



# The Independent

University of Buckingham Alumni Magazine  
Spring 2012



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# Alumni events



Welcome to the May issue of *The Independent*. In this issue I am very pleased to give you details of events we are arranging for

alumni during 2012. You will also be able to keep updated on the website ([www.buckingham.ac.uk/alumnnet](http://www.buckingham.ac.uk/alumnnet)) on these gatherings and any others.

On Wednesday 13 June we will be holding the Alumni Summer Party in London. We are lucky to hold this event in the State Rooms at Speaker's House again this year and our host will be the Rt Hon John Bercow, MP, Speaker of the House. The Vice-Chancellor Professor Terence Kealey will also be present as will representatives from UBAA who are helping to sponsor it.

The event will take place between 18.30-20.00 and there will be drinks and canapés. Please arrive in plenty of time as it does sometimes take a while to get through security at the House (as we discovered last year!).

Once you have registered on this link [www.buckingham.ac.uk/alumnnet/summer-party](http://www.buckingham.ac.uk/alumnnet/summer-party) we will send you a formal invitation so that you can gain entry to the event. We will be asking for a £12 contribution towards the reception as many people didn't turn up last year, meaning that those on our waiting list

missed the opportunity. We do hope this will be fairer for everyone.

In order to make more of an evening of it, we are booking 30 spaces at an Italian restaurant close to Speaker's House (Quirinale, [www.quirinale.co.uk](http://www.quirinale.co.uk)) and if you would like to come along to that please do let me know as soon as you can as I am sure the places will go quickly. We have booked a limited choice menu (drinks not included), so have a look on the link and make your choices. Payment can be made in advance (£35 per person) to make life easier. Again, the Vice-Chancellor will be there and very much hopes to see you.

Why not make a night of it by going on elsewhere afterwards? Try either the Cinnamon Club ([www.cinnamonclub.com/](http://www.cinnamonclub.com/)) or The Speaker ([www.pleisure.com/pubs-the-speaker.html](http://www.pleisure.com/pubs-the-speaker.html)) for drinks and dining – both are very close to Westminster.

On 19 June we will be holding a business breakfast in London. The speaker is Mark Allen (Law 1986), and the talk is entitled "Milkround – A Business Breakfast with Mark Allen, Chief Executive of Dairy Crest plc". Registration and coffee will be at 08.00 and breakfast and the guest speaker at 08.30. The event will be held at the Athenaeum Club in Pall Mall. Please email [alumni@buckingham.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@buckingham.ac.uk) as soon as you can if you wish to attend as the places are limited. This event is kindly supported by Ronel Lehmann (Business Studies 1986) and there will be no charge.

This autumn we will begin an annual event that we hope will prove successful. On 18 October we are inviting all alumni who were here between 1976 and 1980 to a dinner at the Royal Overseas League in London.

We have had an extremely good response so far but if you were here during those years and haven't yet seen this information, please do get in touch ([anne.matsuoka@buckingham.ac.uk](mailto:anne.matsuoka@buckingham.ac.uk)) if you are interested in attending. Detailed information will be sent to those who wish to attend in the next week or so.

If you would like further details on our lectures, or to be added to the mailing list, please contact Beth on [bethany.carter@buckingham.ac.uk](mailto:bethany.carter@buckingham.ac.uk). The lectures include Ed Smith, former cricketer and author/journalist with *The Times*, The Rt Hon John Bercow, the Speaker of the House of Commons, and Professor Saul David, lecturer in MA Military History at Buckingham.

Finally, on page 14-15 of this issue, you will find news on some of our overseas alumni who are very successful in their chosen careers. Should you have any thoughts on others we could involve in this new section of *The Independent* please don't hesitate to let us know.

With very best wishes to you all,

**Anne Matsuoka**

Head of Alumni Relations & Graduation  
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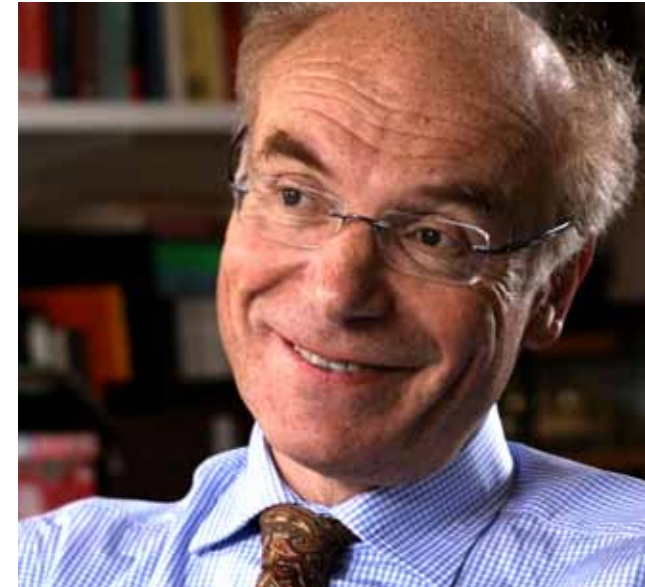
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# From the Vice-Chancellor



## How did we get here and where are we going?

The 2000s were Buckingham's decade. Not long ago British universities were funded and therefore dominated by the state, and Buckingham was small and unconsidered. Today, with fees of up to £9,000 a year being charged of home students, all British universities have been propelled into a market, and the National Student Survey is increasingly emerging as a key university league table. The industry is being reformed in our image.

Buckingham itself has moreover flourished, and we now have 1700 students, which is twice as many as four years ago. How did we do it?

We have of course been assisted by the introduction of a market in fees for home students, which has helped level the playing field. Indeed, because our undergraduates complete their courses in only two years (which compensates for our fees exceeding £9,000 a year for home students) we have gone from being the most expensive university in Britain to the cheapest (though we prefer the term "cost-effective").

But we have also revisited our relationship with the state, and we now engage with the Government's Quality Assurance Agency (a form of quality control), the Government's National Student Survey (we all know about that), the Government's Higher Education Statistics Agency (which compiles the data for the newspaper league tables) and the Government's Student Loan Company (which provides our students with

loans and grants for fees and living expenses). These engagements with four Government agencies can only increase our attractiveness to students, and we are comfortable with them because they do not significantly reduce our independence.

But no market in higher education is free, and we do not know how the Government will disrupt this one. Because we are independent, our home students can currently access the loans and grants of the Student Loan Company without our having to do what every other British university has to do, namely (i) cap the fees we charge, (ii) cap the numbers of students we admit, and (iii) accept the social engineering of the Government's Office of Fair Access. But the Government may one day remove these freedoms, and we might one day leave the Student Loan Company rather than accept caps on our fees, caps on numbers and social engineering.

We might then get flanked by the new, growing, for-profit sector, which also offers two year degrees but which seems happy to offer poor staff:student ratios and which seems happy to accept caps on fees, numbers and on the social composition of its colleges. And why shouldn't it? If it can turn a fast buck, why should the for-profit sector worry itself with standards?

Historians warn us that events are often "contingent" – they happen by circumstance rather than on purpose. The Government's imposition of significant university fees happened because the universities are, anomalously, the current responsibility of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS, which has only small budgets) rather than of the Department for Education (DE, which has huge budgets.) When the Government cut the budgets of all its departments, therefore, the universities bore the brunt of BIS's cuts. Had the universities remained in their natural home of the DE, their fees would have been raised only minimally. The Government may have been encouraged to raise fees because the success of Buckingham in the NSS suggested that greater independence would raise standards, but nonetheless it took a global financial crisis and the misallocation of the universities to BIS to create the political will to raise those fees.

The UK now has one of the freest markets in undergraduate higher education in the world. That can only benefit UK higher education generally, but the devil for Buckingham lies in the details, and the current auspicious set of circumstances may not last for ever. So we must teach to the best of our abilities, raise as many capital funds from our alumni and supporters as possible, and furbish a reputation for quality of such standing as to attract ever more students.



# University news



Mortar boards are thrown into the air



Graduates say 'cheese'



St Peter and St Paul's Church



The graduation ceremony



The academic procession



Graduates celebrate

## Graduation

The sun shone as more than 600 students graduated in four ceremonies over two days

Students, friends, family and staff gathered from all corners of the earth to celebrate the University's biggest Graduation ever in March. There were four ceremonies in total, with over 600 graduates receiving their degrees in the Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul's.

Afterwards, the bells tolled. Students threw their mortarboards into the sky, hugged one another and rejoiced with their families. Because Graduation was delayed until March, the daffodils were out and the sun shone.

In his opening speech the Vice-Chancellor Professor Terence Kealey thanked the students for being so delightful to teach. "I have lectured in three other universities – Oxford, Newcastle and Cambridge – and there is no doubt that you Buckingham students are more polite and more serious than in those other places," he said. For the first time the graduands sat in the middle of church, taking their rightful place at the heart of the ceremonies.

A number of eminent figures received

honorary degrees this year. The first was Tun Mohammed Hanif Bin Omar, a Buckingham alumnus and Inspector-General of the Royal Malaysian Police for 20 years, who recalled the highlights of his time at Buckingham. "We love this University in spite of its pressure cooker regime and we love this town," he said. "We in Malaysia tried to make as great a success of our lives as possible to burnish the image of our *alma mater*. We owe it to you and ourselves."

Lady Barbara Judge, a distinguished lawyer and businesswoman, and Professor Philip James, a prolific scientist, also received honorary degrees, as did the

**For the first time the graduands sat in the middle of the church, taking their rightful place at the heart of the ceremonies**

University's first Estates Bursar and Graduation Officer, Tom Merrick.

In 2012, Anne Matsuoka became head of Graduation in succession to Mr Merrick, and she and her team were thanked by Professor Kealey for their hard work and organisation. "Smooth operations aren't smooth in the background, and they've put in a fantastic amount of effort to make today work," he said.

To round off the ceremonies, Chancellor Lord Tanlaw commended the students for their independent thinking in choosing Buckingham as their place to study. "We created the University for people who are going to be different, and who will always think outside the box," he said. "The alumni whom I have met here and abroad have really lived up to that reputation."

Later the graduates danced the night away at the Swan Ball. They were treated to a casino, a chocolate fountain and live performances by a Michael Jackson tribute band. It was a night to remember and the perfect way to celebrate their success.

## 'I was very well looked after'

Margaret Riley, winner of the John Clarke Prize for her DPhil thesis, was thrilled when she found out the news. "It was a wonderful reward for the hard work. I found it a challenge to juggle everything but it was extremely worthwhile."

She wrote her PhD on the patronage of botany and horticulture in the late-17th century. It focused on two brothers, William and James Sherard, who grew plants from all over the world, including pineapple, papaya and coffee.

As a keen gardener herself, Margaret is fascinated by these horticultural pioneers. "I share with these people the pleasure of nurturing a rarity, but their technology was primitive. I wanted to find out what motivated them, and how they were able to do what they did."

One of the most challenging

aspects was writing up her research. "Like many people, I found that part a considerable grind", Margaret says. "But it was extremely satisfying to have finished such a substantial piece of work."

Margaret is most grateful for the support of her supervisors. "I was very well looked after," she says. Thanks to an arrangement facilitated by Buckingham,

Margaret enlisted the additional help of Professor Mark Laird, Senior Lecturer of Landscape Architecture at Harvard. "I would like to thank my fantastic supervisors, Professor John Clarke, Professor Jane Ridley and Mark Laird – they made this possible."





# University news

## ‘It’s never too late to learn’

A former MI6 electronics engineer aged 90 has become the first student to complete the new Masters degree in Intelligence History and Bletchley Park Studies at the University.

Bertie Gladwin is the UK’s oldest new graduate and a self-confessed “learnoholic” who embarked on his degree at the age of 89 together with his wife, who was then aged 77. “I feel very satisfied to think that I’ve done an MA at my age,” he says. “When you’re 90 you sit around and not a lot happens, so it’s important to carry on learning and to broaden your horizons.”

Mr Gladwin has been clocking up degrees for years. At the age of 60, he decided to undertake a BA in Psychology. By the time he was 70 he had also completed a BSc in Molecular Biology. “They’re fascinating subjects,” he says. “I did them just because I was interested in them and wanted to know more about them.”

It was his wife, Wendy, who encouraged him to take the Masters. “She said it would be a good way to round off my academic career, and would give me a good sense of accomplishment,” he says.

“Plus I had worked at the Government Communications Centre for 20 years, so I had the relevant experience.” Mr Gladwin wrote his dissertation on the use of radio by the underground movements in World War Two France and was awarded a distinction for it.

His wife Wendy was equally happy with her experience at Buckingham. “I loved the atmosphere of studying,” she says. “The people at the University were a jolly good lot and made us welcome from the beginning.”

Mr Gladwin’s advice to anyone considering a degree, is to go for it at any age. “It’s never too late to learn,” he says.



**Bertie Gladwin:**  
“I feel very good about it, but really I think I’m just lucky.”



**Charles Dickens lives on in cyberspace**

## Champagne with the Queen Dickens expert goes to the Palace

Professor John Drew, the University’s expert on Charles Dickens, attended a glittering champagne reception at Buckingham Palace where he shook hands with the Queen and engaged in banter with the Duke of Edinburgh. The event was to mark the Dickens Bicentenary and was attended by Britain’s finest actors, including Helena Bonham-Carter and Derek Jacobi, and the cream of Dickens scholars.

As director of the Dickens Journals Online project, Professor Drew has been creating an online scholarly edition of the hugely successful magazines that Dickens edited – *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* – which was launched publicly in February 2012.

“We ate the tiniest canapés you have ever seen and drank the most delicious champagne,” said Professor Drew. “The Duke of Edinburgh was knowledgeable about Buckingham. We had a conversation about our growing numbers and how the rest of the sector was now very much like us. It was only at the point where I started to explain how the website worked that his eyes glazed over.”

Later the University’s School of Humanities organised a four-day conference to celebrate the Bicentenary of Dickens’s birth called “Charles Dickens and the Mid-Victorian Press” in concert with the University of Leicester. This was to promote international discussion of Dickens’s achievements as a magazine editor,

a journalist and publisher and it attracted prominent academics and delegates from Japan, Canada, Belgium, the USA, South Africa and Spain.

The conference contained an exhibition of archive materials curated by Antony Burton, formerly of the V&A, and guests enjoyed a banquet, readings at the Old Gaol in Buckingham, a reception at the Radcliffe Centre and a cream-tea and champagne send-off.

Professor Drew and his team have been working on the Dickens Journal Online project for the past six years. “It’s sufficiently complete for us to say that it was ready to launch,” he said. “We have corrected the text, we have some rare material not seen before and it’s all indexed. But there’s another six years’ work left to do, for example, identifying anonymous articles.

“We will be working with a team in Australia and the British Library to get it all attributed.”

*Lucy Hodges*

## Rising stars in Law School Students are excelling in moots

Buckingham law students are doing increasingly well in national mooting competitions, showing that a small institution can compete with the big boys.

In the ICLE Annual Mooting Competition, one of the country’s most prestigious competitions for law undergraduates, students Selwyn Hawkins and Kimberleigh Malyan finished an impressive third out of 64 entrants. On their way to the podium, the team knocked out St John’s College, Oxford, in the first round, Exeter University in the second round and last year’s winners, the Open University, in the quarter-final. Unfortunately their luck ran out in the semi-finals when the moot resulted in a tie-break. The winner was decided by the “flip of a coin”, as one of the judges described it, and Buckingham lost.

Feedback from the judges was extremely positive throughout the competition. In one moot, his lordship Mr Richard Benson QC described Mr Hawkins as “a rising star of the Bar” and Miss Malyan as “an impressive



**Bernie Marsden and his acoustic band (above and below) play golden oldies**

advocate”. Dr Gregory Ioannidis, Senior Lecturer in Law and Master of the Moots, said that he was very proud of the students. “They have worked hard and shown that they possess the perseverance and dedication required for success at the Bar. They have done a great service to the University by allowing it to remain high in the list of Institutions with an excellent tradition in mooting.”

In the OUP/BPP moots, another renowned competition, Buckingham is now in the top eight of the country. The quarter finals will take place later this year, and the team hope to achieve another top result.

## Radcliffe Centre opens its doors New lecture theatre wins plaudits

In the last issue of *The Independent* we wrote of the urgent need for a new lecture hall to teach students in groups of 70-plus. Now, after three months of building work and an amazingly successful fundraising appeal, the refurbishment of the Radcliffe Centre is complete and attracting



admiration from Town and Gown alike. Students are revelling in the wonderful new facilities, and townsfolk are clamouring to rent the stylish new concert venue.

A former Non-Conformist church, the Centre has been used as a lecture hall since it was acquired by the University in the 1970s. Upgraded in 1982 with a generous donation from the Radcliffe Trust, it became a concert hall and lecture theatre and was known for its fantastic acoustics and Steinway grand piano. But recently the Centre has been showing its age.

Now it has been reconfigured to include raked upholstered seating from Norway, underfloor heating, new lighting and sound equipment, and a new coat of paint. The result is that it has become a superb modern lecture hall, concert venue and community drama space, for use by the University and the town of Buckingham.

We have had a series of concerts to mark the reopening, including a lunchtime concert by student and amateur pianist Giles Wollenmann and two sell-out evening concerts by the local celebrity Bernie Marsden, former guitarist of the rock band Whitesnake. The rafters reverberated to the sound of Buddy Holly and other golden oldies, and Bernie generously gave the proceeds of his two sell-out gigs towards the cost of the refurbishment. We are very grateful for his help.

We are also grateful to the Radcliffe Trust and to the Brunner Charitable Trust, and to the many local individuals and groups who either bought a chair or donated in some other way. Thanks to them the Radcliffe Centre has become an invaluable resource for students and the community alike.

The final bill for the refurbishment was £500,000 but we are still a long way from reaching our funding target. If you can help with raising money, please contact the Development Office. We would be immensely grateful for any donations received, big or small. You can have your name on a chair for £200 or your message on the wall (£100 for 80 characters or £50 for 40 characters.) For more information visit [www.buckingham.ac.uk/radcliffe](http://www.buckingham.ac.uk/radcliffe), contact the Development Office on +44 (0)1280 820115 or email [development.office@buckingham.ac.uk](mailto:development.office@buckingham.ac.uk).  
*Rebecca Maclean*



# ‘I wanted to study at the same time as racing’

Jonathan Sale interviews Marc Gené, a Formula 1 test driver

**Marc Gené (Economics 1995) is the first Spanish driver to win the 24 Hours of Le Mans, in which he has been a competitor five times, most recently last year (2011). A go-kart champion as a teenager, he began motor racing in 1992 and started his Formula 1 career with Minardi in 1999, joining the British team Williams in 2001. He joined Peugeot in 2007. Mainly for Ferrari, he has driven more F1 test miles than any other driver.**

“When I was eight or nine, my father said that if I did well at school in Barcelona, he would buy me either a go-kart or a bike. I chose the go-kart and we – my brother and I – did it just for fun. One day there was a “spotter” who came – and he spotted my brother, not me. My brother got involved in racing go-karts and I thought, “If he can do it, so can I.” I was the Spanish champion at 13 or 14.

The teachers were very aware of all this and most were very supportive. Not all of them were, which would develop my skills of diplomacy! I was an average student – six out of 10 – but I was a good student, trying very hard, and I always used to take my books when I was racing.

In Spain you finish your school at 17 and that’s when my karting was over. I began competing in cars. My brother did a lot of motor racing in England and his experience was very useful to me. England was the place to go. I had to come to England; all drivers around the world came to England. You were really competing against the best.

I went to do a two-month winter training camp

with two months racing in Sheffield.

At 17-and-a-half, I was among the youngest. I did not have my driving licence. When I was walking through a department store, I saw some information about Sheffield University.

I wanted to study at the same time as racing, to have something to fall back on, but studying in Spain while racing in England was logistically difficult.

The team I was racing with for the following year was based at Silverstone, so I looked at universities around the Oxfordshire area. I heard that Buckingham had an international atmosphere and went to be interviewed. At the interview, I asked, “What’s that noise?” Malcolm Rees of the Economics Department said, “That’s Silverstone down the road.”

I did the two-years Economics degree and a Masters. My parents were surprised and worried: I was the only one in the family to live outside Spain and to go to a university. (I have two kids, a girl of five and a boy of three. If he wants to do motor racing, I’ll support him but I’ll try not to push him.)

I would say that I missed one day a week, usually a Friday, when teams practised before weekend races. My friends would pass on their notes from the lectures.

Malcolm Rees was very supportive and we kept in touch once a year. There were one or two teachers who didn’t like what I was doing and I had to work very hard for them. If I had to change a tutorial, they made life difficult. I don’t remember missing an exam. Everything worked out fine. What was my final grade? I don’t remember, I think it was average.

I was in Formula 3 at the time. I didn’t do much socialising; I would go to the lectures and I would go to the gym. I lived on campus for the first two years and in my third year I went to live in a house on my own.

**My degree was the best investment I made. It’s like having a passport. You might not need it but it’s there**

Now people start in motor sport much younger. It’s difficult now to go to university while racing; it’s difficult even to finish school. I don’t remember any drivers who went to university in the last 20 years. The last one I can remember was Jonathan Palmer; he was a doctor. Among the drivers, there were never any negative comments about my being university trained; people would say it was very good. How has my economics degree been useful? Sponsors may ask about the economy of Formula 1 and I can explain that Formula 1 runs on the same principles as any other company.

My favourite subject was macro-economics. I’ve always been interested in the big picture.

There was a Spanish community in the University and I still see friends from that time. In my first two years I was very focused and was one of the students who went out least. In my third year I started to go out more. Graduation was one of the

most important days of my life; Margaret Thatcher gave me my degree.

You could postpone your military service while you were studying and I did it in 1996 as soon as I got back to Spain. I studied French and Italian. (I also speak Catalan, Castilian, English and German.) In 1997 I did the International F3000 Championship and in 1998 I won the Open Fortuna by Nissan. I wasn’t sure if I was going to make it to Formula 1. I started sending out CVs to accountancy firms and was selected for PricewaterhouseCoopers and ended up working for them as an auditor in 1998. Now they are my advisers; they take care of the company I use for racing. Finally I made it to Formula 1 in 1999.

Three things stand out in my career. The 24 Hours of Le Mans: I’m the first and only Spanish driver to win that race and the day I won it was a big day in Spain. In future I’ll look back on it and know that I made something big and fulfilled all the years of hard work. Then there was the time when

I first signed for Ferrari – I was never a racing driver for them but a test driver – and I put on the Ferrari overalls and joined the Ferrari family. And finally, in the history of Spain, only ten drivers had made it to Formula 1 before me.

Now I have two main incomes: Ferrari and Peugeot. I also am a television commentator in Spain for the F1 races. My aim is to continue with the three companies for the next three years since I love the work I do with them. Ferrari have indicated that I could be involved with them in developing cars.

I’m 37 and in Formula 1 that starts to be the age – Schumacher was the exception at 42 – when you are replaced by young drivers. My degree was the best investment I made and I’m so relaxed now. If the racing suddenly stopped, I would be very relaxed. A degree is like having a passport. You may not need it but it’s there.

*The writer is a freelance journalist*





# ‘We are all aliens’

Justine Kibler meets a scientist who believes that life originated in outer space

As a child in 1950s Sri Lanka, Chandra Wickramasinghe used to gaze in wonder at the night sky. Living in a small suburb of Colombo with no light pollution, millions of stars of the Milky Way would shine above him each night, and he vowed to find out what they were.

In the decades to come, Wickramasinghe, together with the pre-eminent astronomer of the 20th century Sir Fred Hoyle, developed several theories to understand the universe. They suggested that life did not originate on earth, but was instead carried across the universe by comets. These theories were initially dismissed by scientists as being too radical. Now, however, after gathering definitive evidence, they are finding acceptance, and the University of Buckingham is on the frontline of this success.

The Buckingham Centre for Astrobiology is a unique research centre. Headed by Professor Wickramasinghe, it continues the research that he and Fred Hoyle embarked upon in the 1960s. It unifies ideas from both biology and astronomy with the aim of unravelling one of life's greatest mysteries: where are we from?

Born in Sri Lanka, Wickramasinghe was the son of Percival Herbert Wickramasinghe, a senior scholar of mathematics at the University of Cambridge. He studied mathematics at the University of Ceylon, and received the top grade in his degree. In recognition he was awarded a scholarship to study for a PhD at Cambridge University. Sir Fred Hoyle chose Wickramasinghe as his student, and the two eventually became colleagues and friends.

Wickramasinghe's research at Cambridge began with some very modest ideas. He set out to understand what cosmic dust was made of. Cosmic dust is composed of microscopic particles of material and is found in space between the planets and stars. Up to the 1960s astronomers believed that it was made up of tiny ice particles similar to those found in the Earth's clouds, but Wickramasinghe soon found that they were actually made mostly of carbon. "These findings were extremely controversial at the time because people didn't want to change their thinking, but powerful evidence came along which meant that they had to reject these former ideas," he says.

Using new results from astronomy and



Chandra Wickramasinghe thinks that life was carried across the universe by comets

calculations, Wickramasinghe soon discovered that this carbonaceous material had to be of an organic character. Then, given that a third of all the carbon in the space between the stars was made up of this complex life-like dust, he began to question why there was so much of this material in the galaxy.

"We next turned our attention to our planet. Ninety nine point nine per cent of the organic material on earth is made through biology. It is the most important way – and the only way we know for sure – that organic molecules are made in quantity. And so the question began to dawn on us – what if all of this matter in space is actually being generated by life processes as well? Why do we have one model for the earth and reject it for the rest

of the universe? So we began to explore the hypothesis that cosmic dust might be biological material or at least biologically generated. That was the beginning of ideas of life being widespread in the universe; a process that started way out in space rather than here on the earth."

The 1980s saw some breakthrough evidence to back up this theory. Hans Pflug, a German geologist and paleontologist, found fossilised bacteria in a meteorite. This provided evidence that life existed outside of the earth and was being carried around the universe in comets and meteorites. In 1982 Hoyle and Wickramasinghe concluded that the connection between biology and astronomy was so strong that there should be no distinction between them; their boundaries

were artificial and man-made. From their conclusion the new discipline of astrobiology arose, of which the Buckingham Centre for Astrobiology is a descendant.

Both the theory that life has been distributed by comets and the new discipline of astrobiology have been slow to gain acceptance in the science world. "The majority of astronomers still find it very uncomfortable to get to grips with these ideas," says Wickramasinghe.

He believes that this reluctance reflects human nature in general. "I think human beings are innately conservative. We don't like to move house, we don't like to change our relationships with other people, and I think emotional stability is probably the explanation for scientific conservatism as well. If a really big new theory threatens a well-established paradigm such as the origin of life, there will often be a great hesitation to leap over such a gulf in thinking. For example it took nearly 300 years, from the time of Galileo to Newton, for the old order of an Earth-centred cosmos to be rejected. It shouldn't be that way if science is to be entirely objective – change should be dictated by facts. Things move faster now because the pace of scientific activity has sped up a lot, but the basic resistance to change is still there – it's part and parcel of human psychology."

Evidence supporting the theory of panspermia is now mounting, however, and Wickramasinghe's once radical ideas are becoming increasingly recognised. In recent years NASA astronomer Richard Hoover also found evidence of fossilised organic material in meteorites, and other researchers such as Sun Kwok from the University of Hong Kong have also begun to draw similar conclusions about the life-like nature of cosmic dust.

"Life is a truly cosmic phenomenon. People, and particularly astronomers, have been shying away from this conclusion, but it's inevitable that their views will change," says Wickramasinghe. "There's no way in which life could have originated on earth as it is far too small a setting to make that transformation from non-life to life. So we are all aliens, in a sense. We are all part of a connected chain of being that extends across the whole universe. Our biosphere doesn't end on the surface of our earth – it extends to almost infinity."

Wickramasinghe believes the research at

## The CV

**Age** 73

**Education** BSc in Mathematics at the University of Ceylon, PhD in Mathematics at Cambridge University, ScD by the University of Cambridge

**Career** Fellow of Jesus College and Director of Studies in Mathematics, Cambridge 1962–75, founder of Astrophysics Department in Cardiff 1975, founder of Cardiff Centre for Astrobiology 2000, Director of Buckingham Centre for Astrobiology 2011 to present

**Hobbies** Poet and author

the new Centre will take all these ideas to their logical conclusion. "We are approaching a point that is very critical in the whole story of astrobiology, and it's turning out that Buckingham will discover the definitive evidence, and win credit for perhaps the most important scientific revolution of our time."

He also believes that Buckingham is the ideal place for the new science of Astrobiology, as conceived by him and Hoyle, to reside. "As an independent University it is not riddled with old ideas and prejudices, and it deserves to be in the frontline of an important development like this."

Despite the criticism he has faced over the years, and the many questions that still remain unanswered, Wickramasinghe looks back fondly on his career. "It has been an exciting adventure," he says, "trying to overcome these various obstacles and trying to solve the question of how life began on the earth and how life begins anywhere in the universe. I think I was driven only by a desire to know what is true – sometimes at the expense of ostracism and hostility. But in perspective all that does not seem to matter so much to me. I have to admit that my research has not brought us anywhere nearer to solving the problem of how life began in the universe in the first place. That's something that is still a very distant dream for the future – maybe we'll never know how the first life emerged from non-life. What I can say with absolute confidence is that once life got started in the universe as a unique event, then its spread is inevitable, and it's unstoppable. We humans on this planet are part of this cosmic process."



# Practice makes perfect

Are demon crossword puzzle solvers born or made? Justine Kibler reports on a ground-breaking study that seeks to crack the biggest riddle of all



Watching a clever person solve a cryptic crossword is a jaw-dropping experience. Almost by magic they seem to be able to figure out the answer to an utterly baffling clue that makes no sense to the uninitiated.

Yet slowly, as you sit at the feet of an ace crossword solver, you begin to understand a little of what it's about. There are rules to be learnt. A question mark, for example, indicates that the clue will require lateral thinking. All clues involve word play; many use abbreviations. Once you have mastered these conventions, you are away.

At the University of Buckingham, Dr Philip Fine and Dr Kathryn Friedlander, both in the Psychology Department, have been examining what makes a good cryptic crossword puzzle solver. Working in collaboration, they have surveyed more than 750 crossword solvers and recorded more than 60 hours of footage of people with a range of puzzle-solving abilities.

The two are comparing the performance of all these groups to see if there is any difference in the way they approach crossword solving, says Dr Friedlander. "We're looking to see if there's anything apart from practice which means that some people get to that next level of expertise."

Their research has found that it takes a novice about a year to be able to solve a basic cryptic crossword at all. And it takes an average of seven to nine years for someone to become consistently good at solving cryptic crosswords, which is very much in keeping with studies that look at how people develop expertise. Surveys have found that it takes 10,000 hours or 10 years of practice for a person to become an expert at a particular skill like playing the piano. And to practise something for such a long time requires a high level of motivation.

Psychology lecturer Dr Fine and visiting research fellow Dr Friedlander believe that self-motivation is the key to how – or why – people become expert crossword solvers.

Solving crosswords is a very self-motivated pursuit, unlike other hobbies. "For something like music, for example, the issue of what is driving the individual is confused because of the influences of parents. The practice is drilled and the

motivation is supplied for them," says Dr Friedlander. "There's always the question 'Did these children practice so hard because they wanted to make progress themselves or because their parents told them they had to?' That is not nearly so much the case with crossword solving.

Many of the crossword solvers in the University of Buckingham survey talk about a "Eureka" moment when they suddenly discover how to solve a clue. "It makes you feel rather good and rather smart to get that moment," says Dr Friedlander, who believes this to be a key motivational drive.

The researchers are looking at whether cryptic crossword fiends have superior lateral thinking and problem-solving abilities, or whether they are simply more interested and therefore more motivated.

"I expect you may find some of the people who end up as experts have a slightly better working memory or are better at adaptive problem solving," says Dr Fine.

"Plus, they will have a personality that leads them to be more motivated, to follow things through, and to be more driven. So, a huge amount will be to do with practice. There will be some people who do really well at the beginning. They are lucky that they were shown how to do cryptic crosswords when young."

So, their conclusion is that crossword puzzle solving is not an innate ability in itself. Intelligence, memory and good cognitive skills all play their part.

The researchers believe that some other factors will also be important in acquiring superior crossword solving skills. For example, the person needs to be exposed to cryptic crosswords in the first place. In their survey, they found that a large number of crossword solvers had family members who also did them. Peers can help, as well. They are able to teach novices the ropes before they lose interest. They then need the opportunity and resources to be able to practise.

"I suspect that anyone of average intelligence with an interest in problem-solving can learn to do standard cryptic crosswords without a lot of problems," says Dr Fine. But the most important quality of all is to be self-motivated.

# Cultural revolution

Creative artist in residence Graham Roos outlines his vision for the University

I produced and directed my first play at Buckingham in 1989 with a small grant from the drama society of the time. The play made a little money and this encouraged me to continue writing and performing after graduating. Thanks to this small success I had the confidence to pursue a career in the creative world and I always looked back at my days at Buckingham with great fondness.

Cut to 2009 and I have just enjoyed a brief residency at The Royal Opera House in my guise as poet and am now at The House of Lords enjoying tea with Buckingham alumni and the Vice-Chancellor. I think he asked me what I did. I think I said I was a lecturer, writer and film maker. Ah! He replied. But which one are you really? All of them I said – they are interlinked. Then you should come and give a talk to our students. I think it was then that the words "do you have an artist in residence at the university these days?" came tumbling from my lips. The VC said no but he thought it a good idea – did I have anyone in mind? As it happened yes I did...

It is now 2012 and I have just completed my first term as Creative Artist in Residence at the Univeristy. It is odd to be back and yet superficially little seems to have changed from my time – except there are perhaps fewer shoulders pads and less big hair. The same pretty town greets me on arrival and I note with satisfaction the harmonious mix of international students on the university grounds. The OTM greets me and I see little has changed here – even the clock above the door in the refectory is the same one that was there in the 1980s.

And yet there is profound change and it is happening right now. The University is expanding, there are more home students than ever, and this is having an impact on the cultural experience of student life. The University is now in the national league tables and not only doing all right but excelling in many areas and making it into the top ten in English, for example. There is a sense of pride among the students that they are attending one of the great educational experiments of the late 20th and early 21st centuries – and there is

the feeling that anything is possible.

One of the things that strikes me most about Buckingham today is the sheer "can do" attitude. Buckingham is now the destination of choice of many students who bring with them an edgy determination. They are less willing to accept the *status quo* and what they do not like they set about changing – which is the true basis for successful student life anywhere. One gets the impression that the University is on the cusp of radical change and could become the Number One destination of choice for students. It is not hard to envisage a future Buckingham which the students have chosen in preference to Bristol, London or Exeter. Sadly, when I was here in the late 80s there were no real societies, no central hub to the University – few, if any, of those poetry or debating events so taken for granted by more established, conventional universities. Now there is an explosion of talent. The poetry society is bursting with ability. Last term I organised a poetry slam in the OTM and led a workshop on performance poetry. I hope I speak for many when I say the evening was a huge success – so much so that an open mic night has become a regular slot on Tuesdays.

I am also launching a film competition to be judged by a panel of BAFTA jurists and international film makers with the prize of a trip to Pinewood Studios, and hope that this will become an annual fixture in the student calendar.

The Drama Society shows great promise. I have been pleased to have had a small involvement with the renovation at the Radcliffe Centre where I produced my first play all those years ago. It will now provide the sort of studio theatre atmosphere necessary for undergraduate productions.

Finally I would like to ask any alumni reading this – if you have anything cultural to offer the University – whether it's costumes or a poetry library, lighting, old film equipment – anything to expand access to the arts, please consider donating it to us. You never know, it might help launch someone's career.

**Buckingham is now the destination choice of many students who bring with them an edgy determination**





# Alumni who run the world

Graduates are to be found in top jobs back home as government ministers, police chiefs and, even, military advisers. Liz Lightfoot reports

Above right: Malaysian Ambassador Blanche Olbery cherishes her memories of university life  
Below: Tun Mohammed Hanif bin Omar



Blanche Olbery (Law 1985) was cold and more than a little apprehensive as she travelled alone from the small town of Segamat in northern Johor, Malaysia, in 1982.

She found the coach stop for Bletchley and just managed to catch the last bus to The University College at Buckingham, as it was then called.

Convent school educated Blanche was 23. She need not have been so worried because she soon linked up with Malaysian students. After a short course to improve her English, she enrolled on the two-year law degree.

"Memories of my university life are something I cherish," says Datin Blanche Olbery, now 52, a successful lawyer and the Malaysian Ambassador to Papua New Guinea. "I was lucky that there was a big Malaysian population at the University and I have particularly good memories of Buckingham because I met my husband there. A law degree from the UK is most sought after if you want to become an advocate and solicitor. Both Malaysia and the UK have the same legal system," she says.

Malaysians made up the biggest group of students at the University in the 1980s, followed by Nigerians and Bermudians. Thirty years on, many of these pioneering students who left their homelands to seek an international education are back in their native countries, playing a key

role in law, politics and public life.

One of the many distinguished alumni is Blanche's husband, Datuk Seri Dr M Kayveas (Law 1986), a prominent Malaysian politician who is president of the People's Progressive Party and credited with rebuilding the party after it was torn apart by internal squabbles. The party stands for "One Malaysia," embracing the haves and the have-nots in a modern, middle way socialism.

He had a taste of government as a former Deputy Minister in the 1993 coalition Malaysian Government and in 1996 received the honorary title "Datuk" for his services to the country. Unlike Blanche whose father was an English accountant, Kayveas grew up on the impoverished Benta estate in Kuala Lipis, Pahang with illiterate parents who worked the rubber plantations.

"I was editing the newsletter for the Malaysian Student Association of Buckingham when I met Blanche. "We had the same kind of vision," he says. When he returned to Malaysia he looked up Blanche and later they married. While Blanche is in Papua New Guinea he is in charge of their four children, with help from Blanche's mother in Kuala Lumpur.

He chose Buckingham because of the two-year degree and because it was a cosmopolitan university that welcomed people from all over the world. "Buckingham

has produced a lot of talent and it took me to a level of education that allowed me to become a senator, MP and Deputy Minister. The education I received, the opportunity to be involved in student politics and the law degree had a lot to do with my success," he says.

Other renowned and colourful characters in Malaysia attended the University. The former police chief, Tun Mohammed Hanif bin Omar (Law 1986), was a Buckingham graduate and has just been awarded an honorary degree by the University (see p4). He was the first serving public servant to receive Malaysia's highest non-royal award which carries the title "Tun".

Two Malaysian government ministers are Buckingham alumni – the Honorable Anifah Haji Aman (Politics, Economics and Law 1979), the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Datuk Buang Idris (Law 1982), the Chief Political Secretary. Buckingham can also claim as former students the Honorable Junaidi Wan (Law 1981), the deputy speaker of the Malaysian Parliament, and Nayagam Rajendran (Law 1982), the chairman of the Industrial Court of Malaysia.

Bermuda is another country with alumni now in senior positions. Leo Mills (Law 1984) was director of public relations for the Bermuda civil service when he took study leave to read law at Buckingham in the early 80s. After graduating in 1984 his career took

## Great parties and student politics

### Dato Zuraidah Atan (Law 1984)

Buckingham graduate Dato Zuraidah Atan is to head the Malaysian Government's new Foundation for Student Volunteers that will help to transform the country's tertiary education.

All students in universities and colleges in Malaysia are being encouraged to volunteer to help them gain social and employability skills beyond the narrowly academic and will receive training organised by the new foundation.

"We want students to go out and feel empathy for the environment and the people, not just stand there taking photos to put on Facebook," says Dato Zuraidah Atan.

She enjoyed herself at Buckingham. "It was an environment where everyone knew each other and we had great parties," she says. She became active in student politics and was vice president of the Malaysian Association of Buckingham.

After graduating she helped to restructure corporate debt in the 1997 Asian financial crisis. She was an adviser to the Government debt committee and was involved in the reconstruction work of central banks.

In 1999 she was appointed the first woman president of the Affin Investment Bank Malaysia at a time when the bank had



Zuraidah Atan (above left)

suffered losses of RM2 billion or more than half a billion US\$. When she stepped down the bank had made more than RM200 million or 5.3 million US\$ and its credit rating had soared.

Exhausted, she decided to take up her legal career again. "I had already taken my exams but I needed to do a pupillage. I did criminal legal aid work because I wanted new experiences and one of my jobs was to visit the women's prison every week to take pleas of mitigation," she says. In 2004 the Government conferred on her the honorary title of "Dato".

Now she runs her own boutique legal firm and has more time for her charity work as chairman of Relay for Life Kuala Lumpur – a charity that honours cancer survivors – and as the honorary adviser and volunteer for the National Cancer Society of Malaysia.

off and he rose to the rank of Cabinet Secretary and head of the Civil Service. Since retiring he has been working as an associate counsel for the Bermuda law firm Trott & Duncan and is well known, even to the criminal fraternity. He tells the story of being called to the firm's offices on Christmas Day after reports of a burglary. When he got there the burglar turned to him in panic: "Mr Mills, can you please help me get out?" he pleaded unsuccessfully.

Malaysian students were likely to be funded by loans and scholarships, unlike some of the Nigerians who were the children of Princes, says Dato Zuraidah Atan (Law 1984). She remembers looking out of the window of the Franciscan building onto a row of expensive cars – Ferraris and Porsches – owned by Nigerians and other students at the university.

Law was the most popular course for the Nigerian students, many using it as a way into a career in politics. Alumni Liyel Imoke (Law 1986), for example, is the popular governor of Nigeria's Cross River State. Buckingham graduate Ebenezer Babatope (Law 1988), 69, the son of a Methodist clergyman, also known as Ebino Topsy, is a newspaper columnist and historian who was a spokesman for the Unity Party of Nigeria and served as a Government minister for transport and aviation.

Another prominent Buckingham

alumnus, Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola (Law 2003), 61, had previously served in the Nigerian army and was military adviser to Lagos State. On his return to Nigeria after his degree, Prince Oyinlola was appointed Governor of Osun State, serving until 2010.

While his contemporaries were still to make their mark on the legal profession, Olusina Sofola was appointed a Senior Advocate of Nigeria at the age of 43 last year. Sofola graduated from Buckingham with a law degree in 1987 and was called to the Nigerian bar in 1988. The son of prominent lawyer Chief Idowu Sofola, he was thrown in at the deep end the day after he was called to the bar when he went to court to defend an insurance company against a bogus claim for goods that had been bought in London and allegedly stolen. The claim was dismissed when it emerged the receipts had been altered. Now he is speaking out for a reform of conditions in which judges work in Nigeria.

Wherever they are working, Buckingham's distinguished alumni share a piece of British history. They helped to build the university to where it is today – a vibrant, global community of students from Britain and 88 other nations who for the last six years have voted it the top UK University in the National Student Survey.

The writer is a freelance journalist



# Alumni announcements

## Births



### Leonard Brewer (Accounting and Economics 1990)

Leonard's wife Kumiko Hashimoto gave birth to their first daughter Mia Isabelle Antoinette Brewer van Vryenes Slupick on 9 November 2010 in Stellenbosch, South Africa.



### Olajumoke Kanoba (Applied Computing 2002)

The alumni office is happy to announce the birth of Olajumoka's son, Ehis Kanoba, born on 13 August 2011.



### Rawan Shukur (English Lit, current student 2012)

Congratulations to Rawan who gave birth to her daughter Yosour on 1 November 2011 in Milton Keynes Hospital.



### Marco (Economics 2001) and Lizzeth Resinelli (Law 2004)

Alumni Marco and Lizzeth announce the birth of their first daughter Sofia on 9 December 2011.



### Paolo (Business Studies 2003) and Muriel Cuturi (MBA 2003)

Paolo and Muriel became parents for the fourth time on 15 December 2011 with the birth of their daughter Elisabetta.



### Karsten (Economics, Business and Law 2005) and Sheena Schmidt (Law 2004)

Congratulations to Karsten and Sheena on the birth of Tobias, born on 20 February at the Seychelles Hospital on Mahe Island.

## Marriages



### Alloysius Joseph Egbulonu (Economics 2006)

Congratulations to Alloysius who married Rachel Louise Ashby on 3 August 2011 in Wallasey, Wirral. Their wedding was followed by a beautiful reception at The Queens Royal, New Brighton.



### Severina Shopova (International Studies 2003)

On 27 August 2011 Severina married Belgian Pieter De Beus. The wedding party took place in Stara Zagora, Bulgaria. We wish them the best of luck.



### Janice Kenner-Lee (Psychology with Business Studies 2007)

Congratulations to Janice who married Adrian Kenner on 22 October 2011 at Luton Central Baptist Church.



### Ijeoma Belynda Obi (Law 2007) and Nnamdi Emeka Dan-Nzolu (Law 2009)

The alumni office are delighted to announce that Buckingham alumni Ijeoma and Nnamdi were married on 15 October 2011 in Abuja, Nigeria.



### Kirsten Von Wedel (International Relations 1997)

We would like to congratulate Kirsten who married Godeke in Berlin on 1 April 2011, and wish them all the best for the future.



### Felix Radizi (Service Management 2002) and Ebele Ndukwe (Law 2003)

Married on 14 April on the island of Mallorca. They also had a traditional court wedding in Nigeria in March.

## Deaths

**Werner Beduhn (Business 1995)** died on 27 December 2011 from a heart attack. He leaves behind a wife and two little boys, aged two and four.

After University Werner became a successful headhunter, working for almost 15 years in London before moving to Frankfurt, Germany, two years ago. Several former Buckingham students attended his funeral, including Andreas von Filz, Valeria Berman (formerly Hammerstein), Max von Spies, Cornelius Oheimb, Cato von Saurma, Guido von Rohr, Ines von Eenden, and Clemens Toepfer.

He will be remembered as a loyal friend and for his positive and generous nature.

**Professor Mark Blaug (Honorary Graduate 1993 and Consultant Professor of Economics 1991 – 2011)**, one of the most distinguished economists of his generation, died on 18 October 2011. His work contributed directly to the climate of ideas which led to the foundation of the University in the early 1970s, and he played a major part in assisting the University to establish a sound academic reputation.

**Mr Tan Tan Bok (Law 1988)** died on 4 August 2011 at Kuala Lumpur Hospital. Our deepest sympathies go to his family.

**Mr Musa Jamaludin (Law 1983)** died tragically in a road accident on 1 October 2011 in Sarawak, Malaysia. Our condolences go to his friends and family.

**Wybetty James** died on 9 August 2011. She was the wife of Professor Philip James, the first Dean of Law at Buckingham. Professor and Mrs James were popular among the students whom they spent a lot of time entertaining. Andrew Durand, former Dean of Law, Professor and Mrs Alan Brook and Professor and Mrs Robert Pearce attended her Memorial Service.

**Professor Anthony Jolowicz (Honorary Graduate 2000)** died on 17 January 2012. A distinguished lawyer, Jolowicz was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1990. He was a member of the Council of the University and accepted an Honorary Doctorate in Law from the University in 2000.

With his wife, Poppy, he attended every convocation until his illness in recent years prevented him from travelling to Buckingham.

**Sue Knowles (Law 2003)** died tragically in France, on New Year's Eve, as a result of a car accident, at the age of 49.

Sue was a model student, and graduated with First Class Honours in Law. After outstanding success on the Legal Practice Course, she was offered a training contract with Vincent Sykes and Higham and after qualifying was kept on and was swiftly invited to become a partner. She had just decided to do Consultancy work from 1 January 2012 this year so that she could spend more time with Nick, her husband, a pilot with KLM.

**Lady Margaret Peacock**, wife of Professor Sir Alan Peacock (former Vice-Chancellor), died on 4 November 2011. She was well known to earlier generations of students. Her memorial service was attended by Professor Martin Ricketts together with his wife Di, and Mrs Colleen Carter from the University of Buckingham.

**Professor Mike Smith**, member of the University of Buckingham Council, died on 1 October 2011 while recovering from complex surgery. Mike was chairman of our Academic Advisory Council and a highly valued and respected colleague. Those who knew him will remember his cheerful charm and the wise and thoughtful contributions he made at Council meetings.

**Sir Timothy Raison (Honorary Graduate 2001)** died on his 82nd birthday on 3 November 2011. Educated at Eton, he began his career as a journalist, eventually becoming editor of *Crossbow* and founder editor of *New Society*. He was best known, however, for the number of parliamentary posts he had held, including Minister of State at the Home Office, under Edward Heath and Margaret Thatcher, and Opposition Spokesman for the Environment.

Sir Timothy Raison was a Conservative MP for Aylesbury and a member of the Council of the University. He was sworn in as a Privy Councillor in 1982 and knighted in 1991, and received an honorary doctorate from Buckingham in 2001.

For complete obituaries please go to this page: [www.buckingham.ac.uk/alumnet/obituaries](http://www.buckingham.ac.uk/alumnet/obituaries)

## Lost alumni

**If you know how to contact the following, please email the Alumni Office at [alumni@buckingham.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@buckingham.ac.uk)**

- Mrs Emmerencia Alintah, Law 1980
- Mr Alexander Barber, Law 1979
- Mr Eduardo Barretto, Economics 1980
- Mr Kevin Chan, Law 1979
- Ms Gopika Dass, Law 1980
- Mr Aloysius Dozie, Law 1978
- Miss Oritsematosan Edodo, Law 1980
- Mr Tsuli Egbe, Law 1980
- Mr Emmanuel Emeruwa, History, Politics and English Literature 1980
- Mrs Olivia Foresythe, Politics, Economics and Law 1980
- Mr Filippo Friedenbergh, Economics 1980
- Mr Zacharias Gertler, Economics 1980
- Mr Mohd Gorjestani, Economics 1978
- Mr Saman Gulam, Law 1980
- Mr Mahmoud Hadid, Economics 1980
- Mr Haris Haji Abd Manan, Law 1980
- Mr Armin Hasan, Economics 1979
- Mr David Higginson, Economics 1978
- Mrs Mona Higginson, Economics 1978
- Mr David Hogbin, Law 1978
- Miss Diana Horne, Law 1980
- Mr Felix Inneh, Law 1980
- Mr Ian Johnston, Politics, Economics and Law 1980
- Mr Manfred Kalkhoff, Politics, Economics and Law 1978
- Mr Gopal Krishnan s/o Munusamy, Law 1978
- Mr Raymond Lau, Law 1980
- Mr Ivan Levy, Economics 1979
- Mrs Sheela Levy, Politics, Economics and Law 1979
- Mr Federico Marescotti, Economics 1980
- Mr Wyndham McCready, Politics, Economics and Law 1979
- Mr Sean Miller, Law 1980
- Mr Matthias Nwokeji, Law 1978
- Mr Jomoria Ogbiru, Law 1979
- Mr Andrew Orji, Law 1978
- Mr Norman Persaud, Law 1979
- Ms Dina Roushdi, Law 979
- Mrs Sally Shewell, History, Politics and English Literature 1979
- Mr Leon Smith, Law 1980
- Mr Baboucar Sompou-Ceesay, Economics 1979
- Mr Osu Sukam, Law 1979
- Mr Letchemanan Venketraman, Law 1980
- Mr Ralston Winn, Law 1978
- Mr Piers Wooley, Economics 1980



# Alumni news

## Security risks during the 2012 Olympics

A group of three alumni have published a report on the security risks posed by the 2012 Olympics. It contains independent analysis on the English riots of July and August 2011 and comes up with original recommendations that should be addressed urgently.

The three – Suhel Abo-Hatab (MASIS 2011), Shyam Bhatt (MASIS 2011), Jonathan Lautier (MASIS 2011), and colleague Christian Cullen – demonstrate that there is much work to be done to ensure that the UK's biggest peacetime event remains safe and secure.

Called *National Security Risks: Immediate Challenges Before Summer 2012*, it is the first document to encompass all five official enquiries into the 7 July 2005 bombings. The book forms part of the group's growing consultancy company SIRS (Security Intelligence Resilience Strategy), which was founded in 2011. SIRS is a geo-political risk consultancy, providing research and policy recommendations on national and international security.

## Reconciliation in Sri Lanka

In the aftermath of the Sri Lankan Civil War, Pushpi Weerakoon helped to set up the Reconciliation Secretariat last October. Its aim is to achieve full peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

A native of Sri Lanka, Pushpi (LLM 2003) had spent the majority of her life living among conflict, and for this reason she decided to pursue a career in conflict transformation. This is the process in which conflicts are transformed into peaceful outcomes.

"Even after military victory in 2009 much needs to be done to achieve positive peace and reconciliation in my nation. To achieve this I am continuing to offer my services as the Co-ordinator for the Sri Lankan National Reconciliation Secretariat," she says.

In her role Pusphi launches projects that fulfill the recommendations of the LLRC (the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Committee Report), a report commissioned by the Sri Lankan President which investigates the causes of the civil war and suggests preventative measures for the future.

She also manages the website Sri Lankan Reconciliation Youth Forum, which contains many of the activities and events in the north and east of the country that are geared towards relationship building. She also co-ordinates civil society meetings which bring together diplomats and Members of Parliament, and liaises with educational institutions to promote tolerance and diversity.

## World's leading security company

Alumni Michael Gazeley (Business Studies, 1988) and Mark Webb-Johnson (Computer Science 1988) have been stacking up awards and press coverage for their world-leading security company, Network Box.

In November 2011 they successfully represented Hong Kong at the Asia Pacific Information Communication Technology Awards 2011 (APICTA) in Thailand, where they won first place in the security category.

A short time before, they also won the Technological Achievement Grand Award at the Hong Kong Awards for Industries. Their company has now won more than 50 national and international awards for its security technology across the globe.

Co-founded more than ten years ago by Mr Gazeley and Webb-Johnson, Network Box protects many of the world's best known companies and organisations, including BMW, Nintendo and Samsung.

## Alumni in the news

### Superyachting Patrick Coote (Business and Management 1994)

For the last six years Patrick Coote (Business and Management 1994) has been living in Monaco and running a company called Fraser Yachts, the largest superyacht brokerage Group in the world. He has featured in many of the world's largest yachting websites and magazines, including *Boat International* and *Superyacht Times*.

"The world of superyachts is everything you ever imagined it to be and more," says Mr Coote. "The yachts, like many of their owners, are interesting, complex, exciting and challenging. Our clients include self-made entrepreneurs, property heirs,



Pushpi Weerakoon: peacemaker



Award-winning Michael Gazeley



Relax on a superyacht

old American industrialists, Middle Eastern royalty and young Russian tycoons, united only by their irrational passion for luxury yachts and the privileged ability to spend tens of millions on a toy. Basically we are estate agents for floating houses but there is a lot involved in navigating a mansion around the oceans."

Mr Coote had been interested in yachts from a young age and knew that he wanted to work in the field. After obtaining his degree from Buckingham he landed a job in Antibes working for a small yacht brokers. He has since worked for the British Marine Industries Federation and was the Assistant Editor of *Boat International* magazine before joining Fraser Yachts in 2006.

"Is it morally acceptable to splurge millions of pounds on such an unnecessary asset?" he asks. "All I can say is that it is all relative. Many of our clients are some of the world's biggest philanthropists, spending millions a year on charitable projects. A superyacht is their chance to relax, escape and unwind." Visit Mr Coote's website at [www.fraseryachts.com](http://www.fraseryachts.com).

### Bahamas' first Llewellyn Boyer-Cartwright (Law 1994)

Llewellyn Boyer-Cartwright became the first Bahamian to be admitted to the Lawyer Pilots Bar Association this February and his success was featured in three local newspapers.

The Lawyer Pilots Bar Association, which has been running since 1959, is a non-profit international organisation dedicated to aircraft safety and to the legal issues that surround the aviation industry.

Boyer-Cartwright, who specialises in aviation law, is now known as a "veteran of the aviation industry". He worked as an airline pilot for Bahamasair and Laker Bahamas Airways for several years, completed a Masters degree in aviation science in 2004, and was type-rated on the B747 in 2005. Since graduating from Buckingham he has also been a practising lawyer, and is now a senior associate of Callenders & Co, The Bahamas's oldest law firm.

### Sustaining fishing in the Caribbean Milton Haughton (Biological Sciences 1989) and Susan Singh-Renton (Biological Sciences 1986)

Milton Haughton has become the new Executive Director of Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), and fellow alumna Dr Susan Singh-Renton has become the new Deputy Executive Director. Their

promotions were featured in the Caribbean newspaper *St Lucia Star*.

CRFM is an inter-governmental organisation which aims to coordinate and promote sustainable development and management of fisheries and the marine ecosystem. Mr Haughton and Dr Susan Singh-Renton have more than four decades of experience in the field of fisheries and aquaculture between them, with Mr Haughton having been Scientific Director of a CRFM project for 10 years and the former Deputy Executive Director.

Mr Haughton's vision for the future in his new position is to "ensure that the fisheries and aquaculture sector in the Caribbean is transformed and developed into a dynamic, profitable, and environmentally sustainable sector", according to the article in the *St Lucia Star*.

### Charity partnerships

#### Ronel Lehmann (Business Studies 1986)

As one of the UK's leading communications experts and founder of Lehmann Communications, Ronel was interviewed by *Noah's Ark Children's Hospice* magazine about the importance of charity partnerships.

Lehmann Communications, a marketing agency, has a long track record of working with the not-for-profit sector, and Ronel believes that these partnerships are becoming increasingly important in the current economic climate. One way in which his company has helped charities is by signing them up to a new technology called "giveonthemobile", which allows people to give donations directly from their mobile phones. Ronel is volunteering his time to Noah's Ark by serving on the Board of Trustees and providing strategic marketing advice.

"It is important to understand that our business doesn't exist in isolation just to make money. Our corporate social responsibility is about understanding our business's impact on the wider world and considering how we can use this impact in a positive way," he says in the article.



Ronel Lehmann: working with charities



Llewellyn Boyer-Cartwright



# Your alma mater needs you

By Paul E H Davis

As a schoolboy I attended Brighton College, an independent school in East Sussex with an enviable reputation for academic excellence and superb extra-curricular activities.

After I left, the Headmaster wrote to all Old Brightonians with an unbelievably simple scheme. He wanted us to agree to pay, each month, the princely sum of £7 – annually, the grand total of £84. Like many of my friends, I questioned the amount requested as it seemed, quite frankly, a ridiculously small amount each month. In Brighton, it would be the equivalent to about three coffees, or two hours' parking!

So, what was it for? Brighton College had linked up to a school in an extremely deprived area of East London. The Headmaster wanted to use the money raised to provide three boarding scholarships a year to disadvantaged but worthy students. Brighton College was inundated with direct debits from Old Brightonians because the amount requested was so small that everybody agreed to pay and everybody felt that they wanted to pay back. Do you feel that way? I do and you should. The result, after two years, was that all six students on the scholarships went on to Oxford and Cambridge.

This proves that small amounts from a large number of people really can work. If you were to give to your *alma mater* in the same way, it would help it to raise the money it needs for improvements.

The University of Buckingham needs your help; it needs money or, more specifically, endowments.

Today, it is easy to think that all is well with our University and that a bright future is assured – so perhaps former students do not need to do much. Everything seems to be going our way: the purchase of the Right Bank site the other side of the River Great Ouse, a substantial increase in student numbers, our continued success in the National Student Survey, positive news coverage – and, of course, the problems being experienced by our competitors in the state-subsidised sector.

The talk of more markets in higher education, students paying their way and shorter degree courses makes people believe that the Government has finally seen the light, and will commit itself to the creation of an English equivalent to the Ivy League in the USA which contains universities like Harvard and Yale.

Sadly, that is unlikely. We have to face the fact that rough times lie ahead. We are independent and that means, ultimately, we are alone. As our motto says, “we fly on



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our own wings”, but that means that we can soar upwards or come crashing down.

We may be experiencing relatively good times now but Buckingham has seen many ups and downs in the last 25 years. None of us knows what the future holds.

As alumni, we all benefited from what is, in all but name, an Oxbridge education. Small groups and even one-to-one teaching are the norm, not the exception; and access to lecturers – as well as administrative staff – has always been easy.

We need to build up our endowment so that, if and when, the good times turn, the University will be able to weather the storm. I was at the University in the early 1990s when we thought we would simply go from strength to strength, but I was also there a few years later when things went wrong and student numbers fell because the market conditions changed.

This is why I want you to donate money to our *alma mater*. It does not need to be a lot but it would be helpful if it were regular.

We need to build up a war fund.

I am putting my money where my mouth is. I support the University through scholarships, exhibitions, and prizes and through the Pioneer Fund where I give a sum of money each month. And I can tell you this: seeing people who would not have been able to enter higher education come to the University and succeed is the most rewarding experience in the world. Try it yourself because you won't regret it.

I leave you with the thought that it is time to give something back; after all, if the University fails and no longer exists, where does that leave our degrees?

Get involved with the refurbishment of the Radcliffe Centre and become, quite literally, a part of the fabric of our University by “buying” a chair in the renovated lecture theatre. Or what about setting up a scholarship scheme, or just committing to give a small amount every month, say £10 (a mere £120 per year) – or more if you can? Something even simpler, the officers of the University of Buckingham Alumni Association give their precious time free to raise funds for the University. Please support their efforts. The future of our *alma mater* is in your hands.

If you would like to sign up to the Pioneer Fund and give £67 a month to the University, please contact the Director of Development, Lucy Hodges on +44 (0)1280 820115