neutral space but that we are also actively supportive and facilitative.

The years of late adolescence have been described by one researcher as constituting a ‘reminiscence bump’, a key stage in life during which we shape our identities and answer basic questions such as: ‘who am I and what do I want for myself in life?’. For LGBTQ students, it can be hard to deal with these fundamental developmental tasks of young adulthood without first having a strong enough sense of themselves as LGBTQ or Q.

In November 2011, I organised a conference, together with a colleague from Cardiff University, exploring how university support services can be more proactive in addressing the needs of LGBTQ students, you can see presentations from the conference at www.venuebirmingham.com/innerworlds.

The LGBTQ staff network is not only for LGBTQ staff. The network is open to anyone who wants to be supportive and get involved in some of our activities. We have our own webpage www.equality.bham.ac.uk/staff/areas/orientation.shtml, mailing list, and Google group that all staff are welcome to join. When I was at university in the 1970’s I once saw a notice pinned up that simply said: ‘Don’t be coy – join GaySoc!’. Perhaps, in the spirit of LGBTQ History Month the following year you’ll forgive me if I issue a similar invitation to anyone who wants to be involved with the University group. ‘Don’t be coy – join the staff LGBTQ Rainbow Network!’

For further details email lgbtq@contacts.bham.ac.uk, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sue Knight, Wellbeing Advisor/ Co-convener of Staff LGBTQ Rainbow Network

‘To me the staff group is important not only because it provides valuable support for LGBTQ colleagues, some of whom continue to experience negative reactions at work due to their sexuality, but in its existence I feel the University is able to demonstrate its commitment to supporting sexual minority groups, encouraging people to feel both valued and accepted as individuals and employees.’

Sue Knight, Wellbeing Advisor/ Co-convener of Staff LGBTQ Rainbow Network

‘It ensures issues affecting us are tackled at a high level – and is a great way to meet people from the LGBTQ community working on campus.’

Ben Goodwin, Barber Institute of Fine Arts
BIRMINGHAM’S TOP CONTENDERS

With the UK’s biggest sporting event on the horizon, many of the University’s alumni and current students are in the midst of preparations to make their mark at London 2012. University of Birmingham Sport have given us a guide to some of the top athletes to watch out for across a wide range of sporting disciplines in 2012 and beyond.

Archery
- Naomi Folkard (BA Music, 2005) Naomi made her Olympic debut at Athens in 2004 as the youngest member of the GB Archery squad. She has since gone on to collect an array of medals including silver at the 2010 World Field Archery Championships, gold at the 2007 World Cup in Dover and silver at the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

Athletics
- Hannah England (BSc Biochemistry, 2009) Middle distance runner Hannah made headlines across the world after finishing an incredible 1500m run to earn herself silver at the 2011 IAAF World Championships in Daegu, Korea. The 24-year old was previously runner-up at the 2009 World Athletics 1500m final, and took home 1500m bronze at the 2008 National Championships.
- Luke Gunn (BSc Sports and Materials Science, 2006) Luke competed in the 3000m Steeplechase and was crowned the UK National Champion for the third consecutive year in July 2011. The 27-year old is currently on a 12 month sabbatical from his role as University Sports Manager to focus on his bid to make the GB team for London 2012.

Cycling
- Lora Turnham (BSc Physiotherapy, 2011) Along with her sighted pilot Bex Rimington, Lora has taken the Para-Cycling world by storm. In 2011 she won silver in both the Para-Cycling World Cup and Para-Cycling Track Championships. Her achievements are all the more impressive considering she only began her sporting career in 2009.

Hockey
- Susie Gilbert (BA Geography, 2012) 22-year old Susie is a regular fixture on the women’s GB and England hockey squads, and is part of their centralised programme. In 2010 Susie won three bronze medals with England hockey for the Champions Trophy, World Cup and Commonwealth Games. She also plays for the University of Birmingham women’s hockey team.

Rowing
- Pamela Ralph (BSc Physics, 2011) Pam was part of the team that took two gold medals in 2011 at the World Cup in Munich and the World Championships in Slovenia. In 2009 the 21-year old captained the University’s award-winning cheering squad, the Birmingham Pussycats.

Triathlon
- Non Stanford (BSc Sport and Exercise Sciences, 2010) Non began competing in Triathlon in 2008 following an injury from Cross Country running. By 2009 she was a top triathlete, and won her first bronze medal at the 2010 Premium European Cup in Brasschaat, Belgium.

LONDON 2012

MarComms:
Enhancing Birmingham’s Reputation

Director of Communications and Marketing, Alistair Jarvis introduces the team.

The Marketing and Communications team (MarComms) is responsible for enhancing the reputation of the University. To build our reputation as a leading global university we must reach local, national and international audiences. We promote positive messages about the University’s strengths through a variety of communications channels to a wide range of audiences including our students, staff, local community, prospective students, businesses, research partners, other universities, influencers and policy makers. There are four teams within MarComms: Ideas Lab, Marketing, Media Relations and Stakeholder Relations. Most of our projects involve partnership-working between these teams and with other teams across the University and externally.

Ideas Lab
Ideas Lab works proactively with external media companies to simulate new programmes and projects that are based on academic research and involve the University’s academic experts. It acts as a bridge between academics and TV, radio and multimedia producers.

What you can talk to us about:
Research that is new, unusual or quirky, with a strong visual element; ideas for TV, radio, or smartphone apps.

Stakeholder Relations
The Stakeholder Relations team leads the University’s corporate communications and related activity in public affairs, internal communications and community relations. The team also delivers a programme of major corporate events such as the Degree Dinner, Happiness Lecture and Community Day, as well as all-staff events including the Vice-Chancellor’s Open Forum and Meet UEB.

What you can talk to us about:
Internal communications (Buzz and Buzz-bitesize, the intranet, staff events), event management, communicating with policy makers and government, engagement with the local community.

What you can talk to us about:
Certification, glossy leaflets, posters, banners, website design.

What you can talk to us about:
Prospective and current student marketing and communications, reputational marketing, University web, social and digital content.

Media Relations
The Media Relations team is responsible for proactively promoting the University’s strengths through the media and to act as a gatekeeper in times of crisis. As well as writing and issuing more than 250 news releases and statements a year, they handle over 1,000 media inquiries and are on call 24 hours/seven days a week. They are also responsible for monitoring media coverage and producing Original magazine.

What you can talk to us about:
Your news (for example research outcomes), media training, being added to our online media experts guide, blogs, PR-planning, overseeing interviews and photography.

What you can talk to us about:
Within MarComms: Ideas Lab, Marketing, Media Relations and Stakeholder Relations.

Meet the TEAM

Alistair Jarvis
Director of Communications and Marketing

What you can talk to us about:
Prospective and current student marketing and communications, reputational marketing, University web, social and digital content.

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The 2012 American election campaign process is in full swing with Republican candidates travelling the length and breadth of the country to garner support for Presidential nomination. Amy Cory chats to Professor Scott Lucas about this year’s contenders.

Almost four years ago Barack Obama galvanised Americans to believe in change with his historic election as America’s first African-American President, putting an end to the Republican Party’s eight-year reign. He will be running for a second term this autumn and the race is on to find his Republican opposition.

‘There has always been a front-runner for the next Republican candidate in my opinion,’ explains Professor Scott Lucas, Professor of American Studies from the University’s department of American and Canadian Studies. ‘I have always seen it as a race with only one choice to make – between Romney and not Romney.’

Although America’s won’t get to vote for their next President until November, they are currently witnessing a series of contests to select the Republican Party’s presidential candidates. Unlike the UK’s party leader system, America’s parties hold an open contest and the candidate who wins the most delegates will compete against Obama in the autumn. The process differs state-by-state; with some offering a winner-takes-all system and others awarding delegates proportionally.

‘There were seven or eight main candidates for the Republican contest, but in practice there has always been one favourite,’ reasons Professor Lucas, who has been closely following the race and evaluating the results via EA WorldView, an emerging website on US foreign policy and politics. ‘I think Romney’s the only candidate who can beat Obama, because he is a good enough debater and tactician to put up a good fight. Rick Santorum’s policies are too vague on the economy and Newt Gingrich has problems with his morality. If either of these candidates wins, Obama will walk the race in November.’

‘There is a wild card in this race which could make it more interesting; Ron Paul represents the libertarian movement and is rallying for an economically free market. He is very activist-based and is steadily gaining a sizeable minority, plus he has enough money to contest primaries all the way to the end. He won’t win, but he adds a different perspective,’ Scott explains.

The campaign trail has proved to be an interesting one thus far with the economy at the forefront of everyone’s agenda and negatively creeping in at every opportunity. ‘Romney can’t afford not to play to the negativity creeping in at every opportunity, at the forefront of everyone’s agenda and presenting soldiers as victims,’ Dr Walters notes.

In terms of the outcome for Britain, Scott surmises, ‘Whether it’s a Republican or a Democrat in the White House in November, Britain won’t be very affected as both candidates will position themselves towards the centre. What’s more interesting to consider is the outcome of political elections in Northern Africa and the Middle East – those countries are just as likely to affect us, as the United States is no longer the centre of the world. That’s something I never would have thought 10 years ago.’

For Scott’s up-to-date election commentary, visit EA WorldView at www.eaworldview.com

With Stephen Poliafko’s recent visit to campus to film his latest period drama in the cavernous corridors of Aston Webb, Amy Cory explores the historic figures and events that continue to dominate the silver screen.

‘Filmmakers have no choice than to focus on the spectacle,’ reasons James. ‘Otherwise these films may never be made, blighted by constant contradictions and striving to achieve the perfect representation. Not to mention they may never find an audience and the casting problems they would face, after all, Roman gladiators didn’t look like Russell Crowe.’

James is very quick to point out that film audiences should never underestimate and are skilled in distinguishing fact from fiction. ‘Viewers would have very odd expectations if they’re looking for an actual history lesson in a movie,’ he explains. ‘Instead, what they get, and often want, is an artistic representation of the past, which often speaks as much about the time it was made as it does about the event itself. Audiences are often more aware and informed than they are given credit for.

And which historical event would James like to see made into a movie? ‘I think last summer’s riots would make a really interesting topic as we’re still trying to work out what went on and why. Failing that, I would like to see historic events told from the point of view of her staff? But that never would happen – no one would go see these movies – and that’s why I don’t make films.’

‘We can never truly arrive at a pure version of any historic event, therefore history itself can only ever be a version of history,’ reasons Dr James Walters, a Lecturer in Film and Television Studies from the University’s department of American and Canadian Studies. ‘History continually dominates the movie industry with historic figures and events prolific this award’s season (think Iron Lady, War Horse and The Artist). Whilst this genre has always been popular with cinemagoers choosing to escape to a somewhat familiar alternate world, Hollywood’s representation of history is often mired with significant inaccuracies which can be potentially detrimental for an audience’s understanding of the past.

‘Titanic isn’t a historically accurate depiction of anything,’ explains James whose research interests include contemporary and golden era Hollywood, alternative worlds and film moments. ‘The dangers in representing history in film lie in what they leave out; it’s almost impossible to capture the whole scale of an event in just 90 minutes and so instead, they tend to focus on individual journeys.’

‘I think titanic manages to tell the tale of the doomed voyage through a powerful love story. It is actually very good at focusing on ordinary people and perspectives of the affluent and the working class thrown together in such tragic circumstances – making history spectacular.’

**Fighting History**

War films are an interesting sub-genre of the historic epic movie, which Dr Walters suggests offer a very ‘close experience’ for the audience. Alumni, Dr Mark Straw, Project Support Officer based in Registry, who completed his PhD thesis on contemporary war films explains, ‘Representations of war are always intimate and offering, a visceral spectacle for the spectator and presenting soldiers as victims.

‘I would really like to see a genuinely compelling American war film not from the US perspective, something that really joins the audience and perhaps follows the personal tragedies of the perceived enemy.’ Mark notes that war films consistently contain a damaged male protagonist who is meant to be perceived heroically. ‘Despite all of its historical inaccuracies, Gladiator is a great film. It rejuvenated the historical epic drama, opening doors for others to follow, offering a brilliant combination of a damaged male hero and striking CGI spectacles. Most impressively though, it managed to make political corruption and scheming interesting for the audience.’

**2012 Who’s Who in Politics**

- Barack Obama (Democrat) 44th President of the United States  
- Mitt Romney (Republican) Former Governor of Massachusetts and Nominee in 2008  
- Rick Santorum (Republican) Former Senator for Pennsylvania who trained as a lawyer before embarking on a political career  
- Newt Gingrich (Republican) Former Speaker of the United States House of Representatives during Bill Clinton’s Presidency  
- Ron Paul (Republican) Incumbent member of the United States House of Representatives for Texas

**Believing in change once again**
FEATURE: GUILD

ABOUT THE GUILD

In line with the Education Act (1994), the Guild is officially recognised as the key body of representation for students whilst studying at the University. We exist to represent students, and in doing so help them to develop skills outside of study, have fun, meet people and make their time at Birmingham special.

Students are at the heart of the Guild and help to run the union alongside elected officers, staff and volunteers. Every year, students elect officers to represent the Guild. Each officer has a different portfolio and it’s their role to improve the university experience, for example the Vice President (Housing and Community) works with community groups to develop positive relationships between students and local residents. The staff team, which includes more than 400 student staff, support the elected officers and manage the Guild’s department and services.

Elected officers give their time in different ways – from serving on committees to championing students’ views in Guild Council, where policy is agreed, and the Trustee Board oversees the Guild to ensure good governance. The board comprises of external trustees, alumni and students with a wealth of experience.

STRATEGIC PLAN

The Guild’s Strategic Plan 2011–14 was developed in response to student feedback. The Guild vision and plan is based around four key themes which guide our work, and within each theme key commitments have been identified. The plan has been designed to respond to change; the ever evolving higher education landscape means that we must be responsive to students’ needs, and be able to influence the university, local and national agenda.

We want to be experts on Birmingham students – their hopes, fears, and what they want and need from student life. In an essence we want to make their time at Birmingham special and this is what our plan is designed to deliver.

GET INVOLVED

We believe that the ‘student experience’ is about having a rounded university experience which is why the Guild has more than 180 student groups and societies from A Capella to Wayfarers and 26 student-led volunteering projects. Across campus more than 1,000 volunteer student representatives ensure that students’ views are heard. In addition, many students give up their time to represent students as Guild councillors and student group committee members.

Not only do volunteers have a positive impact on the student body but also on the local community. Through its relationship with community partners the Guild is able to offer over 300 opportunities for students to volunteer their time within local and national charities, such as the Acorns Hospice.

This is just a snapshot of some of the activities, schemes, groups and projects Birmingham students are involved in. In the last academic year alone students volunteered for almost 70,000 hours. All University of Birmingham staff are also invited and encouraged to join our student groups. The Guild will also support staff who wish to volunteer through external organisations. Staff can benefit from student groups in other ways. For example, the Selly Oak Play Scheme invites parents to bring their children along to the Guild for fun and games. The volunteering group, fun and set-up by students, takes place every Sunday between 11am-1pm during term time. The free project organises activities including arts, crafts, games and workshops.

The project has been designed to deliver.

GET INVOLVED!

The project is currently in its early stages but a number of fascinating items have already been uncovered such as the ‘Wardens of the Guild’ truncheon, a copy of ‘The Mermaid’ from 1843, and a Quarter Mile Cup. The Guild is looking to develop the Deb Hall as part of this project, a place that holds fond memories for many alumni. If you’re interested in the history of the Guild and can help the project in anyway, please do get in touch by emailing e.g. goddard@guild.bham.ac.uk.

KEEP IN TOUCH

For further updates on Guild events and how you can be involved contact:
Website: guildofstudents.com
Facebook: facebook.com/guildofstudents
Twitter: @guildofstudents

Three words to describe the Guild? Fun, Challenging, Changing.

MARK HARRROP, GUILD PRESIDENT, TELLS BUZZ ABOUT THE HISTORY AND UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES AT THE BIRMINGHAM GUILD OF STUDENTS – THE UNION FOR MORE THAN 28,000 STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM.

MARK HARRROP

What do you do?
I’m the elected President of the Guild of Students, here to represent over 28,000 students and to make their time at Birmingham that extra bit special.

How do you work with staff?
I work alongside six Vice Presidents, 11 non-sabbatical officers, and over 60 core members of Guild staff. Staff support the officers in a number of ways and help us to ensure students get the best from Birmingham.

What is your proudest moment to date?
It has to be winning the Officer Election with the greatest number of votes in the Guild’s history, and being the highest voted for President comparatively in the country, no small mandate!

Three words to describe the Guild?
Energetic, fun and challenging.

EMMA WEDGE

REINTRODUCING GUILD OF STUDENTS

The Selly Oak Play Scheme has been successfully running for over ten years. The scheme provides a great chance for kids of all ages to interact with others and try out new activities. The play scheme is open to all students and university staff.

Fliss Cross, Vice President (Activities and Development)

What do you do?
I manage the Student Voice Department in the Guild of Students. This means looking after the Guild elections, which allow students to choose who represents them, the Student Representation Scheme, and the Guild’s democratic decision making committees.

How do you work with officers?
I work very closely with the officers of the Guild to support them in representing all students at Birmingham. I work closely with colleagues in the Academic Quality Unit, and across all Colleges, Schools and Departments to run the Student Representation Scheme, and with members of staff throughout the university to deliver a range of projects from Guild elections, to Personal Tutor Awards.

What is your proudest moment to date?
Getting over 4,000 votes in the Guild Referendum in 2008 to change the governance structures of the Guild.

Three words to describe the Guild?
Creative, fun and energetic.

STACEY BROWN

VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR

What do you do?
I currently work with the Vice President (Activities and Development) to recognise students through Volunteering England’s Gold Award and National Student Volunteering Week and with the Vice President (Sport) to encourage club captains to register themselves as volunteers. I work with staff to register the thousands of students who volunteer through other departments and deliver information sessions, drop-ins and fairs, such as the Work Experience Fair.

How do you work with Officers?
I currently work with the officers of the Guild to support them in representing all students at Birmingham. I work closely with colleagues in the Academic Quality Unit, and across all Colleges, Schools and Departments to run the Student Representation Scheme, and with members of staff throughout the university to deliver a range of projects from Guild elections, to Personal Tutor Awards.

What is your proudest moment to date?
Working with the Job Zone for the first time this year, the SEOTY (Student Employee of the Year) and Gold Awards will be given out to students during a joint ceremony in the Great Hall together with the PSA, Student Funding office and the CEC.

Three words to describe the Guild?
Energetic, fun and challenging.

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Three words to describe the Guild?
Energetic, fun and challenging.
For more events please visit
www.birmingham.ac.uk/oncampus/index.aspx

Mayoral Debate
What can an elected mayor do for a city and region? What does it mean for city democracy?

Tuesday 29 February, 6.00pm
Join Patrick Wintour, Political Editor of The Guardian (Chair), Pete Roth, Elected Mayor of Frankfurt and President of the German Association of Cities, Lord Michael Heseltine, Chairman of the Regional Growth Fund, Lord Andrew Adonis, Director of the Institute for Government and President of Professor John Kane, Director, Institute of Local Government Studies, University of Birmingham for this panel debate to explore city leadership ahead of the city’s mayoral referendum in May 2012.
Registration for this event is essential. Please register with Kylie Morris email: k.morris@bham.ac.uk

Birmingham Professional Forum
29 February 2.00–3.00pm
Great Hall, Aston Webb Building
The Birmingham Professional Forum (formerly University Services Forum) is a ternary event for administrative, support and technical staff based across the University, led by the Registrar and Secretary, Lee Sanders. The Forum includes presentations on topical subjects for the University and there is also an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the event. You can do this in advance, by emailing internalcomms@contacts.bham.ac.uk or on the day. Clarke Associates will be holding a drop in session to discuss proposed campus developments from 3.00–4.00pm after the Birmingham Professional Forum.

Scott’s Last Expedition
11 January–29 May 2012
The Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections is marking the centenary of Robert Falcon Scott’s last expedition to the South Pole with a display of material in the Main Library foyer from collections relating to the Terra Nova Expedition. In January 1912 the British Antarctic Expedition ‘Terra Nova’ led by Scott lost the race to the South Pole, beaten by the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen who had arrived 33 days earlier. On their return plans for the expedition party tragically perished. For further details visit www.birmingham.ac.uk/oncampus/exhibitions/Scotts-Last-Expedition.aspx

Happiness Lecture
Tuesday 13 March 2012
The 2012 Baggs Memorial Lecture on the theme of Happiness will be delivered by Jung Chang, bestselling author of Wild Swans and Mao: The unknown story. All tickets for the lecture have arrived 33 days earlier. On their return plans for the expedition party tragically perished. For further details visit www.birmingham.ac.uk/oncampus/exhibitions/Scotts-Last-Expedition.aspx

Antarctic Exploration & Scott

Inaugural Lecture
Tuesday 29 February, 5.15pm
‘Can Railways Cheat Adhesion’ Professor Felix Schmid, Professor in Railway Systems Engineering and Integration, College of Engineering and Physical Sciences
Venue: Lecture Theatre 1, 2nd Floor, Gasbot Kasp Building
For a full schedule of upcoming inaugural lectures visit the University events pages www.birmingham.ac.uk/oncampus/index.aspx

Community Day 2012
Sunday 10 June, 11.00am–4.00pm
Free fun for all the family
Fun fair, culture trails, Live music, climbing wall and much more

PuGIN, DûRER AND THE GOTHIC
13 January–24 June
The great English architect and designer AWN Pugin passionately promoted the Gothic style. He was inspired by, among others, Albrecht Dürer, widely recognised as the greatest German Renaissance artist. As part of the Birmingham-wide celebration of the bicentenary of Pugin’s birth, this display will showcase the eight prints and single drawing by Dürer from the Barber’s collection. The display also includes stained-glass designs by two other 16th-century German artists – Hans Holbein and Abel Stimmer.

New look for Winterbourne
You may notice a few changes next time you visit the Winterbourne garden. A Lime avenue has been created similar to that of many Arts and Crafts gardens. During recent severe gales, a diseased tree fell foul of harsh winds, providing an excellent opportunity to restate some of the original design for the garden. You may be excused for thinking that the new feature will be supplying Winterbourne with plentiful fruit in the near future; however the trees bear only their name in common with the fruit trees. They will however create a peaceful walkway for visitors and an ideal space for relaxation.

Meet UEB
Tuesday 20 March, 12.00–1.30pm
Business School Common Room
UEB is made up of 13 senior leaders who make the key decisions that guide our development as a University community. ‘Meet UEB’ is your opportunity to find out more about what UEB do and ask any questions that you have regarding the University. Please email internalcomms@contacts.bham.ac.uk for further details or to register your attendance.

Fitting In
We all face challenges and it can help to know that you’re not alone. Whether you’re facing a first year seminar, an interview or a tough assignment, please feel free to contact a member of the UEB team to talk through your concerns.

Services
Class One Decorating: Highest quality internal and external painting and decorating. Friendly, professional service. Free, no-obligation quotes. Tel: 0121 441 3344 or 07976 678863 info@classonedecorating.co.uk www.classonedecorating.co.uk

Expert Advice For BPAS and USS Members: Chartered Financial Planner based in Birmingham and listed by the USS as qualified to advise scheme members. An investment and retirement planning specialist committed to providing the best advice and service.

Gardening work in all seasons undertaken: including fencing, patios, decking, garden tidying/clearances and gutter cleaning. Contact Chris 0121 459 3293 or 07890 246911.

Community Day 2012
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Fun fair, culture trails, Live music, climbing wall and much more

Other featured events:
- Inaugural Lecture ‘Can Railways Cheat Adhesion’ Professor Felix Schmid, Professor in Railway Systems Engineering and Integration, College of Engineering and Physical Sciences, 5.15pm, Lecture Theatre 1, 2nd Floor, Gasbot Kasp Building.
- Mayoral Debate: What can an elected mayor do for a city and region? What does it mean for city democracy? Tuesday 29 February, 6.00pm
- Scott’s Last Expedition: 11 January–29 May 2012
- PUGIN, DûRER AND THE GOTHIC: 13 January–24 June
- Happiness Lecture: Tuesday 13 March 2012
- Antarctic Exploration & Scott
- Birmingham Professional Forum: 29 February 2.00–3.00pm
- Informed Choice (Midlands) Ltd.: Chartered Financial Planner, 26 February – 10 March
- Fairtrade Fortnight 2012: 26 February – 10 March
- Meet UEB: Tuesday 20 March, 12.00–1.30pm
- Community Day 2012: Sunday 10 June, 11.00am–4.00pm

For full schedule of upcoming inaugural lectures visit the University events pages www.birmingham.ac.uk/oncampus/index.aspx