

# WE ARE UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR

October/November 2013

UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM



# Provost's view

This isn't the piece I set out to write. On a walk during my holiday in Scotland this summer, I sketched out in my head the bones of a commentary about the nature of identity, place and belonging, hoping to emulate the tone of one of my favourite radio programmes '*This American Life*'.

For those unfamiliar with the programme it is an eclectic mix of stories that consistently document humanity in the round. As I said, though, I'm not writing that piece. Unusually this is not because the composition in my head didn't make it until the end of the walk, but because since I returned from leave our University has not only been shortlisted as University of the Year by Times Higher Education (the winner is announced towards the end of November), but we have also won *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* 'University of the Year Award' for 2013–2014.

These commendations are only the most visible part of an impressive set of changes in our external reputation and rankings. Our trajectory in both university and subject-specific league tables has been consistently good. We are moving up the rankings in the '*Complete University Guide*', *The Guardian* and the (newly merged) *Times/Sunday Times* league tables and international league tables tell a similar story (QS now puts us as the 62nd best university in the world). In the Russell Group – those universities defined both by research excellence and breadth – Birmingham is now consistently in the top ten.

Such changes to our league table positions are just the most visible expression of the transformations underway. There have been numerous other ways in which our staff have been recognised for their contributions. I don't have space to detail even a fraction of these but we should note that accolades have been given to academic, professional, and support staff, and to undergraduate and postgraduate students from across the University.

You could be forgiven for thinking that this enhanced visibility is just a bauble, unrelated to our core activities of doing great research and providing a great education. After all, many of the fundamentals are going in the right direction. After an exceptional year in 2011–12 for the NSS, research grants and graduate employment (again, I could go on) we consolidated and improved in 2012–13. We are highly innovative – schemes such as the Birmingham Fellows and our unconditional offer strategy for exceptional students are now being copied by many other universities. Last year, external investments were announced in the University Training School, the Institute for Translational Medicine and



Professor Adam Tickell, Provost and Vice-Principal.

the High Temperature Research Centre of £100 million and our academics routinely share their expertise in the media.

Yet even if the recognition we are getting reflects an underlying truth, it remains important in itself. We live in extraordinarily volatile times – the future excellence of the University depends not only our being good, but on our having both self-confidence that this is true and external recognition of the fact. Neither our noble history nor our beautiful campus are sufficient to guarantee that students will want to study here or staff want to work here.

Although there is still some way to go, we should all celebrate the progress we've made. I know that these achievements have only been possible as a result of the dedication and efforts of the University community. I also know, to return to my opening statement, that many people strongly identify with this great institution. I certainly do: two of my siblings studied here and after I arrived I discovered that my great, great, great grandfather had been present at the opening of Mason Science College, which later became the University of Birmingham. Since then I've felt it almost to be a matter of family honour to do my part. I feel genuinely privileged to be the University's new Provost and Vice-Principal and look forward to working with our staff, our students and our alumni over the coming years.

**Provost and Vice-Principal,  
Professor Adam Tickell**

## YOUR BUZZ

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Please let us know if you want extra copies of *Buzz* or if you think we need to amend your distribution details.

Views expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the University or a statement of University policy. All submissions may be subject to editing. The Editor's decision is final.

'Ask the VC'

**Vice-Chancellor's  
Open Forum****24 October, 12.30–1.30pm****Elgar Concert Hall,  
Bramall Music Building**

Join the Vice-Chancellor, Professor David Eastwood, for his first staff address of the new academic year. He will report on the challenges and successes of the past year and look forward to the opportunities of the forthcoming academic session.

The VC encourages all staff to attend and there will be an opportunity to ask your own questions on the day. If you would prefer you can submit a question in advance, and in confidence, by emailing them to [internalcomms@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:internalcomms@contacts.bham.ac.uk)

**Birmingham  
Professional Forum****14 November, 11.00am-12.00noon****Elgar Concert Hall,  
Bramall Music Building**

The Birmingham Professional Forum is a termly event for all 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](mailto:internalcomms@contacts.bham.ac.uk) or on the day. Further details are available at [intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/events/bpf.aspx](http://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/events/bpf.aspx)

# Green light for new dental hospital and school

As *Buzz* went to press, building work on the first integrated stand-alone dental hospital and dental school to be built in the UK for nearly 40 years was due to get underway.

Financial closure was reached last month on the multi-million-pound development, led by Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Trust, with partners the University of Birmingham, Birmingham and Solihull LIFT (BaS LIFT) and Calthorpe Estates. The development is a key element of the new Edgbaston Medical Quarter and further enhances the city's reputation as a hub of Medicine, Learning and Life Sciences.

The 1.23-hectare (3.05-acre) site at Pebble Mill will see a new four-storey dental hospital and school of dentistry constructed, with a build cost of £34 million. It will house a range of services including walk-in emergency dental care, Restorative, Oral Surgery, Oral Medicine, Dentistry and Paediatric Dentistry.

A second wing will provide world-class research facilities and a modern learning environment for more than 600 undergraduate and postgraduate students and trainees. It is anticipated the building will open to staff, students and the public in time for the 2015 autumn term.

The new building will provide a state-of-the-art clinical environment for patients' treatment as well as world-class teaching facilities. Professor Philip Lumley, Head of the School of Dentistry, said: 'As international leaders in research, teaching and clinical service within dentistry, the University of Birmingham School of Dentistry has welcomed the opportunity to work with our partners and is delighted to have reached this milestone.'

**University  
events**

A lot goes on across campus. To find out more about these events and more visit [birmingham.ac.uk/events](http://birmingham.ac.uk/events) and follow us at [@UoB\\_Events](https://twitter.com/UoB_Events)

The campus farmers market



Friday lunchtime lectures at The Barber Institute of Fine Arts



Christmas Carols held in the great hall





# NORTH AMERICA

The University's ties with the Americas have flourished over recent years. *Buzz* takes a look at some of the University's innovative activity in North America.

We are making significant investment to support academic engagement in North America, and have developed a flourishing network of departmental relationships with leading academic institutions, generating research results and funding successes. Exciting educational opportunities have been established for students through new exchange partnerships, and prestigious internships.

In the United States we have a distinctive partnership with the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois. Our close relationship has many strands; however a significant cultural engagement dimension has evolved. Enhancing dialogue across arts and academic sectors offers a major opportunity to build meaningful partnerships, and support global engagement.

Initiatives include a jointly organised symposium on 'Local and Global Cultural Engagement' after which Birmingham was invited to contribute to the Chicago Cultural Plan, and developing cross-College research and educational links across the Midwest, in particular with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), a globally elite public research-intensive university.

Our strong partnership with the Fulbright Commission has led to us being awarded the prestigious Fulbright Distinguished Chair, as well as to us hosting the inaugural Fulbright International Education Administrators (IEA) Seminar programme in the UK.

In Canada we have developed strong partnerships with a number of leading universities, including McGill University and the University of British Columbia as part of the Universitas 21 network. Our academic community leads a number of engagements with leading Canadian universities in a wide range of disciplines. For example, we have strong research links with the University of Toronto in varied areas such as Cancer Studies, Bioethics, and German and European Studies.

The North America Travel Fund has been established to allow academics to seek funding for travel to North America to establish and develop research collaborations, further information is at [intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/external/international/relation/fundingopp](http://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/external/international/relation/fundingopp) For further details contact Catherine Lemon, International Development Manager North America, [c.lemon@bham.ac.uk](mailto:c.lemon@bham.ac.uk)

## BUAFTAs 2014 nominations open



**Does someone in your team stand out?** From Tuesday 1 October you can nominate your colleague or colleagues for a Birmingham University Award for Tremendous Achievement (BUAFTA).

Awards are given to administrative, technical, academic related and support staff who significantly contributed to the success of our university. Nominations are made by filling in a nomination form which can be found at [intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/BUAFTAS](http://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/BUAFTAS) Paper forms are also available from local champions in your department and Aston Webb reception. Nominations can only be submitted once against each award; however, you can nominate a colleague or team for different awards.

This year's award categories include: Team Player of the Year, Team of the Year, Best Newcomer and Idea of the Year, among others. If you would like to find out more about categories or are looking for any other information about BUAFTA awards please contact your local champion.

The deadline for nominations is midday on Monday 28 October 2013, so make sure to nominate your colleagues now!

This year you can also support Acorns Children Hospice by taking part in the BUAFTA raffle.

**For further information on the BUAFTAs, including nomination form and your local champion please visit [intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/BUAFTAS](http://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/BUAFTAS)**

## Welcome 2013

Staff from across the University have been working hard for Welcome 2013 which ran from 21–27 September. Events included the introduction of Parents' Welcome Addresses, a Wellbeing Fair, Welcome Hubs supporting students with registration, ID Cards and visa checks, and new Library Services workshops. The Welcome Timetable contains key information for our new students about induction and events happening across campus. For further details visit [birmingham.ac.uk/welcome](http://birmingham.ac.uk/welcome)



smartmover



## Smart Movers

As featured in the August edition of *Buzz Bitesize*, the University is pleased to report positive results in our recent travel survey. Results indicate that measures introduced through the Sustainable Travel Plan have been successful in encouraging staff and students to commute by sustainable travel methods. Results are also being used to inform the ongoing development of Sustainable Travel Plan initiatives. For example, based on survey feedback, there will be a big push over the next year to provide initiatives to get more people cycling.

- From October there will be bi-weekly cycling roadshows offering free cycling maintenance, bikes to try, advice, and the sale of equipment and accessories. From November there will be free bike maintenance classes and free cycling lessons on campus every Monday at 5.00pm.

In addition to this the Green Bike Project opened on campus in September, this is a student-led bike workshop offering staff and students bicycle maintenance and the sale of second-hand bikes.

For more information, including details on all Travel Plan initiatives, please visit [intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/travel/](http://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/travel/) or email the University Sustainable Travel Coordinator Caroline Radnor at [sustainabletravel@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:sustainabletravel@contacts.bham.ac.uk)

Professor Adam Tickell, Provost and Vice-Principal, is an avid cyclist and is keen to see more people cycling on campus. Adam explains that it is easier than people think to get cycling, no special gear is needed, you can cycle in your normal clothes, it's low intensity exercise and you can get a long way in a short space of time! Cycling makes sense from both a health and financial perspective so you could save your bus fare and keep fit at the same time. Adam also reminds us that staff can claim for their mileage when cycling for business purposes.



## New MOOCs for Birmingham

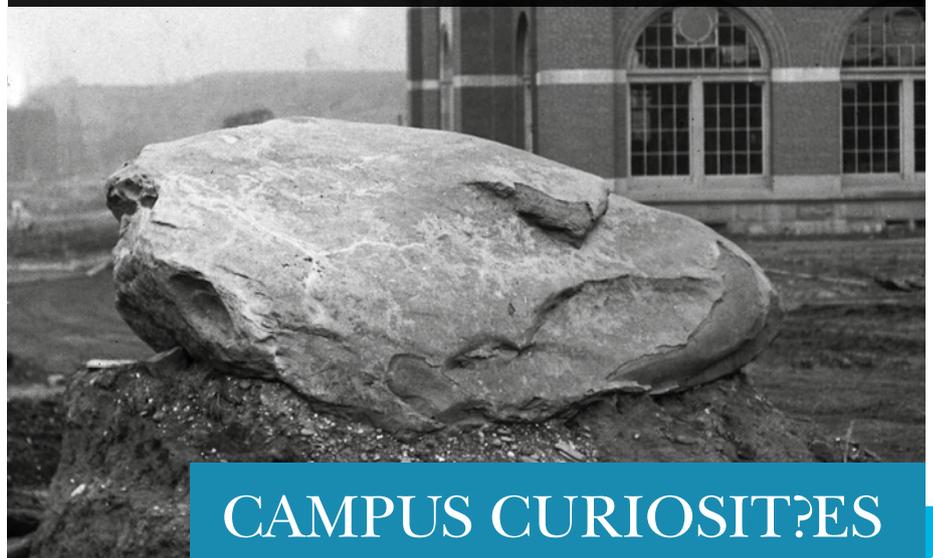
The University has unveiled the first of its new MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) designed to offer a taste of higher education to learners from across the UK and the world. Birmingham is initially launching 'Improving Your Image: Dental Photography in Practice', beginning in December 2013, which will be followed by a number of other MOOCs launching throughout 2014. Delivered in partnership with Futurelearn, the UK's first MOOCs provider established by the Open University, and our very own world-class academics, MOOCs will enable learners worldwide to sample the high-quality academic content available here at Birmingham, and increase access to higher education for a whole new cohort of learners. Each course will last between four to six weeks and there will be no entry requirements for students. Further details are available at [intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/moocs](http://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/moocs)

Some boulders may appear on campus during landscaping work but did you know that the 'rock' we will probably all have walked past at the back of the Bramall Music Building has a much more interesting history?

- This large boulder is termed a 'glacial erratic'; referring to the fact that it differs in size and composition compared to bed rocks in this area
- As our picture shows it has been on campus since the University was founded over 100 years ago

- Transported by an ice sheet this boulder would have been deposited during a glaciation, the last one being over 10,000 years ago
- Glacial erratics can be transported considerable distances with some erratic boulders found in Selly Oak originating from North Wales
- Erratics are useful indicators of former ice flow patterns

For more interesting facts about geology why not pay a visit to the Lapworth Museum, R5 on the campus map.



## CAMPUS CURIOSITIES

# University launches new Code of Ethics

The University is committed to the highest standards of ethical conduct in all of its activities and has long and well established approaches to ethical review, particularly in research. A University Code of Ethics has been approved by the University Council to set out a framework and guiding principles for ethical review for staff, students and members of University committees. It encompasses four key policy areas of teaching, research and knowledge transfer, fundraising, and gifts and finance.

The Code outlines the approach for each of these key areas and gives links to more detailed information, including: related policies, procedures, guidance documents, and point of contact for initial enquiries. The Code is available at [birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/uob-code-of-ethics.pdf](http://birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/uob-code-of-ethics.pdf)

If you have any queries regarding ethical policy, please contact the relevant senior officer:

**Teaching:** Professor Jeff Bale, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education)

**Research and Knowledge Transfer:** Professor Malcolm Press, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Transfer)

**Fundraising:** Nick Blinco, Director of Development, Alumni and Business Engagement

**Gifts and Finance (Investments and Procurement):** Gill Ball, Director of Finance

For general queries please contact the Registrar's Office

## NEWS IN BRIEF

Congratulations to the University's Chancellor, **Sir Dominic Cadbury**, who has been awarded the CASE Europe Leadership Award 2013. The judges commended Sir Dominic's dedicated involvement in all areas of advancement at the University.

**Sir David Omand**, former Director of GCHQ and Permanent Secretary at the Home Office, is chairing a new University of Birmingham Policy Commission on 'Security Impact of Drones, Challenges and Opportunities for the UK'. Sir David, Tom Watson MP, and lead academic Professor Nicholas Wheeler were among panel guests at the launch event at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton.

The University has made an impressive 15th place rise to **62nd in this year's QS World University Rankings**, cementing its position in the top 100 universities globally and placing it 10th in the UK.

Congratulations to all staff in **Hospitality and Accommodation Services (HAS)** who have maintained their Fair Trade status, awarded by the Fair Trade foundation, for the 10th year running.

## APPealing new student competition



The IT Innovation Centre recently held the University's first Student Mobile App Competition, to stimulate creativity and to encourage undergraduate and postgraduate students to design their own apps. Finalists were invited to a two-day event where they presented their working apps to a panel of judges and general audience.

The standard was very high, with commendations for most shortlisted apps. The winning app was developed by Elliot Yates, from the Medical School, for his design to manage social events for the University's Med Soc Student Society. Yuqing Guo and Ziwei He from the School of Electronic, Electrical and Computer Engineering, won the Most Original award

with their augmented reality University map. Yatisha Patel, from the School of Dentistry, won the Most Value to User category with her Dentify app that offers interim advice to patients waiting to see a dentist.

Congratulations to all entrants; the 2013–14 Student Mobile App Competition will open in October, and will be accredited through the University's Personal Skills Awards employability programme.

To learn more about the competition and for links to the winning apps visit [intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/it/innovation](http://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/it/innovation)

## Advancing equality in employment

Throughout 2013–14 *Buzz* will highlight some of the wide ranging equality and diversity initiatives that are both already established, and being developed as part of the University's commitment to promoting equality and celebrating diversity. There will be a focus on promoting equality and an inclusive working environment for all of our staff, placing the spotlight on new and current initiatives across the University. For example, look out in this edition for features on Black History Month 2013, and the University's Mental Health Advisory Service.

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Kadian Pow, Community Engagement Assistant, introduces *Buzz* to the University's diverse programme of events for Black History Month 2013.

October is Black History Month (BHM), and for the third consecutive year, the University will commemorate this national celebration of the ways in which the contributions of black people have shaped Britain's history. The University, in co-operation with The Drum, Staff Diversity Team, Birmingham Ethnic Minorities Association, and Guild of Students, is presenting a diverse programme of events, scholarship, and exhibitions for BHM 2013.

## What is Black History Month?

The origin of BHM goes back to the 1920s and the establishment of Negro History Week in the United States. This evolved into Black History Month and was marked every February, chosen because of the birthdays of African-American social reformer Frederick Douglass, and Abraham Lincoln, the President who 'freed the slaves'.

In the UK BHM launched in the 1980s and was largely the result of community activism, challenging racism in general in British society and the 'Eurocentric' version of history that dominated the state school system. Today BHM has become an important date in the cultural calendar of many of the UK's museums, galleries and local authorities.

## Who are 'Black People'?

Good question! Over the years, the focus of BHM has expanded to include the history of African, Asian and Caribbean peoples and their contributions to Britain's story as a nation.

In the University's opening Black History Month event on 1 October, six panelists representing the arenas of culture, art and academia grappled with the question of 'What's the Future of Black History Month?' Attendees were also invited to ask their own questions, including 'Has the term always been shared? Is it a political term? Is it racial? How is it changing in an increasingly globalised culture?'

## Why is celebrating BHM so important to the University?

'Catherine Hall, in [her book] *Civilising Subjects, uses Birmingham as a case study to demonstrate the interconnected histories of England and the Caribbean. To not celebrate Black History Month would be to ignore an important part of the city's history*' says Ian Grosvenor, Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor for Cultural Engagement. It is a time for us as a campus to reflect on the ways in which the history, art, culture and science of the African Diaspora have shaped the fabric of British society. Moreover, BHM presents a focused opportunity in which to engage Birmingham's diverse communities with the University's resources.

Please see [birmingham.ac.uk/BHM2013](http://birmingham.ac.uk/BHM2013) for full details on this year's packed programme of events. Contact Kadian at [k.pow@bham.ac.uk](mailto:k.pow@bham.ac.uk) for further information.

## What is in the BHM programme?

The past and present of the University plays a role in at least two of October's events. To complement Cadbury Research Library's Roots of the University exhibition celebrated playwright David Edgar will give a talk about, 'Arthur and George'. The story, in part, chronicles the plight of George Edalji, one of the University's first mixed race students. Dr Julius Garvey, the renowned surgeon and son of civil rights legend, Marcus Garvey, will highlight the University's community outreach efforts when hosting the Jamaican National Olympics team in 2012.

Dr Stewart Brown, Reader in Caribbean Literature, will be displaying 'Babel' in the Aston Webb Rotunda until 31 October. An ongoing series of collages, paintings, digital prints, cards, books, boxes and installations, derived from Stewart's experiments with 'visual language' and inspirations encountered during his time as an academic at the University, and travels through West Africa and the Caribbean.

As a special addition this year, the 'Scholarship of Blackness' blog will host daily articles from University faculty whose research focuses on issues of the African Diaspora. Visit the blog at [scholarshipofblackness.tumblr.com](http://scholarshipofblackness.tumblr.com)

These events, and many more, will be 'forming part of the University's focus on equality and inclusion in employment, a key area for the next academic session,' remarks Susan Squire, HR Diversity Advisor.

Intellectual discussion, historical engagement, cultural entertainment; the Black History Month programme has something to offer all students, staff and the local community.



# STAFF OPINION SURVEY 2013 HAVE YOUR SAY

## 4 November – 1 December 2013

Share your views in our University wide staff opinion survey.

The University's third all staff opinion survey, Have Your Say 2013, will run 4 November – 1 December and follows surveys held in March 2009 and 2011. Have Your Say is an important and effective way to gather the views of all University staff, and is a vital opportunity for you to play a part in shaping the University's future.

Although individual survey responses will be completely confidential, anonymised responses will be reported back so that action can be taken. We will also compare results with those from 2011 to see how well we are progressing. A dedicated Project Team with colleagues from HR, Communications, and Senior Team have coordinated the survey with approval from the University Executive Board, and all staff are encouraged to participate. Managers have been asked to ensure that you are given time to complete the survey in work hours.

### How do I complete the survey?

All members of staff with computer access will receive an email from the company that will be running the survey for us, ORC, inviting them to participate online. Staff who do not routinely have computer access will receive a paper copy to return directly to ORC. Each email or paper copy is unique to you so please do not forward your email to colleagues as this will have an impact on responses.

### What will you ask me?

Many of the survey questions will be the same as 2011 in order to help comparative evaluation. However, some questions have been amended to address topics of current priority to colleagues and the University. Most of the questions are multiple choice, although there is an optional free-text question for any more detailed responses or suggestions.

What would you change?

What do you want?

How do you feel?

*'The time has come for our next Have Your Say survey. This is the third that we have run and the second one that I have been personally involved in. What came through particularly strongly from Have Your Say 2011 was the very high level of response and commitment among staff to the survey and the real commitment throughout the University to listen, to act, and to make changes based on staff views.'*

*'Our response rate in 2011 went up by ten per cent from Have Your Say 2009 to 66 per cent, well above the sector average for this kind of survey. This was due in no small part to the many Have Your Say champions who worked tirelessly at a local level to encourage, enable and persuade colleagues to fill in the form. We will be drawing on a similar team of volunteers for this survey and I would encourage all of you to engage with your local champion and to help in raising the response rate for 2013 once again.'*

*'The survey is of very little value, however, if the University as a whole does not listen to what you are telling us. Following the publication of 2011 results every level of the University, including University Executive Board and*

*all local departments, prepared their own action plans. Many of these were creative and far reaching and it was a pleasure to monitor how this action developed, and to see that the action is still continuing and making a difference even as we go into the next survey. Such action plans, and their implementation, show that the survey does make a difference by giving a very wide cross section of our staff the chance to tell us what they think.'*

*'I would encourage all members of staff, therefore, to engage once again with this process, both in the filling out of the survey itself and in the action planning that will follow the publication of results in early 2014.'*

**Let's make Have Your Say 2013 make a difference!**

**Professor Martin Stringer,**  
Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor,  
Chair of the Have Your Say  
Project Group



Learn more:  
[www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/haveyoursay](http://www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/haveyoursay)

## You said... we did

Colleagues from across all Colleges and Corporate Services worked together following Have Your Say 2011 to reflect on survey results, celebrate successes, and highlight themes for development. Each area produced action plans to act upon and communicate issues identified. These are just a few of the initiatives and improvements that have resulted from Have Your Say action planning, make sure that your voice is added to 2013 action plans!

*Improving communication was a particular focus of survey results, and clear communication strategies have been implemented, both locally and at a College level, to cascade information effectively and encourage sharing of best practice. The College and Schools have established their own, regularly published, newsletters. Staff development initiatives are now also firmly established within the College. These include a programme of Birmingham Professional events, an annual Health and Wellbeing Day, and a Postdoctoral Career Development initiative (PERCAT).*

### College of Medical and Dental Sciences

*Staff performance and management was highlighted as a key area for Academic Services. As a direct result of the survey all senior and middle managers within the department attended a comprehensive programme to look at improving all aspects of managing staff performance and all line managers attended performance management training.*

### Academic Services

*As a result of the staff survey 2011 communication and sustainability were raised as two areas of concern amongst*

*Finance staff. As a result, the Communications and Sustainability Interest Group (COSIG) was set up and has had a wide range of successes including a Green Impact Bronze award, enhanced intranet presence and improved communications both within the department and across the University.*

### Finance

*The College has made significant improvements in a number of areas specifically identified by staff. To reduce stress and improve overall health, we have introduced a number of wellbeing programmes, encourage a healthy work-life balance, and support staff development. To acknowledge and celebrate the work of our professional staff we have introduced the 'Going the Extra Mile' (GEM) award, where staff can be nominated by anyone within the College for going above and beyond their role. Our communications are smarter and more concise, ensuring that messages are delivered in the most effective ways. We hold termly College Assemblies and Birmingham Professional events, and all staff emails are limited to our monthly enewsletter and weekly events email.*

### College of Social Sciences

*In response to the staff survey and to complement the existing suite of successful development options, POD is launching some new opportunities in 2013/14 such as workshops in leading successful change, managing personal transition in times of change, creativity and innovation, and workshops in career development and objective setting.*

### People and Organisational Development (POD)

*The College has been seeking to involve a wider group of staff in discussions of strategic plans. Heads of Department were included in the College Board away day and the feedback was that they appreciated this greater involvement in strategic planning for the College a number of Schools, departments and professional services teams have also held away days to develop longer term plans. Research support budgets have been devolved to Schools to enable decisions on research support to be provided at a local level and the Law School has established a role of Head of Staff Development.*

### College of Arts and Law

**Visit [intranet.birmingham.co.uk/haveyoursay](http://intranet.birmingham.co.uk/haveyoursay) or email [hys2013@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:hys2013@contacts.bham.ac.uk) for further details.**

## Have Your Say 2011 – what you told us:

**76%** would recommend the University as a place to work

**91%** were willing to 'go the extra mile' when necessary

**71%** felt committed to the University's goals

**42%** believed that action would be taken on issues identified by the survey

**28%** felt that University Executive Board (UEB) is sufficiently visible in the University

**76%** of you said that your work gives you a feeling of personal accomplishment

### Key facts

- The survey is completely confidential. The University will not see individual survey responses as they are analysed by an independent survey company who anonymise results before providing reports.
- Results will be used to facilitate improvements both University wide and in your area of work.
- Taking part only takes a few minutes and surveys can be completed during work time.
- The survey will be open from 4 November–1 December 2013.



# BOOK TO THE FUTURE

**Samantha Williams learns more about a unique celebration of the written and spoken word taking place across campus this October.**

Our university will play host to a festival first with 'Book to the Future' a week-long celebration of the written and spoken word from 24–29 October. Set to uncover a wealth of literary gold from across campus and beyond, the diverse programme of over 50 events packed into six days will comprise exclusive exhibitions, readings, performances, panel debates, and lectures, as well as the nation's first inter-university poetry slam competition, UniSlam, and even a massive world record attempt!

Sponsored by the College of Arts and Law and the Alumni Impact Fund, and supported by student societies including BEDsoc, Writers' Bloc, and the Shakespeare society Foolish Wits, 'Book to the Future' will feature our academic, student and local talent as well as well-known alumni authors, poets, playwrights, journalists and scriptwriters. We have picked a few highlights for *Buzz* readers to look out for, but a full schedule is available online at [birmingham.ac.uk/btff](http://birmingham.ac.uk/btff) so don't miss out!



## The Book of the Dead

Egyptian textiles from the Cadbury Research Library will be exhibited in the main library with four sections of Egyptian funerary cloth dating from 300-30BC, recently conserved by the British Museum. On display for the first time in many years, the cloth depicts scenes from the Book of the Dead. These early textile sections are held by the Cadbury Research Library as part of the Mingana Collection of Middle Eastern Manuscripts, collected in the 1920s.

## World record attempt

On Sunday 27 October, the University's Great Hall will witness a spectacular showdown as bookworms aim to beat a world record for the most people walking five metres with a book on their head. Over 1,000 people will need to squeeze into the hall with their novels to reach this epic feat. Why not bring along friends and family and become a record breaker?



## Jamie McKendrick to open

### 'Creative Minds at Birmingham'

**Jamie McKendrick**, widely published author of numerous poetry collections and former New Generations Poet of the Poetry Society, will launch the first of the School of English Drama and American & Canadian Studies Writers and Artists Distinguished Speaker Series on 24 October. McKendrick will read and discuss his work for guests at the Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building.

## Weird and wonderful storytelling with Sir Tony Robinson

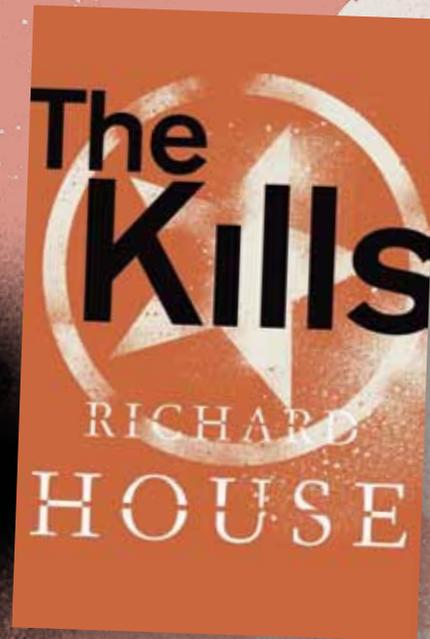
**Sir Tony Robinson** will visit the University on Friday 25 October as part of his book tour for a new children's publication, *The Weird World of Wonders: Inventions*. Local children are invited to listen to this unique, funny and educational story-telling hosted in the Bramall Music Building. The actor, comedian, amateur historian, TV presenter, and political activist is best known for playing Baldrick in the BBC television series *Blackadder* and for hosting Channel 4 programmes such as *Time Team* but on this occasion, guests will see a very different side to him!

## Talks from Birmingham writers

Birmingham has seen a number of literary oeuvres appear from local writers in 2013 and receive fantastic success. The Literary Festival will showcase these gems, including some from our own academics at a series of lectures and discussions. Look out for **Lisa Downing** Professor of French Discourses of Sexuality in the College of Arts and Law, whose latest title, *The Subject of Murder*, examines real-life murder cases and representations made of them from the 1830s in France, to 20th and 21st-century US and UK cases. The book offers a new interpretation of the way in which our society understands the figure of 'the murderer'. Lisa has published widely on history and theories of sexuality and gender to much acclaim.



Dr Richard House, of the Department of English, who has received a great deal of media attention over the last month for his position on the Man Booker Prize longlist, will also speak at the festival. *Buzz* recently caught up with him to find out more...



A fascination with human nature interweaves and drives the four books of *The Kills*. Richard interrogates human instinct through entangled and doomed dramatis personae of dodgy government and company agents to Italian pimps and prostitutes, seeking to determine what drives people to commit crime or to become victimised. When asked about his inspiration for the 1,000-page novel, Richard highlighted the human vulnerability in believing what we hear: *'If we distinctly believe what we are told, what happens if we are not told the truth, or if the stories we tell are not the truth? I like the idea that we tend to trust somebody telling stories about themselves and I wanted to consider what would happen if, as a reader, you were reading little histories that you knew were stolen from somewhere else.'*

Balancing on the verge of fiction and reality, the plot for *The Kills* is planted in a bloody room in Naples, from where the novel wildly grows to explore the ways in which crime emits unavoidable shock waves, rippling out to affect others on

the peripheral. In fact, death is rampant throughout to enable Richard to analyse the impact and reach of these waves.

Writing the characters was the most exciting part for Richard. *'Having felt an outsider myself, I was fascinated to explore those feelings in other people and the way some people can feel locked out of society through sexuality, gender, race, culture or something so simple as not speaking a language.'* The most brilliant thing about the novel, he suggests, is that it can make you sympathetic and empathetic in a unique way. *'I hope that people will come at the book in different ways and to enter a debate in different ways.'*

Inspired to take on *The Kills*? Be sure to consider the ebook – first published uniquely in its digital form, this novel pioneers a new art, bravely paving a digitally enhanced pathway for the e-reader, with additional audio and video content. Richard has even quirkily dismantled the third book so that the material can be reordered and read chronologically or by character.

He believes the additional dimension enhances the overall mood and sensitivity of the words and encourages the reader to experience the novel in a different way.

The fractured sense of the dismantled text indeed reflects the mood of the story. Richard said of the digital adaptation, *'I really enjoyed playing with the stories and experimenting with the possibilities of suggestion. The high risk nature of this experiment makes the success doubly rewarding.'*

*Buzz* has decided to follow Dr House's lead and digitally enhance this feature. Find us online at [intranet.bham.ac.uk/buzzhub](http://intranet.bham.ac.uk/buzzhub) for exclusive video of our *Buzz* interview with the man himself and find out how he feels about the longlisting, his advice for aspiring writers and more about the inspiration for *The Kills*.

Why not share your favourite book or poem?



#bttf

# From the petri dish to potential lifesaver

*'I am interested in looking at how materials interact with biological systems and how this causes the biological system to change as well as the properties of the material',* says Liam.

The use of soft solid materials in physiological conditions offers potential for groundbreaking medical application. For example, Liam's research has led to the development of novel technologies for the regeneration of tissues, including ceramic bone grafts and a new gel which can deliver populations of cells into human tissues to stimulate repair. This enables localisation of the cell population, something that is critical in maximising therapeutic potential.

Liam works collaboratively with clinical partners and researchers in the College of Medical and Dental Sciences as well as other materials scientists to ensure that this important research has real impact on human lives. He encourages his students to also consider the unique perspective for medical applications, and potential translational impact of their studies, a somewhat alternative route for chemical engineers,

*'My "crazy" idea,'* Liam says, *'is to grow ligament implants in the lab for*

*injury transplantation'.* Specifically he is looking at the cruciate ligament; damage to which is one of the most common sports injuries with often devastating results as the ligament cannot repair itself. Recovery currently involves an agonising operating process and long rehabilitation phase to recover. Not such a 'crazy' idea as potentially a miraculous one; this research has won the attention and support of the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital and has been awarded grants from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, totalling £500,000, and Orthopaedic Research UK, totalling £160,000.

The big idea, developed with post-doctoral researcher Jennifer Paxton, is to fuse ceramics with blood-derived materials containing human cells to literally grow a ligament in the lab for transplantation. *'Taking a simple blood transfusion from a patient, we can treat it in the lab to form a jelly material which, when added to ceramics and ligament cells, contracts and gradually morphs into the shape of the ligament.*

*'The unique combination of materials, which the cells are able to modify, enables the newly formed structure to grow and*

*replicate the natural ligament form.'*

While only at an early test phase, this breakthrough has proved important for analysis of ligament properties and has been used to inform rehabilitation. At this stage, the new tissue is currently too weak for clinical testing but Liam is hopeful that in five to ten years' time, we may begin to see life-changing transplants. *'This may be out-there and is certainly high risk but I believe the crazier the idea the bigger the impact. Being able to grow healthy replacement ligaments and bones in the lab really could save lives.'*

Birmingham is an exciting place to be for researchers in this field and Liam highlights that the potential for translational medical technologies in the region is extremely impressive. *'Facilities in the city such as the new Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Centre for Defence Medicine, the Orthopaedic Hospital and plans for Birmingham's medical quarter, as well as significant investment in trauma medicine, mean that there is enormous opportunity for this type of translational research and development of new medical treatments.'*





**Sofia Hansrod** tells *Buzz* about the University's new business support initiative BizzInn

The University's Enterprise Acceleration team is part of Research & Innovation Services located at the BizzInn business incubator on Birmingham Research Park. We promote and support entrepreneurial culture; and engage with researchers working on the commercial development of their research ideas.

Our vision is to create a thriving entrepreneurial community that supports research and innovation led enterprise through training and networking events. We nurture, develop, and grow commercial ventures through a mixture of hands-on support, access to a wide network of service providers, investors and entrepreneurs, and funding through early stage support grants.

We provide an integrated network of business support for academics, entrepreneurs and start-ups helping to transform innovation into enterprise.

**The team**

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**BizzInn Business Incubation**

The BizzInn incubator is a new business support initiative funded by the University to provide six months free incubation space to academics and entrepreneurs with access to specialist business advice and networking. It is run by the University's Enterprise Acceleration Team and Alta Innovations Ltd, the University's technology transfer company. To find out more about how you can access office space and support at BizzInn, visit [birmingham.ac.uk/bizzinn](http://birmingham.ac.uk/bizzinn)

**BizzInn Benefits**

- Up to six months free commercial office space for new eligible enterprises
- 24/7 access to Wi-Fi equipped work space with hot desks, internet, meeting rooms
- Free parking and refreshments
- Free business guidance
- Business meeting space adjacent to the University of Birmingham
- Access to finance, grants, loans, investors, and business support organisations
- Access to a wide range of support and advice from professional advisors and trade/cluster associations
- Joint exhibition and presentation area to 'showcase' research, products and services

**Lunchtime Enterprise Skills Series**

These lunchtime seminars, held on the last Wednesday of every month, cover a wide range of subjects such as Product Development, Marketing and Industrial Collaborations which will be of interest to different researchers and academics. Our next lunchtime networking seminar will be on 30 October – with Dil Sandhu, from Kinneir Dufort, delivering a session on Product Development, a perfect opportunity to find out more about the Enterprise Acceleration team and what BizzInn has to offer. Lunch is provided and you can register at [bizzinnproduct.eventbrite.co.uk](http://bizzinnproduct.eventbrite.co.uk)

**Global Entrepreneurship Week**

To coincide with Global Entrepreneurship Week (18–22 November), the Enterprise Acceleration team in conjunction with Alta Innovations is running a programme of events to inform and inspire researchers about the commercial potential and impact of their research and the help and support available at the University.

Come along for coffee and cake, meet the team and hear about how academics from your college have successfully commercialised their own research. Venues to be confirmed.

Monday 18 November 11.00am	Funding commercial development of research ideas. An introduction to funding streams available for development, from both internal and external sources.
Tuesday 19 November 12.00noon (including lunch)	Commercialising ideas whose intellectual property cannot be protected by patent. A discussion of the business models available to a sustainable enterprise.
Wednesday 20 November 11.00am	An introduction to Intellectual Property. How to identify and protect the intellectual property in your research.
Thursday 21 November 11.00am	The Commercialisation process. An outline of the different ways that an innovative idea can be commercialised.

# Open your mind to mental health

## Bryoney Johnson finds out more about the University's Mental Health Advisory Service

Many of us will be used to trying to maintain or improve our physical health by keeping active and eating healthily, but perhaps fewer of us recognise that it is just as important to pay attention to our mental health. One in four people will experience some sort of mental health difficulty in their lifetime; and the University provides extensive mental health support and information for all staff and students.

The University has two mental health advisors who work closely with students to provide confidential advice and assistance. This includes liaising with tutors, advising on peer support groups, and providing both short-term and on-going support dependent on individual needs. The University's Wellbeing Advisers provide a wide range of support services for staff. This can be as simple as offering staff and students the time and space to talk about their difficulties, listening to what they have to say and providing relevant and appropriate information about the support available.

Earlier this year the University also held its first University Mental Health Day with a packed programme of activities and

“I chose Birmingham because, out of all the universities I applied for, their Student Support staff seemed to be the best and most understanding when I met them on various open days.”

workshops to improve wellbeing and promote services available to both students and staff. Events included Laughter Yoga, 'Metal Zumba', and a Comedy Gala headlined by Jo Brand. Look out for details of Mental Health Day 2014 in forthcoming editions of *Buzz* and *Buzz Bitesize*.

Visit [intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/mentalhealth](http://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/mentalhealth) for further information or follow the Team on Twitter @3elmsroad.

“The Student Support Services really are exceptional, and have helped me massively in getting through my degree.”

## The Mental Health Advisory Service have produced ten top tips for boosting mental health at the University:

- **Work hard:** As the University's motto says 'per ardua ad alta'- through hard work great things are achieved! Striving to meet your goals builds skills and confidence, and attaining them can provide a great sense of achievement.
- **Embrace your independence:** The University environment encourages you to challenge, enquire, and to master your skills.
- **Get learning:** Studying and being occupied with activities that have meaning and value builds a sense of purpose which can enable you to realise your potential. Why not take a look at courses available at [intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/development?](http://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/development?)
- **Keep active:** Exercise not only helps you keep fit, it can also boost self-esteem, and improve your sleep. Visit [sport.bham.ac.uk](http://sport.bham.ac.uk) for details on classes and facilities.
- **Eat well:** There are strong links between what we eat and how we feel, it's important to eat a varied, balanced diet. The greengrocer's stall next to Staff House is a good place to start!
- **Experience University culture:** Art and music directly address life's meaning, providing opportunities for reflection and self-expression. Check out events at the Bramall Music Building and Barber Institute at [birmingham.ac.uk/events](http://birmingham.ac.uk/events)
- **Enjoy the campus:** Our campus includes acres of parkland, Victorian architecture, and innovative modern buildings. With cutting-edge technology, and modern learning resources, it provides a unique environment for our students and staff.
- **Contribute:** People are often happiest when they're doing something for someone else. Volunteering for a new project or initiative is also a great opportunity for personal development.
- **Join in:** Being part of a group who share a common interest gives you a chance to socialise, and build networks. Visit [intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/staffnetworks](http://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/staffnetworks) for details of clubs and societies.
- **Ask for help:** Talking about your feelings is an important part of taking charge of your wellbeing. Asking for help is a sign of strength and responsibility, not weakness. Visit [intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/wellbeing](http://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/wellbeing) for details of the wide range of support services available for staff.



# news+views

Our regular feature gives *Buzz* readers a quick tour of the latest University news hitting the headlines, and activity among our online community.

## in the news...

Here are just a few examples of our recent highlights.

On A level results day the University dominated headlines with live BBC broadcasts from our clearing centre. Birmingham received 104 pieces of coverage with 14 national broadcast hits, which included interviews with the **Vice-Chancellor**, including Radio 4's *Today* programme, and Director of External Relations **Cathy Gilbert**.

**Dr Nick Hawes**, of Computer Science, was interviewed widely by national and sector press about new research which suggests that robots could potentially soon be trained to carry out the roles of security guards and carers.



**Dr Jason Braithwaite**, neuroscientist and expert on near death experiences, was called upon by national UK broadcasters as an expert commentator on new US research announced in August, which highlighted that mice experience a surge of brain activity in the final moments before death.

**Dr Helen Stokes-Lampard**, of Primary Care Clinical Sciences, was interviewed on BBC Radio 4's *Women's Hour* on the subject of poor cervical screening take-up rates among homosexual women; and why it is important that all women are screened regularly regardless of sexuality.

**Dr David Houghton**, a Lecturer in Marketing, made national headlines with his University study into how posting photographs on Facebook may damage relationships. The study, which highlighted that those frequently posting pictures of themselves can be perceived negatively by online friends, was featured by the *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, and well-known international publications.

Alumna **Fiona Clampin** hosted a BBC Radio 3 programme about the role played by the composers Elgar and Bantock in establishing a Chair of Music at the University of Birmingham. Professor Andrew Kirkman, Head of Department of Music, discussed Elgar's role as Chair and the syllabus developed by Granville Bantock.

## Join the UoB online community

Follow us on Twitter at @unibirmingham. If you use social media at work and would like to increase your visibility, get in touch with our Digital Marketing and Communications Team via [k.connolly@bham.ac.uk](mailto:k.connolly@bham.ac.uk)

If you would like to work with the press office, or find out more about how they can help you to promote your research, email [pressoffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:pressoffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk) or call 0121 414 6029

## feeling social...

On A Level results day we had an incredible number of happy students who had confirmed their place at Birmingham. Many of our soon-to-be undergraduates; and some proud family members, friends and teachers; took to Twitter to share the good news, with over 4,000 tweets mentioning us on results day alone.

@unibirmingham You've made me the happiest person in the world!  
#hellobrum

Loved @unibirmingham from the beginning, and now I really get to go and study there! #yessss #hellobrum

Never, ever, ever been this happy! @unibirmingham  
In fact, the #hellobrum hashtag proved so popular that it was trending in different parts of the country, accumulating more than 2 million timeline views.

Love seeing #hellobrum trending... everyone's obviously made the right choice!

Love how #hellobrum is trending!! So so excited see you soon @unibirmingham!

Is it me or is everyone going to Birmingham uni?  
Perhaps even more heartwarming was seeing our current students and alumni congratulating our new students and taking to Twitter to let them know what they had to look forward to.

Three years ago I got into my 1st choice of @unibirmingham. A degree later I now work in Birmingham in a fantastic job #hellobrum #workhard

Everyone who has got into @unibirmingham welcome to the best university and most amazing three years of your life! #congratulations

Congratulations to everyone getting their exam results today! @unibirmingham

I will always have such wonderful memories!! #Classof2013

We also helped a large number of students with enquiries via our Social Media channels, many who were waiting for their place to be confirmed with us; or were looking for a place through Clearing or Adjustment.

# The University of Birmingham has been named *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* University of the Year 2013–14.

Here are just some of the reasons why:



1. Innovative approaches – such as our unconditional offer strategy successfully piloted in 2013
2. We are recruiting outstanding post-doctoral researchers on a trajectory to become the next generation of research and academic leaders through our Birmingham Fellows scheme
3. Our Birmingham Professional programme represents and values the excellence, distinctiveness, and impact of our administrative, support and technical staff
4. The University's School and Sixth Form, due to open in 2015, will help to deliver our vision of creating a learning community to maximise the personal and academic achievement of its pupils
5. In the last year we have won nearly £100 million for new projects including the High Temperature Research Centre
6. From pioneering life-saving drugs in the fight against cancer to discovering the world's oldest calendar, research from our university is creating major impact on the city, the region and the world
7. The University generates over £1 billion of regional economic activity annually
8. Our league table trajectory has been consistently positive – we have moved up the rankings in each of the *Complete University Guide*, *The Guardian*, *QS World Rankings*, and *The Times/Sunday Times* league tables
9. Our transformed Access to Birmingham (A2B) programme is helping students from families and communities in the West Midlands who have little or no experience of higher education to find out about what studying at university involves
10. Excellence in student satisfaction – Birmingham achieved 90 per cent student satisfaction with teaching in the 2013 National Student Survey

