Vice-Chancellor’s view

I am writing this just as we have completed yet another wonderful series of degree congregations.

At this time of year well-meaning people ask me whether I am looking forward to the long summer break and clearly assume that a university closes down over the summer months!

With great patience I point out that universities are large and complex organisations. Many of our students, particularly our postgraduate students, are here studying throughout the year. The University’s research is unceasing and the myriad of other activities in which the University is engaged are as intense over the summer as they are throughout the academic year.

There was a time, of course, when the world was different. The pace was slower, and degree congregations did indeed bookend the year, and it was possible to think, if not of a long summer layoff, at least of a slackening of the pace. For the great universities of the world the reality is now different.

None of that means that our degree ceremonies have lost any of their significance or symbolic power. Indeed it is a source of great satisfaction to many of us that an increasing number of our students want to graduate in person. This has meant, along with the expansion of the University that we have had to increase the number of degree congregations. To all of the staff involved I want to extend my thanks for ceremonies wonderfully managed, hospitality generously offered, and for creating that wonderful sense of a university celebrating the achievements of its students.

Many parents who have experienced degree ceremonies at other universities tell me that nowhere does it with the style, confidence, and sense of occasion that we achieve here at Birmingham. So, for so many of our students, this is a memorable conclusion to a memorable university career.

As our students graduate they do so from a university that now produces some of the most employable graduates in the country, in fact even in the world. Years ago student employability was assumed to be something which was automatic, or something to which students attended to after they had graduated.

There was an assumption of a purity in the academic experience that should be unsullied by the prospect of entering the labour market and pursuing a career. We now recognise that students are here to excel academically, and many to begin their professional qualification. That does not mean that they are indifferent to their future careers, and they now appreciate deeply the support that the University gives them throughout their degree programmes to enriching their CVs, expanding their experience, and beginning to develop the kinds of complementary skills that employers seek.

Working with our colleagues in the student employability team, and an increasing number of alumni who offer mentorship and internship experiences, Birmingham stands with Cambridge and Imperial in producing the most employable graduates in any Russell Group university.

There is now much glib talk about ‘the student experience’. This is not some commodity which is purchased, nor some service which is provided. At its heart, at a university like ours, the student experience is an academic experience characterised by exciting and challenging teaching, immersion in a discipline or disciplines, stretching intellectual experiences, and the ability to think within and beyond the paradigms of an academic discipline.

Were we to lose that we would lose something which was not just precious but defining of what a university is. Alongside our students’ academic study their experiences are enriched by a vast array of extracurricular opportunities and by learning, living, and engaging with fellow students of equal talent and ambition.

To reduce this to a ‘student experience’ that can be measured is to diminish what a university is and demean the ambition and sophistication of our students. We are promised a Green Paper in the autumn on a Teaching Excellence Framework focused on enhancing the student experience.
My fear is that this will be another exercise in trying to measure where we should inspire, and codify where we should be exploring. We will try and engage in this debate in a way which gives an appropriate expression to what higher education is and should be at a leading university.

Having celebrated our students’ achievements, throughout the summer the University will be deeply engaged in those other activities that define and shape us. It is a period where for so many of our colleagues their time is focused on research and their days animated by the spirit of discovery. For others it is a period where we are reimagining and rebuilding our university. When the new academic year begins we will have taken possession of Chamberlain, a new student residence, and over seven hundred new student rooms. We will have opened the University of Birmingham School, the first of its kind in the country, our School of Dentistry will be about to occupy the new Dental Hospital, and our Student Services teams take possession of the refurbished Student Services Hub in Aston Webb. Together with our partners at the University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust we will have opened the Institute of Translational Medicine in the old Queen Elizabeth Hospital building, and at Ansty the High Temperature Research Centre will have begun its pioneering work.

New buildings, new ventures, and another academic year will follow. Notwithstanding the challenges of the times and the likely funding reductions through the Government’s Comprehensive Spending Review, I am confident that what we have achieved will be the harbinger of still greater things for the University. Next year promises to be as exciting, rewarding, and important as any in the recent history of the University. My thanks to all of our colleagues for everything they have contributed throughout this academic year. We can, I believe, face the future with confidence.

Vice-Chancellor, 
Professor Sir David Eastwood

Staff recognised in the 2015 Queen’s Birthday Honours

The University is delighted to announce that four members of staff have been awarded Honours:

- **Professor Simon Halsey**, Professor and Director of Choral Activities, has been awarded a CBE for services to music. Professor Halsey directs a postgraduate course in Choral Conducting in association with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

- **Professor David Parker**, Edward Cadbury Professor of Theology and Director of the Institute for the Textual Scholarship and Electronic Editing, received an OBE for services to higher education. Professor Parker has been with the University for more than twenty years following a career in Anglican parochial ministry.

- **Dr Clare Taylor**, General Practitioner and National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Doctoral Research Fellow, has been awarded an MBE for services to general practice. Dr Taylor’s research interest is cardiovascular disease and she also works closely with GPs in their formative years of independent practice.

- **Carl Hingley**, Senior Automotive Technician, School of Mechanical Engineering, receives the British Empire Medal for services to higher education, STEM education and the automotive industry. Mr Hingley has served the University for almost four decades, during which he has supported the education of more than 2,500 Mechanical Engineering students.

**BIRMINGHAM CANCER SHOWCASE**

Cancer Research UK and Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research jointly organised the showcase, which took place in June, to show how discoveries are being taken from the laboratory into treatments designed to benefit cancer and blood cancer patients. Visitors were able to go behind the scenes in the laboratories with the chance to have a go at being a scientist. Guests also learnt more about the science behind the research with a programme of talks, fun hands-on demonstrations and an opportunity to chat informally with leading Birmingham cancer researchers.

**THELMA presented to University**

The University was presented with the award for Outstanding Departmental Administration team, at the recent Times Higher Education Leadership and Management Awards 2015. The awards, now in their seventh year, recognise outstanding leadership and management in the UK’s higher education institutions.

The judges recognised the ‘virtual team of professional staff’ in the Department of History, for its significant involvement in the University’s recent successes. Working in close partnership with academics, professional services staff achieved, among other things, a 34 per cent increase in admissions and significant grant capture. The judges were also incredibly impressed by the Department gaining first place in the history grade point average table in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework.
‘Exploration’ will launch in the Bramall Music Building this October. The programme will deliver an exciting culturally diverse programme across theatre, live music, comedy, film, family events, lectures, debates, festivals and exhibitions to make the Bramall more accessible to students, staff and members of the community.

The Bramall will become a key cultural venue nurturing of other talent within the University while also celebrating artistic creations from the UK, Europe and further afield. Exploration will be instrumental in developing new partnerships, exploring new collaborations and supporting new work from within the University.

Exploration will launch with an Afro–Brazilian themed event on Friday 2 – Saturday 3 October with samba and Brazilian dance workshops, martial arts and live music, with the catering team serving a special range of Brazilian food for the events.

Free tours of the Elgar Concert Hall and Dome Space in the Bramall Music Building will take place at 1.00pm on Wednesday 22 July, Tuesday 22 September, and Tuesday 29 September, and are open to all. To book a place please visit: www.birmingham.ac.uk/bramall/events/index.aspx

Learn more
www.birmingham.ac.uk/bramall
Events Programme Manager
Sophia Tarr: s.tarr@bham.ac.uk
facebook.com/brammallmusicbuilding
twitter.com/bramallmusic

The University is working towards a model of sustainable procurement and has already almost reached its target of a 20 per cent reduction in carbon emissions by 2020 but there is still work to be done.

One initiative instigated by the Procurement Team is the recent move to reduce the number of deliveries from Office Depot from daily to twice per week; this not only generates substantial savings for the University but also reduces carbon emissions from delivery vehicles. Negotiations are taking place to roll this out with other suppliers. The next project will be the managed print service, which will replace many of the inefficient desktop printers with smarter more sustainable devices.

For procurement to be sustainable there needs to be balance between environmental, economic and social factors. For example buying a cheaper, less robust product may mean that a replacement needs to be purchased sooner and that extra waste has been generated by the faulty product which has an environmental impact.

What can we do as individuals?
(a) Before making a purchase think
(b) is there a more sustainable option?
■ Consolidate orders so that fewer deliveries need to be made.
■ Ask suppliers to take their packaging back, for example disposing of pallets left by suppliers costs the University £3,000–4,000 per year.

The next procurement-themed training event, Understanding the University’s procurement procedures, will take place on Wednesday 16 September 1.30–4.00pm. Anyone interested in attending this event or future workshops should contact Purnima Bhatt at p.bhatt@bham.ac.uk.
Steve Williams has been the glassblower at the University for the last 22 years. He is situated in the chemistry department shaping and repairing apparatus to be used by researchers and students from across campus and external organisations. In addition to this work, he makes bespoke gifts and awards to present to staff and students including the Founders Awards and retirement gifts.

He often creates products that have an intricate design and are unique for a particular piece of research; designs are sketched with exact measurements and Steve then follows the plan to the letter. Utilising a standard glass tube he can modify it to include chromatography filters or construct vacuum lines to be used in chemistry. He can craft a wide variety of items from glass but can be limited by the size and scale of his workshop.

The glass that Steve works with is tougher than the type found in many decorative and household items. For example wine glasses are often fashioned from soda glass, which would crack if it came into contact with boiling water. Equipment for laboratories at the University is shaped from glass with a higher melting point such as borosilicate or quartz. Steve wears didymium glasses to protect his eyes in the workshop.

Steve said of the role: 'I like a challenge and trying to make things I have never made before. Working here at the University provides a pleasant environment, enabling me to produce high-quality pieces, within a specific time scale. I enjoy the interesting variation of my work, coupled with the sociable interaction with staff and students.'

Steve Williams is based in Haworth Building and you can contact him to find out more about his services at: S.J.Williams.3@bham.ac.uk.
Top marks for library construction as it reaches its highest point

Library staff were on top of the world when construction of the new University main library officially reached its uppermost point in June.

To mark the occasion, a plaque featuring a quotation from a novel by David Lodge, Emeritus Professor of English Literature, was placed on the roof of the building by Vice-Chancellor Professor Sir David Eastwood at a ceremony organised by the University and contractors Carillion.

The quotation, from Small World, one of Professor Lodge’s novels set in the fictional city of Rummidge – which bears a certain resemblance to Birmingham – says: To read is to surrender oneself to an endless displacement of curiosity and desire from one sentence to another…

Professor Lodge is one of the most celebrated modern-day novelists and renowned literary critics, best-known for his satirical ‘campus’ novels about academic life, which broke new ground and helped to create a new genre of literature. In 2014, his work was named as one of the top ten ways Birmingham has changed the world in a list of research produced by the University, with nominations from staff, students and alumni.

Research from the University will be at the very forefront of the new academic library, quite literally, as the Research Gallery at the front of the library will be a transformational, engaging and interactive space where the University will be able to showcase and explore research across the arts and sciences for the benefit of the whole community.

Away from the gallery, the new library, which is due to open in the summer of 2016, will advantage staff and students across the institution. The building will be an inspirational place at the heart of the campus filled with new and emerging technologies to enhance access and add value for all students. Researchers will benefit from a state-of-the-art, research annexe in the lower ground floor featuring 50 kilometres of shelving that will bring together the University’s low use but important heritage print collection.

Diane Job, Director of Library Services at the University of Birmingham, said: ‘We are delighted to reach this important milestone in the construction of what will be a truly inspirational place…’
New postgraduate home gets a boost thanks to generous donation

The Business School’s new postgraduate centre will bear the name of a noted economist after his widow gave a generous £2 million gift in his memory.

The building, currently under construction alongside Pritchatts Road, will be named the Alan Walters Building after the former Professor of Econometrics and Social Statistics who also served as an advisor to Margaret Thatcher. The building will open to students in 2016 and has been made possible following a gift from Lady Walters (BA English, 1970) in memory of her husband. It will contain several distinctive features for students of Business School postgraduate programmes, including a Harvard-style lecture theatre.

Sir Alan became a lecturer in Econometrics at the University of Birmingham in 1951. In 1961, he was appointed Professor of Econometrics and Social Statistics and remained at the University until 1968, when he went to the London School of Economics as Sir Ernest Cassel Professor of Economics. He was also Chief Economic Adviser to the Government, as well as Economic Adviser to the World Bank. Although Lady Walters did not meet Sir Alan until they were both in London, Lady Walters also studied at Birmingham, graduating with a BA in English in 1970 and a Certificate in Education in 1972.

Lady Walters said: ‘I hope this gift in memory of my late husband will inspire the next generation of Birmingham students to go on to achieve great things. My husband and I both had fond memories of our time at Birmingham, and the new building will be a stimulating place to study, giving postgraduate students the dedicated space they need to carry out their studies. I very much look forward to visiting the building on completion and am delighted that the University is investing in such a high quality facility to benefit its students.’

The donation is part of the University’s Circles of Influence fundraising campaign. Read more about the campaign on pages 10–11.

Work begins at the Birmingham Institute of Forest Research (BIFoR)

Construction work at the University’s ground-breaking forestry research project in Staffordshire has begun after Shaylor Group were named the main contractors to build the free-air carbon enrichment (FACE) experiment. The BIFoR FACE facility is being established at Mill Haft Wood, near Norbury in Staffordshire and will study the effects of increased CO₂ on mature oak woodland. The experiment will address whether mature woodland ecosystems trap carbon – with profound consequences for future climate change – and was made possible by a generous gift of £15 million (plus access to a suitable site and refurbished field HQ) by Birmingham alumni Professor Joe Bradwell and his wife Barbara. Construction is expected to finish by spring 2016.

High Temperature Research Centre fit-out underway

The High Temperature Research Centre (HTRC) has moved another step closer to completion as the interior fit-out begins. Main contractor Wates Construction has begun to install mechanical and electrical system connections to the specialist research and development equipment for advanced manufacturing. The project, at Ansty Park, near Coventry, is scheduled for completion in September this year. It is a joint collaboration between the University and Rolls-Royce, funded through a £40 million investment by Rolls-Royce plc and a £20 million government grant through the Higher Education Funding Council for England’s (HEFCE) UK Research Partnership Investment Fund (UKRPIF).

The Centre provides a unique casting, design, simulation and advanced manufacturing research facility and will focus initially on the key design and manufacturing aspects of investment casting. Once complete, the HTRC will enable production-scale research and development for aerospace and other industrial sectors.
A Qur’an manuscript held by the University has been dated among the oldest in the world thanks to modern scientific methods.

Radiocarbon analysis has dated the parchment on which the text is written to the period between 568 AD and 645 AD with 95.4 per cent accuracy. The test was carried out in a laboratory at the University of Oxford. The result places the leaves close to the time of the Prophet Muhammad, who lived between 570 AD and 632 AD.

Researchers conclude that the Qur’an manuscript is among the earliest written textual evidence of the Islamic holy book known to survive. This gives the Qur’an manuscript in Birmingham global significance to Muslim heritage and the study of Islam.

The Qur’an manuscript is part of the University’s Mingana Collection of Middle Eastern manuscripts. Funded by Quaker philanthropist Sir Edward Cadbury, the collection was acquired to raise the status of Birmingham as an intellectual centre for religious studies and attract prominent theological scholars.

Consisting of two parchment leaves, the Qur’an manuscript contains parts of Suras (chapters) 18 to 20, written with ink in an early form of Arabic script known as Hijazi. For many years, the manuscript had been misbound with leaves of a similar Qur’an manuscript, which is datable to the late seventh century. The Sura sections in the Birmingham manuscript tell the stories of Moses and of the ‘People of the Cave.’

Dr Alba Fedeli, who studied the leaves as part of her PhD research, said:

‘The two leaves, which were radiocarbon dated to the early part of the seventh century, come from the same codex as a manuscript kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris.’

Explaining the context and significance of the discovery, David Thomas, Professor of Christianity and Islam, and Nadir Dinshaw Professor of Interreligious Relations, said: ‘The radiocarbon dating of the Birmingham Qur’an folios has yielded a startling result and reveals one of the most surprising secrets of the University’s collections. They could well take us back to within a few years of the actual founding of Islam. According to Muslim tradition, the Prophet Muhammad received the revelations that form the Qur’an, the scripture of Islam, between the years 610 AD and 632 AD, the year of his death. At this time, the divine message was not compiled into the book form in which it appears today and was preserved in “the memories of men”.

‘The tests carried out on the parchment of the Birmingham folios yield the strong probability that the animal from which the parchment was taken was alive during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad or shortly afterwards. This means that the parts of the Qur’an that are written on this parchment can, with a degree of confidence, be dated to less than two decades after Muhammad’s death. These portions must have been in a form that is very close to the form of the Qur’an read today, supporting the view that the text has undergone little or no alteration and that it can be dated to a point very close to the time it was believed to be revealed.’

The Qur’an manuscript will be on public display at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts from Friday 2 October until Sunday 25 October 2015.

Find out more about the University’s Cadbury Research Library at:
www.birmingham.ac.uk/facilities/cadbury/index.aspx
From September 2015

The University Executive Board (UEB) is the senior management team responsible for steering and implementing University strategy and policy. The Vice-Chancellor is the Chief Executive of the University and chairs UEB.

The University’s Professional Services, located both centrally in Corporate Services and in the Colleges, work in partnership with academics to support the academic mission of the University. Professional Services are led by the Registrar and Secretary, Mr Lee Sanders, who is supported by a team of Senior Officers who are the directors of the Corporate Services.
Meet the University Executive Board (UEB)

From September 2015

Secretary to University Executive Board
Colette McDonough
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Professor Adam Tickell
PA: Lynne Hopwood
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Professor Sir David Eastwood
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Registrar and Secretary
Lee Sanders
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Pro-Vice-Chancellors

Provost and Vice-Principal
Professor Sir David Eastwood

Pro-Vice-Chancellors
Senior Officers
From September 2015

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Director of Hospitality and Accommodation Services
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Director of Strategic Planning
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The Birmingham International Academy (BIA) is the new identity for the University’s English for International Students Unit (EISU) and the Birmingham Foundation Academy (BFA). The BIA will retain its base at Priorsfield and continue to offer high quality pathway provision to international students looking to progress on to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

The BIA is responsible for providing English courses and pathways for international students to fully prepare students for progression on programmes at the University, and also delivers English skills development and support for existing students at the University. Upon successful completion of the appropriate pathway, students are guaranteed progression to a wide range of programmes at the University. The international pathways enable students to constantly improve their academic, linguistic and cultural skills.

This year, the BIA has welcomed record numbers of over 1,200 international students onto its presessional programmes and 130 foundation students. The BIA also organises a variety of popular day trips to places of cultural and historic interest throughout the year such as Stonehenge, Bath, Oxford, York and Warwick Castle as well as a lively summer social programme to allow students the possibility to settle in before their main programmes of study get underway.

The BIA launched in May with an event held at their Priorsfield base to celebrate. In his launch address, Provost and Vice-Principal Professor Adam Tickell emphasised the importance of the BIA’s role in supporting the University’s international recruitment strategy. He also spoke about exciting new developments including international partnerships such as a recent agreement for the Singapore Institute of Management (SIM) to deliver the foundation programme overseas.

During the event current presessional students Omar Alharthi and Ibrahim Altuwaijri spoke about their expectations and fears before coming to the UK and the ways in which BIA teachers helped them to adapt to life in the UK. Tiara Utomo, a former student on the foundation programme now in the second year of her economics degree, paid tribute to her BIA course tutors and spoke about the ways her foundation year had prepared her for life as an undergraduate student. She said: ‘The foundation programme has helped me to settle in and boost my confidence to fully engage within the international and local community during my undergraduate study.’

Speaking after the event, BIA Academic Director Dr Steve Minchin said: ‘It is an exciting time for the BIA. With the introduction of new courses, and the development of existing ones, we will continue to provide excellent opportunities for students from around the world to be part of this university.’

The University has welcomed international students to our campus for more than 100 years and has one of the largest international student communities in the UK, with alumni based in more than 190 countries.
#UoBSaysthanks as Circles of Influence smashes fundraising target

It's official. Supporters of the University's Circles of Influence campaign, led by Development and Alumni Relations Office (DARO), have raised £193.4 million for the University. Of the 193.4 million total, £84.7 million was raised through DARO, £8.6 million given by supporters, staff and friends through other parts of the University and £75 million from philanthropic donations to research.

“We are working on clinical trials in Malawi to treat a very aggressive form of blood cancer called Burkitt’s Lymphoma that affects predominantly children in Africa. Without your support we simply wouldn’t be able to do this work to save children’s lives. Thank you!”

Dr Farhat Khanim, Research Scientist, School of Biosciences

These are just a few of the people and projects that our amazing donors have helped to support through Circles of Influence. The campaign may have closed on 31 July but the tradition of charitable giving to the University will continue with a wide range of ground-breaking research and student support schemes that staff can get involved with.

Visit www.uobsaysthanks.com to find out more about how the campaign has benefitted students, colleagues and the community, and how you can get involved in the next steps of fundraising for our University.
Thank you to all colleagues who have helped the campaign since 2009; you are among 10,000 donors and 5,000 volunteers who have supported 250 extraordinary projects, making a difference on campus, locally, and across the globe…

**Bramall Music Building**
Completed in 2012, and completing Joseph Chamberlain’s vision for the Aston Webb semi-circle, the Bramall Music Building was made possible thanks to donations from 260 donors including a transformational gift from the Liz and Terry Bramall Foundation.

**Innovative research**
More than £5.5 million has been donated to support research across the University. Projects include research to treat childhood blood cancer, breast cancer and prostate cancer, hydrogen research, and support for the Shakespeare Institute.

**Funding scholarships**
The campaign has awarded 570 student scholarships through the Access to Birmingham (A2B) scheme, helping many students who otherwise may not have been able to attend university.

**Student support**
More than £2.5 million has been given to improve our student experience. This includes the Hands Up fund, which has supported student projects from careers fairs to cheerleading, and ballroom dancing to battle re-enactments.

**Transforming campus**
Circles of Influence has supported campus developments equivalent to 9.6 football pitches including redevelopment of the Lapworth Museum, and the new Library, Sports Centre, University of Birmingham School, and Institute of Translational Medicine.

**Enhancing teaching**
Researchers at the Autism Centre for Education and Research (ACER) are using Nao robots supported by Circles of Influence to teach children with autism and improve their classroom experience.

**Birmingham Fellows**
Support for the Birmingham Fellows scheme has helped more than 60 outstanding postdoctoral researchers to join the University.
Buzz is pleased to reveal the winners of the inaugural Outstanding Teaching Awards. The Awards were created, in a joint venture between the University and Guild of Students, to recognise teaching staff from each of the University’s five Colleges who demonstrate truly excellent teaching.

The recipients below were nominated by the student body for their commitment to providing teaching that is stimulating, innovative and consistently challenging. They encourage and facilitate active learning and are enthusiastic about sharing their knowledge with their students.

The quotes included below are taken from the nominations, highlighting the positive impact teaching staff have had on students during their time at the University. The Awards were presented during July’s degree congregations.

**Dr Gareth Sears**
College of Arts and Law
Dr Gareth Sears is a Senior Lecturer in Ancient History in the School of History and Cultures. An alumnus of the University, his expertise is in Roman history – specifically city life and religious changes in the Roman world including Roman North Africa. He has published several books on the theme.

‘Dr Sears is an extremely passionate lecturer with a zest for the ancient world that shines through in his teaching. He organises intellectually stimulating and very interesting seminars, which I think gives us the best preparation for exams.’

**Dr Steve Jacques**
College of Life and Environmental Sciences
Dr Steve Jacques is a Lecturer in Human Biology, Biochemistry and Disease in the School of Biosciences, working primarily as an anatomist with a particular interest in neuroanatomy. He previously worked in surgical specialities for the NHS and as an anatomy demonstrator before embarking upon a career as a teaching-focused lecturer in 2014.

‘Dr Jacques exudes enthusiasm and is willing to help and listen, which really makes a difference to our learning. He constantly provides us with content of a new and interesting calibre in an exciting and different manner.’

**Dr Zoe Schnepp**
College of Engineering and Physical Sciences
Dr Zoe Schnepp is a Birmingham Fellow in the School of Chemistry. As a Postdoctoral Researcher she worked in Germany and Japan before returning to the UK in 2012. Her area of teaching and research covers biomimetics and the creation of functional nanomaterials from renewable resources.

‘Dr Schnepp has gone above and beyond for us, making sure we have understood the material and explaining concepts thoroughly. I think she is an excellent role model for the undergraduate students. Her enthusiasm for learning is infectious.’

**Dr Lisa Jones**
College of Medical and Dental Sciences
Dr Lisa Jones is a Senior Lecturer in Psychiatry in the School of Clinical and Experimental Medicine. She contributes widely to education within the College and has set-up the intercalated programme in Psychological Medicine for medical students. She is also very involved in student welfare and is currently a Personal Mentor on the MBChB programme.

‘Dr Jones is highly knowledgeable and has enhanced our learning experiences. She uses multi-method teaching, has a warm and approachable demeanour, and a genuine interest in student wellbeing. She always makes time for her students, and it is clear that we are her first priority.’

**Professor Stan Siebert**
College of Social Sciences
Professor Stan Siebert is a Professor of Labour Economics in the Department of Business and Labour Economics at the Business School, where he has worked since 1980. His teaching covers the economics of labour markets, business economics and labour relations, and he is also an Access to Birmingham co-ordinator.

‘Professor Siebert makes the lecture fun by engaging with us; he brings the subject to life. His teaching is definitely one of the more enjoyable styles that I have come across, and I believe it is this that has helped me to immensely expand my knowledge of the subject and encouraged me to be more interested in the subject outside of lectures.’
Matthew Parris on Happiness

On 22 June author and journalist Matthew Parris delivered the 37th Baggs Memorial Lecture, the annual public address reflecting on the theme of ‘Happiness – What it is and how it may be achieved by individuals as well as nations.’

Matthew Parris worked for the Foreign Office and the Conservative Party before serving as MP for West Derbyshire (1979–1986). He was then a parliamentary sketchwriter for The Times and he now writes a column for the paper, broadcasts for radio and television, presents the biographical programme Great Lives on BBC Radio 4 and writes for The Spectator. Matthew is also an established non-fiction author and won the Orwell Prize for his acclaimed autobiography, Chance Witness, published in 2002.

Prior to the lecture Buzz spoke to Matthew about his career and what happiness means to him.

On the public’s engagement with politics...

Since 2001 the turnout for general elections has increased each time so I do think the public is connected with politics. There hasn’t been a drastic change though; the proportion of votes taken by the two major parties has stayed roughly the same. It became fashionable to say the two party system was fragmenting and there was a new alienation from politics but I don’t believe this to be the case.

On his inspiration to write...

I’m inspired to write about things I have had some involvement in or have experienced. In politics I was close to a few people who were embroiled in scandals so I put pen to paper and wrote Great Parliamentary Scandals: Four Centuries of Calumny, Smear and Innuendo. I then published an anthology, Scorn, based on my love of invective and derision in the English language. What I wouldn’t be confident in doing would be a complete work of the imagination where I had to invent a world or characters. I admire people that can produce a novel, plays or poetry but I don’t think I have that talent.

On travelling...

Like all seasoned travellers the joy is in the movement rather than staying anywhere for very long. Generally speaking I am particularly engaged by landscapes, mountains, deserts, rivers and lakes, I am less so with people and cultures and tribes. I feel I should be but I am not. I like adventure.

On happiness...

I am happiest when I am at work; the pleasure of complete absorption in a task in which one knows one is competent. Yet I don’t believe there to be a key to happiness, it’s not a thing to be found, it’s not even a particularly useful word. The closest we can get to understand what the elements of the word are, is when we go with the flow of our own natures, when we’re comfortable in our own skin and go with the grain. People learn to feel when they’re acting with their impulses, their natures and their capabilities and it is then that they will be truly happy.

Funding for the lectures was bequeathed by Thomas Baggs, an alumnus of the University, in 1973. The gift was made on the condition that the series was open to the public, maintained the theme of Happiness and was delivered by ‘suitably qualified persons’. The theme was inspired during his career in teaching, wartime journalism and advertising both in the UK and USA. Previous guests to have tackled the subject of Happiness include Chris Addison, David Attenborough, Alastair Campbell and Benjamin Zephaniah.

On 22 June author and journalist Matthew Parris delivered the 37th Baggs Memorial Lecture, the annual public address reflecting on the theme of ‘Happiness – What it is and how it may be achieved by individuals as well as nations.’
Honorary Graduates and Founders’ Awards

An honorary graduate is someone who has made a major contribution to academic life. They are nominated for an honorary degree by anyone who is a student, alumnus, employee, member of honorary staff or member of Court or Council of the University. Honorary degrees were presented at the congregations in July.

- Lord Victor Adebowale CBE, Doctor of the University, is a Non-Executive Director of NHS England and Chief Executive of Turning Point
- Dr Clifford Cocks, Doctor of Science, is a retired Chief Mathematician at GCHQ
- Professor Pascale Cossart, Doctor of Science, has worked on DNA-protein interactions, intracellular bacteria and cell and infection biology
- Mr Gregory Doran, Doctor of Letters, is the Artistic Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC)
- Mr James Eder, Alumnus of the Year, is the founder of The Beans Group
- Dr Clive Hickman, Doctor of Engineering, is Chief Executive of the Manufacturing Technology Centre, which bridges the gap between academic research and industrial exploitation
- Ms Billie Major, Alumna of the Year, is the Corporate Vice-President of Cappgemini
- Dame Una O’Brien, Doctor of the University, is the Permanent Secretary of the UK Department of Health
- Mr Ajit Kumar Seth, Doctor of the University, is the Head of the Civil Services in India
- Mr Ed Smith CBE, Doctor of the University, is Chairman of Crown Commercial Services and Deputy Chairman of NHS England. He is also Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council at the University
- Mr Simon Stevens, Doctor of the University, is CEO of NHS England
- Mr Andy Street CBE, Doctor of the University, is managing director of John Lewis and Chair of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership
- Professor Philip Sugarman, Doctor of Medicine, is a psychiatrist and former chief executive, of the UK charity sector’s largest NHS provider, St Andrew’s Healthcare
- Chancellor Phyllis Wise, Doctor of Science, is the Chancellor of the University of Illinois at Urban-Champaign (UIUC)
- Mr Lim Ming Yan, Doctor of the University, is President and Group CEO of CapitaLand

The annual Founders’ Awards recognise the very best academic work from across the University’s broad spectrum that has significantly contributed to the advancement of the University’s reputation both nationally and internationally. This year they were presented at the Chancellor’s Dinner on 16 July.

- **Academic Advancement**
  Winner: Professor Jane McKeating

- **Policy Advancement**
  Winners: Professor James Arthur and Professor Erika Rackley

- **Business Advancement**
  Winner: Professor Hisham Mehanna

- **Outstanding Early-Career Academic**
  Winner: Dr Anne-Marie Krachler

What is it?
University Mace, designed by Philip Webb (1831–1915) The Silver and Plate Collection, Research and Cultural Collections

Where is it?
Currently on loan to the National Trust exhibition Architect of Design: The Genius of Philip Webb at Standen, West Sussex, 1 August–15 November 2015.

The Mace is the ceremonial symbol of University jurisdiction and authority and is used during formal academic occasions. Its most important function is its role within degree congregations where it is carried before the procession at ceremonies. The mace is a beautiful example of Arts and Crafts silverwork, designed by Philip Webb and made by the Birmingham company W.H. Haseler Ltd.

Philip Webb was an architect and designer who played an integral role within the Arts and Crafts movement and was one of the founding partners of what became Morris & Co. He was a prolific designer of applied art for the interiors of his houses and the mace is a rare example of commissioned design work independent from this.

Alice Beale commissioned the mace and presented it to the University in 1903. Alice was the wife of the University’s first Vice-Chancellor, Charles Gabriel Beale and a prominent figure in Birmingham social reform and philanthropic circles. The Beale family had a close relationship with Webb, who had designed Standen, the residence of Charles’ older brother James and his wife Margaret, in 1891.

Learn more
For more information about the mace and exhibition, please read the blog at: rcc-redmarley.tumblr.com
Many articles about Birmingham research and expertise appear in local, national and international press every day. Here are just a few examples of our recent highlights.

A Qur’an manuscript held by the University has been placed among the oldest in the world thanks to modern scientific methods. The story featured across the BBC’s news programming and was broadcast on ITV, Sky and Al Jazeera. It also made the headlines in the Guardian, The Times, Independent, Daily Mail, the Telegraph and many more. It also received coverage internationally reaching audiences on a global scale including the front page of the New York Times. Susan Worrall, Director of Special Collections, Professor David Thomas and Dr Alba Fedeli were interviewed about the discovery.

The University’s Chancellor, Lord Bilimoria, has been awarded International Indian of the Year for his outstanding achievements in the fields of business and education by publication India Link International. The news was reported across the Indian media in outlets such as The Times of India, NDTV and the Press Trust of India.

Dr Steve Hewitt was interviewed by BBC Radio WM, BBC Radio Coventry and Warwickshire and BBC Radio Berkshire about the Tunisian beach massacre. Dr Berny Sebe wrote an article for the Guardian about how the Tunisian beach attacks show the deadly potential of Isis.

Dr David Houghton was interviewed for a special BBC Radio 4 series looking at the rise of the selfie.

Dr Bai Li has featured 88 national and regional newspapers in China discussing the Chirpy Dragon public health programme, which is tackling the problem of childhood obesity in China, highlighting our research strength in exercise as medicine.

James Hale was featured in a Mail Online article about a prehistoric walking bat that has been discovered in New Zealand.

Dr Zoe Schnepf was featured in the Huffington Post reacting to Sir Tim Hunt’s comments about women in science.

Martin Ezcurra was interviewed by Brazilian magazine Época about the scientific advances in palaeontology since the first Jurassic Park film.

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Pam Kearns in my own words

Pam Kearns is Professor of Clinical Paediatric Oncology and Director of the Cancer Research UK Clinical Trials Unit (CRCTU) in the School of Cancer Sciences. She is also an Honorary Consultant in Paediatric Oncology at Birmingham Children’s Hospital and a Senior Clinical Advisor to Cancer Research UK (CRUK).

I studied Medicine at the University of Aberdeen and then went on to train as a paediatric oncologist in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. My doctoral research around childhood acute lymphoblastic leukaemia then continued at Vrije University in Amsterdam. On gaining my doctorate I returned to the UK as a Clinical Senior Lecturer at the University of Bristol. In 2007 I joined the University of Birmingham to continue my research in childhood leukaemias.

Working with children with cancer you combine together two different strands of care; treating their condition and supporting the family via a more holistic approach. You start the process delivering devastating news to a family, through all their treatment, looking after them during recovery, following-up on their progress and realising the impact it has on the whole family. I’m passionate about ensuring the best possible outcomes at all stages of this process for the child and their family.

In children’s cancers as a whole the survival rate is approximately eighty percent, but for some cancers such as brain tumours and bone cancer it is much lower. Oncologists have been using standard drugs and modifying the combinations for three to four decades, which has been effective for many cancers. The challenge is now to take what we have learnt about the profile of cancers and identify new drugs to target specific cancers. There also a need to establish kinder treatments with fewer side effects; while we can cure some cancers patients can often live with long term consequences of their treatment such as damage to internal organs.

My current research involves modelling leukaemia in order to replicate how it evolves in a child. You can see how different parts of the leukaemia are affected by different drugs and then take this forward to the clinic. I’ve previously done this with lymphoblastic leukaemia and in the past couple of years the focus has moved to acute myeloid leukaemia, which is more complex to model.

However we have had some success with an epigenetic modifier, which effects how cells read genes. The drug, which was originally developed as a chemotherapy drug but failed due to its many side effects, can cause changes to DNA in lower doses. Early clinical trials suggest that in low doses it can induce death in leukaemia cells but the mechanism is not quite right. The next stage of research will be to understand in greater details how it works and more importantly how it interacts with other drugs, to create a synergistic effect.

This research is being supported by the pharmaceutical industry and partners in Europe, and the collaborative approach should lead to a practical application for new drug combinations when the clinical trials end in approximately eighteen months’ time.

In May of this year I was appointed as a senior clinical advisor at Cancer Research UK. I’ve worked with the charity for a number of years as they provide core funding for an innovative international programme of clinical trials at the CRCTU. This role will allow me to inform and guide the charity’s research strategy and health policy to benefit patients with a cancer diagnosis.

When I am not working I am likely to be running or cycling. I have been running for many years and have completed marathons for charities; I find long distance running helps to keep my mind clear and focused. I began cycling a couple of years ago and found myself signing up for a 100 mile bikeathon for Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research, something I repeated in July. Friends have suggested I should become a triathlete, but as I am not the best swimmer there’s probably not much chance of that, the combination of running and cycling is probably enough!