

SUMMER 2013

# Cardiff

*University Magazine*  
— for Alumni & Friends

## Comings & goings

OVER 25 YEARS OF  
LIFE-CHANGING  
STUDENT EXCHANGES

### INNOVATION AND IMPACT

Award-winning projects  
that started at Cardiff

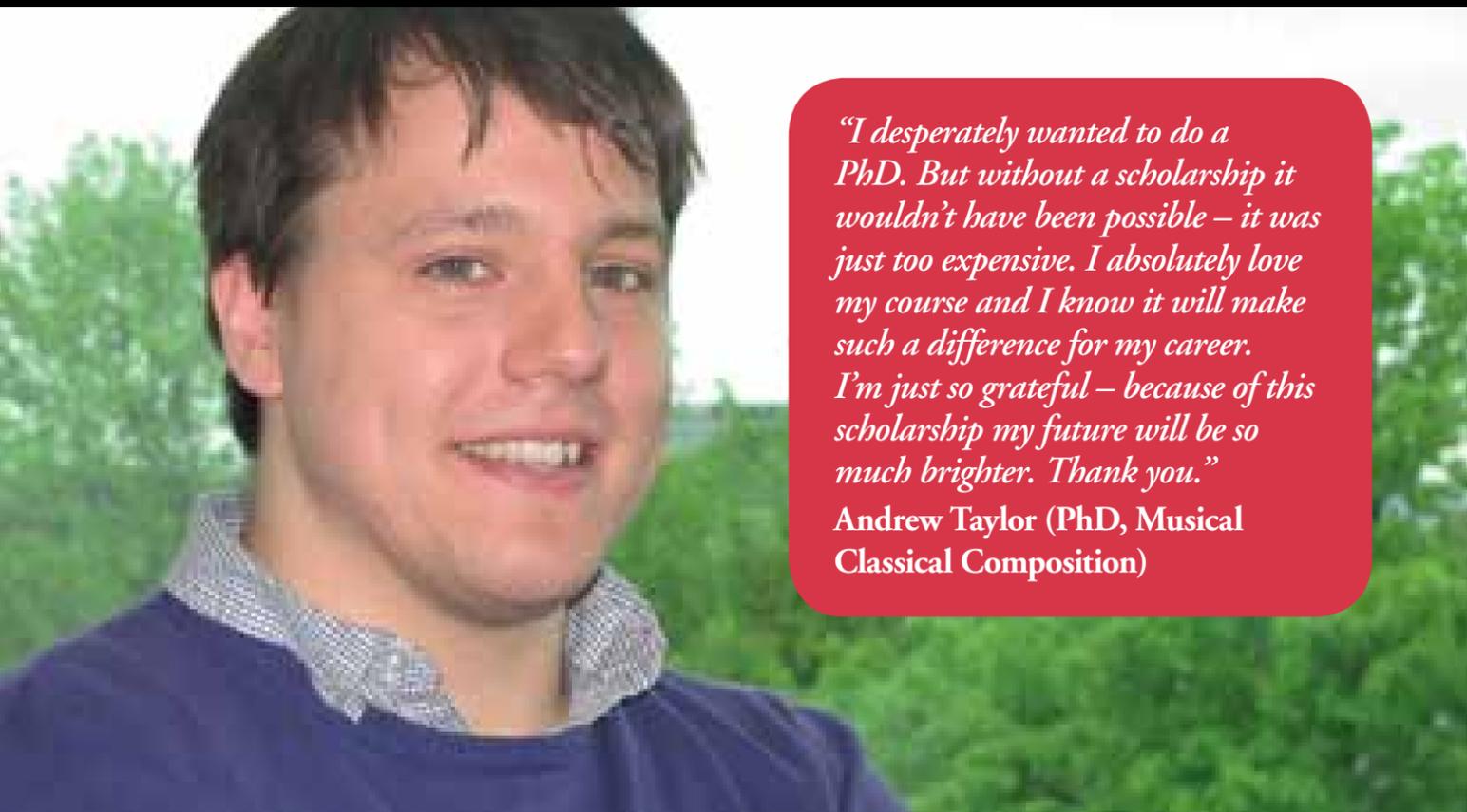
### TWITTER POLICING

How social media is  
helping track crime

### LITERARY ALUMNI

Cardiff graduates with  
books to their names





*"I desperately wanted to do a PhD. But without a scholarship it wouldn't have been possible – it was just too expensive. I absolutely love my course and I know it will make such a difference for my career. I'm just so grateful – because of this scholarship my future will be so much brighter. Thank you."*

**Andrew Taylor (PhD, Musical Classical Composition)**

**Will you give a deserving student a life-changing gift today – the chance to study at Cardiff?**



*"There is a real danger of the higher fees worrying prospective students to the*

*point where they may decide not to go to university at all. That's such a shame, because anyone who has the passion to succeed here should have the opportunity – no matter their financial circumstances."*

**Hannah Chandler (2nd year, BSc Psychology)**

**Will you help support additional scholarships for the forthcoming academic year?**

It costs £1000 to fund a year's scholarship for a student today, and with the help and kindness of our alumni we hope to extend our scholarship programme to enable more students receive a world-class education at Cardiff.

To make a donation visit [www.cardiff.ac.uk/supportstudents](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/supportstudents), call 029 2087 6413 or send a cheque made payable to 'Cardiff University' to Development and Alumni Relations, Cardiff University, Deri House, 2-4 Park Grove, Cardiff, CF10 3BN.

Every pound donated will support our Scholarships and Bursary Fund for 2013.



# Welcome



Welcome to the latest issue of the *Cardiff University Magazine*. I can hardly believe that almost a year has gone by since I took up my role as Vice-Chancellor and President of Cardiff University. In that time I've got to know not only the institution, but its research and teaching as well as many of the people who study and work here.

What is clear to me is that there are many talented students and staff in Cardiff, as well as a huge number of supportive and successful alumni around the world. I know that all of you want us to be the best that we can be, and so do I. It is with this ambition and the excitement of our potential in mind that I recently published my vision for the future of Cardiff University: *The Way Forward*. Our ambition in the next five years is for Cardiff University to be consistently among the top 100 universities in the world through focussing on research, education, international and engagement activities. In order to do that we need to invest in our people and our facilities, constantly strive to improve our performance and diversify our income streams so as to become more financially sustainable. If you would like to read more about our vision for the future of Cardiff University, visit [www.cardiff.ac.uk/thewayforward](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/thewayforward).

Many of you are helping to support our students through mentoring, through donating towards scholarships and bursaries and through helping them to find graduate employment once they leave Cardiff. Some of you work for organisations which contract us to undertake research and development activity for them, others of you help us to attract and recruit the most able students around the world.

There are many ways in which your help is already making a difference towards the future ambitions we have in *The Way Forward*. The most important thing is that we share that future together.

With many thanks for your continued support.

**Professor Colin Riordan**  
Vice-Chancellor & President

Summer 2013

# contents

## 4 News

Student CEOs; better school dinners; Cardiff teaching goes global; improving child welfare

## 8 Development

The latest fundraising news

## 10 Time abroad during study

How the Erasmus student exchange programme has changed participants' lives



## 14 Accelerating change

Cardiff launches new Catalysis Institute

## 16 The University's real world impact

Celebrating some of the great ideas that started at Cardiff



## 20 Talking the beat

Neighbourhood watch, 21st Century style

## 22 Learning the lore of the land

How ancient traditions help us reconnect with our forebears



## 24 Shaping public policy in Wales

Cardiff at the hub of Welsh policy thinking

## 25 Network

There's a literary twist to this issue's alumni roll call

*Wherever you are, stay in touch with Cardiff University*

ON THE GO? SIMPLY USE YOUR SMARTPHONE TO SCAN THIS CODE AND IT WILL TAKE YOU STRAIGHT TO THE ALUMNI SECTION OF OUR WEBSITE



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Editor: Sarah Price

Print: The Westdale Press Limited  
70 Portmanmoor Industrial Estate, East Moors, Cardiff CF24 5HB



*Cardiff University Magazine* is produced in association with: Immediate Media Co  
Tower House, Fairfax Street, Bristol BS1 3BN  
T +44 (0)117 927 9009  
[www.immediatemediaco.co.uk](http://www.immediatemediaco.co.uk)

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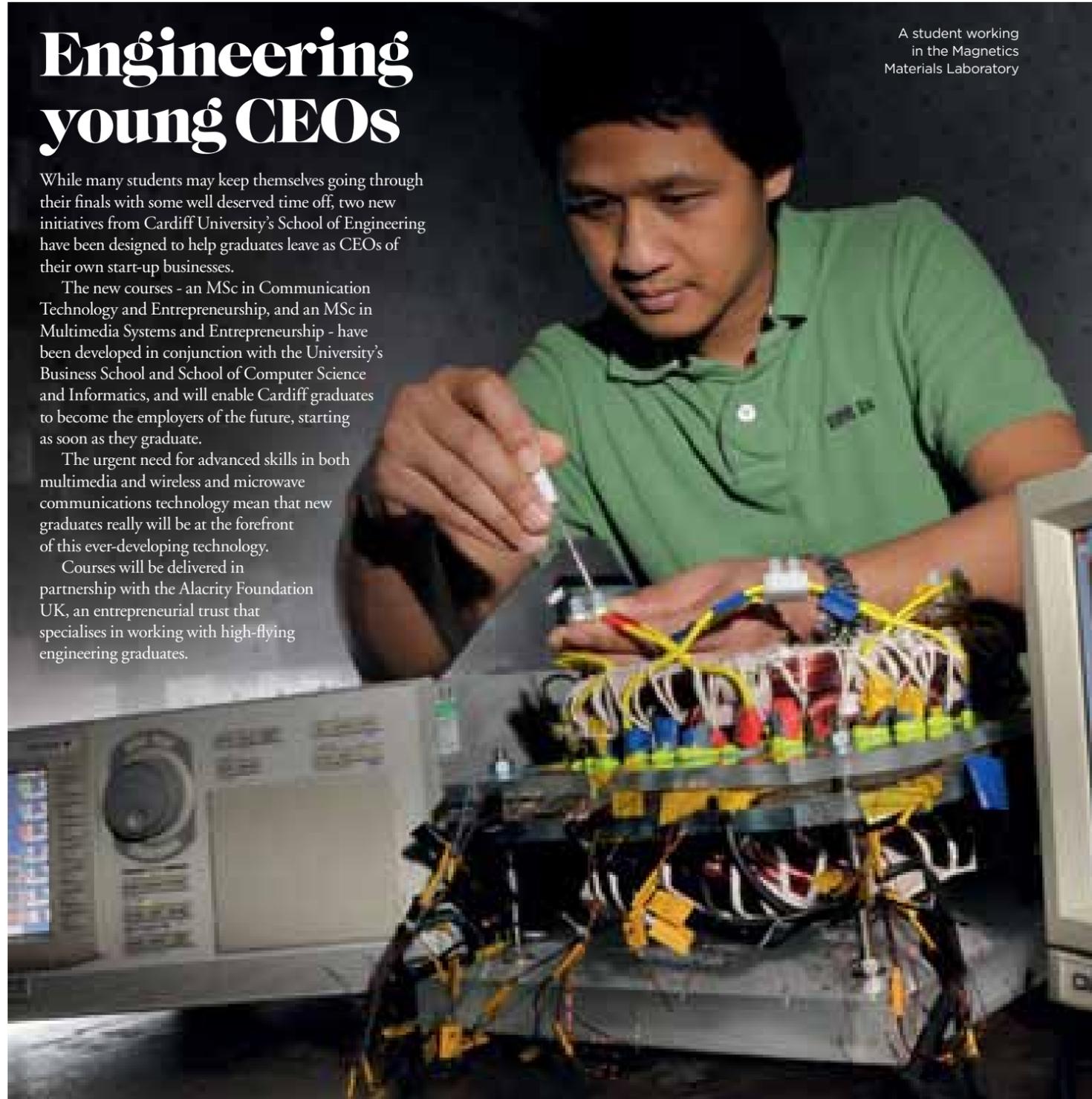
## Engineering young CEOs

While many students may keep themselves going through their finals with some well deserved time off, two new initiatives from Cardiff University's School of Engineering have been designed to help graduates leave as CEOs of their own start-up businesses.

The new courses - an MSc in Communication Technology and Entrepreneurship, and an MSc in Multimedia Systems and Entrepreneurship - have been developed in conjunction with the University's Business School and School of Computer Science and Informatics, and will enable Cardiff graduates to become the employers of the future, starting as soon as they graduate.

The urgent need for advanced skills in both multimedia and wireless and microwave communications technology mean that new graduates really will be at the forefront of this ever-developing technology.

Courses will be delivered in partnership with the Alacrity Foundation UK, an entrepreneurial trust that specialises in working with high-flying engineering graduates.



A student working in the Magnetics Materials Laboratory



## Tasty ideas for school dinners

School dinners are often in the news for the wrong reasons, but research by members of the School of Planning and Geography is contributing to major changes in the way children are fed in the UK's schools.

Professor Kevin Morgan and Dr Roberta Sonnino (pictured right) have been awarded the Economic & Social Research Council's Celebrating Impact Prize for their work, which has been influential in recent food policy in Wales, England and Scotland.

Their project linked directly the procurement of school food, the environment in which it was eaten, and the messages given

to children in the classroom in order to encourage them to eat healthy food.

"Willows High School, which is based in a deprived part of Cardiff, has done some extraordinary things in terms of school food reform," said Professor Morgan.

"It has introduced one of the finest kitchens and canteens that I'm aware of anywhere in the UK, and that's important because providing a convivial, pleasant eating environment for children gives them an incentive to come into the canteen rather than to flee from it, which was often the case in the past."



## Learning goes global

Aspiring students across the world can now take advantage of some of the most inspiring teaching found at Cardiff, by clicking onto Futurelearn, a new company set up by the Open University.

Cardiff is joining with several other UK universities to promote its expertise to the world, giving those with study ambitions but who are unable to physically attend university the chance to further their knowledge.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Colin Riordan said: "We hope this will inspire more people to expand their horizons, breaking down the traditional barriers and dispelling the myth that access to a Russell Group university like Cardiff is for a privileged few."



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Rugby doc finally earns nickname

Wales and British & Irish Lions centre Jamie Roberts joins an illustrious list of doctors who also played top-flight rugby. JPR Williams, Jack Matthews and Gwyn Jones all combined a profession in medicine with the rigours of the national game.

"My nickname is 'Doc' and I've always felt a bit of a fraud!" says Jamie.



### India's love-lorn tigers facing extinction

Research from Cardiff has found that a combination of a reduced gene pool, loss of habitat and habitat fragmentation are having a devastating impact on India's tigers.

"What diversity remains needs to be managed properly so that the Indian tiger does not become inbred," said Professor Mike Bruford of the Cardiff School of Biosciences.

### Welsh hospitality

The Stars and Stripes fluttering over the University's main building may have taken a few by surprise in April, but that's one of the ways 60 talented students from the United States were welcomed to Cardiff.

The Marshall Scholarship offers some of the USA's brightest and best the opportunity to study in the UK for two years, and the University was delighted to host the latest batch of scholars.

### Child welfare funding

More than £500,000 has been awarded to three children's social care research projects that include University academics from the School of Social Sciences.

The research will analyse how social workers communicate with children; how Local Safeguarding Children's Boards in Wales respond to child neglect; and how those in contact with social work agencies compare with those who aren't.



## HONOURS & AWARDS

### Award for two decades of research

Professor Kevin Fox's research on synaptic plasticity - processes vital for a person's ability to develop and adapt - has been recognised as significant to the advancement of medical science by election to the Fellowship of the Academy of Medical Sciences.

The research has helped to inform thinking into debilitating medical conditions such as schizophrenia, autism and Alzheimer's disease.

### Further US awards for Cardiff scientists

Professors Mike Owen and Mike O'Donovan were once again in the US to receive an award, this time in the shape of the William K Warren Distinguished Research Award in recognition of their work on the genetics underpinning schizophrenia. The award follows last year's Lieber Prize, and was presented at Orlando-based International Congress of Schizophrenia Research.

Professor O'Donovan said: "The development of new treatments for schizophrenia will depend on us gaining a better understanding of disease mechanisms. Genetic discoveries like those we are making offer a new starting point for this work. This prize recognises what we have achieved so far and encourages us to continue to gain new understanding of this important condition."

### US award lecture

Professor Ole Peterson, Director of the School of Biosciences, gave an Award Lecture at the Experimental Biology 2013 meeting in April. Only the third European scientist to deliver the lecture, Professor Peterson's recognition is due to his 'lifetime achievement in gastrointestinal and liver physiological research'.



## 20 subjects in top 200

Cardiff's reputation as a world-class seat of learning was boosted in May when the University was named in the top 200 universities in the world for 20 subjects.

The annual QS World University Rankings by Subject survey gives students the only means by which they can find out rankings by particular subject, rather than by institution of broad faculty distinction. Geography (including City and Regional Planning) was the top ranking Cardiff subject, coming in at 47th best in the world. Also appearing in the top 200 were mechanical engineering, biological sciences, medicine,

chemistry, earth and marine sciences, accounting and finance, communication and media studies, law, sociology and statistics and operational research.

Professor Tricia Price, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience and Academic Standards said: "To have our strengths recognised - in so many subject areas - is outstanding. We also place great value on the opinions of students and research partners, the continued popularity of the University amongst prospective students and in the significant grants, awards and funding won by our researchers each year."

## MRC celebrates Cardiff century

The University's Centre for Neuropsychiatric Genetics and Genomics opened its doors to the public in June, to mark the Medical Research Council's 100 years of funding life-saving science.

MRC-funded centres across the UK are both inviting the public in and taking their work out to local communities. The MRC has been funding psychiatric genetics in Cardiff for the past 23 years, with the dedicated MRC Centre established in 2009.

MRC Centre Director, Professor Mike Owen said: "The MRC Centre at Cardiff has made fundamental advances in our understanding of a number of disorders including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, ADHD and Alzheimer's disease."

## And finally... Welsh history

The dulcet tones of Cardiff alumnus Huw Edwards, heard most evenings on the BBC's *News at 10*, can now be heard fronting an online educational resource for young people in Wales and beyond.

Following the success his *The Story of Wales* series, a series of mini-documentaries on Welsh history have been made for the Welsh Assembly Government's virtual learning hub, HWB.

The documentaries will "convey some of the colour, vibrancy and excitement of Wales's turbulent past", according to Senior Lecturer in Early Modern and Welsh History, Dr Lloyd Bowen. "It is hoped that this initiative will provide teachers and schoolchildren with a resource that can help enhance their experience and understanding of Welsh history." To watch the documentaries, take a look at

<https://hwb.wales.gov>.



# university view

## Combining excellence with enjoyment

Professor Patricia Price is Cardiff University's Pro Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience and Academic Standards, and is tasked with ensuring the University produces well-rounded, flexible, mobile and highly employable individuals



As we prepare for another academic year, our aim is clear: the student experience at Cardiff must become a byword for excellence.

Whether we like it or not, higher education has had to change and operates in a completely different and evolving environment to the one when I was a fresh-faced undergraduate. Fees, rising expectations and an eye on future employment prospects continue to focus students' minds when choosing where and what to study.

Many different aspects of university life affect the experience of students - from the range of courses, the quality of teaching and academic support, and the provision of learning and library space to the opportunities for volunteering, and sport - not to mention where to see the best live bands or finding the best deal on where to eat out.

Cardiff has a solid foundation - matched with ambitions for excellence. In the recent National Student Survey (NSS) we recorded our highest level of overall student satisfaction and the latest *Sunday Times University Guide* saw us back in the top 20 of UK

Universities, cementing our place as best in Wales.

Crucially, *The Sunday Times* emphasises that Cardiff University has one of the highest rates of graduate employment in the UK. Our students don't just get 'any old job'; most secure degree-level posts with decent starting salaries. However, we must continue - and do more - to deliver graduates who are delighted with their experience and are highly employable. The many alumni volunteers who are now starting to mentor our students are playing an important part in this - for which we are very grateful - and together with our new student employability hub bringing together volunteering and skills enhancement, as well as the Cardiff Award we are making great strides.

As all of you will no doubt remember, an essential part of the Cardiff student experience is having fun. We will produce graduates who are well-rounded, flexible, mobile and highly employable, many with work based and/or international experience. Most of all however they will have delighted in their experience. Excellent and enjoyable. That must be the Cardiff student experience.

# Development update

A round-up of the new developments made possible thanks to the support and generosity of our donors



## The music must go on

When Cardiff-born Gareth Hughes (*above*) left home to go to University as an undergraduate in London, before completing a masters in Birmingham, little did he know that the generosity of a Cardiff University student who had graduated 80 years before him would bring him back to his home city to do a PhD in Music Composition.

David William Thomas (also known as David Wynne) graduated from the Cardiff School of Music in 1928, and was determined when he died that another music student should get the opportunity to follow in his footsteps. It was with that aim that he left a legacy to establish the David Wynne and Eirwen Thomas Scholarship Fund in his and his wife's memory.

His foresight has enabled Gareth, a talented pianist, to undertake a PhD at Cardiff, with the Scholarship supporting his fees and a modest maintenance grant towards his living expenses.

"The Scholarship has enabled me to do a PhD full-time rather than part-time, or even not at all," says Gareth. "It has helped me to focus fully on my research and composition over a concentrated period of time."

Gareth has written one large orchestral piece, as well as working on workshops with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

"This has been an invaluable experience, learning about the practicalities and reality of working with musicians and instruments with a professional orchestra," says Gareth.

True to his Welsh roots, some of Gareth's research is focused on Welsh language texts and pre-Christian Celtic mythology – the Mabinogion. He has also written a chamber piece based on the tale of Blodeuwedd, the flower girl who is turned into an owl.

"I'm really grateful to the generosity of Mr Wynne," says Gareth. "As a music scholar himself he would have understood how much is involved in doing a PhD and how difficult it is to get funding for musical activities. I'd have liked to have the opportunity to thank him so much for the opportunity he's given me. Many things have changed since 1928, but I hope through pursuing a career in music after I finish my PhD his musical spirit and generosity will continue through my compositions and my work."

## Wartime scholarship helps scientist

James Robinson started his PhD in 2009 with help from the John Evan Williams Bequest. The scholarship, which was established in 1942, takes care of James's tuition fees and also provides a generous stipend.

"I can focus entirely on my studies, without any financial worries," says James (*below*), whose research in the Cardiff School of Chemistry is developing new models and methods for the calculation of the electronic structures of small molecular systems.

"It's the electronic structure that primarily determines a system's chemical properties," says James. "Not only is there interest in this problem within academia, it's also relevant to the pharmaceutical industry."

James's research over the last few years has culminated in a computer programme that is now available within the widely used Molpro quantum chemistry software package.

"Mr Williams' bequest has enabled me to help solve a problem many years later," says James. "Legacies really can have a long-term effect on helping to improve knowledge and all our lives long after someone has passed away."



## Largest fundraising appeal in Welsh university history

Cardiff University's Vice-Chancellor has made the largest ever fundraising appeal to alumni by a Welsh university. Through a direct mail campaign, Professor Colin Riordan will for the first time in Cardiff University's history implore former students in the UK and overseas – 65,000 in total – to donate money towards scholarships for prospective students.

In his message, the Vice-Chancellor writes of his determination to help as many deserving students as possible to come to Cardiff, undeterred by financial obstacles: "Cardiff University has always been open to everyone who has the talent and desire to succeed. For students, past and present, this has always been the case and I am resolute that it must stay that way.

"We need to continue attracting the best and brightest students, irrespective of their background. The University subsidises tuition

fees as much as it can. But now more than ever, maintaining our ability to change lives by providing access to higher education depends on philanthropic support for scholarships."

In his appeal, the Vice-Chancellor emphasises that going to university today can seem to many prospective students a daunting financial commitment.

"By helping extend our scholarship scheme, our alumni are enabling us to provide additional opportunities for students, ensuring that Cardiff maintains a diverse and vibrant student community," he said.

Each donation pack is personalised with old *Gair Rhydd* newspaper stories published during the time they attended the university.

*Find out more about the appeal by taking a look at [www.cardiff.ac.uk/supportstudents](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/supportstudents)*

## Long term benefits

Leaving a legacy to Cardiff University is a wonderful way of celebrating your own life or the memory of a loved one. Endowed gifts are simple to set up in your Will, and they generate income year on year in perpetuity, enabling you to support students at the University for future generations.

For information about helping students at **Cardiff University** through your Will, contact **Eleanor Hewett** in complete confidence: **HewettE@cardiff.ac.uk** or telephone **029 2087 0372**



## Student Alumni Awards

Cardiff University's Alumni Awards enable students to carry out further study that would have otherwise been beyond their financial means

### Rotten luck

Final year PhD student Matt Dray likes nothing more than watching leaves rot, and with his financial award he was able to travel to the University of York to use specialised research equipment.

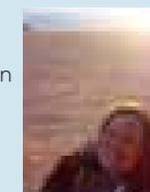


"I'm looking at how the increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is altering the way leaves decompose as leaf litter," says Matt. "Spending time in York meant I could improve on my thesis, and also gave me the opportunity to study with the eminent Professor Sue Hartley, Director of the York Environmental Institute at the University of York.

"My scientific skillset has been greatly improved, as have my chances of securing work opportunities in the future."

### Beyond the wall

Caitlin Maggs, who was busy collecting her graduation gown when we spoke to her, was able to visit the Middle East to further her understanding of the notoriously turbulent region.



"I really wanted to visit Jordan, Palestine and Israel to inspire me as part of my English Literature degree," says Caitlin.

"The funding has allowed me to learn from a community that is as much alien as it is familiar. The experience has not only benefitted me professionally by opening doors for future careers in teaching and writing, but also personally. None of this would have happened without my Alumni Award."



*From fertilisers to clean fuels, catalysts play a key role in industrial chemistry. Now Cardiff scientists are pioneering their development as partners in the new UK Catalysis Hub, discovers Andy Ridgway*

Stephen Kill FBIPP Bsc/Harwell

# Accelerating change

**T**hey play a vital role in the production of 80 per cent of manufactured goods, and one third of the global population wouldn't be alive today without them – our world would be a very different place without catalysts. Now Cardiff University has cemented its position at the forefront of catalysis research by being one of the founders of the UK Catalysis Hub – a world-leading centre for catalysis research.

Catalysts are materials that either speed up a chemical reaction or enable one to take place. Through a detailed understanding and careful use of catalysis, many processes can be made faster, cleaner, more economical and more sustainable. Most of us associate them with our cars and their 'catalytic converters'. These devices, which form part of the exhaust system, contain tiny particles of precious metals such as platinum that act

as catalysts - quickly converting the toxic by-products of combustion, such as carbon monoxide, into less toxic substances. In doing so, the precious metals aren't changed – the other key characteristic of a catalyst.

As well as cleaning up pollution, catalysts are involved with the production of everything from raincoats to mobile phone cases, and play a vital role in growing the food needed to sustain our burgeoning global population. "Catalysts are required to create fertilisers and we'd not be able to grow the crops we do without them," says Professor Graham Hutchings, who is co-leader at the UK Catalysis Hub and Director of the Cardiff Catalysis Institute.

The Hub is located at Harwell Oxford, a science, innovation and business campus 16 miles south of Oxford, and will allow scientists to develop and understand catalytic processes like never before. The research

that takes place there will help to solve some important problems. "The effective use of energy, access to clean water and the remediation of carbon dioxide are three of the biggest challenges we face," says Professor Hutchings. All these challenges, along with many more, will be tackled at the Hub.

Some exciting – and rather surprising – solutions are being investigated. Among them is the idea of converting the greenhouse

gas carbon dioxide into alcohol. If the Hub can develop the right catalysts, they could be used to turn carbon dioxide from high-output sources, such as coal-fired power stations, into a mixture of alcohols including ethanol. "You could imagine a chemical plant built next to a power plant so you don't have to transport the trapped carbon dioxide elsewhere," says Professor Stan Golunski from the Cardiff School of Chemistry, who will also carry out research at the Hub. The alcohol produced wouldn't end up in our gin and tonics – it would be used as a fuel.

The scientists at Cardiff University are well placed to take a central role at the Hub as its School of Chemistry is already home to a world-renowned catalysis facility – the Cardiff Catalysis Institute. It has Professor Hutchings as its director and Professor Golunski as its

deputy director. In all, researchers from over 30 institutions work at the Hub, a facility made possible thanks to a £12.9 million investment by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC).

It's by uniting this scientific talent that the Hub will achieve its goals. "There are really big problems that need the expertise of more than one research group to solve," explains Professor Hutchings. "We want people to work as a team:

they will have much more scientific weight than if they were working individually."

Some of the catalysis research will be conducted at the Hub's own labs, but it will also coordinate research at the partner institutions. Its location at Harwell Oxford means its researchers will have access to a raft of impressive

facilities. Among them is the Diamond Light Source. Here, particles are accelerated to near the speed of light so they produce intense beams of light that can be used to investigate the structure and properties of molecules such as catalysts.

In short, the Hub will push research into new fields as well as improving the work of existing catalysts. "The idea is to do exciting catalysis in a new way," sums up Professor Hutchings. ■

**Andy Ridgway is deputy editor of science and technology magazine *BBC Focus*.**

## 5 ways the UK Catalysis Hub could change the world

### Turning water into fuel

A catalyst that can split water into hydrogen and oxygen with the help of sunlight is a key target for researchers at the Hub. The hydrogen could then be used as a clean fuel. There are already some water-splitting catalysts but they need ultra-violet light to work. Simply being able to use the Sun's rays would make it much more economic.

### Cleaning up car exhausts

Catalysts that would enhance the abilities of catalytic converters at removing carbon-containing soot from diesel car exhaust gases are being investigated. The catalysts would combine the carbon with oxygen, and while a small amount of CO<sub>2</sub> would be produced, this would be outweighed by the drop in asthma-causing carbon particulates.

### Transforming CO<sub>2</sub> into alcohol

The greenhouse gas carbon dioxide can be turned into alcohol by reacting it with hydrogen – after all, alcohol is an arrangement of carbon, oxygen and hydrogen atoms. If a catalyst can be found that does this effectively, it would provide a use for the CO<sub>2</sub> produced by fossil fuel-burning power stations. The resulting alcohol would be used as fuel.

### Making industry more efficient

Many catalytic processes in industry require high temperatures and pressures. But all living things contain catalysts – enzymes – that work under much milder conditions. The Hub will investigate whether some of these can replace industrial catalysts.

### Transforming wood into fuel

When the forestry industry plants fast-growing trees to be chopped down for timber, some of the wood, such as the sawdust and branches, is not used. At the Hub the hunt is on for catalysts that would convert that solid material into a liquid fuel – alcohol.





# winning ideas

*From tackling teen smoking to shaping the BBC's news agenda, four Cardiff projects have been recognised for their impact and innovation*

Thinkstock

## Taking the glow off lighting up

**Innovation in Healthcare AWARD**

**How role model teenagers can help stub out smoking**

The Innovation in Healthcare Award, received by Cardiff's Professor Laurence Moore and Professor Rona Campbell from the University of Bristol, was for the ASSIST Programme, which helps to discourage teens from starting to smoke through a network of influential peers.

"Most smokers begin in their teens," begins Professor Moore from the University's School of Social Sciences. "The hard part is working out how these teenagers can best pick up messages that guide them away from starting to smoke at this age."

Teachers may seem an obvious choice, but they may not be trained in this area, or may even be smokers themselves. Adult advice to teenagers is also notoriously prone to falling on deaf ears. In developing the ASSIST programme, the team realised their best chance of success was to work with influential teenagers in each school, who could best pass on positive messages in ways their peers felt comfortable with.

The Medical Research Council funded the initial research as well as the eventual trials, which took place in 59 schools in South East Wales and the Bristol area. Researchers identified influential teenagers in each class by asking questions about who the students looked up to, who they respected, and who they thought was a good leader.

"Teenagers gain influence for different reasons," continues Professor Moore. "They might be mature for their age, good at sport, or spend time with older children. We realised this group, with some training, were able to pass on anti-smoking messages to those they mixed with during free time at school, at parties or through social media."

### THE RESULTS

Since the ASSIST programme was rolled out in 2008, licenced by the spinout company DECIPHer Impact Ltd, an estimated 65,000 students have taken part in the programme, with an estimated reduction of 1,350 smokers. To date, 27 licences have been sold to Primary Care Trusts and Local Authorities across the UK. The programme has been recommended by the National Institute of Health and Clinical Guidance (NICE).

### KEY PLAYERS

Cardiff School of Social Sciences, DECIPHer Impact Ltd, schools in South Wales and Bristol. Funding from the Medical Research Council, with trial sites in Public Health Wales, NHS Bristol and Tower Hamlets Borough Council. The Welsh Government and Smoke Free Southwest were original licensees and early adopters.

The University's annual Innovation and Impact Awards recognise the pioneering research and innovative business collaborations that lead directly to improvements in our everyday lives. This year's awards, held in May, focused on the fields of healthcare, business and society, with winners helping to improve neighbourhood policing results, reduce the numbers of teen smokers in schools, change the way post-devolution politics is reported on the BBC, and form lasting partnerships between a major local employer, students and scientists.

The Awards are organised by the Cardiff University Innovation Network ([www.innovation-network.org.uk](http://www.innovation-network.org.uk)), which have given academic staff the opportunity to showcase their innovative programmes of work since 1996.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Colin Riordan said: "These are some of the best examples of how Cardiff's research, collaborations and partnerships are having a real impact on society, healthcare and industry. We are committed to sharing our world-leading research with organisations, businesses and communities to help them grow and succeed."



## Revving up the motor industry

**Business Innovation AWARD**

**How a novel collaboration made savings for Ford and provided invaluable student experience**

What's the best way for industry and academia to work together? For Cardiff University and automotive giant Ford, the answer was to create a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP), placing a postgraduate with the company for two years to tackle business challenges, mentored by a member of academic staff from the Cardiff School of Computer Science & Informatics.

"Our first meeting with Ford in 2009 stemmed from a Cardiff alumnus suggesting there might be some common ground between Ford and the University," says Professor Phil Bowen, Director of the Cardiff School of Engineering. "This kind of meeting is a kind of courtship ritual – universities are keen to show off their research experience, while companies want the best skills and graduates."

"The result was a number of projects in association with three University Schools - Engineering, Computer Science & Informatics, and Architecture - including an outbound engine traceability system that has resulted in significant savings per year, and the development of a modern, data-warehouse based system of reporting for the engine plant at Bridgend.

"What companies get out of this kind of partnership is an independent view on their day-to-day issues, improved profitability, and not to forget the human element: good graduates for their future workforce. And for students, direct involvement with companies gives them a huge boost in terms of real-world learning."

Paul Thomas, Business Manager at Cardiff University, added: "The KTP Office at Cardiff has an excellent track record, with no less than 23 current partnerships – that's, fourth in the UK for KTP activity." 

### THE RESULTS

The KTP resulted in improved production processes and estimated savings of £220,000, with key lessons being rolled out across Ford's sites. Based on this success, Ford placed another three KTPs with the University, this time using expertise from the School of Engineering - resulting in a total of four KTPs worth approximately £500,000.

### KEY PLAYERS

Cardiff School of Computer Science & Informatics, Cardiff School of Engineering and the Welsh School of Architecture, Ford Motor Company.

**“What companies get out of this kind of partnership is an independent view on their day-to-day issues, improved profitability, and not to forget the human element: good graduates for their future workforce”**



## Helping police crack crime

**Social, Cultural or Policy Impact AWARD**

**Changing the way the police respond to crime and disorder within communities in South Wales**

Professor Martin Innes, who heads the Universities' Police Sciences Institute, was presented with the Award for Social, Cultural or Policy Impact for work that focused on neighbourhood policing and tackling antisocial behaviour.

"The key innovation that we've developed here at Cardiff University is its local nature," says Professor Innes. "It is a partnership between a local university and a local police force, and no one has ever done that before."

"We were doing some work with South Wales Police, where we went out and interviewed members of the public about their concerns and priorities for policing across the whole city. In the course of these interviews we started to pick up community intelligence about concerns about a local drug market in a particular part of the city. That led to Operation Michigan, which was a major crackdown on Cardiff drugs offenders that led to dozens of convictions.

"The Universities' Police Sciences Institute was also asked by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary to take a look at victim outcomes: what do victims think about how they're policed and the service they receive? Based on that, we were able to say to the police: 'Here are four key things that you can do, that really work for victims.' And by implementing that, we now know that the police are more effective in terms of responding to the needs of victims of antisocial behaviour."

Professor Innes' work has also informed the 'Prevent' counter-terrorism strategy for the UK and overseas. 

### THE RESULTS

The research led to a shift in policy across the whole of England and Wales, and a change in direction in the way that the police did business. South Wales Police enforced a major drug operation - Operation Michigan - which resulted in 184 arrests, prison sentences totalling 200 years, six kilograms of heroin, crack and cocaine being seized, plus a 36% reduction in acquisitive crime and a 25% reduction of acts of antisocial behaviour.

### KEY PLAYERS

Universities' Police Sciences Institute (part of the Cardiff School of Sciences), South Wales Police.

## Unbiased reporting

**Regional Impact AWARD**

**Reshaping the BBC news agenda to reflect post-devolution politics**

The BBC Trust commissioned Cardiff University to research how news was covered on its various channels post devolution. With different policy regimes in Wales, Scotland, England and Northern Ireland, the Trust recognised the importance of reflecting this new reality through their news. After analysing more than 4,500 news items on BBC network television and radio news, factual programmes and BBC online news, the researchers found shortcomings in both quality and accuracy.

Dr Stephen Cushion, of the University's School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies received the Regional Impact Prize along with Professor Justin Lewis. Dr Cushion said: "There seemed to be lazy reporting in terms of the different countries. For example, mention of a Minister for Education wasn't followed by their geographical remit, so viewers in Wales would be left unsure about whether the news story was about decisions being made by government in London or Cardiff, and how this would affect them."

Examples also showed breakdowns of confidence in the NHS in England, but at no point was the viewer informed that this only affected England, leading to a lack of accurate information for the viewer. *The King Report*, which featured the University's findings, led to a series of recommendations for the BBC to adopt.

"One of the most satisfying parts of the research is that the research we produced for *The King Report* is now featured on the BBC College website, so journalists can go to this site to check they are reporting devolution in an accurate way," said Dr Cushion.

"This was a profound moment for the BBC," concludes Rhodri Talfan Davies, Director of BBC Cymru Wales. "We realised we couldn't continue to see devolutionary matters as a peripheral issue: they were absolutely at the heart of the way we told stories about the UK." 

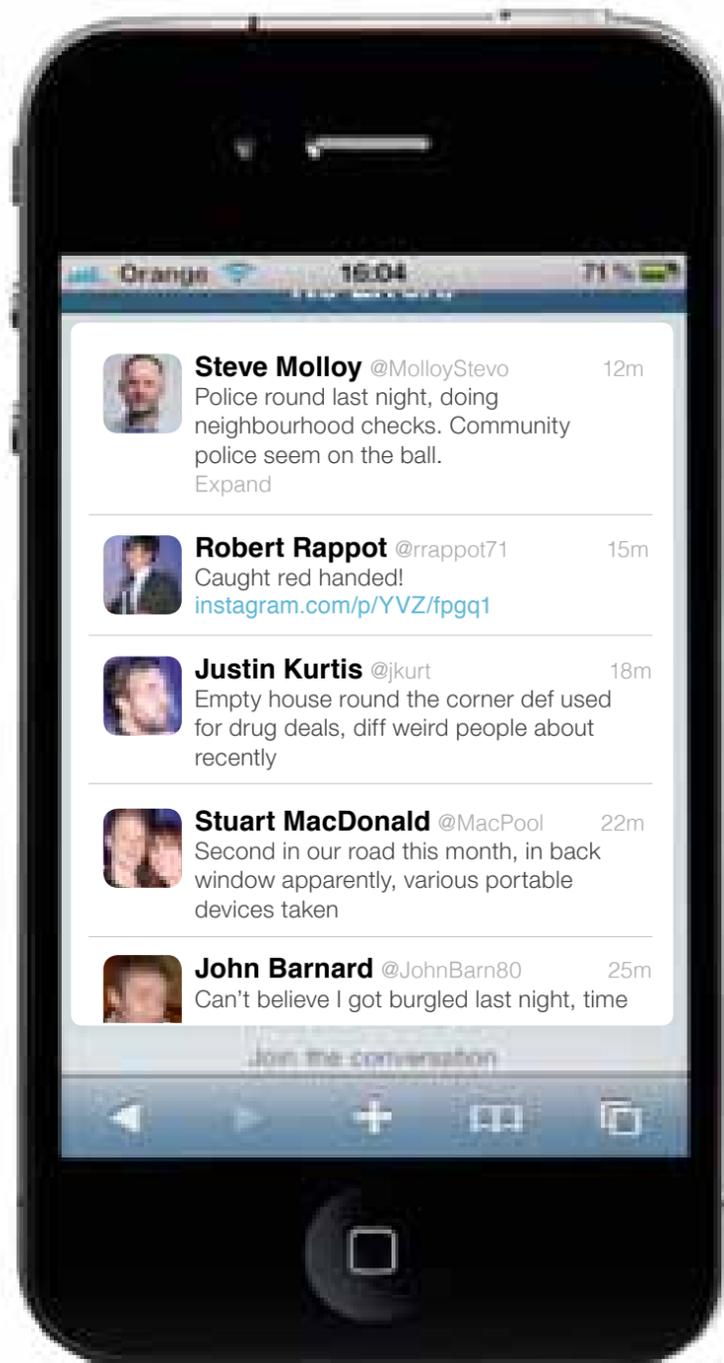
### THE RESULTS

Follow-up research in 2009 found that BBC coverage had become more attuned to the new world of devolved UK politics, including an increase in reporting from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

### KEY PLAYERS

Cardiff School of Journalism, BBC Trust.





# Talking the beat

*Social network platforms such as Twitter are giving scientists and the police the opportunity to pre-empt criminal activity. Welcome to Neighbourhood Watch, 21st century-style*

Images: Alamy

Can browsing Twitter help track and prevent crime? That's the theory being tested by a team at Cardiff University. With hundreds of millions of online social interactions taking place each day, there's a massive drive to harvest and use this 'big data', with implications for social and computer scientists, law enforcement agencies and governments around the world.

There are currently 400 million tweets each day on Twitter worldwide, of which COSMOS – the Collaborative Online Social Media Observatory at Cardiff University – is able to mine, store and analyse between one and 10%. The percentage may sound small, but this still equates to a colossal amount of data. By 2020, it is estimated that social scientists will have access to the largest data source on the planet, meaning the potential for research is enormous.

Dr Matthew Williams is Senior Lecturer in Criminology at the School of Social Sciences: "We have created a digital data observatory that automatically – and ethically – harvests data from social media and other open digital sources such as the Office for National Statistics. The data analysis tools developed so far for COSMOS include gender, location, frequency, network, topic, sentiment and tension analysis. These tools were initially validated in a pilot study that focused on racial tension on Twitter."

Professor Omer Rana at the School of Computer Science and Informatics: "For academic use, and with permission from Twitter, you can mine up to 10% of this data each day for free, via the 'gardenhose' – the key challenge is how to store and scale the analysis of all this data. If you had the capacity to store and analyse it, even 100% of this data is available to use, but for the sum of around £40,000 a day!"

Having access to this type of information is a sea change to the kind of data social scientists are used to analysing. For example, the census is taken only every 10 years, and other surveys might be taken every one or two years. These new

data are distinctive in capturing naturally occurring social interaction at the level of populations in near real time. Consequently they offer the possibility of studying social processes as they unfold.

Existing COSMOS projects are using this data to research the potential link between social media updates and crime, hate speech and suicide.

So what about the direct uses for this kind of data, surely recent news regarding the National Security Agency in the USA and GCHQ in the UK is going to make people more suspicious of 'organised snooping'?

Dr Pete Burnap of the School of Computer Science and Informatics: "A recent example of the use of this data was after the murder in Woolwich of Drummer Lee Rigby. We harvested 450,000 Woolwich-related tweets in the weeks following the incident. This enables us to analyse the opinion and reaction of those watching the news."

"Our research into racial tension around sporting events shows that there is a link between real-world actions and social tensions expressed via social media. Likewise, we have observed increased levels of cohesion between Twitter users in relation to the London 2012 Olympics. Through COSMOS we can now scientifically and empirically formulate and conduct social science experiments that are replicable by researchers across the globe."

The COSMOS team are currently

**“Having access to this type of information is a sea change to the kind of data that social scientists are used to analysing”**

working with the Metropolitan Police to see if they can gauge and perhaps even predict crime in certain boroughs in London, and with Google to see if they can identify the spread of hate speech in social media.

"In the near future we plan to expand upon this work to look at

## in numbers

**500 million**  
Twitter users globally

**80% UK**  
Twitter users on mobile devices

**400 million**  
Tweets per day globally

**4 million**  
Tweets collected each day at Cardiff University

**2.5 billion**  
Tweets on the COSMOS database to date

**10 billion**  
Projected size of COSMOS database by 2020

**47% UK**  
18-24 year old internet users have a Twitter profile

potential links with voting behaviour, using the Scottish referendum as a case study," Dr Williams continues. "Our ultimate aim is to establish an International Centre for Social Media Research that is fit for purpose for

research in the 21st Century, that will provide a much needed service to academics and policy and decision makers globally." ■

Read about recent research at [cosmosproject.net](http://cosmosproject.net) and follow on Twitter @cosmos\_project



# Into the wild

*Take 90 first-year archaeology students into the woods, give them a dead rabbit and some flour, and what do you get? One of the best weekends of their lives, reports Tom Burnett*

**T**he biggest shock of all was when we took their mobile phones off them!" says Ian Dennis, from the Cardiff School of History, Archaeology and Religion, recalling the survival weekend he recently helped organise for first year archaeology students. "Just imagine, 90 students, many of whom had never even been camping before, suddenly dumped in the middle of nowhere on the Gower, for a whole weekend!"

Led by Swansea-based wilderness trainers Dryad Bushcraft, the trip was designed to teach students basic outdoor skills (handy for future

excavations), and an appreciation of how ancient man fended for himself. "And it was also just a good excuse to spend a night under the stars, away from all the modern comforts students are used to," adds Ian wryly.

Once their mobile phones had been confiscated, the students were re-equipped by Dryad's experts.

"We gave them supplies, including an unskinned rabbit, some flour and some beer," continues Ian, "as well as the essentials you need in order to survive in the forest, such as a good knife. They had to build their own shelters for the night, cook meals, prepare camps, you name it."

"It's surprising what you can make from the survival pack we gave each team," said Andrew Price, who runs Dryad Bushcraft. "We had rabbit stew, unleavened bread made from the beer and flour, lots of wild herbs and plants gathered from the forest. You're literally surrounded by things you can eat or use in different ways. It's only in recent history that people have relied more on what you can get from the chemist than what is growing around you. In fact, many of the things you still find in your bathroom cupboard are derived from these plants, roots and so on."

Dryad also offer courses in primitive living, which include lessons

in flint knapping – making tools such as hand axes, blades and arrow heads. Ian is keen to bring more of Cardiff's archaeology students on courses such as these, which help them understand ancient hunting and survival techniques.

"I'm hoping to bring 14 students to meet and learn from a professional flint knapper. This is a skill only mastered by a few. The knowledge that goes into creating what may look like a simple arrow is astounding; the students love watching something they may have found on an archaeological dig being created before their eyes." And this time, they might even be allowed to keep their mobile phones on... **Tom Burnett graduated from Cardiff University in 1992, and is now a freelance journalist.**

Photos from top left: Rick cutting firewood; Andrew and Rick, Dryad's able instructors; Archaeology students are shown how to skin a rabbit, (Ian Dennis is standing, right); Dryad's green man; Arrowheads made by flint-knapping.

## Firelighting in 5 easy steps

**Tom Burnett (above left) discovers the secret of 'man's red flower'**

**1. Take it slow** "Firstly, be organised and take your time," says Dryad's Andrew Price (above right). "Making a fire is the first thing you do when you set up a camp, but if you rush it, it won't work." So we spend half an hour scavenging for bits of dead wood, from thin twigs to branches the width of your wrist. They're best if still attached to trees, as they're less likely to be rotten.

**2. Build a 'raft'** A twig 'raft' keeps the base of the fire off the damp ground, and helps to encourage airflow beneath the soon-to-be smouldering structure.

**3. Get smouldering** Andrew then uses his trusty fire lighting tools – half board, drill, bow, bearing block and a limpet shell – to create smouldering dust that he transfers to a readied tinder bundle, or what looks like a nest to you and I.

**4. Blow and build** With a bit of puff from yours truly, before you know it we have fire! This is placed on the twig raft and then covered with sticks that increase in size as the fire takes. "Forget all that pyramid fire building stuff," says Andrew, "if you were building a house would you build the roof first?"

**5. Put the kettle on** In a few minutes we're sitting back, waiting for the kettle to boil. Needless to say, when I try lighting a fire this way later in the day, I don't have quite the success that Andrew had, but it's got to be said, I'm hooked on this survival lark...



# Shaping public policy in Wales

## Llunio polisi cyhoeddus yng Nghymru

*From October, a new public policy hub will be run from within Cardiff University*

Before the last Welsh Government elections, the Labour Party included in its manifesto a desire to set up a body that would enable government ministers to work with experts in public policy from universities in Wales and beyond.



"The reasons behind the formation of this new body are twofold," begins Cardiff Business School's Professor Steve Martin, who will lead the organisation.

"While the civil service in Wales has considerable expertise, it has shrunk over the past few years, meaning there is no longer quite the capacity for the kind of strategic thinking necessary in public policy. Secondly, there is sometimes a danger of 'group thinking' within civil services, so we'll be offering a wider point of view."

The Institute will be run from Cardiff University, which has a rich history of working with the Welsh Government in matters of public policy. It will provide an independent point of view in areas of public policy throughout Wales, and will act as a centre for research commissioned from Cardiff and 27 other research centres around Wales, the UK, and eventually internationally.

"We're in the process of planning our body of work," says Professor Martin, "but it's likely we'll focus on local authorities and the need for restructuring, as well as other elements of policy in education, agriculture, healthcare and local government."

"Being asked to lead this new body represents a considerable coup for Cardiff. There's a huge amount of expertise in public policy research across the University, and we hope to be able to provide some of the 'unthinkable thinking' that's needed in a constantly changing society."

As a University we occupy a very unique place in Wales, and we are committed to doing much more to ensure those students who wish to use their Welsh language skills whilst studying for their degree can do so. Students at Cardiff can choose Welsh medium modules in eight of the University's Schools, with further provision being developed in four more.

The Cardiff University Branch of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol has more than 200 student members and meets quarterly to discuss Welsh medium academic developments across the University's three Colleges. With funding from the Coleg Cymraeg the branch has set up an office and video conferencing facility to facilitate a collaborative approach to Welsh medium provision.

## *O fis Hydref, caiff canolfan polisi cyhoeddus newydd ei chynnal o Brifysgol Caerdydd*

Cyn etholiadau diwethaf Llywodraeth Cymru, cynhwysodd y Blaid Lafur awydd yn ei manifesto i sefydlu corff a fyddai'n galluogi gweinidogion y llywodraeth i weithio gydag arbenigwyr ym maes polisi cyhoeddus o brifysgolion yng Nghymru a thu hwnt.

"Mae'r rhesymau sydd ynghlwm wrth ffurfio'r corff newydd hwn yn ddeublyg," esbonia'r Athro Steve Martin, o Ysgol Fusnes Caerdydd, a fydd yn arwain y sefydliad. "Er bod gan y gwasanaeth sifil yng Nghymru gryn arbenigedd, mae wedi crebachu dros yr ychydig flynyddoedd diwethaf, sy'n golygu nad oes eithaf cymaint o gapasiti ar gyfer y math o feddwl strategol y mae ei angen mewn polisi cyhoeddus. Yn ail, mae perygl o 'feddwl torfol' mewn gwasanaethau sifil weithiau, felly byddwn yn cynnig safbwynt ehangach."

Caiff y sefydliad ei gynnal o Brifysgol Caerdydd, sydd â hanes cyfoethog o weithio gyda Llywodraeth Cymru ar faterion yn ymwneud â pholisi cyhoeddus. Bydd yn cynnig safbwynt annibynnol o ran meysydd polisi cyhoeddus ledled Cymru, a bydd yn gweithredu fel canolfan ar gyfer ymchwil a gomisiynir yng Nghaerdydd a 27 o ganolfannau ymchwil eraill ledled Cymru, y DU, ac ym mhedwar ban byd yn y pen draw.

"Rydym wrthi'n cynllunio ein hamrediad o waith," meddai'r Athro Martin, "ond y tebygolrwydd yw y byddwn yn canolbwyntio ar awdurdodau lleol a'r angen am ailstrwythuro, yn ogystal ag elfennau eraill o bolisi ym meysydd addysg, amaethyddiaeth, gofal iechyd a llywodraeth leol."

"Mae'r ffaith y gofynnwyd i ni arwain y corff newydd hwn yn dipyn o gamp i Gaerdydd. Mae arbenigedd mawr ym maes ymchwil polisi cyhoeddus ar draws y Brifysgol, a gobeithiwn y byddwn yn gallu cynnig rhywfaint o'r 'meddwl meddylgar' y mae ei angen mewn cymdeithas sy'n newid yn gyson."

Fel Prifysgol, mae gennym le unigryw iawn yng Nghymru ac rydym yn ymrwymo i wneud mwy o lawer i sicrhau bod y myfyrwyr hynny sy'n awyddus i ddefnyddio eu sgiliau iaith Gymraeg wrth astudio ar gyfer eu gradd yn gallu gwneud hynny. Gall myfyrwyr yng Nghaerdydd ddewis modiwlau cyfrwng Gymraeg yn wyth o Ysgolion y Brifysgol, ac mae darpariaeth bellach yn cael ei datblygu mewn pedair ysgol arall.

Mae gan gangen Prifysgol Caerdydd o'r Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol dros 200 o aelodau sy'n fyfyrwyr ac mae'n cyfarfod bob chwarter i drafod datblygiadau academaidd drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg ar draws tri Choleg y Brifysgol. Gyda chyllid gan y Coleg Cymraeg, mae'r gangen wedi sefydlu cyfleuster swyddfa a chynadledda fideo i hwyluso ymagwedd gydweithredol at ddarpariaeth drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg.

# network

## news

Updates from Cardiff alumni worldwide



## Welcome

to the Cardiff Network. As I write this the Class of 2013 are graduating in the Cardiff sunshine with hopes for their futures and with many happy memories from their time in Cardiff.

The teaching and research they have undertaken at Cardiff will give them a great start in the working world; their successors will also have

the benefit of the advice and guidance that many of you are so generously willing to give through our new Alumni Mentoring and Placement Scheme. Over 50 students have been matched with alumni so far. Thank you all very much indeed.

This issue focuses on just some of the alumni with literary leanings – from successful crime and thriller writers to the latest member of the Richard & Judy Book Club – the talent amongst the Cardiff alumni community is varied and never-ending.

It seems I had better pack a few of their books in my hand-luggage this summer...

Sarah Price

Acting Director of Development & Alumni Relations

## This issue Literary alumni

We meet five Cardiff graduates with something to write about



### Jeni Oborn

Jeni's book, *The Image of Survival* (MALT Publishing, RRP: £8.99), tells of her courage in dealing with the cancer that she was diagnosed with at only 11 years of age. Find out about her extraordinary struggle and the effect it's had on her life on page 26.



### James Smythe

A man who enjoys the darker side of life, James has written four published novels, the latest of which, *The Machine* (Blue Door, RRP: £12.99), has been described as "a *Frankenstein* for the 21st century". Discover more about what makes James tick on page 26.



### John Rickards

John Rickards' first novel *Winter's End* (Penguin, RRP: £6.99) introduced the literary world to fictional Boston private investigator Alex Rourke. Rickard talks about how he became involved in writing as well as his love of neo-noir and cyberpunk on page 27.



### Simon Hall

BBC reporter Simon Hall began his series of crime novels with *The TV Detective* (Accent Press, RRP: £7.99), and he is currently in the process of writing his seventh and eighth books in the series. He talks about combining his two jobs on page 28.



### Jason Parlour

Blogger Jason has recently signed up for a round-the-world trip with a difference. He's one of the crew members on the next Clipper yacht race, and Jason will be keeping the wider world informed through writing frequent blogs and social media updates. Find out more on page 29.



## Jeni Oborn

### Philosophy and Cultural Criticism 2001-04

At the age of 14, Jeni Oborn was forced to deal with a situation far more frightening than typical teenage angst: that of cancer. What she initially thought was glandular fever turned out to be Hodgkins Lymphoma, a cancer that affects the lymph glands, initially in the neck and chest. Although the cancer was discovered relatively early, Jeni was soon enduring months of chemotherapy, hair loss and other side-effects.

"Being a teen is already hard enough, but having to think of life and death rather than hairstyles and boys makes life pretty hard. The cancer was completely out of the blue; nobody in my family had had that type, and it was, and remained, a struggle to understand 'why?'."

Already a thoughtful teen, once in remission Jeni had a hard time making sense of what had happened. "People were always saying how brave I was, but I didn't have a choice in the matter! I found it really hard to get on with my life, even though those around me, understandably, wanted to forget. The months and then years went by without the cancer returning, but I still couldn't understand why I had survived, and what I now had to do to deserve that survival."

Spells teaching English in China, several office jobs and setting up a conservation charity in Paraguay still didn't get rid of the need for "something impressive" in her life. But writing a memoir, *The Image of Survival*, finally gave her a way of coming to terms with the past, and helped Jeni understand that cancer had had a profound effect on her.

"A huge number of the things I've done wouldn't have happened without the illness happening first. Having survived something completely out of my control made me want to put myself in challenging situations that I could control."

As for the book, the modest first run of *The Image of Survival* almost sold out at the book launch in Wells, with all proceeds going to the cancer charity CLIC Sargent. A second print run has sold equally well.

## James Smythe

### English Literature (1998-2001), MA Creative Writing (2002), PhD Critical, Creative Writing (2003-08)

Although from London, James found the choice of where to spend his many years as a student an easy one. "My mum's from Bridgend so we were in Wales a lot as I grew up. I always knew what a friendly place it was, and although Cardiff was a capital city, I was confident I'd be extremely happy there."

This love of the city continued through a decade of learning, as Cardiff offered James (*below*) the creative outlets he was always on the look out for. "There was a club called The Toucan which was a brilliant hub for creative writing – the open mic night each week was really popular with students and the public alike. It was round the corner from Clwb Ifor Bach, and what a venue that is!"

James had to write a body of creative work as part of his PhD, the result was a twisted family saga of a novel titled *Hereditation*, which was published by Welsh publishing house Parthion. James has since written three further books, including *The Machine*, which was published in April this year.

One reviewer described *The Machine* as 'very dark, very convincing'. James says: "I knew from when I first started to write that I wanted to make people feel something, that I wouldn't be happy to let the reader get comfortable."

It would seem that teenagers who have Stephen King as their favourite author don't generally become writers of easy-reads for the beach, and James has obviously found a fan base amongst those who prefer the less comfortable side of life.



## John Rickards

### BEng Environmental Engineering 1996-99

By his own admission, John Rickards' first attempt at a book was "absolutely terrible". Begun in his second year at Cardiff, while reading a lot and writing in his spare time, the book was never finished.

Although John still harboured ambitions to write a book after university, he says a spell as a freelance trade journalist actually taught him a huge amount.

"I ended up writing about shipping for a number of magazines and news publications. Quite how it happened I'm not sure, but it definitely taught me how to write quickly and accurately, as well as all about the structure of copy."

A decade on from his first complete book – thriller *Winter's End* – John has written four books following fictional Boston private investigator Alex Rourke, a couple of anthologies, as well as cyberpunk fiction via the pen name Sean Cregan.

"Cyberpunk can be described as 'high tech, low life'. Think *Blade Runner* crossed with William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, and everything dark in between."

As well as keeping himself busy with his many writing projects, John is also a freelance book editor, photographer and has recently set up a project that allows web users to read first chapters of books, uploaded from anyone, anywhere.

"No Names, No Jackets allows people to stick to the important bit, the words. If a book is badly branded by the publisher – with a dodgy cover for example – it can miss out on the readership that it was originally intended for. This site – [www.nonamesnojackets.com](http://www.nonamesnojackets.com) – allows people to get stuck into the words without any of the other distractions."

Within two weeks of the site's launch at the end of June, there were over 350 first chapters for the discerning reader to cast their eyes over. Keep an eye on this site: it may well be how you choose books in the future...



# Simon Hall

## Postgraduate Diploma in Journalism 1990-91

"It's funny how sometimes a curse can turn into a blessing," says Simon Hall (*below*), the BBC's Home Affairs Correspondent for the South West of England. "I was quite happy covering environmental issues – who wouldn't be in this beautiful part of the country? – when my boss 'invited' me to move to home affairs. I was gutted!"

But little did Simon know that this seemingly routine reshuffle would be much more than that; in fact it would completely alter his life.

"To begin with, I felt completely lost with court reporting, police procedures and the criminal activity I was following. Everyone else seemed so good at it. But slowly I got to grips with the subject matter, before becoming completely immersed in all things crime."

This new interest not only injected some work satisfaction into Simon's life, it also gave him the impetus to start his literary career. His *TV Detective* series has been a hit amongst fans of crime writing, and he is currently writing his seventh and eighth books.

"It's an amazing journey being a writer; you learn an awful lot about yourself as well as the world around you, which you're always seeking to research. Although my books may bear more than a slight resemblance to my own life, I'm very careful not to rely too heavily on fact when writing. Added to this, the local police, who I've come to know since becoming home affairs correspondent, have taken my books with the good humour I hoped. A TV reporter solving all the crimes committed on their patch could have been taken another way!"

Simon also holds writing workshops around the country and beyond, and teaches creative writing courses to sixth form students, and a lot of it comes down to his time studying journalism at Cardiff.

"It's a fantastic place to be a student, and the course is one of the best in the UK, if not the world."



## ALUMNI UPDATES

### Lessons from Fleet Street

Students working towards a BA in Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies were treated to some real world experience when three alumni shared their experiences and passed on some career advice.

The graduate panel comprised Hayley Dunlop, a senior press officer from *The Guardian*, successful fashion designer Josie Beckett, and Gary Andrews, Digital Campaigns Manager at Ruder Finn, with their tips including:

- Don't think you need to work for free to get the experience. Get a job – any job – and keep working.
- They're never 'informal chats'... they're always interviews.
- In your first job, make lots of cups of tea! You'll make friends and vital future contacts.
- Don't feel like you have to be on every social media site – work with what's comfortable for you.

### Welcomed with open arms

A service that links foreign students with hosts in the UK has been making a huge difference to the lives of many students heading to Wales. HOST runs a hospitality scheme that ensures students feel more at home in the UK and leave with a better understanding of the country. HOST's Margaret Stevens said: "We offer one-off invitations for a day, a weekend, or three days at Christmas. It's a simple way to make a big difference to someone's stay."

"It's the best way to learn British culture! I even got to feed their chickens!" said Florence (*above*) after her HOST visit. Find out more at [www.hostuk.org.uk](http://www.hostuk.org.uk)

### Wayne's rising star

Wayne Reynolds [MSc Planning Practice and Research (2007), MA Urban Design (2012)] has recently been named as a Rising Star for 2013 by *Wales Business Insider* magazine.

Now a director of the planning and design consultancy Atriarc Planning, Wayne began his career as a 'go to' consultant for difficult and stalled planning applications, before starting his own company.

"John Punter, from the Cardiff School of Planning and Geography, was a major influence on my career," says Wayne.



Jason Parlour learns the ropes on his second training day

## Jason Parlour

### MEng Mechanical Engineering 1996-99

While at Cardiff, Jason decided that his working life would go no further than 2012, which meant he was effectively aiming to take retirement at the age of 35.

This might seem unusual for a then student, as those studying at university are normally found worrying about where their working lives may take them, but being a self-confessed workaholic it seems that Jason will have fitted an entire career, if not two, into his busy schedule.

"While at Cardiff I was only sleeping for four and a half hours a night, which was all I needed. This gave me quite a bit of time to dedicate to the various projects I had on the go, including being a student warden, the coordinator for Nightline and running a couple of clubs and societies. And whenever there was time, I'd squeeze in meetings, get things going, manage emails and run from one diary appointment to the next."

Even now this pattern hasn't changed too much: Jason currently runs a massage therapy business, a luxury boutique hotel, a freelance photography business, a web development company and a small portfolio of rental properties.

"I've had five days off in the past three years," says Jason, "two Christmas days, a Boxing Day and two days off last May. I always enjoy

being busy, but I don't really like working, so I thought I might as well spend my time doing things that I enjoy. If things need doing that I don't enjoy, I employ someone else to do them!"

With early retirement beckoning later this year – just a year behind schedule – Jason had plans to drive his camper van to New Zealand, until he saw a poster on the Underground in London that was advertising for crew members to sail round the world.

"This just caught my imagination. The Clipper Round the World race begins on 1st September, the day I was to begin my retirement. I've never even been on a sailboat before, but signed up to sail all eight legs of the race – 40,000 miles – on the 70-foot yacht.

"I was a bit worried when my first day of sailing was in 55 knot winds, but now the training's been going well I'm just really looking forward to the event. The 11-month journey will take us to South America, then South Africa, Australia, China, San Francisco, through the Panama Canal, up to New York and then back to the UK – the list is pretty impressive!"

Jason will also be keeping the wider world informed while they travel, as the boat's media manager. Well, you didn't expect him just to sail did you?

To follow Jason's progress, take a look at [www.jasonparlour.com](http://www.jasonparlour.com)



# Life's a beach

Cardiff alumna **Lucy Clarke** combines travelling the world with writing in Dorset – and her debut novel *The Sea Sisters* has just been picked for the influential Richard & Judy Book Club. We caught up with her to enquire: could life get any better?

**You studied English Literature at Cardiff. What are your memories of the city and the course?**

When I moved to Cardiff I was 18 and it was the first time I'd lived in a city. Having grown up on the coast, I found the absence of the sea hard to begin with, but I soon fell in love with the beautiful architecture and lovely parks of Cardiff.

I would really like to tell you that I was the sort of student who sat beneath oak trees with a notepad on my knee scribbling ideas for my first novel. But I was actually the student at the back of the lecture hall chatting about what had happened the night before at *Jive Hive*.

**Which writers did you most enjoy studying while at Cardiff?**

I was surprised to find it was the classic writers like Charles Dickens, Jane Austen and Charlotte Bronte, whose work I enjoyed studying the most. Because our reading lists were so long, I remember picking a module because it only had one novel on the list: *Clarissa*, by Samuel Richardson. I just hadn't realised that *Clarissa* was 1,536 pages long.

**Did you write while you were at university, and if not, did you always know you would write at some stage?**

When I was in my second year of university, my housemate and I co-wrote the *Student Survival Guide*, which was a fun and light-hearted guide to student life. I loved the process of working on a book, albeit non-fiction in this case, but I didn't actually make the decision to be a novelist until I was about 24. I'd just returned from a six-month trip hiking and camping through America

and Canada, which had afforded me the space to think clearly about what I wanted to do with my career. It took me until I was 30 to sign my first book deal. I could paper a wall with the rejection letters I received along the way, but when good news finally landed, wow, did it feel great!

**How did you get the idea for *The Sea Sisters*?**

The idea that sparked *The Sea Sisters* came from my fascination with travel journals. I love the colourful places they've been written, the pages thick with smears of sunscreen and grains of sand. Whenever I travel, I keep a journal and I've often thought how intriguing and tempting it must be to read someone else's travel journal. What an insight it would give you into who they are. With this in mind, I asked myself two questions that were to be the fuel for the story: Who could the travel journal belong to? And, who finds it and why?

**Being chosen for the Richard & Judy Book Club is a massive boost for authors, how has it been for you?**

I was in the Philippines researching for my next novel when my editor called to say, "*The Sea Sisters* has been picked for the Richard & Judy Book Club!" I was so thrilled; I've always followed the book club and have found many of my favourite authors through it, so it was a huge privilege to have Richard

and Judy's stamp of approval on the cover of my novel. It's also wonderful news for sales because my novel is now in every WHSmith in the country during the summer months.

**Finally, your life sounds pretty idyllic. Is it as perfect as it sounds?**

I'm almost certain that nothing is ever quite as perfect as it sounds – though I must admit that right now, life is pretty good! I'm finally working as a full-time novelist and I spend my winters travelling [with professional windsurfer husband James Cox] and my summers at home in Dorset, writing from our family beach hut. It's taken a lot of hard work

**“Whenever I travel, I keep a journal and I've often thought how intriguing and tempting it must be to read someone else's travel journal”**

to get here, and there have been numerous rejections and disappointments along the way. With that in mind, I plan to get my head down and work as hard as I can so I can keep doing this as long as possible! 📖



Lucy Clarke studied English Literature at Cardiff University from 1999-2002. *The Sea Sisters* (Harper, £7.99) is out now.



# Watch us on YouTube

You'll find many of the people and schools featured in this issue of the Cardiff University Magazine on the University's YouTube page. Zoom inside the designs for the new Cardiff Business School building. Listen to students' memories of their Erasmus European exchanges. Meet the winners of the Innovation and Impact Awards, and find out more about Yves Barde, the world-leading neurobiologist coming to Cardiff. It's your University, brought to life.



[www.youtube.com/cardiffuni](http://www.youtube.com/cardiffuni)



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