

PROM

Elder Abuse

Quantified Romantics

Body Size

Mindfulness Research

Fractal Clock

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www.aber.ac.uk/en/postgrad/

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PROM is the magazine of Aberystwyth University.

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Keep up to date with regular alumni news from Aberystwyth University by updating your current email address on www.aber.ac.uk/alumni/update, following us on Twitter or joining Aber Connect or our groups on Facebook and LinkedIn. See www.aber.ac.uk/alumni for links.



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STRONG FOUNDATIONS

On the morning of 15 October, Aberystwyth University and our local community celebrated Founders' Day, probably for the first time since 1872. I was privileged to speak at the event in the Old College, alongside the Deputy Mayor, the President of our Students' Union, and a local representative of the Old Students' Association. This was a superb reminder of how our communities – town, current students, staff, and alumni – interact and intersect, and a very positive opportunity to indicate the importance of town and University to one another. The event didn't quite hit the heights of 1872, as I regret to say I don't have the powers to grant a town holiday. The menu was also rather different – the crowd in 1872 enjoyed 'turkeys, chickens, hams, tongues, ducks, grouse, partridges, pheasants, raised pies, rabbit pies, veal and ham pies, aspec [*sic*] and other jellies, &c.', as reported in *The Welshman* from 18 October. We were a tiny bit more restrained with a range of excellent, contemporary breakfast canapés – though in common with the 1872 report, our hospitality colleagues still ensured that 'The repast was turned out in first-class style and was well served'.

The Founders' Day event was part of our celebration of the successes of 2015. Not only has Aber officially been recognised as a 'Great Town' by the Academy of Urbanism; the University is also delighted to be opening our world-class Fferm Penglais student accommodation; taking forward funding applications for 'New Life for Old College'; and flying the Green Flag on the Penglais Campus – the first University in Wales to be recognised for outstanding green spaces. We have been making great strides in providing paid work and project experience alongside training to build our students' and graduates' confidence, and partly through the AberForward scheme we have seen a tremendous uplift in our employability performance. Naturally, these improvements are already feeding into our league table performances, with Aber the joint top climber in the 2016 *Times / Sunday Times Good University Guide*, up 14 places. Meanwhile, we advanced to 52nd in the UK in the QS international rankings, moving into the top 501-550 universities in the world, a jump of up to 149 places; while in the THE World University Rankings we now stand at 39th in the UK, and in the top 350 in the world. All this is excellent progress; but we still need further improvements in student satisfaction, currently being targeted through our Student Success plan.

We also want to do more in reaching out to our alumni. We have a magnificent cohort of staff members, current students, alumni and friends whose gifts to the University help us take forward many different projects. This isn't just about money – giving treasure is important, but time and talent are equally vital. On this spring's visit to the US, it was a privilege to congratulate Washington DC resident alumnus Mitch Robinson on winning the inaugural British Council Education UK Alumni Award for Professional Achievement – you can read more elsewhere in *PROM*. Our newest Alumni Associations in New York and Washington DC are under development, and they will be working hard with us to catch up with our vibrant Alumni Club of Malaysia, established in 1998! Perhaps next in line will be Singapore... and many thanks to alumna and University Council and Development Advisory Board member Anne Davies for hosting an alumni reunion in Singapore at the British High Commission in September. We offer our warmest thanks to Myra Kinghorn, inaugural Chair of the Development Advisory Board; and welcome and congratulate her able successor Lynton Jones.

We are also celebrating our largest financial gift from a living donor, as Peter Hancock and his partner Pat Pollard (née Trevitt), Aber alumni now living in New Zealand, have made an exceptionally generous donation of £506,000 to establish the Peter Hancock Need and Merit Scholarship Fund. Peter wants to say thank you to Aber - but also 'to make a difference through providing scholarships for in-need, promising students to enable them to commence rewarding careers contributing to society and then, in turn, help others.' This gift fits impeccably with the University's priorities of student success, excellence, and supporting and retaining students from many different backgrounds.

All these inspiring examples are about partnerships – just as we celebrated the link between Aber town and the University on Founders' Day, so we celebrate the living link between the University and our alumni. Please do ask what your University can do for you; and we hope you will also be open to the many opportunities you have to help your University.



Professor April McMahon, Vice-Chancellor



SPACE SCIENTISTS CONTRIBUTE TO DISCOVERY OF BEAGLE 2 ON MARS

Space scientists at Aberystwyth have played an important role in the discovery of the remains of the Beagle 2 Mars Lander which was lost on Christmas Day 2003.

The UK-led Beagle 2 Mars Lander, which hitched a ride on the ESA Mars Express mission, has been found partially deployed on the surface of Mars.

This find shows that the 'Entry, Descent and Landing' sequence for Beagle 2 worked and the craft landed successfully.

The team searching for Beagle 2 approached Dr Laurence Tyler and Dr Matt Gunn at the Institute of Mathematics, Physics and Computer Science at the University to provide detailed 3D images of the area where it was believed to have landed.

Using powerful 'Shape from Shading' computer software developed by the Space Robotics Group, Dr Tyler was able to provide a terrain map of the area from images taken by the HiRISE camera on NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter.

Dr Tyler hopes to use the same technique to study the proposed landing sites for the European Space Agency's 2018 ExoMars rover mission.

Beagle 2 was led by Professor Colin Pillinger from the Open University and Aberystwyth University space scientist Professor Dave Barnes played a key role in the development of one of the mission's defining features, its robotic arm.

Professor Pillinger died in May 2014 and Professor Barnes died in July 2014.



Dr Laurence Tyler, a member of the Space Robotics Group

Commenting on the discovery of Beagle 2, Dr Tyler said: "This news has brought a lump to my throat. I am very pleased to hear it sounds like Beagle 2 landed successfully but saddened that Dave is not around to see this. He would have been absolutely thrilled that Beagle 2 landed safely and didn't just burn up in the atmosphere."

Following the untimely death of Professor Barnes in July 2014, Dr Tyler and Dr Gunn are both leading the important contribution Aberystwyth is making to ExoMars.

Full story: www.aber.ac.uk/en/news/archive/2015/01/title-162231-en.html

'SUPERFEED' LUPIN WILL PROVIDE SOYA-GRADE PROTEIN FROM UK FARMS

In March 2015 scientists at IBERS proved that growing lupins provides a viable alternative source of soya-grade protein for animal and fish feeds in the UK.



The potential for home-grown lupins to replace imported soya in livestock, poultry and aquaculture concentrate feeds has been made clear through the three year project which has revealed that livestock, poultry and fish given rations containing lupins perform equally well and in some cases better than those fed rations of comparable quality containing soya.

The research, which was funded by 10 industry partners and co-funded by Innovate UK and the BBSRC, has far-reaching implications for the UK food and farming industry, where imported soya has long been a key source of protein in animal feeds.

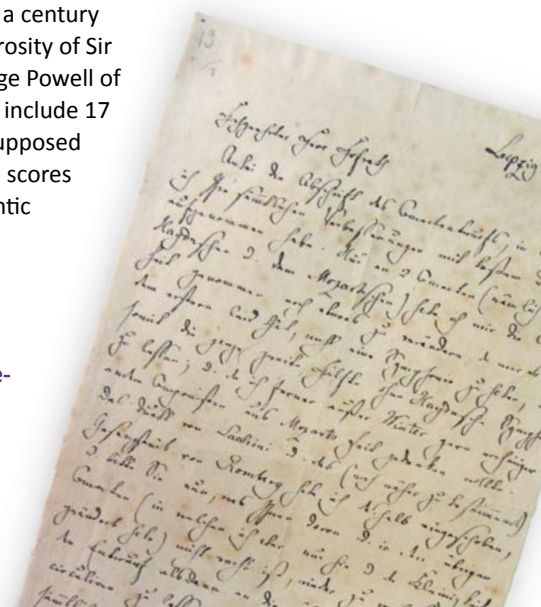
Full story: www.aber.ac.uk/en/news/archive/2015/03/title-165258-en.html

WEDDING MARCH COMPOSER'S RESTORED LETTERS ON SHOW

Letters written by Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847), best known for his Wedding March score and still the most frequently used music to wedding ceremonies today, were recently conserved and are now accessible to future generations for study and research at Aberystwyth University.

The documents, bequeathed to the University over a century ago through the generosity of Sir Hugh Owen and George Powell of Nanteos (1842-1882), include 17 letters and also two supposed autographed overture scores by the German Romantic composer, pianist and conductor.

Full story: www.aber.ac.uk/en/news/archive/2014/08/title-155056-en.html



£750,000 TO STUDY HOW SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS AND READERS ANTICIPATE THE FUTURE

Professor Iwan Morus from the Department of History and Welsh History, along with researchers from York and Newcastle universities, has been awarded £750,000 by the Arts and Humanities Research Council to study how science fiction writers and readers during the 20th century anticipated the future through new scientific developments.

The three year project will investigate the relationships between science, fiction and popular culture over the course of the long technological 20th century (1887-2007), focusing on how innovations in science, technology and medicine have been used by writers, policy-makers and the general public to anticipate and think about the future.

Professor Morus will be leading on research into the technologies and performances that were used to imagine the future at the turn of the 20th century and the culture of futurism that flourished in books and magazines, fiction and non-fiction during the late Victorian and Edwardian period.

Professor Morus said: "I will look at the optimism and excitement of the innovations in physics and experimental cultures during the late Victorian and early Edwardian period.

"The overall aim is to show how science has been a source



Professor Iwan Morus with an induction coil which was in use from the 1830s. Between around 1890 and 1920 these were used to generate high voltage to create electromagnetic (radio) waves.

of unsettling social change as new knowledge opens up new possibilities, anticipations and hopes but also new fears, conflicts and unintended consequences.

"At the same time, we will explore how fiction and culture more broadly has unsettled scientific certainties by making science a source of entertainment, wonder and pleasure, and enabling readers and publics to challenge expert knowledge by asking difficult questions about the ethical, social and political implications for the future."

Full story: www.aber.ac.uk/en/news/archive/2015/01/title-162841-en.html

FIRST STUDENTS WELCOMED AT FFERM PENGLAIS

This year the University welcomed the first students to its new student residences at Fferm Penglais, which offer the very latest in purpose-built student accommodation.

Located immediately behind the existing award-winning Pentre Jane Morgan student village, and within easy walking distance of the University's academic buildings, the new residence provides a superb environment for living and studying with generous en-suite bedrooms and high specification studio apartments, including hard-wired and Wi-Fi internet access. A convenient central service area provides laundrettes, stores, social and sporting facilities.

There is an area of accommodation located within the Fferm Penglais dedicated for students who are Welsh learners or fluent Welsh speakers, and wish to live in a Welsh speaking environment.

Pro Vice-Chancellor, Rebecca Davies, said: "The development is a significant investment for the University, and I am confident that the accommodation represents some of the best student accommodation available in the UK."

Full story: www.aber.ac.uk/en/news/archive/2015/09/title-173077-en.html

HISTORY OF NATIVE WELSH SHEEP BREEDS UNCOVERED

Sheep were domesticated 10,000 years ago, but little was previously known about the history, genetic diversity and relationship between Welsh and other European breeds. Understanding the relationships between breeds will assist breeding strategies aimed at improving production through lower costs, increased efficiency, improved livestock health and monitoring of inbreeding.

The findings of a three year study published by *BMC Genetics* in June by IBERS PhD student Sarah Beynon, Dr Gancho Slavov and Dr Denis Larkin of the Royal Veterinary College in London, concluded that the genetic integrity of native Welsh breeds and the contemporary scientific techniques of genetic selection offer breeders in Wales the opportunity to develop commercial flocks that will be comparable to commercial breeds like Texel but better adapted to the local environment.

Full story: www.aber.ac.uk/en/news/archive/2015/06/title-168102-en.html



Sarah Beynon

THE PETER HANCOCK NEED AND MERIT SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Peter Hancock graduated from the Geology Department at Aber in 1962, and armed with his Aber education, set out on a career which spanned the globe, like many of his contemporaries. His first job was helping to map the geology of parts of Central Australia, but his career broadened and he worked in government, industry and consultancy as an engineering and exploration geologist in Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Canada, discovering new mineral resources and investigating or overseeing in-ground construction of major gas pipeline, hydro-electric and irrigation projects, effluent disposal works, land stability and due diligence reporting on mineral resources.

Throughout his career, Peter has never forgotten his time spent at Aber and has always remembered that acquiring an education can have its own challenges and setbacks. Peter was fortunate that his experiences whilst studying for his degree at Aber were enhanced and supported financially by a scholarship, and personally by mentoring from the young Dr Nancy Kirk, a truly memorable character from the geology academic staff. In recognition of this help, which enabled him to complete his studies and embark on his career, Peter, in conjunction with his partner, Pat Pollard (née Trevitt), herself an Aber graduate in botany and geology, has endowed a fund to help Aber students of today to find the support they need to finish their studies. Peter and Pat firmly believe that no deserving student should feel unable to complete their studies for a lack of funding, and they have donated an endowment of £500,000 to Aberystwyth University to provide for this support. An additional gift of £6,000 from Peter and Pat has enabled the scholarship to start this year.

In New Zealand Peter has represented a range of clients before judicial tribunals and the court of arbitration in cases involving mineral exploration, mining and engineering works. He has been a teacher, lecturer, researcher and a government and company geologist. He developed and managed his own consultancy company operating in New Zealand, Australia and North America. His research for and publication of his book, *Green & Gold: Sustaining mineral wealth, Australians and their environment* on the perceptions and realities of resource development, led to his later career as a facilitator in conflict resolution on resource development, environmental, and Aboriginal racial and disadvantage issues. His lecturing positions



were at the University of South Australia and University of Waikato and he was a Visiting Fellow at the Australian National University (ANU) for 19 years, providing lecture courses and undertaking multi-disciplinary research assignments.

Peter has undoubtedly had a hugely successful career and he identifies one of the most rewarding experiences as building inter-racial and inter-tribal harmony through constructive dialogue as Founding Director of the ANU Centre for Dialogue, which has helped to reduce violence and improve quality of life for some Aboriginal people.

Peter says, "The key element in making this gift is to give something back to student life and the university that over 50 years ago gave me so much academically, socially and in developing my leadership and business skills. At the same time, I hope it will make a difference through providing scholarships for in-need, promising students to enable them to commence rewarding careers that contribute to society and so, in turn, help others."

We offer a huge thank-you to Peter and Pat for endowing the Peter Hancock Need and Merit Scholarship Fund for *'deserving, meritorious, in-need Year 2 Honours students or equivalent, in any discipline and of any nationality and who show potential to benefit society through the successful completion of their Honours Degrees or equivalent.'* As new generations of Aber graduates set out into their future, some will carry the knowledge and gratitude that Peter and Pat have helped to make their studies possible, and we hope that this will lead to similar successes in life for them. 🍷

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION IN WALES PHILANTHROPY AWARD

In recognition of the importance of Peter Hancock's support for Aber, he was awarded a Community Foundation in Wales Philanthropy Award, presented at the Community Foundation in Wales Annual Philanthropy Reception and Awards held at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff in November 2015. As Peter and Pat were unable to attend in person, the award was accepted on their behalf by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor April McMahon.

Speaking at the Awards ceremony, Professor McMahon said: "It is a real privilege to be here accepting a Community Foundation in Wales Philanthropy Award on behalf of our alumnus, benefactor and friend, Peter Hancock.

"Peter is extremely clear that one of his main motivations in setting up this fund is to encourage others to give. He believes strongly that the professionally and financially rewarding career he has enjoyed as an engineering and exploration geologist was enabled by a scholarship provided through the University, without which he would not have been able to complete an honours degree – hence the focus of the Fund on supporting 2nd year students to finish their degrees successfully.

"Peter's words are inspiring, and I know our students feel this too. And what's more, his gift fits impeccably well with the University's priorities of student success, excellence, and working to support and retain students from many different backgrounds.

"I thank you for your recognition of Peter and Pat's generosity and ambition; and it is my very great pleasure on behalf of Aberystwyth University to accept the Philanthropy Award for Peter Hancock." 📌



Celebrating the awarding of the Community Foundation in Wales Philanthropy Award to AU alumnus and benefactor Peter Hancock are AU alumni and staff (left to right) Dr Martin Price, Cathy Piquemal, Dr Hywel Ceri Jones, Steve Lawrence, Professor April McMahon, Dr Stuart Owen-Jones, Dr Susan Davies, Louise Jagger and Kay Powell.



CELEBRATE 50 YEARS UNDERGROUND

Calling all cavers! On the weekend of 29 - 31 January 2016, Aberystwyth Caving club will be holding its 50th anniversary. The club invites all members both past and present to join us in Aberystwyth to celebrate ACC with events taking place over the weekend. We look forward to seeing you!

Contact David Greenwell via development@aber.ac.uk (01970 621568) the club's Facebook page is at www.facebook.com/groups/AberCavers/?fref=nf



JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS
OF ELDER ABUSE:
DESIGNING A NEW APPROACH
WITH OLDER PEOPLE



Alan Clarke, Sarah Wydall & John Williams

The Choice project at Aberystwyth, a three-year project funded by the Big Lottery, will be working with older people who are being abused and help them to access the kind of help and support they need. Professor John Williams outlines the problem and how the Choice project aims to address it.

The good news is that we are living longer. Estimates show that the number of older people living in Wales will increase from about 615,000 today, to nearly 900,000 by 2039. The fact that we live longer is not a problem – it is something we should celebrate. However, it brings challenges in particular for health, social care, transport and leisure services. Wales has been innovative in its approach to its ageing population. The Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013-23 is now in its third phase. Other countries have followed this innovative idea. Wales was the first country in the World to appoint an Older People’s Commissioner whose remit is to protect the rights of older people. Since the creation of the office by the *Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006*, the Commissioner has undertaken reviews of residential care homes, dignity and respect in hospitals in Wales, and advocacy in care homes. The general view is that Wales is a good place in which to grow older and in many respects, it is.

However, not all older people in Wales have a good experience. Poverty, poor housing, fuel poverty and isolation affect the lives of some older people in Wales. They share many of these with younger generations. Sadly, older people in Wales also experience abuse and neglect. A study on the prevalence of elder abuse conducted for the Department of Health in 2007 found that 6% of respondents to the survey who lived in Wales experienced abuse – that is the highest prevalence in the United Kingdom. Estimates suggest that 35,000 older people in Wales experience abuse or neglect, which roughly equates to the population of Port Talbot or Pontypridd.

There have been several well-publicised cases of the abuse of older people in residential care. Operation Jasmine found over one hundred older victims suffered abuse in a group of care homes in South Wales. The finding of the investigation into the treatment of older patients in Glan Clwyd Hospital identified failures in the care of vulnerable older people. It is disturbing that these took place in what are supposed to be safe and caring environments. As well as institutional settings, elder abuse takes place in people’s own homes. People in positions of trust abuse older people, for example, family members and people they know. Abuse can involve action or inaction. It causes immeasurable harm to many older people and can lead to isolation, poverty, malnutrition and premature death.

The Centre for the Study of Ageing, Abuse and Neglect, based in the Department of Law and Criminology, has been awarded £890,000 by the Big Lottery as part of a £1.3m research project on Elder Abuse and Justice. The grant holders are Alan Clarke, John Williams and Sarah Wydall. The other members of the team are Sarah Cairns, Jeremy

Newman and Rebecca Zerk. Two additional people are to be appointed in the near future. In addition, a number of volunteers are being recruited. The Project is called *Dewis Choice*.

The Project builds on research undertaken by the Centre on elder abuse focussing on those who experience abuse or neglect in their own homes by a family member or 'friend'. The research reveals several things. Perhaps the most disturbing is that something appears to happen when a person experiencing abuse reaches the age of sixty. They appear to be moved to other processes where justice options that may be explored for younger victims are not considered. Although a lot of elder abuse is domestic abuse, it is not seen as such by agencies and available justice options are not pursued or even presented as an option. A more welfare approach is adopted. Social care and support is important, but it may fail to deliver justice for the older person. Sometimes, it may mean the older person having to leave their home and move into residential care, which victimises them for a second time.

The research revealed that the criminal law is rarely used. In most cases, abuse involves a criminal offence. This is not to suggest the criminal law should always be the answer, or that it is the answer in most cases. However, low figures of prosecutions or cautions of between 1% and 2% of referred cases must give rise to concerns. Have we effectively decriminalised elder abuse? Do we deny older people the protection of the criminal law?

Throughout investigations of elder abuse, the research showed older people are disempowered. It is something being done to them rather than with them. The lack of advocacy to support the victim is apparent. This is particularly the case where the victim lacks mental capacity, but it applies to others as well.

Victims of elder abuse want three things. First, they want the abuse to end. Second, they want the perpetrator to recognise what they are doing is wrong. Third, they want to feel justice has been done. Justice involves something in addition to civil or criminal proceedings. If the perpetrator is a family member, for example a grandchild, the grandparent may not want to see them criminalised or the subject of court proceedings. It is important that the dynamics of elder abuse be recognised.

If elder abuse takes place within a family, there can be mixed reactions. Criminalising a family member may have devastating consequences for the family. Members of the family may take sides. It is possible that a family providing support and

companionship will abandon the older person as they side with the perpetrator. However, it is unacceptable that the price the older person has to pay for this support is for the abuse to continue.

Typically, it is assumed the victim is dependent upon the perpetrator. This is often the case – the perpetrator may enable the victim to continue living at home. However, on occasions the research shows that there is mutual dependency. The perpetrator may steal, for example, from the older person to fund an addiction.

These findings led the team to conclude that further research was required to identify any justice deficits in existing procedures and to design, with older people, a new restorative approach for victims of elder abuse. This restorative approach aims to preserve and build on what is good about the relationship, but ensure the abuse ends and the perpetrator recognises their behaviour as being wrong.

The Choice Project will work with several key stakeholders including Carmarthenshire and City of Cardiff local authorities. It will start with an awareness-raising exercise conducted by volunteers from all age groups, ensuring that the project is truly intergenerational. Often older people are given little or no information on what options are available, so the second stage will appoint and train specialist Justice Workers who, with the older person, will identify the justice options and any social care services that may be available, giving the older person sufficient information to make an informed choice as to whether to use them. In addition, the Justice Worker will offer

victims the opportunity of taking part in developing and evaluating a restorative approach intended to make sure the abuse ends, and the older person feels justice has been achieved without destroying what may be a crucial support network

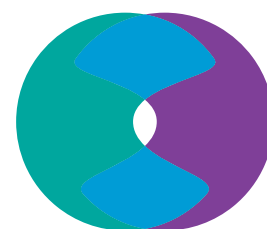
and strong emotional ties.

Choice seeks to move away from the domination of the welfare approach and instead offer older victims choice. Human rights underpin the project and abuse is a breach of many human rights.

Most importantly, it is intended to make sure victims of elder abuse are empowered to make informed choices about how we end elder abuse. ■

Justice involves
something in addition to civil
or criminal proceedings

If you wish to know more about *Dewis Choice* please contact Jeremy Newman the Project Coordinator on jen11@aber.ac.uk (tel 01970 622516), visit the website choice.aber.ac.uk. In addition, you can follow us on Twitter - [@choiceolderppl](https://twitter.com/choiceolderppl).



Dewis Choice

ABER ABROAD



The geographical spread of Aber alumni reaches every continent around the globe, separated by distance but all united in their shared experience of a unique educational community with an international outlook in a Welsh seaside town. A variety of alumni events has been held in the United States of America, Singapore, Australia, Malaysia, Mauritius and Taiwan, often with visiting staff from Aber who have unfailingly been offered a warm welcome.

In Washington DC, New York, Singapore and Mauritius, alumni have been keen to follow the example of our oldest international alumni association in Malaysia and have volunteered to start local groups with a view to setting up full alumni associations. We offer a huge thank-you to Mitch Robinson in Washington DC; Jeffrey Bradford in New York; Yves Hein in Mauritius; to Anne Davies for her organisation of a reception in Singapore, laying the foundation for a new association there and to everyone who came along to these support events.

If you are interested in joining or helping to form one of these new groups, please contact the Development and Alumni Relations team on +44 1970 621568 or development@aber.ac.uk and we will put you in touch with those involved.

Travel plans for 2016 so far include Mauritius and Dubai and a return visit to the United States, but if you would like to know if we're visiting your part of the world, or if you would like to look at starting up your own Aber alumni group, please get in touch and we'll help with the plans. The International Office staff in Aber are also globe-trotting and you can see where they are going on the International Office events page at www.aber.ac.uk/en/international/events-news. 📍

ABER OPPORTUNITIES NETWORK: HOW THE E-MENTORING SERVICE IS WORKING

Britannia Beauty is a luxury British make-up brush company founded by make-up artist, entrepreneur, digital marketer and 2015 Aber graduate, Lucy Newman in January 2015.

Since her final year, Lucy has been able to receive mentoring from other Aber alumni already established in their career.

Here are, in Lucy's words, the benefits she sees to her contact with Aber alumni, in the context of a final year student /recent graduate starting a new business and looking for mentoring:

"On leaving Aber and starting my own business, I have found that alumni support through e-mentoring has been absolutely invaluable to me. Being able to have access to Aber graduate professionals who have 'been there and done that' has put my mind at ease and helped me on my way in business like no book or fact sheet ever could!

"I am thankful for all the help and guidance I have received through e-mentoring; whether it be finance, legal advice or simply how to work with suppliers. I couldn't recommend it more!"

If you would like to know more about becoming a mentor, or how Aber is encouraging the entrepreneurial spirit of its students, please get in touch via development@aber.ac.uk or speak to Tony Orme on 01970 62203 awo@aber.ac.uk

The background of the page is a reproduction of the painting 'Satan Summoning His Legions' (1792) by Richard Westall. It depicts a muscular, winged figure, Satan, standing in a dark, cavernous space. He is wearing a red cape and holding a staff or scepter. His right arm is raised, and he appears to be summoning or commanding other figures. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the figure's musculature and the texture of his cape.

QUANTIFIED ROMANTICS:

PIONEERING TECHNOLOGY
THAT TELLS US (AND OTHERS)
HOW MUCH WE TRULY 'FEEL'...

Words: Matthew Pryce-Barnett

Byron might have loved it, Sir Walter Scott been amused and J M W Turner intrigued.

It's all very well writing high-flown poetry and prose, and painting luminously evocative scenes, but what effect are they having on the dear reader or viewer?

As a result of a creative collaboration that would have impressed them all, two Aberystwyth University professors combined their expertise and interests to bring the Romantic Movement and 21st century computer science together to discover just that.

'Quantified Romantics' is an experiment that just might have huge implications for everything from the advertising industry to fashion and Facebook. As part of the national 'Being Human' festival which took place last November, Romanticist Richard Marggraf Turley and computer scientist Reyer Zwiggelaar conducted an intriguing public engagement event.

In a specially designed and darkened enclosure dubbed 'The Vortex', members of the public were invited to view projected images of gothic paintings and pages from Romantic novels while biometric data were collected with specially designed 'smart' wristbands. That way the pair hoped to detect just how 'moving' such images and words really are for a contemporary audience.

Professor Marggraf Turley explains: "The aim was to explore some of the most intriguing aspects of what it means to be human in the modern world. Do gothic novels really stir the pulse, as their Romantic authors claimed? Can paintings of yawning chasms, nightmarish creatures, ruined abbeys in dark forests and rocky precipices actually cause measurable chills of terror? Such images and impressions are, in a way, timeless and provide a clue to our innate sensitivity to certain emotional triggers and stimuli."

The project began six years ago when Professors Marggraf Turley and Zwiggelaar began exploring thermal imaging as a means of assessing and quantifying one's emotional response, especially through the medium of literature and poetry.

Things moved on, to smart wristbands. With the help of PhD student Tom Blanchard, a complex system of sensors was incorporated into a wristband to monitor movement, heart-beat, temperature and also the quality and moment-by-moment condition of the skin.

As Professor Zwiggelaar points out, the project dealt not only with the interface between art and science but also with how such cross-subject symbiosis may have intriguing consequences.

"We are living in an emotionally supercharged world where people are constantly being exposed to challenging and emotive stimuli through all sorts of media, from social to film and music. At the same time many of us are also happy to share and reveal our feelings and emotions in a way that was not only impossible before the advent of Facebook and Twitter, but wasn't really acceptable. How much of this is authentic? We live and move in a world of illusion, but perhaps also of delusion. We were trying to show how the use of certain technologies can reveal our true responses and feelings, sometimes even to ourselves."

But Professor Zwiggelaar has no doubts as to the technology's power. "Through public engagement events such as that, by gauging people's responses to Romantic images, we can develop our technology in a real situation.

"The truth is that we as humans are very predictable – it is amazing how predictable we are. So, for example, with Facebook when someone says how they are feeling about themselves or someone else, if you had a device that showed how they were really feeling then that might be interesting. More obviously it would have implications within the fashion or advertising worlds where businesses and designers could gauge the impact of their products."

Professor Marggraf Turley adds: "The event also raised compelling questions about our susceptibility to direct and remote sensing. Do we really want to be so transparent to corporations and advertisers? Are we comfortable with allowing biometric measuring devices into that most private of realms - that of the senses?"

"Biometrics offers genuine value, and for those who wish to "improve" themselves, the wide availability of self-tracking technology is a boon. But there is a darker side, a world of continual panoptic and lateral surveillance."

Reyer Zwiggelaar is a Professor at the Department of Computer Science. His current research interests include Medical Image Understanding, especially Focusing on Mammographic and Prostate Data, Pattern Recognition, Statistical Methods, Texture-Based Segmentation, and Feature-Detection Techniques.

Richard Margraaf-Turley is a Professor at the Department of English and Creative Writing. His research interests include Romantic literary and political culture, Shakespeare and food security, and contemporary poetry. He has been involved in several collaborative projects between the arts and sciences.

QUANTIFIED ROMANTICS

MEET THE STUDENT...

Working closely with Professors Marggraf Turley and Zwigelaar, and helping to create the biometric wristbands was Aberystwyth computer science PhD student Tom Blanchard.

Originally from Brighton and now in his ninth year at Aberystwyth, Tom's first degree was in artificial intelligence and robotics which included an industrial research year which he spent in the computer science department. He enjoyed working with the PhD students and so after completing his first degree he successfully applied for Aberystwyth Postgraduate Research Studentship funding to do a doctorate. "Initially my PhD was working with fairly basic and inexpensive sensors combined with more sophisticated ones to analyse and assess natural phenomena," explains Tom. "It was generic work, but as a test-case I applied the technology to the front of glaciers, the part that falls off into the sea, carrying out assessments to see more clearly which parts had fallen off and where.

"Around this time I was approached by Professor Zwigelaar who asked whether I might be interested in working on the Quantified Romantics project. My experience wasn't really so much biometric monitoring as in actually making things, but I had helped on a similar project around a year previously which was to do with measuring anxiety in people, so it sounded interesting and I agreed."

Has he enjoyed the collaboration?

"Hugely – I love tinkering with technology and playing with toys! But seriously, out of play often come interesting and ground-breaking discoveries and developments. At the early stage of creating something like this it is more to do with experimenting with different sensors, playing with the technology and writing new bits of code - almost doing a bit of everything to get some working system.

"What I have been doing is really the first step in seeing whether an idea works, after which you give it to a team who can further design and package it. The technology then gets smaller, more robust and aesthetically pleasing, but the work I have been involved with is in some ways more exciting as it represents the genesis of a product."

As Tom says, the Quantified Romantics project followed the theme of 'play' and was more a public engagement event than a clinical trial, but valuable nevertheless. As he puts it: "it was more about talking to the public – communicating – than staging a scientific experiment. But it shows how science can engage with other disciplines and ideas in an exciting and unusual way."

So, having nearly completed his PhD, how does Tom see his future developing?

"I have a research project here at Aberystwyth for the next couple of years connected with crop monitoring and maximising yield, using systematic monitoring of what is happening in



Richard Marggraf Turley (L) with Tom Blanchard (R)

different parts of a field. So obviously, if you can achieve a one per cent increase in yield over a billion acres of wheat, then that is very significant and makes a huge financial difference also."

Fortunately it isn't all work. Tom has a number of hobbies that involve the outdoors – so he's in the perfect place. In fact, as he explains, he originally chose Aberystwyth for that very reason.

"I had always been into outdoor sports and pursuits such as mountain biking and climbing, and to begin with was very unsure about going to university. But Aberystwyth allowed me to do all of that, and so it was a two in one. I did most of those things for quite a long time really until I got to my PhD, so a lot of that dropped off. The last year has consisted of writing up and part-time work to fund it all, so I haven't had the chance, but will maybe pick some of those pursuits up again now."

And he has another, more unusual interest.

"I've been going down to help out with the Aberystwyth Lifeboat for some time now. I'm interested in sailing and over my life I've done various first aid courses and things, so I guess it's partly an extension of that. There is a sort of drama about it too, its history and community involvement. I just find it interesting and I may pursue it and take it further."

Meanwhile, Tom predicts that he will be in and around Aberystwyth for at least another four or five years, but beyond that isn't so sure. He is 'mildly wary' about the famous 'Aberystwyth effect'.

"It's a wonderful place and I love it, but I also know that people can tend to stay here because it's nice and comfortable, and I don't want to stay because it's somehow easier. So, while I very much like Aberystwyth and it is in many ways my home I will keep my options open and maybe explore the world a bit. But not quite yet..." 📍

DRILLING ANCIENT AFRICAN LAKES SHEDS LIGHT ON HUMAN EVOLUTION



The Chew Bahir Drilling Project: Preparing to remove a core section in its core liner from the lowermost drill rod © Verena Foerster, University of Potsdam

Valley, close to the sites of the earliest known fossils of our species, modern human *Homo sapiens*.

Speaking of the importance of the project, Professor Henry Lamb, of Aberystwyth University's Department of Geography and Earth Sciences, said: "Ideas about how climatic change may have influenced the emergence and dispersal of modern humans have remained largely speculative. We are now going to be able to place the fossil and archaeological data against a detailed record of climatic variation. This will allow us to make more rigorous tests of these hypotheses."

Full story: www.aber.ac.uk/en/news/archive/2015/02/title-164073-en.html

£2.76 MILLION RESEARCH FOR ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY OF OATS AND THE MILLING INDUSTRY

The award-winning oat breeding team at IBERS has secured new funding from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council for research aimed at further improving the nutritional value and economic sustainability of oats.

The demand for high quality food grade oats is increasing annually, driven by its proven health benefits and through product innovation by the milling and cereals industries. Despite an expanding market, the oat crop continues to be challenged by the high investments being made in alternative crops and this intensifies competition.

This new BBSRC LINK 5 year project, led by IBERS, involves collaborative research between science based partners (IBERS, Heriot-Watt University and NIAB) and industry partners along the supply chain who will play a central role in evaluating the performance and quality of new oat varieties.

The project will address some of the major challenges facing UK agriculture in terms of the sustainable production of safe and nutritious food.

Full story: www.aber.ac.uk/en/news/archive/2015/02/title-162996-en.html



Professor Athole Marshall (centre) with oat breeding team members in the BBSRC funded National Plant Phenomics Centre at IBERS

THE GUARDIAN TIPS ABER GRADUATE AS ONE OF 2015'S 'NEW FACES OF FICTION'

Aberystwyth University Creative Writing graduate, Kate Hamer has been tipped by *The Guardian* as one of the most promising new authors of 2015 in their 'New Faces of Fiction', a list of the first time novelists they believe will 'make a splash'.

Kate's story, *The Girl in the Red Coat* is described as a re-telling of *Little Red Riding Hood* inspired by the image of a little girl in a red coat, lost in a wood.

Growing up in Pembrokeshire, she harboured an aspiration to write for a living but worked for a decade in television, producing documentaries before embarking on a Masters in Creative Writing at Aberystwyth University.

She described her time at Aberystwyth as giving her "the opportunity to experiment with and explore my personal writing style. I came across tutors who were passionate, open to ideas and talented, and this was exactly what I needed at that stage in my writing career."

Full story: www.aber.ac.uk/en/news/archive/2015/02/title-163691-en.html



BACK TO SCHOOL

Are you working in secondary or further education? The University's Schools & Colleges Liaison Team are available throughout the year to support you and your students. The team offers a comprehensive range of presentations and workshops covering all aspects of researching, applying and preparing for higher education. Staff from the University's academic departments are also available to offer subject specific talks to assist with syllabus enrichment.

For full details, please contact schools-liaison@aber.ac.uk / 01970 622065.



BODY SIZE, A MORAL ISSUE

Words: Dr Sarah Riley

There is an advert that features a man, shirt open, smearing a product over his large, untoned chest while women in an open-plan office gaze on in admiration. The perspective then changes and we are shown that this is the man's fantasy and in reality he is an object of disgust. The message from the advert is clear: this man is disgusting for using the advertiser's rival product and disgusting for being fat.

The advert works in part because we have been trained to be disgusted by bodies that do not conform to narrow definitions of attractiveness. Disgust is a basic and powerful emotion. It is associated with contamination, originally in relation to food, but as humans developed, disgust became linked to morality. And in today's society our body size is a moral issue.

People have always been judged by their bodies. In the past having muscles meant you worked for a living, you only had to look at a man to know if he worked in the foundry or the fields. Now a muscular physique on a man is more likely to be the outcome of a 'lifestyle choice', of time spent in the gym. This shift from bodies representing the communities to which we belong to representing our individual choices has opened up the possibility for greater judgement: if our bodies represent our individual choices then we can be individually judged by them.

But thinking about our bodies as representing lifestyle choices ignores the issues people have less control over, such as natural differences in body shape and size, social inequalities that impact on what we can eat and how we exercise, unconscious desires around food and the commercial forces that benefit from our body image anxieties and what psychologist Deb Burgard calls the 'weight cycling' industries. By ignoring these issues and focusing on the individual we allow a judgemental culture to flourish. Research shows that

shoppers sneak looks at each other's supermarket trolleys, girls spend hours getting ready to go out, not for male attention but because they fear looks from other girls, and our media encourage us to scrutinise and compare our bodies with others, an outcome of which is body dissatisfaction. Sport England designed their 'this girl can' campaign to challenge what they saw as being the biggest barrier to women participating in sport: being judged.

Living in a culture of scrutiny and judgement creates negative emotions: fear, shame, and anxiety. Disgust gets added when we tie this judgemental culture to how we think about health. Over a number of years we have begun to associate health with weight so that weight has become a proxy for health. And in the context where we are individually responsible for our health within a finite resourced health system, a person's weight has become not just an indicator of their health but also their morality.

But the relationship between health and weight is complex. The 'calories in / energy out' model is oversimplified, definitions of healthy weights change, and there is evidence that a little 'extra' weight can be protective. Research in psychology, sociology and biomedicine have all challenged the notion of obesity as a direct cause of illness as well as questioning the efficacy of pointing out to people that they are overweight. Nonetheless, these approaches persist.

The impact of seeing weight but thinking health is a problem. Research shows that people may work on their bodies to get a healthy *look*. And the cost of this can include obsessive concern over food consumption or exercise, bulimic practices and smoking. The cost for larger people is to be the object of disgust, not given full status as people – see for example, the way obese people are represented in the media in dehumanised ways – without heads, or with clothes straining against their apparently ever

expanding bodies. This means that larger people are less likely to go to a doctor about their health concerns, and more likely to have their symptoms dismissed or ascribed to their weight, creating health inequalities.


In any event, there is plenty of evidence that fat shaming simply doesn't have the desired effect of weight loss. It may increase body-dissatisfaction, but longitudinal research showed that higher body dissatisfaction was linked with less weight loss and with long-term weight gain in adolescents who had been big children.

Fat shaming is a moral issue, not because weight is linked to health, but because it's a form of bullying and part of a wider judgemental culture in which all people are encouraged to feel anxious about their bodies. Skinny people also have stories to tell of comments and criticisms. This tells us that there is a very narrow margin of what is aesthetically

acceptable and most of us don't fit it. The outcome is that it is hard for us to have good feelings about our bodies. I once asked a lecture full of students if anyone felt guilty for not going to the gym more often and nearly every person put their hand up.

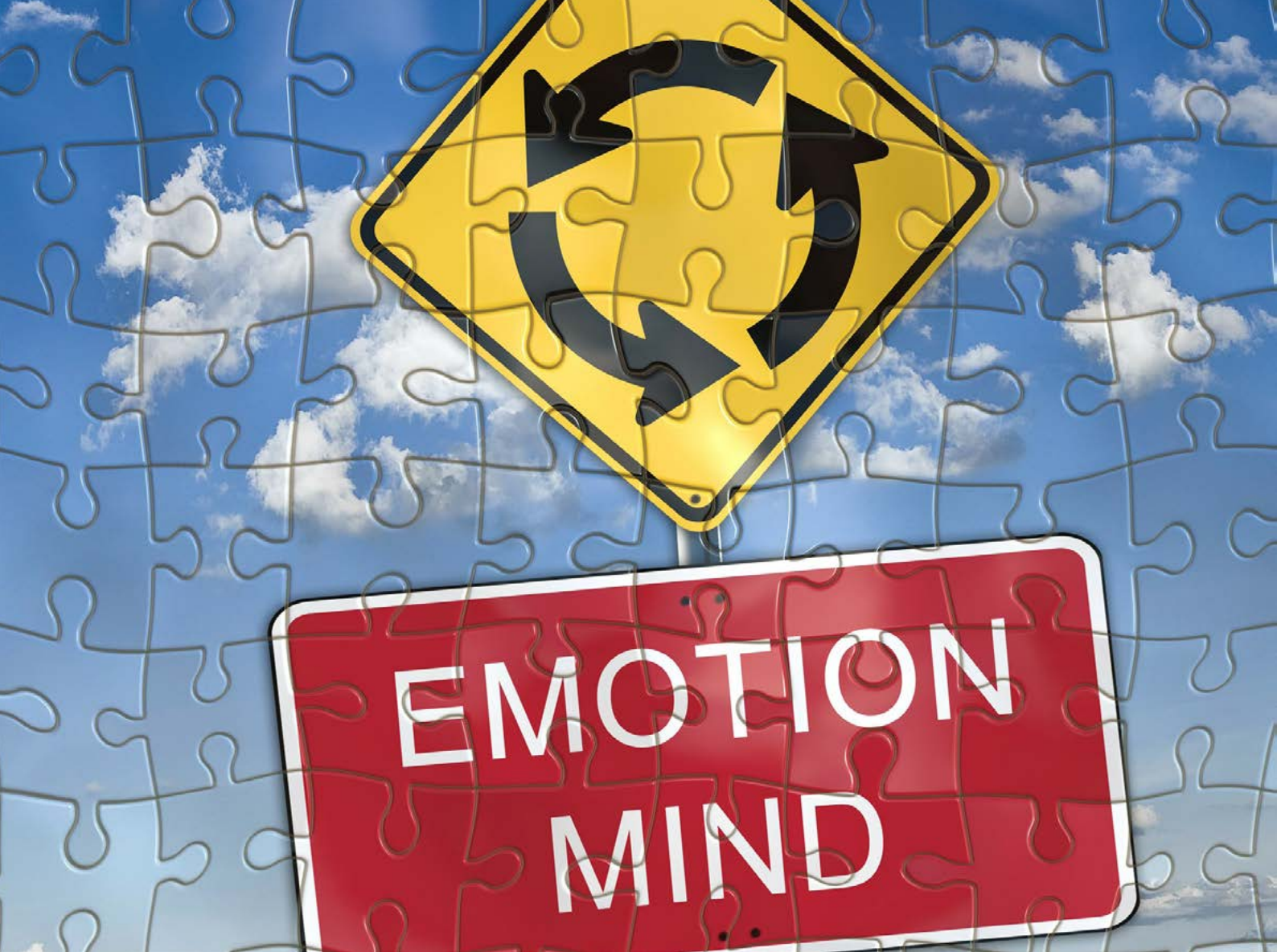
there is a very narrow margin of what is aesthetically acceptable and most of us don't fit it

My argument is that these negative emotions we have about healthy living make it harder to live healthy lifestyles. In thinking of our bodies as something we have to work on, in need of constant vigilance and open to judgement, health becomes hard work, unpleasant, difficult, and associated with negative feelings.

I'm not saying don't go to the gym. My concern is that whether you are a gym bunny or one of the significant number (30-40% in Wales) of people who report taking no recreational exercise in a week, you have to make sense of your bodies within a judgement culture. I'd like to see us find collective ways to resist this judgemental culture. Ironically, it may make us a slimmer nation. 

Dr Sarah Riley is Director of Research and Senior Lecturer at the Department of Psychology. She is an identity researcher, interested in how we make sense of ourselves, particularly in relation to our gender, bodies, appearance or social groups, such as youth cultures.





ARE YOU PAYING ATTENTION?

A story of pioneering mindfulness research

*Words: Professor
Mark Whitehead*

How well can you focus on something? If you are like me you probably pay relatively little attention to your own attention and will find answering this question quite tricky. Here is one way to assess your ability to focus. Try to focus on something simple such as your breath. Notice its movement into your body as relatively cold air passing through your mouth and nostrils. Pay attention to the way in which your in-breath results in the expansion of your lungs and the uplifting of your chest. Now attend to your out-breath, noticing the expansion of your abdomen, the movement of warmer air through your nose, and the general sense of relaxation your body may experience. Now try and focus on your breath, and nothing else, for five minutes. Difficult isn't it? Notice how your mind wanders, possibly dwelling on that rather awkward conversation you had with your boss earlier today, or that looming deadline that is approaching this afternoon. Having noticed where your thoughts have gone, and without giving yourself a hard time for not being able to focus your attention, now return to your breath. This simply exercise is an example of mindfulness training.

Few people would dispute that mindfulness is presently in vogue. From its use in schools as an aid to learning to its uptake by major international companies such as Google, Ebay and Twitter as a way of improving the effectiveness of their employees, there are now few sectors where mindfulness doesn't appear to be having some form

of influence. In amongst all this activity a team from the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences are involved in pioneering research exploring the potential role of mindfulness in supporting social change in the workplace and the wider world.

As a practice that is devoted to instilling presented centred, non-judgmental awareness within individuals, mindfulness originated some two and half thousand years ago as a Buddhist meditative tradition. Over the last 40 years mindfulness practices have been adapted in order to help address a series of secular challenges. The development of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) (which was introduced by Jon Kabat-Zinn as a practice for pain management), and Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) (which has been used to alleviate certain mental illnesses) are perhaps the most well-known secular applications of mindfulness. More recently, in the UK there has been growing governmental interest in the potential applications of mindfulness. Mindfulness training is now being offered to MPs and Lords in Westminster, and Assembly Members in the National Assembly for Wales. The UK government has also established an All-Party Parliamentary Group to study the benefits of bringing mindfulness into public policy. The Mindfulness APPG is supported by the Mindfulness Initiative, a coalition of Oxford, Exeter

and Bangor Universities working 'to promote a better understanding of mindfulness and its potential in a range of public services'. Focusing initially on health, education, and criminal justice, the APPG is exploring the evidence base that could support the wider application of mindfulness techniques. What undergirds all of this mindfulness activity is the dual realization that people tend to be both happier and more effective when they can focus their attention. The problem is that the multi-media world we now live in thrives on multi-tasking and the promotion of almost chronic forms of divided attention.

At Aberystwyth a team of researchers lead by mindfulness trainer Rachel Lilley and supported by Professors Mark Whitehead and Rhys Jones, have been exploring the role of mindfulness training as a context to support practitioners who are responsible for developing policies that promote various forms of behaviour change (particularly in relation to promoting low carbon lifestyle). Working with behaviour change experts within the public, private and third sectors (with a particular focus on the civil service in Wales) the team have been studying the impacts that participating in an 8-week mindfulness training programme has on the day-to-day work of these professionals. The results have so far been very encouraging. Participants report that the mindfulness training programme has changed the way in which they think about the behaviours of others, and enabled them to develop more nuanced understandings of why people find the transition to lower carbon lifestyles so challenging. They also report that the programme has enabled them to handle stress in the workplace more effectively, find new ways of relating to and working with their colleagues, and even had a beneficial impact on their lives outside work. So far approximately one hundred people have participated in this Mindfulness and Behaviour Change programme developed at Aberystwyth University. The Civil Service in Wales has been so impressed with the results of the programme that they are looking to expand the training more widely among civil servants. Aberystwyth's research team were recently asked to contribute to the evidence gathering of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Mindfulness.

Few people would dispute that mindfulness is presently in vogue

Having seen the benefits that mindfulness training can bring to workplaces across a range of sectors, the Aberystwyth research team are now supporting efforts to build a more mindful university right here in Aberystwyth. These efforts began with a mindfulness training session that was led by Rachel Lilley and offered to the university's Administrative Forum. It has since grown to include weekly mindfulness classes being offered to all staff across the university. The response amongst staff has so far been very encouraging. As far we know Aberystwyth is the first university in the UK to explore the potential of developing a more mindful institution. In terms of mindfulness, Aberystwyth University appears to be leading the way on a range of different fronts. 🌱

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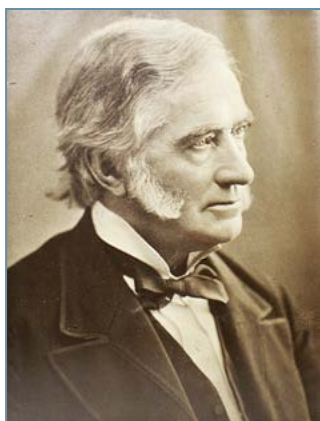


Professor Mark Whitehead is a graduate of Aberystwyth from 1997 when he was awarded the James Fairgreave and Gregynog Prizes for Geography. His PhD, exploring the emergence of sustainable urban development planning in the UK, was awarded in 2001. He was appointed a lecturer in the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences in 2000.

CELEBRATING OUR FOUNDERS



*Thomas Charles Edwards,
First Principal*



Sir Hugh Owen

The history of the formation of the first university in Wales in 1872 is a unique one, the result of a wave of popular support, public imagination and individual generosity. A small group of patriots, led by Hugh Owen, a London Welshman, raised enough money by public and private subscription to establish a college of university status in Wales.

This year, Aberystwyth University is celebrating this history, its present and its future by establishing a formal celebration of its Founders. On 15 October 2015, a Founders' Day Breakfast was held in the Old College in Aberystwyth, commemorating the establishment of the first university in Wales. Bringing together representatives from the University, the Old Students' Association and local community for a celebratory breakfast, the event mirrored the ethos behind the original celebrations in Old College on 15 October 1872, when over 100 people, including 26 students and four members of academic staff, became a landmark in the history of education in Wales.

And as was the case in 1872, a London Celebration was held on 27 November 2015 to echo the dinner at the City Terminus Hotel, Cannon Street, London, on 27 November 1872, an event which "was marked by great cheerfulness and hopefulness for the future success of the College" (*College by the Sea*, Ewan Morgan p16.)

Founders' Day celebrations in London were held in the magnificent St Pancras Renaissance Hotel, mirroring the joyful occasion held in 1872 when benefactors and supporters of the fledgling university marked the opening of the college in Aberystwyth.

Drawing upon the vision, ambitions and achievements of our Founders and a long history of alumni fundraising in support for the University and our students, the 2015 celebration invited alumni and friends to join with us in helping students in three specific ways: reducing hardship; promoting welfare and wellbeing, and creating more opportunities.

Such was the popularity of this event, tickets were sold out, and the original fundraising target was met two weeks early, enabling all the projects to proceed.

Professor April McMahon, Vice-Chancellor, said: "The establishment of Aberystwyth University is one of the great romantic, indeed heroic, stories of modern Welsh history. As the birthplace of university scholarship in Wales, we are immensely proud of our heritage and look forward to commemorating one of the most special events in our University calendar."

Founders' Day commemorations in 2016 will build on these joyous events and the newly launched Aber Fund appeal will further the successes of the Annual Fund in building upon the foundations of philanthropy that have underpinned our history. If you would like to join the celebrations or add your support to our efforts, please get in touch with Cathy Piquemal in the Development and Alumni Relations Office 01970 621568 or development@aber.ac.uk

*Vice-Chancellor, Professor April
McMahon and Baroness Kay
Andrews (front row, second from
right) with guests celebrating
Founders' Day*





ABERYSTWYTH ALUMNI ELECTED TO PARLIAMENT

Twelve Aberystwyth University alumni were elected to the House of Commons in Westminster in the 2015 General Election.

Guto Bebb MP

Guto graduated from Aberystwyth in 1990 with a BA in History. He was elected to Parliament in 2010 after winning the newly-created seat of Aberconwy for the Conservative Party. He increased his majority in 2015 to 3,999.

Rehman Chishti MP

Conservative MP Rehman Chishti read Law at Aberystwyth, graduating in 2000. Born in Muzaffarabad, Pakistani Kashmir in 1978, he won the Gillingham and Rainham seat from the Labour Party in 2010. In the recent election he increased his majority to 10,530.

Glyn Davies MP

Former Welsh Assembly member Glyn Davies is currently serving his second term as Conservative Member of Parliament for Montgomeryshire, after he won the seat in 2010. Glyn attended Aberystwyth University at the age of 50, gaining a diploma in International Politics in 1995.

Jonathan Edwards MP

Leader of Plaid Cymru in Westminster, Jonathan Edwards graduated from Aberystwyth University in 1999 with a degree in Politics and History. He has been the MP for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr since 2010.

Lady Sylvia Hermon MP

An Independent MP, Lady Sylvia Hermon was elected to the Northern Irish seat of North Down as a Ulster Unionist Party member in 2001. A graduate from the Law Department, she gained her degree in 1977.

Dan Jarvis MP

Labour Party MP for Barnsley Central, Dan Jarvis graduated from Aberystwyth University in 1996 with a degree in International Politics and Strategic Studies. He later joined the army where he served in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Will Quince MP

Will Quince won the seat of Colchester for the Conservatives, having come second to the Liberal Democrat candidate for the seat in 2010. He studied Law at Aberystwyth, graduating in 2005.

Liz Saville-Roberts MP

Liz Saville-Roberts held the seat of Dwyfor Meirionnydd for Plaid Cymru after her predecessor Elyn Llwyd stood down at the 2015 election. Originally from Eltham, London, she moved to Aberystwyth aged 18 to study languages, graduating in Celtic Studies in 1987.

Colonel Bob Stewart MP

Colonel Bob Stewart graduated from Aberystwyth in 1977 with an in-service degree in International Politics. In his 27-year military career he served in Bosnia and Northern Ireland, before winning the seat of Beckenham for the Conservative Party in 2010.

Gareth Thomas MP

Former minister of State for the Department of International Development, Gareth Thomas retained his seat of Harrow West for the Labour Party. He graduated in 1988 with a BSc in Politics from Aberystwyth University. Gareth is also the chair of the Co-operative Party.

Mark Williams MP

Member of Parliament for the local constituency of Ceredigion, Mark Williams joined Aberystwyth University in 1984, studying politics. After time as a primary school teacher, he became an MP in 2005 after regaining Ceredigion for the Liberal Democrats.

Mike Wood MP

Mike Wood held the seat of Dudley South for the Conservative Party in the 2015 election, following Chris Kelly standing down. Mike studied Economics and Law and graduated in 1997. He has previously been a councillor on Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council.

Vice-Chancellor Professor April McMahon said:

“I’d like to congratulate all our alumni who are newly elected or re-elected to Westminster. We’re very proud and glad our distinguished tradition of representation at Westminster will continue.” 🇬🇧

AN ARTWORK TO CHALLENGE THE SENSES: RICHARD DOWNING'S FRACTAL CLOCK



It has taken the scenographer and artist Richard Downing five years to create what must surely be one of Wales's and the UK's most thought provoking, technologically demanding and original artworks.



Richard Downing

“ a dance of holes across the stage of an hour ”

His Fractal Clock is indeed a thing of beauty, a huge pyramidal cloud consisting of 81 suspended pieces of triangular slate, lit from above and forming an almost mystical impression of calm and divine order.

And yet all is not as it seems. As part of a complex experiment to consider the ways in which we instinctively respond to the infinite complexities of fractal geometry as represented in nature, each perfectly proportioned piece is programmed to turn very gradually over the space of an hour, altering and shifting one's perception of the whole before returning to its original state.

It is also an experiment in how we perceive space, which as Downing explains, is as important as the elements around it. In his words, his artwork might be described as “a dance of holes across the stage of an hour.”

The project began following a conversation with Oregon based academic and polymath Professor Richard Taylor about fractals in nature and how we instinctively respond to and harmonize our perceptions around such patterns. The dialogue has been ongoing, prompting years of experimentation from Downing and an article in *Performance Research* consisting of 81 elements, exploring the concept of fractal geometry, space and its poetic possibilities¹. From this weave of thinking and doing, the Fractal Clock has gradually emerged.

He explains: “It is the case of a five-minute idea taking five years to realize. But it arrested me and the challenge was to somehow articulate this in an artistic context. Fractal patterning in art has tended to be graphic and two-dimensional. Richard and I were curious about the possibility of fractals as corporeal apprehensions – constructs only of perception. I made the work to find out what that might be like, how it might make one feel and react.”

Downing's background as a lecturer in scenography helped, having spent 30 years producing performance and installation work, as well as his previous interest in creative writing. In his words: “The text I was writing ended up as a theatre of images and so became more sculptured. It was once described as ‘theatrically unreasonable’, which I liked. I am sceptical of boundaries - between art and science, for example. The boundaries are particularly blurry in this piece.”


The entire artwork, occupying 125 cubic metres of space, is suspended from a spider-web frame, with each of the 81 slate triangles suspended in turn by pairs of slender copper wires

from the shafts of stepper motors. Each motor can be controlled to determine individual rhythms of movement and patterns of alignment.

The idea of articulating his concept in such a way was based on a fractal pattern known as the Sierpinski Triangle, which is mathematically exact at its repeating scale. It is also a very powerful and even emotional shape, which has appeared throughout history - for example the 13th Century Cosmati mosaics in Anagni Cathedral.

Adds Downing: "The Sierpinski Triangle has an exactness about it, but by making each element rotate at different speeds this exactness is disrupted and so more statistical, or 'natural', fractals emerge like cloud formations in which a smaller piece may be similar to, but never the same as, the whole. It becomes more organic and entropic. A variation on a theme, as in a piece of music, perhaps."

Housed in Aberystwyth's Castle Theatre, because of its nature and the need for it be perceived and absorbed over the period of an hour, Downing prefers it to be accessible only to single viewers or pairs at a time.

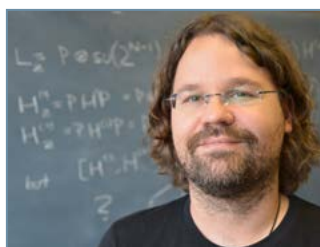
"I prefer people to be able to spend time over it, should they wish. I think it's an instrument of reflection, in the end, and of perception. It will also tell you the time - in many ways - should you let it." 

¹ Richard Downing (2013) *Setting the Fractal Clock(s): The coordinates of a spatial expression*, *Performance Research*, 18:3, 169-178.

More information and announcements of future viewings can be found at rod36.wix.com/richard-downing-fractal
Pete Telfer's recent film about The Fractal Clock can be found at www.artplayer.tv/video/1322/fractal-clock

As well as teaching in the department of Theatre, Film and Television, Richard has acted as Artistic Director for the interdisciplinary performance group U-Man Zoo since its foundation in 1994, designing and directing twelve performances and installations prior to 2006 including **Vision 20/20** (Glasgow Tramway, 1996) **32 Wardrobes** (Project Arts, Dublin, 2001); and **The Water Banquet** (Grenland Friteater, 2003). This work has been supported by the Arts Council of Wales, Wales Arts International, the BBC, and the EU PACT (Performing Arts Co-operation and Touring) Scheme.

A NEW MECHANISM FOR BUILDING QUANTUM COMPUTERS



A new mechanism for building quantum computers has been proposed by an international team of scientists led by Dr Daniel Klaus Burgarth from the Institute of Mathematics, Physics and Computer Science.

Scientists are engaged in a world wide effort to build large quantum computers which will be able to perform some very complex computations in a very short time, tasks that would take the most powerful computers in use today many thousands of years to complete.

Writing in the scientific journal *Nature Communications*, Dr Burgarth *et al* described how the frequent observation of a basic building block of a quantum system, a qubit, could lead to the creation of far more powerful computers.

Full story: www.aber.ac.uk/en/news/archive/2014/10/title-157770-en.html

INTERNATIONAL STUDY OF HOBBIT AUDIENCES

The final film in *The Hobbit* trilogy, *The Battle of the Five Armies* went on general release in the UK on 12 December 2014. On the same day, the most ambitious research project ever undertaken into film audiences was launched by academics at Aberystwyth University.



Professor Martin Barker (left) and Professor Matt Hills

The World Hobbit Project www.worldhobbitproject.org saw up to 140 researchers in 46 countries collaborating to seek responses in 33 different languages to a survey designed to get inside all the meanings that fantasy has for people around the world.

Full story: www.aber.ac.uk/en/news/archive/2014/12/title-160859-en.html

£3.7 MILLION TO COMBAT FLATWORM INFECTIONS

The Wellcome Trust, the UK's largest private funder of biomedical and veterinary research, has awarded a 5-year, £3.7M Biomedical Sciences Strategic Award to an international team of scientists from the UK, Germany, France and the USA led by Professor Karl Hoffmann from IBERS.



Professor Karl Hoffmann, Professor of Parasitology at IBERS

The project entitled the 'Flatworm Functional Genomics Initiative (FUGI)' will develop game-changing research tools for the study and manipulation of parasitic flatworm species responsible for the devastating diseases echinococcosis (hydatid disease) and schistosomiasis (bilharzia), and is set to propel flatworm research into the 21st century.

On winning this prestigious award Professor Hoffmann commented "We are incredibly pleased that the Wellcome Trust has selected our team to develop these cutting-edge resources, which will

revolutionise our ability to study and manipulate parasitic flatworms including blood flukes and tapeworms.

"Parasitic flatworms cause some of the most debilitating infectious diseases on our planet and are responsible for significant and oppressive burdens in both humans and livestock. While existing control is primarily based on chemotherapy, there is a real risk that this strategy is unsustainable due to the generation of parasites resistant to the limited drugs currently being used."

Never before has such a diverse team of international experts been brought together in this way to combat the debilitating diseases caused by flatworm parasites.

Full story: www.aber.ac.uk/en/news/archive/2015/05/title-167342-en.html

ABERYSTWYTH SUBJECTS LISTED AMONGST

WORLD ELITE

Five academic subjects at Aberystwyth University feature amongst the world's elite according to the latest QS World University Rankings by Subject published in April 2015.

Environmental Science, a new entry, and English Language and Literature feature in the top 300; Geography and Agriculture and Forestry retain their positions in the top 150; and Politics (Politics and International Studies from 2015) climbed into the top 150 for the first time.

Now in its fourth edition, the QS World University Rankings by Subject evaluated 3,467 universities and ranked 971 institutions. Over 82 million citations attributions were analysed and the provision of 13,132 programs verified.

Full story: www.aber.ac.uk/en/news/archive/2015/04/title-166437-en.html

International human rights lawyer Mitch Robinson reflects on his time at Aberystwyth University and the town he calls his 'second home'



Words: Matthew Pryce-Barnett

Aberystwyth alumnus and international law expert Mitch Robinson claims he has two homes - Mississippi and Aberystwyth.

And they may be thousands of miles apart, but together they have shaped a career that has taken him to the heart of the US establishment and involvement with one of the most challenging issues in modern history - Guantanamo Bay - where his work has been instrumental in obtaining ground breaking reports and precedents from the UN regarding due process rights and the rehabilitation of torture victims.

Mitch Robinson grew up in America's Deep South where early on he was exposed to civil rights issues. After studying in Birmingham, Alabama, a scholarship took him to Edinburgh University for a master's in international politics. It was also at a key moment in history, as he explains:

"My flight had been delayed because of the attack on the World Trade Centre on 9 / 11 which changed the modern world as we knew it.

"What was interesting to me was that none of the academic community in Edinburgh appeared to have anticipated such an event, while all the books that were more prophetic were by

people from Aberystwyth University - so I decided to pay it a visit.”

Travelling by train, which Mitch feels has a slightly magical quality in itself, and winding through dramatic countryside he arrived at Aberystwyth to find himself in a place that seemed perfect in every respect, and he speaks of that first visit almost lyrically.

“The town was exactly what I was looking for. It was friendly, small but not too small, a beautiful landscape on the ocean - I had never lived on the ocean. It was amazing to me how much vibrancy and diversity you could fit into such a very small space.

“Looking back, the town and its extraordinary atmosphere sold it as much as the university and its reputation. The joke is that you get to Machynlleth and the last 30 minutes you’re just breaking a sweat, but that journey is such a special one for me because it really had a sense of entering an almost magical place. It has a sense of mystery and I can understand how people 1500 years ago used to look into the hills and you can almost sense the dragons and knights. In fact, I think it is genuinely spellbinding, captivating.

“The town was exactly what I was looking for. It was friendly, small but not too small, a beautiful landscape on the ocean”

“There is also something about that train journey in that you are leaving everything behind - there is a romanticism about trains that perhaps resonates with the place itself. Add to that the journey around the estuary and Borth and you feel that you entering a different place and different time.”

He was also struck by its energy and diversity. “Aberystwyth is an amazingly cosmopolitan and organic city, and something that I have noticed since I left which is that there has been a great Welsh revival. All the cafés and cultural places that have opened speak of a very progressive society, but also one that is embracing its heritage. It’s a fusion of both the past and the future - it was like that then in a lot of ways and was great fun. Also, there was no one else from Mississippi there and so I was a curiosity, but people were very welcoming; it felt like home.”

To add to the sense of mystery, Mitch has Welsh ancestry and has often wondered whether there was some genetic memory, a sense of coming home. “Some of my ancestors were Morgans, and when I look back I realize that I had this Welsh heritage that I never knew was there. So I think there was something quite ancestral, something that is maybe in one’s blood and one doesn’t always comprehend. So, you’re talking about a people who were here in Wales for millennia and then for a couple of generations have been migrants and I think there was something intangible that resonated with me at that level.”

Once at Aberystwyth, where he embarked on an LLM, he found himself immersed in a challenging, vibrant academic environment that was refreshingly analytical and creative. And there were two individuals in particular who had a profound impact on him and his thinking: Chris Harding in the Law Department and Ken Booth of the International Politics Department.

“They were outstanding intellectuals and thinkers, yet very different men. I was working from two ends of the spectrum in terms of study and teaching style, but equally rigorous. And the one thing that they have in common is that they put students first, they are student-oriented men. So I had two mentors who were completely different, and what I do now is a fusion of those two approaches.

“Chris’s approach to law is very artistic and very experiential - I often say that he has ‘experiential jurisprudence’. He was able to make connections between the disparate areas of law, art, humanity and academia that were inspired. We’d go to the pub and discuss not only law but he would throw music and literary readings into it - it was a humanities master-class. That in itself was a teaching process in terms of how to think, it was very perceptive and existential whereas the law can be a dull topic.

“At the same time, Ken Booth has an extraordinarily critical and fine mind. He is someone who can turn an idea or concept upside down in a moment’s notice: it’s like everyone sees one thing but he sees something else. In particular, he would see how something could be improved, throw dynamite into an assumption and explode it, but then build up another more suitable theory or model very rigorously. It isn’t about radical thinking: it’s about rigorous radical thinking. It’s not enough to say that this is bad, or wrong, you have to do a rigorous job of explaining how it can be better.”

It was also a time of ‘extraordinary personal growth’ for Mitch. As he put it: “Aberystwyth is a sort of bubble, albeit a very stimulating one. I was mixing with many people from different parts of the world, and that can be a challenging process. It definitely helped sharpen up my thinking and broaden my mind in a wholly positive sense and was an intense experience, both intellectually and emotionally. And I think it was this that created the real bond between me and the university and town. I always say that there are only two places I ever call home: the one is Mississippi and the other is Aberystwyth. Mississippi is the home of my soul, but everything that I ever learned I learned at Aberystwyth.”

After completing his master’s, Mitch worked briefly in Beijing before beginning a PhD in International Law at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, focusing on forced labour and human trafficking. But it wasn’t long before Aberystwyth’s spell began to work its magic and he found himself returning to his ‘second home’.



L to R: Professor John Williams, Head of the Law Department; Dr Jenny Mathers, Head of the International Politics Department; Mitch Robinson and Vice-Chancellor Professor April McMahon at a panel discussion on human rights and international law held in Aberystwyth.

“I had so loved being at Aberystwyth and needed the stability and support it provided, and so returned there to live in Borth and commute to the National Library. Those last few months of my PhD were just perfect - I had balance. Being able to look out at the sea again, have my friends around and go to the Arts Centre. The great thing about being back in Aberystwyth was that the PhD was part of my life, but not all of my life.”

Having completed his PhD, Mitch travelled to Oslo where he took a visiting post-doctoral position, after which he got a call from the Pentagon. His work now ranks among some of the most high-profile and challenging of anywhere in the world, working as he does on the legal defence team representing a prisoner at Guantanamo who is being tried by a secretive military tribunal.

Mitch explains: “The individual is a torture victim, and the tribunal was constituted to circumvent the United States constitution and civilian trials. My particular work is called collateral litigation, in that there is a trial taking place which is not only an unjust violation of basic human rights but most importantly a violation of the US constitution. It is also a violation of international law, and so I was hired by the United States government to carry out collateral litigation to take the circumstances of his case and the violation of his rights anywhere in the world to an international law forum that will hear his case and try to take action in his favour.”

It was partly as a result of this work and his contribution to the cause of human rights law that earlier this year he was awarded the Professional Achievement Award at the US British Council’s Education UK Alumni Awards 2015, about which he has mixed feelings:

“I was massively honoured but am equivocal about it, because the person whose team I work on is still suffering in Guantanamo Bay. The important thing is that I am doing exactly what Aberystwyth trained me to do, and so the award is more to the university where I went 10 years ago.”

So, what does Mitch feel that he owes to Aberystwyth, in terms not only of his work but who he is?

After a long pause, he answers: “My grandfather once told me, shortly before his passing, that the one thing that can’t be taken from you is your education. Everything else can be taken from you. And after working at Guantanamo that is very true - I have seen everything taken from somebody. Aberystwyth educated me, and so it’s given me the one thing that can’t be taken from me. In turn, I can use that to help the prisoner have his fundamental rights restored and defend the rule of law. It also gave me a wonderful three years that I will remember always, some of the happiest of my life.”

“ I am doing exactly what Aberystwyth trained me to do ”

AN UPDATE ON NEW LIFE FOR OLD COLLEGE FROM THE PROJECT TEAM

Our plans for the much loved Old College building reached an important milestone with the submission of a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund in December 2015. The New Life for Old College Project Board, which brings together members of the University Council, University staff, and representatives of the Local Authority, Town Council, Student Union and OSA, approved our plans to apply for £9.93 million towards the full project costs of £19.47 million.

Old College is Grade I listed and one of the UK's most significant nineteenth-century buildings, in Gothic revival style. The University plans to restore it to its former glory, and transform it into a thriving centre for heritage, learning, and enterprise for town and gown, attracting an audience nationwide and internationally. Works are expected to be completed in time for the University's 150th anniversary in 2022.

Louise Jagger, Director of Development and Alumni Relations says: "The views and enthusiasm of our alumni and supporters around the world have been of crucial importance to the plans, and of particular interest to the Heritage Lottery Fund and other funding bodies we have consulted. They have helped to inform our decision to open up over 75% of it to the public alongside student teaching and support facilities. We want to encourage closer 'town/gown' relationships and foster community cohesion."

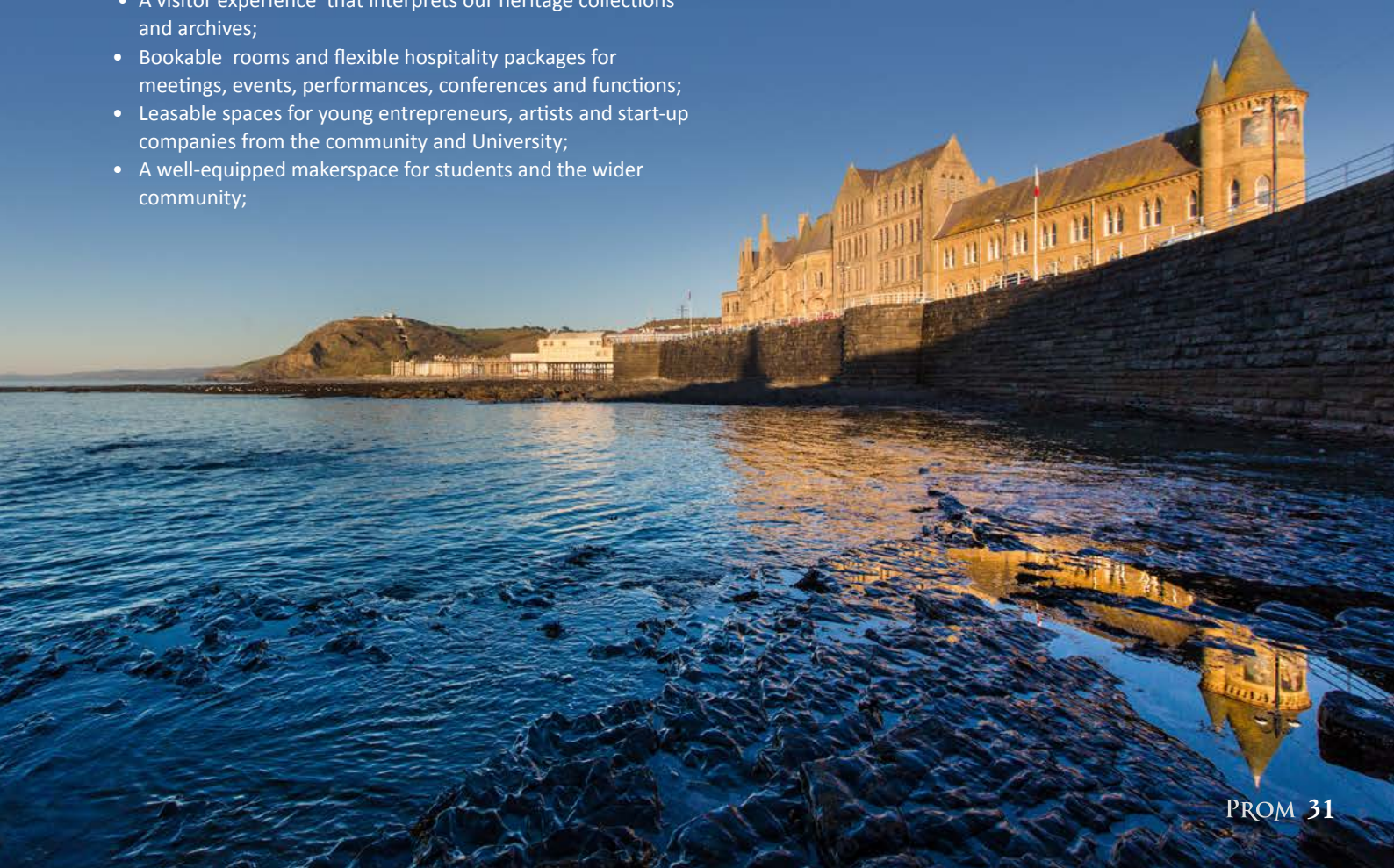
Specifically, the 'new' Old College will be home to:

- A visitor experience that interprets our heritage collections and archives;
- Bookable rooms and flexible hospitality packages for meetings, events, performances, conferences and functions;
- Leasable spaces for young entrepreneurs, artists and start-up companies from the community and University;
- A well-equipped makerspace for students and the wider community;

- Flexible teaching/study spaces for interdisciplinary initiatives, such as learning and skills to support jobseekers into employment, and Welsh for Adults;
- Student support and welfare facilities, including the University's Centre for Widening Participation and Social Inclusion;
- Catering, hospitality and retail facility for students, community, visitors and events, focusing on local and Welsh products.

As an iconic landmark on the seafront promenade, Old College is ideally positioned to be a place people will visit regularly as part of the daily rhythms of Aberystwyth's social, cultural and economic life and which – importantly – gives non-traditional and international audiences the opportunity to engage and connect with the University and with heritage.

The University came into being through public support and is founded upon the principle of inclusivity. By regenerating Old College for public benefit we acknowledge those debts. We are very grateful for all the support and encouragement and will keep you informed about major developments of the project and the outcome of our bid, expected in May 2016. Meanwhile, please do get in touch with the Project Team on oldcollege@aber.ac.uk or 01970 621568 if you want to know more about our plans or would like to discuss how to support them.



OLD STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

The Association was founded in 1892 and, over 120 years later, it has more than 8000 members spread all over the world, but united in a common affection for this historic and much loved University between the mountains and the sea.

Throughout its history, starting in the 1890s when it help to raise funds for the completion of the college building, the Association has supported the University and been a point of contact for maintaining and re-forging the friendships made between students. Today these aims are continued in social events, fund raising efforts and active promotion of Aberystwyth University to the wider world. The Association's Committee meets three times a year and holds a reunion every year, almost always in Aber, the only exception to this being during the First World War.

The Association could not have lasted continuously since 1892 without the ability to adapt to change, whilst still maintaining both its independent voice and a warmly supportive relationship to Aberystwyth University. If you would like to help to shape the future of the OSA, please get in touch with the Honorary Secretary on osaadmin@aber.ac.uk or 01970 621568.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, STEVE LAWRENCE

It is a great honour to be serving a second term as President of the Old Students' Association. As I said in the last edition of *PROM*, it is particularly humbling to have been elected when you consider the outstanding individuals who have preceded me in the role. One of those former Presidents, Ken Young CBE, sadly died in 2015 and an obituary can be found on page 41. Ken was a kind, intelligent and generous man, who held his alma mater in the highest esteem. He worked tirelessly to promote opportunities for Aberystwyth alumni to maintain their links with the University and he also provided encouragement, whenever appropriate, to involve them in actively supporting projects and programmes. While he was aware of the many informal groupings of Aber alumni, his pride in the OSA as its official manifestation was always clear. As he often said, it cannot be accidental or coincidental that our association has probably been in continuous existence for longer than any of its British counterparts. It has branches across the UK and overseas – most notably in Malaysia and Hong Kong – and, given this meritorious history, we have been working with the University to further develop alumni links internationally, with New York and Washington already well on the road to organising branches / chapters. I am sure there will be updates on these initiatives, and others, in future editions of *PROM*.

Another important part of Aber's history is the Old College. The College by the Sea, *Y Coleg ger y Lli*, was Wales's first university institution and the Old College complex remains an outstanding symbol of Welsh higher education today. It has long given generations of students from Wales, from the other countries of the United Kingdom and from all parts of the world a wonderful chance to expand their talents not only through learning but also through the social and cultural phenomenon known as 'the Aber Spirit'. Today the building is a Grade 1 listed High Victorian Gothic edifice which ranks amongst the UK's most significant buildings of the 19th century and consultation has established that it is key to the image and perception of the sea front and historic 'old town' area. Yet, it is comparatively 'hard-to-treat', given its listed status, eclectic architecture and multiple access issues by today's standards. It is therefore largely unused at present and the University is working hard to address this issue. Without a major overhaul the Old Coll is in danger of falling into a state of dilapidation and it is recognised that failure to restore and re-vitalise would not only constitute failure to respect and value our heritage but would also create major weakness in the regeneration strategies

EVENTS TO LOOK OUT FOR IN 2016

The Annual Reunion will be held in Aber in late June 2016 and is open to OSA members and non-members alike. We are working on the programme right now and will be spreading the word early in 2016, so look out for information coming your way in the alumni e-newsletter, in your inbox and don't forget to update your details with us through the Development and Alumni Relations Office so that we send it to the right place!

for Aberystwyth town and Mid Wales. As a consequence, a Project Board was established, chaired by the University's Pro Chancellor, Gwerfyl Pierce Jones, and including OSA representation through the President's membership of the group. Its aim is to help formulate, develop and deliver 'New Life for Old College' as a flagship project in Aberystwyth University's strategy for public engagement. This will create integrated and inclusive opportunities for diverse audiences to engage with the building and the University's historical collections. The aim is to deliver this vision by the 150th anniversary of our University in 2022. This will be achieved with the support of the local community, partners, funders and stakeholders - including 60,000 alumni worldwide - and will build on the wealth of positive feelings for Old College and its unique heritage.

We know from experience that former students have a tremendous amount to give back to Aber and this is often driven by a desire to support current students. This has recently been underlined by a most generous donation from Peter Hancock and Pat Pollard (née Trevitt). I had the pleasure of meeting both of them when they visited the Penglais Campus earlier this year and was taken by their strong sense of wanting to give something back to a place which obviously meant a lot to them. More on this exciting and vital development elsewhere in [PROM](#) (page 8)!

If you would like to receive further information about the Association and its activities, including lectures, reunions, branches etc please contact Louise Perkins, Honorary Secretary, osaadmin@aber.ac.uk or telephone 01970 622081.

LLANDOVERY LECTURE: DR NATASHA DE VERE USING DNA BARCODING TO UNDERSTAND THE WORLD OF POLLINATORS

Another highlight will be the Llandovery Lecture, to be held on Saturday 4 June in Llandovery College. We are very fortunate to have secured Dr Natasha De Vere as the speaker this year. Dr De Vere works for the National Botanic Garden of Wales and combines this with part-time Senior Lectureship in IBERS at Aber.



Natasha is a botanist with particular interest in conservation biology whose research successes include the DNA barcoding of the whole of the native flora of Wales – making it the first nation in the world to achieve this. The project has now extended to Barcode UK and development of applications that use this resource for biodiversity. Widely involved in public engagement with science, and with particular interests in developing arts-science collaborations, Natasha has been actively developing links and collaborative projects throughout the world.

Tickets for the lecture are £22 to include coffee and lunch, and we hope to offer a group tour of the National Botanic Garden in the afternoon (admission £7.50). Tickets are available from Kay Powell through the OSA c/o DARO, Cledwyn Building, Penglais, Aberystwyth SY23 3DD or osaadmin@aber.ac.uk or 01970 621568.

There will be the annual OSA reception at the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show in July and the reunion on the Maes at the National Eisteddfod in August, plus plenty of local activities through OSA branches in the North West, in Cardiff, London and of course, Aberystwyth. Everyone welcome!

GRADUATION HONOURS 2015



Graduation week is the joyous highlight of the academic year, an occasion when Aberystwyth celebrates the achievements of its students with their families, friends and academic staff who have supported them in achieving their educational goals at Aber.

FELLOWS

The University also celebrates and honours those who have made an outstanding contribution to the institution, or to professional and public life in Wales with Honorary Fellowships and, for the first time this year, Honorary Degrees.

JULIA GILLARD



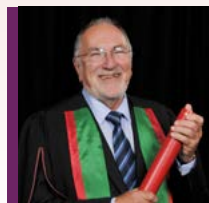
In 2010 Ms Gillard was elected leader of the Australian Labor Party and became Australia's first woman Prime Minister. Ms Gillard, who was born in Barry, served in that office for three years, during which time she delivered nation-changing policies including reforming Australian education at every level from early childhood to university education, creating an emissions trading scheme, improving health care provision and developing and strengthening foreign policy.

EURWEN RICHARDS



Aberystwyth alumna Eurwen is Britain's first female Cheese Master. After working in the Dairy Department at Aberystwyth, she went on to work for M&S and Dairy Crest and became the President of the Society of Dairy Technology. She has won numerous awards, with the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society naming an award after her, 'The Eurwen Richards Award for the Best Welsh-produced Cheeses'.

PROFESSOR ROBIN WILLIAMS CBE



A researcher and a member of the advisory board for Centre for Advanced Functional Materials and Devices at Aberystwyth University, Professor Robin Williams was inducted as a Fellow of the Royal Society and awarded a CBE in 2004 for his contribution to research in higher education. He holds numerous esteemed positions including Council member for the Science Advisory Council for Wales.

PROFESSOR MIGUEL ALARIO-FRANCO



Founder the Solid State Chemistry Group at Universidad Complutense Madrid, where he is now Professor Emeritus, Professor Franco held the prestigious post of President of the Royal Academy of Sciences of Spain. He worked at Aberystwyth for two and a half years from 1972, and has authored four patents and 290 research papers which have been cited on over 3000 occasions.

LORD BOURNE OF ABERYSTWYTH



Lord Bourne is a Lord in Waiting (HM Household) (Whip) and an alumnus of Aberystwyth University, where he maintains strong connections. After the 2015 General Election he was appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Department of Energy and Climate Change, and he is a member of the Advisory Board of Aberystwyth's Centre for Welsh Legal Affairs.

DEBBIE MOON



An alumna of the University's Drama Department, Debbie has built up a portfolio of writing and screenwriting and is the prime creator of *Wolfblood*, a BAFTA-nominated children's television series on CBBC, and has also contributed to the second series of *Hinterland*. She

has strong links with the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, Aberystwyth Arts Centre and the wider University.

DR FRANCESCA RHYDDERCH



Dr Francesca Rhydderch gained a PhD in English Literature from Aberystwyth University. Her debut novel *The Rice Paper Diaries* was longlisted for the Authors' Club Best First Novel Award and won the Wales Book of the Year Fiction Prize 2014. A former editor of the *New*

Welsh Review, she is also an Associate Professor of Creative Writing at Swansea University.

DR LYN EVANS



In his long career in Physics, Lyn Evans has participated in virtually all the great projects of the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN). Since 1993 he has led the team that designed, built and commissioned the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) and was awarded a Special

Fundamental Physics Prize in 2013 for his contribution to the discovery of the Higgs boson.

IOLO WILLIAMS

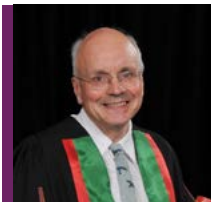


Originally from Llanwddyn in Powys, Iolo Williams gained a degree in ecology at the North East London Polytechnic. After almost 15 years as the RSPB Species Officer for Wales, he started working for BBC Wales and S4C, with whom he has made over 20 series and presented

several network series such as *Birdman*, *Wild Wales* and *Springwatch*.

HONORARY DOCTORATES

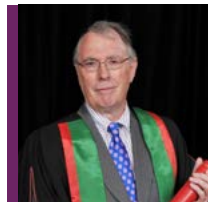
DYLAN IORWERTH



A journalist and an alumnus of Aberystwyth University, Dylan was appointed BBC Cymru's political correspondent in London and co-founded the Welsh language Sunday paper *Sulyn* and the weekly magazine *Golwg*. He has won various literary awards and is an

author, a presenter on radio and television, and Directing Editor of *Golwg Cyf* which publishes *Golwg* and the online news service *Golwg360*.

PROFESSOR HUW CATHAN DAVIES OBE

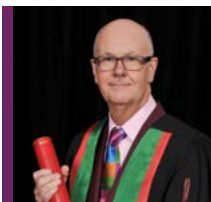


Aberystwyth alumnus Professor Huw Cathan Davies was awarded his PhD from the University of London and went on to serve as a National Academy of Science Researcher at NASA Institute in Virginia. He has also been a member of the Swiss National Research Council, the UK's

Natural Environment Research Council, and is a Fellow of the Royal Meteorological Society.

HONORARY BACHELOR DEGREES

BRYN JONES



Bryn Jones is co-ordinator of the Penparcau Community Forum, which he helped to establish after the demise of Communities First, as well as founder member of HAUL, a local arts and healthcare group. He has also been Chairman of Borth Community Council

and a member of HMS Auxiliary Coastguard for 10 years, receiving a Valedictory Certificate for his length of service.

RHIAN PHILLIPS



Former Head teacher of Plascrug Primary School, Rhian Phillips has a long history with and commitment to education. She is passionate about providing pupils with an excellent standard of education and is an advocate for a global dimension in education. She was appointed

International Schools Learning Ambassador for Wales by the British Council, and has travelled across Europe promoting Global Citizenship and Learning.

AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

As ever, there is much to celebrate for Aberystwyth University's staff, students and alumni this year. Below is a selection of these, and congratulations to everyone on their successes.

FOR ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY



A partnership featuring Aberystwyth University library services

has won the **Outstanding Library Team** category at the recent *Times Higher Education Leadership and Management Awards 2015* (THELMAs).



Aberystwyth University has gained the Silver Award under the **Corporate**

Health Standard, the quality mark for workplace health promotion run by Welsh Government.

IBERS won the **National Institute for Agricultural Botany Variety Cup** for its AberGreen grass variety.

Aberystwyth is 52nd in the UK according to the latest **QS World University Rankings**, with five subjects listed amongst the world's elite.

Aber has climbed 50 places to the top 501-550 for 2015/16 in the *Times Higher Education World University Rankings*.

Aberystwyth was the top climber in *The Times/The Sunday Times Good University Guide*, up 14 places this year.

Penglais Campus became the first university campus in Wales to achieve the **Green Flag Award**, the mark of a high quality park or green space. The Award is a UK-wide partnership, delivered in Wales



by Keep Wales Tidy with support from Natural Resources Wales.



The contribution of Aberystwyth University space scientist, the late Professor Dave Barnes, was

acknowledged when the Beagle2 project received the **Sir Arthur Clarke Award 2015**.



The University's 'O'r Pridd i'r Plât' (From Farm to Fork) scheme was shortlisted in the Food and Drink category of the sustainability awards in the **Green Gown Awards 2015**.



APPOINTMENTS

SENIOR APPOINTMENTS

Daniel Benham – Director of Finance

Dr Debra Croft – Director of Diversity and Equality

Professor Richard Beardsworth – Director of Ethics

Professor Jo Crotty – School of Management and Business

John Glasby – Head of Commercial Services

Dr David Poyton – Dean of the Aberystwyth University Mauritius Campus

HEADS OF DEPARTMENT

Dr Wini Davies – Modern Languages

Professor Mike Christie – School of Management and Business

NEW PERSONAL CHAIRS

Professor John Warren, Institute of Biological and Environmental Sciences

Professor Mike Humphreys, Institute of Biological and Environmental Sciences

Professor Athole Marshall, Institute of Biological and Environmental Sciences

Professor Matthew Francis, Department of English and Creative Writing

Professor Paul O'Leary, Department of History and Welsh History

Professor Peter Merriman, Department of Geography and Earth Sciences

Professor Sian Eleri Pryse, Department of Physics

Professor Stephen Tooth, Department of Geography and Earth Sciences

Professor Ian Armstead, Institute of Biological and Environmental Sciences
Professor Paul Brewer, Geography and Earth Sciences

Professor John Clifton-Brown, Institute of Biological and Environmental Sciences

Professor Colin Cruise, School of Art

Professor Joanne Hamilton, Institute of Biological and Environmental Sciences

Professor Glyn Jenkins, Institute of Biological and Environmental Sciences;

Professor Judith Broady-Preston, Information Studies

Professor Helen Roberts, Geography and Earth Sciences

STUDENTS AND STAFF:



At the **Cyber 9/12 crisis games** held in Geneva, Aber's Postgrad team reached the semi-finals and its Undergraduate team secured the runner-up spot, as well as winning the prize for the competition's 'Best Written Submission'.



Dr Hannah Dee, of the Department of Computer Science was named by Computer Weekly as the **10th most influential woman in UK computing**.



Jamie Harris from the Department of English and Creative Writing won the M Wynn Thomas Prize for outstanding scholarship in the study of Welsh writing in English.



Three Aber students, **Freya Boissonade, Marc Diaper and Sophie Killer** were crowned champions in Brolio / The Pitch competition, organised by the Chartered Institute of Marketing.



Jake Moses and Josh Lovell, two Law & Criminology students from the AU Mooting Society won the 2015 LexisNexis Welsh National Mooting Competition.



School of Education and Lifelong Learning tutor, **Dr Jacqueline Jeynes** was named Writer of the Year by *Freelance Market News/The Writer's Bureau*.



Students working under the name **'//no comment'** won the best overall entry for their 'bbc village' idea in #newsHACK Wales.



IBERS student **Rhian George** is Ladies British Off-road Motorcycle Champion 2015.



Fifty years and still publishing! **Professor Ron Fuge** of the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences celebrated 50 years of scientific publication with the acceptance of his latest paper.



Geography and Earth Sciences lecturer, **Dr Hywel Griffiths**, won the Chair at the 2015 National Eisteddfod of Wales.



Professor Emeritus Paul Ghuman (School of Education and Lifelong Learning) is the recipient of the British Psychological Society's 2015 Award for Promoting Equality of Opportunity for his contribution to challenging social inequalities in the UK.



Kate Hamer (MA Creative Writing 2011) has been shortlisted for the 2015 Costa First Novel Award for her book *The Girl in the Red Coat*.



Dr Rhian Hayward has been appointed to the new Life Sciences Bridging Fund Scientific Advisory Board.



An image of a robot 'listening' to an unborn child taken by **Sandy Spence** of the Department of Computer Science has won the 'People' category in this year's Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) Science Photography Competition.



IBERS PhD student **Ally Evans** is one of three winners of the P1 Marine Foundation National Student Awards 2014.



Postgraduate student **Nathan Hazlehurst** has won the St John Cymru-Wales' Young Adult of the Year award.



A J S "Bill" Williams, an Honorary Teaching Fellow at Aberystwyth University was named as one of the Royal Society of Chemistry's 175 Faces of Chemistry.

ALUMNI:



Mitch Robinson (Law LLM 2005) won the Professional Achievement Award at the US British Council's Education UK Alumni Awards 2015.

Natasha Devon (Drama and English 2003) was awarded an MBE in the Queen's birthday honours list.

Dylan Winer (Zoology 1990) was awarded an OBE in the Queen's birthday honours list.

Sharon Maguire (English and Drama 1982) is the Director of the new film *Bridget Jones' Baby* due for release in September 2016.

Judith Diment (Geology and Geography 1967) has been appointed to the International Polio Plus Committee and she has been given an International Service Award for a Polio-Free World in recognition of significant active personal service toward the goal of polio eradication.

Roger Donbavand (Geography 1975) has been selected and received a bursary for the CSC Leaders challenge, assembling "exceptional senior leaders to tackle Challenges, build the global relationships for the leaders of tomorrow."

Nia Blackwell (Environmental Earth Science 2015) won the inaugural award for the best article to be published in the academic e-journal *Gwerddon*.

Manon Rhys (Welsh) won the Crown in the 2015 National Eisteddfod.

Charley Genever (English and Creative Writing 2014) has been crowned Poet Laureate of Peterborough.

Mari Lisa (Welsh and Drama) won the Daniel Owen Memorial Prize at the 2015 National Eisteddfod.

Lee Edgington (Psychology 2015) has joined an expedition to the Northern Pole of Inaccessibility with the Ice Warrior Project, setting out in February 2016.

Author **Enid Jones's** (Welsh 1998) book, *FflugLen*, is one of the first Welsh-language monographs to have been made available on Open Access, marking a new chapter in Welsh-language academia.

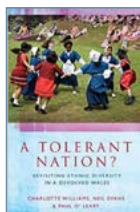
Adrian Fowles (English 1977, MSc Biology 1988) has been given a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Marsh Christian Trust for his work in recording and conserving Lepidoptera.



Josephine Crabb (Law 1969) has been invested as a Member of the Order of St John for voluntary services to the charity and appointed to the voluntary ambassadorial role of County President for St John Ambulance in Berkshire.

BOOKSHELF

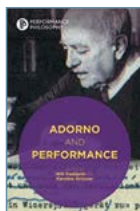
The following are brief outlines of some of the many books produced by Aber academics over the last year.



A Tolerant Nation?: Revisiting Ethnic Diversity in a Devolved Wales:

Paul O'Leary, History and Welsh History

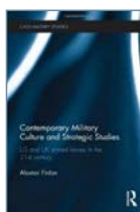
This is the first ever overview of the past two hundred years of ethnic diversity in Wales. The essays collected provide historical context and discuss dominant views and also the ways in which the Welsh themselves have been conceived of as an ethnic minority, offering an insight into the rich diversity of contemporary Wales and filling in a gap in current research.



Adorno and Performance

**Karoline Gritzner,
Theatre, Film & Television Studies**

A highly influential philosopher, the work of Theodore W. Adorno has had great influence in numerous areas from musicology to political thought. The volume's essays work through Adorno's philosophy as it relates to theatre, drama, music, aesthetics, everyday life, the relation of art to society, theory to practice, and other domains of 'performance.'



Contemporary Military Culture and Strategic Studies: US and UK Armed Forces in the 21st Century

Alastair Finlan, International Politics

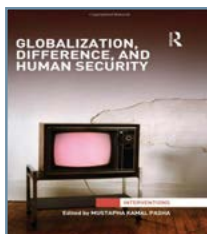
This book explores and compares the contemporary military cultures of the United States and the United Kingdom. With the backdrop of events like 9/11 and military operations in Afghanistan and Libya; this book examines how contemporary American and British military culture is formed, focusing explicitly on the six major military institutions.



Facing Down the Soviet Union: Britain, the USA, NATO and Nuclear Weapons, 1976-1983

Kris Stoddart, International Politics

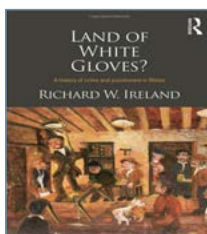
This book reveals for the first time the deliberations regarding the Chevaline upgrade to Britain's Polaris force, the decisions to procure the Trident C-4 and then D-5 system from the Americans in 1980 and 1982, and the highly controversial decision to base Ground Launched Cruise Missiles in the UK in 1983.



Globalization, Difference, and Human Security

Mustapha Pasha, International Politics

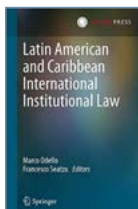
This book seeks to advance critical human security studies by re-framing the concept of human security in terms of the thematic of difference. Drawing together a wide range of contributors, the volume is framed, among others, around a number of key questions on Human Security and its relation to different issues.



Land of White Gloves?: A history of crime and punishment in Wales

Richard Ireland, Law and Criminology

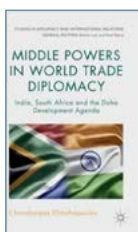
An important academic investigation into the history of Welsh crime and punishment, tracing its history from Medieval times onwards and concluding by examining the question of whether distinctive features are to be found in patterns of crime and the responses to it in the modern era.



Latin American and Caribbean International Institutional Law

Marco Odello, Law and Criminology

This book is one of the few comprehensive works focusing on the sub-regional institutions in the Latin American and Caribbean region, such as the Mercosur, the Andean Community and sub-regional financial organisations as well as new developments including the UNASUR and the Alliance for the Pacific.



Middle Powers in World Trade Diplomacy: India, South Africa and the Doha Development Agenda

**Charalampos Efstathopoulos,
International Politics**

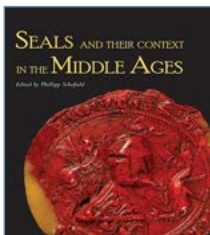
Examining how leading developing countries are increasingly shaping international economic negotiations, this book uses the case studies of India and South Africa to demonstrate the ability of states to exert diplomatic influence through different bargaining strategies and represent the interests of the developing world in global governance.



Post-Cinematic Theatre and Performance

Piotr Woycicki,
Theatre, Film, and Television Studies

A cinema without cameras, actors, screen frames and narratives almost seems like an antithetical impossibility, but this book defines a new emergent and exciting field of post-cinematic theatre which aims to do that through an in-depth post-structuralist analysis based on the works of Deleuze, Lyotard, Lévinas and Rancière and film theory.



Seals and their Context in the Middle Ages

Phillipp R Schofield,
History and Welsh History

Seals were used throughout medieval society in a wide range of contexts: governmental, ecclesiastical, legal, in trade and on an individual and personal level. The papers presented here, which originate from a conference held in Aberystwyth in 2012, focus on the history of seals, their uses, designs, users, and significance.



The Basics of Geomorphology: Key Concepts

John Lewin, Geography and Earth Sciences

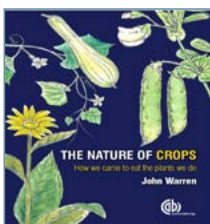
Providing detailed descriptions and analyses of the key concepts and ideas that inform geomorphology; the basics of landform science are explained in 20 concepts, each the subject of a substantive, cross-referenced entry, with the idea of a 'geomorphic system' used to organise entries in 4 sections, with extensive web resources provided for each.



The Cunning House

Richard Marggraf-Turley,
English and Creative Writing

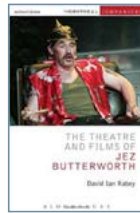
London 1810. The fictional lawyer Wyre is caught between two historical events and drawn into a network of dark alliances that appear to link these events and the ongoing Napoleonic War, the novel exploring a labyrinthine city of dark and secret spaces where the only constant is illicit desire.



The Nature of Crops: How We Came to Eat the Plants We Do

John Warren,
Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences

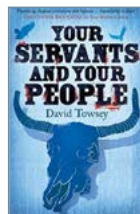
Have you ever wondered why we eat wheat, potatoes and cassava? Or why we chose almonds over acorns? Answering all these questions and more, this book takes you on a journey through our history with crop plants, arranged into recurrent themes, documenting the history and biology of over 50 crops.



The Theatre and Films of Jez Butterworth

David Rabey,
Theatre, Film, and Television Studies

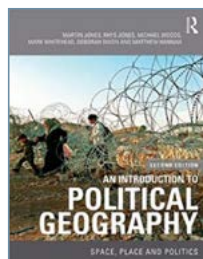
This book is the first to examine all of the writings for stage and film of Jez Butterworth, the most critically acclaimed and successful new British dramatist of the 21st century, identifying the appeal of his writings and containing interviews and in-depth analysis of his works.



Your Servants and Your People (The Walkin' Trilogy)

David Phillip Townsey,
English and Creative Writing

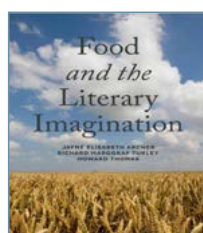
The latest in the Walkin' trilogy. Seven years after Thomas returned as a Walkin'; the McDermott family are looking for a new life, but the teachings of J S Barkley are not so easily forsaken - there are those who would see the sinners dead, and they are slowly closing in.



An Introduction to Political Geography: Space, Place and Politics

Deborah Dixon, Matthew Hannah, Martin Jones, Rhys Jones, Mark Whitehead, Michael Woods,
Geography and Earth Sciences

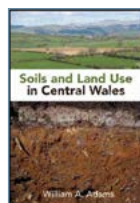
The text explores the full breadth of contemporary political geography, covering traditional concerns such as the state and geopolitics; but also increasingly important areas at the cutting-edge of political geography research such as globalization and geographies of regulation and governance, and themes at the intersection of political and cultural geography.



Food and the Literary Imagination

Richard Marggraf-Turley, Howard Thomas, and Jayne Elizabeth Archer,
English and Creative Writing and Biological, Rural and Environmental Sciences

Individuals and organisations are increasingly concerned about our food, where it comes from, and the conditions of its production. Through close reading of historical literature, this book shows that such anxieties are nothing new and that often, we engage with our rural, worked environments through the lens of apparently sentimental literary representations.



Soils and Land Use in Central Wales

William A Adams,
Biological, Rural and Environmental Sciences

Drawing together research on Welsh soils carried out at Aberystwyth, this volume describes the diverse range of soils in central Wales and explores the options for land use in the area for agriculture, forestry and nature conservation.

OBITUARIES

It is with great sadness that we record the loss in these pages of alumni, students, Fellows and members of staff, past and current, of whose passing we have been informed during the last year. Our sincere condolences go out the family and friends of those listed here.

FELLOWS

Dr Meredydd Evans (1919 – 2015)

This is not a translation. Merêd could not be translated.

It's tempting in this short piece to reference Dr Meredydd Evans's life with milestones that may be more familiar to those who are not acquainted with his life's work or the Welsh-language culture of which he was a cornerstone for the best part of a century.

Dr Meredydd Evans gained a First Class honours in Philosophy from the University of Wales Bangor, followed by a doctorate from Princeton, USA, followed by a period teaching in Boston. During this time he recorded an album of Welsh folk songs for Moe Asch's Folkways Records, which reached the *New York Times'* top ten.

However, he was compelled to return to Wales with his wife, American born opera singer Phyllis Kinney, and their daughter Eluned, and took up a post with the Extra Mural Department at Bangor before being appointed the first Head of Light Entertainment with the BBC in Cardiff. He held this post between 1963 and 1973, leading a formative period in modern Welsh-language popular entertainment. Like his mentor, Sam Jones of Bangor, he insisted that any Welsh-language service be thoroughly Welsh and not merely a slavish translation of Anglo-American culture.

He then returned to teaching with the Extra Mural Department at Cardiff before retiring in 1985 and setting-up home in Cwmystwyth, Ceredigion. He was awarded honorary degrees and fellowships from numerous universities and national institutions, and at the very end of his life he was told that he had been awarded the BBC Radio 2 Good Tradition Award (presented posthumously in April 2015).

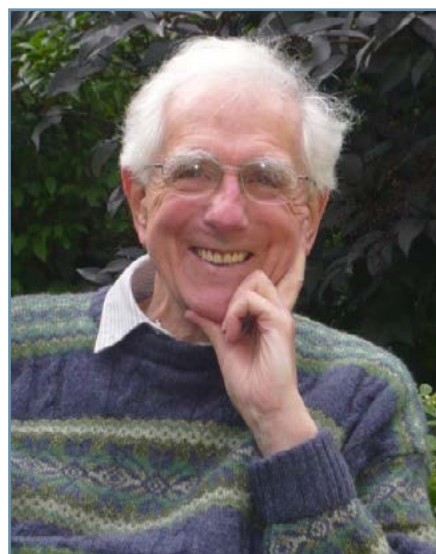
However, this giant of Welsh culture lived somewhere between these familiar reference points.

He emphasised his cultured upbringing in Tanygrisiau, Meirionnydd, in the 1920s more than his higher education. His mother's love of singing nurtured his life-long passion for folk-singing. His extra-curricular activities at Bangor as a member of the immensely popular trio of singers 'Triawd y Coleg' brought him fame early on. His contribution to broadcasting did not end with his period with the BBC but rather began his prolonged campaign, first for the establishment of S4C and in due course to uphold the standards of Welsh-language broadcasting. His contribution to higher education is not summed up in his qualifications, teaching or awards, but rather in the campaign for and formation of Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. Throughout these long decades of activism he not only campaigned from his study, providing the cause with a firm philosophical base, but also from the front line, joining younger campaigners in numerous court appearances.

His lifelong passion for folk-singing, researching, performing and especially teaching and sharing, meant that he was regarded, along with his wife, Phyllis, as the foremost authority in the field.

This long and productive life was underpinned by a geniality and generosity of spirit that saw him held in the highest esteem by young and old, comrades and adversaries alike, and he was a member of that very special group of people who are known to the nation by their first names only. However, I'm afraid that the poetry of Merêd's life, may well be lost in translation.

Arwel Jones



Professor R Geraint Gruffydd (1928 – 2015)



Professor Gruffydd joined the Department of Welsh at Aberystwyth in 1970 as the Chair of Welsh Language and Literature. He was appointed Dean of the Arts in 1974, and in 1979 became Librarian of the National Library of Wales.

A graduate of the University of Bangor and Jesus College Oxford, he worked as an Assistant Editor with the University of Wales Dictionary for two years, and then as Lecturer at the Department of Welsh at Bangor University until his appointment to Aberystwyth in 1970.

In 1985 he became Director of the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, and later served as Vice-President of Aberystwyth University. He was appointed Emeritus Professor at Aberystwyth in 1993 and was honoured as Fellow of the University in 2004.

“It is doubtful whether there was any period in the history of Welsh literature that Professor Emeritus R Geraint Gruffydd was not proficient in”, said Dr Bleddyn Huws, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Welsh. “Although it was the works of the prose authors of the Elizabethan period that was the focus of his DPhil thesis at Oxford, and it was on that basis that he developed to be one of our chief authorities on the literature of the Renaissance period, he also contributed extensively to the field of medieval Welsh poetry. He was an authority on works of the Poets of the Princes and the work Dafydd ap Gwilym and the Poets of the Nobility. He was a complete scholar of Welsh. He excelled as a literary critic due to the breadth and depth of his knowledge of literature in every century, and the robustness of his critical faculties. It is worth reading Geraint’s critical articles if only to appreciate his exquisite style and admire his command of the Welsh language.

“As Head of Department and as an administrator and director of research he was very polite and helpful, and a gentleman in everything he did. Many of today’s Welsh and Celtic scholars in countries around the world are indebted to him for his guidance and support, and secure and generous leadership over the years.”

Professor Gruffydd leaves a widow Luned, and his children Siân, Rhun and Pysr.

Kenneth Young CBE (1931 – 2015)

Kenneth Middleton Young was brought up in Glynneath, south Wales and attended Neath Grammar School from where he came to Aberystwyth to study history in 1949 under Professor Treharne. National Service was spent as a pilot officer navigator in the Royal Air Force, after which he embarked on a career in personnel management.

Ken, as he was widely and fondly known, held executive posts in a variety of major companies including GEC, Smiths Industries, Massey Ferguson and Elliot Automation and in 1989 became Chairman of Girobank plc. This led to roles as the Chairman of Post Office Counters Ltd in 1990 and also Managing Director of Royal Mail Parcels and subsequently Deputy Chairman of the Post Office. From this role he was appointed Acting Chairman for a period from 1989 and he was part of the team which revolutionised the Post Office into a commercial business, one of the biggest changes in its history at the time. Indeed, persuading people to work together was very much a hallmark of his long and impressive career!

It is not surprising, therefore, that Ken was in demand following his retirement from the Post Office. In addition to the challenging role of Chairman of the then recently formed Student Loans Company, he also embarked as Chairman of the Council of Roehampton Institute which had been formed by the merger of four colleges. Again, it is testimony to his negotiating skills that he was able to broker many difficult decisions, finding a way through and forging a consensus from four different academic and operational traditions.

Ken was made CBE in 1977, and in 1991 Aberystwyth appointed him as an Honorary Fellow of the University. The citation was given by Sir David Nicholas CBE, a Neath Grammar School contemporary and fellow Aberystwyth alumnus, in which he stated, “Aberystwyth played a major part in Kenneth’s personal life. He not only found a career here, but found a wife too, Brenda, a graduate of the French department.”



The University continued to play a part in Ken's life and he became the inaugural Chairman of the Aberystwyth Business Club (ABC) in 1993 – his involvement was born partly out of an unwavering belief in the strength of Aber as a university and partly out of an understanding that, "if we, as former students, are to help Aber, we must inspire collaboration". Ken did just that by bringing together likeminded Aber alumni to give of their energy, contacts and, when appropriate, their money. His role with the ABC was followed by his Presidency of the Old Students' Association from 1998 to 2000, a role to which he brought his great good humour combined with clear purpose and efficiency. When Ken was asked to do a job you knew he would do it meticulously and with panache. He was also a lifelong and passionate supporter of Welsh rugby through the good times and the lean. Saturday OSA Committee meetings were never permitted to clash with a Wales international fixture!

Ken was also very much a family man, devoted to Brenda and delighting in his children, Pam and Mike, and his grandchildren Nicolas, Harry and Jessica.

Professor Trefor M Owen (1926 – 2015)

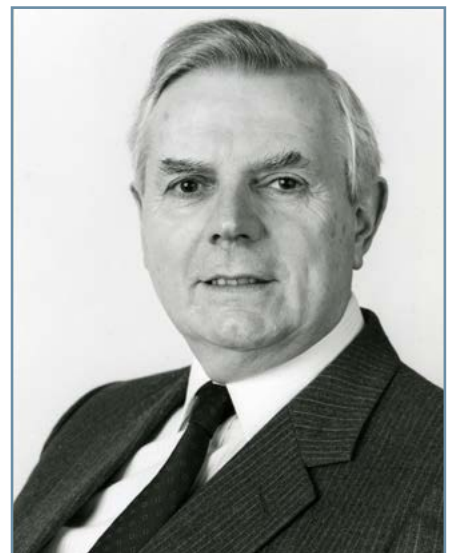
Trefor M Owen, graduate of the Department of Geography and Anthropology and Honorary Fellow, who died in February 2015 aged 88, was a key figure in the development of folk-life studies in the British Isles. Less of a public persona than either his predecessor Iorwerth C Peate or his successor J Geraint Jenkins, both graduates of the same department, nevertheless as Curator (Director in today's terminology) he brought the Welsh Folk Museum (now St Fagans: National History Museum) to academic pre-eminence and himself made a seminal contribution to the study of ethnology and folk lore.

He served three years underground as a Bevin Boy before returning to full-time education. Influenced by Alwyn D Rees (author of *Life in a Welsh Countryside*), his MA topic was a sociological study of a north Wales community. Appointed to the Folk Museum in 1953, he made his name with *Welsh Folk Customs* (1959), an account of the social context of traditional customs. His increasing interest in the wider cultural framework of Wales's past saw him appointed a lecturer in Social Theory and Institutions at Bangor in 1966, where he became one of the first to teach sociology through the medium of Welsh.

On Peate's retirement in 1971 Trefor was appointed his successor. He served sixteen years in this role, a period which saw the institution's greatest growth and academic prominence, and where his Chairman for much of the time was yet another Aber geographer, Dr Elwyn Davies, himself the leading expert on transhumance in Wales. Trefor Owen fostered a culture which saw staff publishing a number of important contributions in a wide range of fields. Through his two books and some 65 academic papers, he made a seminal contribution to the study of folk life (as Peate termed it) or ethnology (as he himself preferred) in Wales. Unlike Peate, he regarded the inhabitants as having had more influence on material culture than the land. He was particularly interested in customs, the culture of poverty, and in the history and methodology of his subject. He retired in 1987 at the age of sixty. His most comprehensive publication, *The Pocket Guide to the Customs and Traditions of Wales* (1991), was written during retirement and was a marvel of compression.

In retirement he served as Warden of the Guild of Graduates of the University of Wales, and was one of the founders of its Ethnology and Folk-life Section, becoming its Chairman and later President. He worked closely with University College Cardiff in establishing a Masters' degree course in Welsh Folk Studies, for which he was made Honorary Professor. He was also Honorary Fellow of Bangor, Vice President of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, and Chairman of the county historical societies of Caernarfonshire and Merioneth. He and his wife Gwen, whom he met at Aber, were faithful members of the Old Students' Association; she predeceased him by some 18 months after 59 years of marriage. He leaves two sons and a daughter; a granddaughter works at St Fagans.

Eurwyn Wiliam



STAFF AND FORMER STAFF

David Blumfield “Blummers” (1962 – 2015)



David Blumfield was known affectionately to his students as “Blummers”, and the outpouring of tributes on social media at the news of his death illustrated how many lives he had influenced and enriched.

David grew up in Bournville on the Cadbury estate and it was here that he discovered his love of drama, prompting him to join Birmingham Youth Theatre where he met his first love, best friend and lifelong partner Lindsay Barker; the two later married on 17th September 1983.

In 1990 after graduating from Bangor, David and Lindsay moved to Aberystwyth and joined Castaway Theatre Company the same year. They toured with many Castaway productions and won Best Play at the British Theatre Festival 1992 in the One Act Play Category for their stunning performances in *After Liverpool*.

Dave took over the artistic directorship of Castaway in 1997, which subsequently became Aberystwyth Arts Centre’s theatre company. As an actor, Dave gave some of the best performances the town has seen, and many will remember him as the villain in the annual Wardens pantomime, one of the highlights in Dave’s calendar. Most notably Dave will be remembered as a fantastic tutor, director, practitioner and inspiration to his students at the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies.

He will be remembered and cherished by thousands - whether as a community theatre director, as a mentor to students, a friend or a family member, his impact on us all has been felt deeply and shall be tragically missed.

Dr Julian Broadbent (1939 – 2014)

Born in Keighley, Yorkshire, Julian studied Chemical Engineering at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST). After graduating in 1962, he became a postgraduate researcher and then research associate at the Department of Mathematics at UMIST, and in 1968 was awarded a PhD for his thesis on “An Investigation of Normal Stress Difference in Polymer Solutions in Steady Shear Flow”.

Dr Broadbent joined the Department of Mathematics at Aberystwyth in 1967 as a research associate and worked in the field of Rheology. In 1976 he was appointed Safety Officer for the University, a role he fulfilled until his retirement in September 2000.

Dr Geoffrey Brown (1926 – 2015)



Born in Aberdare in 1926, and a graduate of Peterhouse Cambridge, Dr Geoffrey Brown was appointed Lecturer in Physics at Aberystwyth University in the summer of 1959. He graduated with an MSc from the University of Wales in 1949 for his thesis entitled *Excitation, Dissociation, and Ionization in the Terrestrial Atmosphere* and was awarded his MA (Cantab) in 1950.

At the time of his appointment he was an Associate Member of the Institute of Physics, Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society and of the Physical Society, and came to Aberystwyth from Swansea University where he had lectured for 10 years.

Promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1965, Geoffrey was awarded a DSc by Aberystwyth in 1975, and was promoted to Reader in 1977. He also fulfilled the role of Sub-Dean of the Faculty of Science in the early 1970s.

He was well known internationally for his work in the field of Ionosphere and Geomagnetism, not only for his research publications but through his involvement in the International Union of Radio Science as editor of a number of their publications.

In June 2014, on the occasion of his 88th birthday, Geoffrey returned to Aberystwyth to mark the 50th graduation anniversary of a group of his former students, and addressed them in the main Physics lecture theatre, as he would have done over 50 years ago.

Dr John Davies (1938 – 2015)



Dr John Davies (to many), John Bwlchllan (to more people) was a notable historian and broadcaster, educated at Cambridge and Cardiff, and appointed as lecturer in Welsh history in Aberystwyth in 1973. From 1974 - 1985 he was Warden of Neuadd Pantycelyn which was, in his words, 'the largest and loveliest Welsh home in the world'.

During the eighteen years of John's Wardenship, he created a remarkable environment. He had a special understanding of young people; he was always prepared to trust them and to allow them the freedom to develop their abilities, to find their talents, and to succeed. For many Pantycelyn, more than anything else, was John's greatest success. In that hall of residence John, with the help of Janet, his wife and their children - Anna, Beca, Guto and Ianto - created a large extended home.

As a broadcaster, a lecturer, one of the founders and first Secretary of Cymdeithas yr Iaith (the Welsh Language Society), and as a prominent figure in the public and cultural life of Wales, John made a huge contribution to the nation he loved so loyally. As a historian, his volumes on the history of Cardiff, on land ownership in Wales, the BBC, *The Making of Wales*, *Hanes Cymru* and *A History of Wales* are huge contributions to our nation's history.

Professor John Rowlands (1938 – 2015)

Originally from Trawsfynydd in Gwynedd, Professor Rowlands graduated with first class honours in Welsh from the University of Bangor in 1959, followed by an MA. He received a Fellowship to study at Jesus College Oxford, and was awarded his DPhil.

Between 1963 and 1974 he lectured at Swansea University, Trinity College Carmarthen, and St David's University College Lampeter, and in 1975 he was appointed lecturer for the Department of Welsh at Aberystwyth. He was promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1976, to Reader in 1992 and Professor in 1996. He continued to work at Aberystwyth University until his retirement in 2003.

Paying tribute to Professor Rowlands, Dr Robin Chapman said: "Many could be justly proud of having achieved just a fraction of what he did. He was a talented musician (we will long remember his piano accompaniments in departmental Christmas parties) and wrote with insight on food and wine. He was a ground-breaking novelist - almost the only example of an Angry Young Man in Welsh literature at the beginning of his career and a master of tragic and comedic fiction in later years. As a lecturer and professor, he had a profound influence on dozens of Wales's leading writers and academics and he was, of course, a loving husband and father."



Dr Suresh Swain (1966 – 2015)

Dr Suresh Swain of the Institute of Biological and Environmental Sciences died on January 6th 2015 while visiting his family in India. Professor Mike Gooding, Director of IBERS paid tribute to Suresh:

"Suresh joined IBERS in 2010 to work on a BBSRC-funded postdoctoral programme, after spending time in the School of Biosciences, Cardiff University and the School of Biomedical Sciences, King's College, London. After completing his postdoctoral work, Suresh then moved on to become one of the core bioinformatics team at IBERS, specialising in the analysis and assembly of genome and transcriptome sequences. Suresh made a particularly significant and unique contribution to the work of developing a draft genome assembly for perennial ryegrass and the recent advances made in this area owe a great deal to his endeavour.

"Suresh was hugely enthusiastic about his work, taking great pleasure in developing his own skills and enabling and assisting co-workers within the department to meet their own research goals. Always cheerful and helpful, he was truly a gentleman who will be greatly missed by his friends and colleagues. He leaves behind his wife, Rajashree, and two young daughters; our thoughts are with them."

Professor Lance Thomas (1930 – 2015)

A graduate of the University College of Wales at Swansea, Lance Thomas developed a highly respected international reputation for innovative work in atmospheric physics. He was appointed to the staff of the Radio Research Station at Slough, later to become the Appleton Laboratory. He returned to Wales in 1981 as the Head of the Department of Physics at Aberystwyth, a post that he held with distinction until his retirement at the end of 1994.

His research was wide ranging, and his experimental work spanned radio, lidar and radar techniques. He was involved in the development of the use of lasers to study the upper atmosphere and was responsible for the establishment of the UK Mesosphere Stratosphere Thermosphere (MST) Radar Facility at Capel Dewi near Aberystwyth, a project for which he was Principal Investigator. His reputation was recognised by the Institute of Physics in 1991 with the award of the prestigious Chree Medal and Prize. Swansea University made him an Honorary Fellow in 1998 and he was elected to a Fellowship of the Learned Society of Wales in 2014.

He played a national role in science administration, serving on committees of the Research Councils and also the governing body of the Institute of Physics.

A man of great personal integrity, he was held in high regard and is fondly remembered by students, colleagues and friends.



Professor David Trotter (1957 – 2015)

Professor Trotter, head of the Department of European Languages, died in August 2015.

David Trotter was a graduate of The Queen's College Oxford, (DPhil) and was a leading Anglo-Norman specialist. In 1993 he was appointed to the Chair of French at Aberystwyth, when he also took on the additional duties as Head of Department, a role which he remained in for the whole period of his employment.

Professor Trotter's research spanned historical French linguistics, medieval French, historical dialectology, especially eastern French. He also led the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded Anglo-Norman Dictionary, based at Aberystwyth University.

He was President of the Société de Linguistique Romane (2013-16), a contributor (on Occitan) to the Romanische Bibliographie (De Gruyter), a member of the Peer Review College of the AHRC and a Strategic Reviewer for the AHRC.

He was one of the editors of the *Journal of French Language Studies* (CUP), and served on the advisory boards of *Romance Studies*, *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, *Revue de Linguistique romane*, *Quaderni di Filologia Romanza*, *Revue Internationale de Linguistique Française*, and the *Winter Verlag* (Heidelberg) series of *Romanische Texte des Mittelalters*.



Paying tribute to Professor Trotter, Professor April McMahon said: "Professor David Trotter's untimely death represents an enormous loss to research and scholarship. He had an outstanding and well-deserved reputation as a historian of French, and was especially well-known for his Anglo-Norman Dictionary project, which won considerable funding and recognition.

"However, those of us who worked with him at Aberystwyth University, where he was one of our longest-serving Heads of Department, will miss David the man even more than David the researcher. He had a wonderful turn of phrase, could liven up the dulllest of meetings in sometimes interesting and unpredictable ways, and was always wise, frank and supportive; I and his colleagues and students will miss him tremendously".

SINCERE CONDOLENCES TO THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF:

(* denotes OSA member)

Andrews, Mr Glyn Llewellyn*, died December 2014, (1966)

Bevan, Professor Edward Alan*, died June 2015,
(Agricultural Botany 1947)

Burgess, Mrs Audrey Elizabeth, (née Edwards)*, died June 2015,
(Mathematics 1946)

Carpenter, Mrs Gillian Annette, (née Boyson), died May 2015,
(Agriculture 1978)

Cowell, Mr K Margaret, (née Robyns-Owen)*,
died June 2015, (1952)

Davies, Mr Murray Roger, died September 2014, (History 1970)

Davies, Mr Peter, died November 2014, (History 1948)

Diment, Dr Anthony Richard, died January 2015, (Physics 1967)

Evans, Mr David Daniel*, died July 2015, (Physics 1948)

Geier, Mr Gunnar, died October 2015,
(Sport & Exercise Science 2008)

Hamilton Jones, Dr Anthony, died March 2015, (Chemistry 1957)

Hill, Mr Michael Andrew, died November 2014, (Geography 1997)

Jones, Mr Islwyn*, died May 2015, (1955)

King, Mrs Cheryl Ann, (née Knight), died December 2014,
(Library & Information Studies 2003)

Langtry-Lynas, Mrs Stella, (née Pennington)*, died March 2015,
(History 1948)

Lawson, Mr John Howard, died August 2015, (Geography 1977)

Lewis, Professor Gwynne, died December 2014, (History 1959)

Manton, Mr Michael, died February 2015

Morgan, Dr Eric Raymond*, died February 2015, (Education 1955)

Morris, Mr Griffith Hubert Williams*, died November 2014,
(Education 1955)

Owen, Mr Dewi Vaughan*, died May 2015, (Law 1977)

Parri-Huws, Ms Sian, died November 2015,
(International Politics 1982)

Prout, Mr Thomas Clive Davies*, died October 2015,
(Geography & Geology 1957)

Rees, Mr Roland, died September 2015,
(History and Philosophy 1963)

Rees, Mr Eric Vaughan, died August 2015, (History 1999)

Rich, Mr Peter Anthony*, died May 2015, (1967)

Roberts, Miss Davida L*, died April 2015, (1954)

Rudden, Professor Bernard Anthony, died March 2015, (Law 1965)

Seymour, Professor John Albert*, died March 2015,
(Geology 1952)

Simmonds, Mrs Gloria Mary, (née Tatchell)*,
died February 2015, (1958)

Thompson, Dr Laurence Arthur, died June 2015,
(German & Russian 1979)

Tudur, Mr Dafydd, died March 2015, (Legal Practice 2010)

Waters, Mr Andrew*, died September 2014, (Geography 1969)

KICKING THE BAR

Tales from the riverbank | Russell Davies

“Man’s days are but as grass” declares the Bible with its usual portentousness. Guns n’ Roses (why do heavy metal bands have the sweetest ballads?) captured the transience of worldly dominion with their iconic, “Nothing lasts forever, even cold November rain”. One would surely question this after the summer of 2015, for the rain has fallen incessantly on the rolling badlands of Pumlumon.

One doesn’t need to turn the pages of Ecclesiastics, or St Augustine or Gibbon to capture the brevity of humanity’s efforts. The great, sadly late Professor L J Williams, recalling his career at the University, noted that he had served in seven different departments but never once changed office. Athletic records tumble even faster than academic departments, as athletes strive to go further and be faster and stronger than their predecessors or peers. In 1965, Dick Fosbury seemed to live up to his first name but his backwards leap got him into the record books. With the same technique others soon flopped higher. Three years later Bob Beaman leapt into the Mexican night, and only recently seems to have come back down to earth. But others, eventually, leapt even further. Many of those Eastern European records set by steroid enhanced drones are now expunged from the record books. Similarly Lance Armstrong’s seven consecutive Tour de France victories are consigned to infamy.

But one record remains since 1933. It did not involve any performance enhancing substances - except, perhaps for a mint. It was achieved close to the Carmarthenshire hamlet from which my forefathers set out to somewhere over the rainbow in search of a fortune. (If they found it, the blighters never told me.) In the long dry summer of 1933, Dachau opened and the Reichstag burned, sinuous Fay Wray met King Kong, F D Roosevelt had a ‘Fireside Chat’ with his people, and Welsh people did what many did in troubled times - they went fishing.

Nantgaredig - ‘the kind brook’ - is not a place often associated with records. The elite athlete who broke the record is even more unlikely. Alec Allen was a 5 foot 2 inch, 42 year old fishing-tackle salesman from Penarth.

Anglers, not fishermen, pray to St Zeno:

“Lord, give me grace to catch a fish so big, that even I,
When telling of it afterwards, will never need to lie.”

On 28 July 1933, Zeno answered Allen’s prayer - and how. From the waters of the river Towy he pulled a 388lb European Sturgeon. It remains (by over 200lbs) the largest fish caught in a British river. There is a photograph to prove that this was no tall tale of the river bank, that this one did not get away. In it the diminutive Allen is dwarfed by the 9 foot 2 inch fish, with its 59 inch girth.



As Alec Allen walked along the Towy’s banks he saw something that looked like a log moving upstream. Allen knew that logs do not move up water so he started fishing.

Those of you who studied Aquatic Biology will know that a Sturgeon does not have a mouth, more a sort of syphon, yet somehow Allen’s hook got stuck on the beast. Enraged, the leviathan leapt from the waters. Terrified, onlookers fled the scene. Allen had to batter (pun intended) the beast to death with a stone.

To transport it from the river Allen went to a local farm to ask if he could borrow a horse and cart. Farmers are naturally inquisitive, and even more so when strangers ask to borrow their equipment, so this one asked “why?”. The answer has the ring of a surreal comedy “I’ve just caught a fish”.

Allen carried on fishing until his death in 1972, but neither he, nor anyone else, caught such a giant again. In his will he asked that his friends scatter his ashes into the river at the spot at which he had captured Leviathan. One of them, Ronald Jones, surely a trustworthy source for he was the former Chief Constable of Dyfed, and a man not given to lachrymose, recalled:

“As we committed the ashes to the waters, I saw a trout leap into the air just where they were drifting. And I said to Dai, ‘Look, that’s Alec’s over there!’” 🍷



View of the Old College, Aberystwyth, from the Castle
by Scott Nisbet, 1950s Oil on board, 55 x 75 cm
Collection: Aberystwyth University, School of Art Gallery
and Museum

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