



ABER *News*

University Charity of the Year fundraising

It is more important than ever during these difficult times, that we support the Wales Air Ambulance to carry out its lifesaving mission.

Like many charities, our University Charity of the Year 2020-21, Wales Air Ambulance, has seen a significant decrease in donations due to shops being forced to close and bucket collections and events being cancelled during the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, there are a number of ways you can still support this worthwhile cause through these hard times from the comfort of your own home:

Wear Red Day

Our annual Wear Red Day takes place on Monday 1 March, which coincides with the Wales Air Ambulance's 20th birthday.

Whether you are a student or a member of staff, and whether you are on campus or working/studying from home, on Monday 1 March we are inviting you to wear something red and make a suggested donation of £1 to Wales Air Ambulance on the [University Charity of the Year webpage](#).

Perhaps your team or department can be creative and think of other ways of raising money on the day? How about a Quiz, Bake Off, or a game of Bingo using Microsoft Teams?

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Photos: © Wales Air Ambulance Charity

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My20

Students and staff are also invited to help Wales Air Ambulance to celebrate its 20th birthday by taking part in My20.

The idea is to take on a challenge, task or activity relating to the number 20 throughout the month of March.

This can be anything you like - run 20 miles, bake 20 cakes, sew 20 items to sell... the list is endless, so let your imagination run wild.

Sign up by visiting www.walesairambulance.com/my20 and complete the simple form and pay a £10 registration fee.

Any money you raise for achieving your task or activities can be paid in our [University Charity of the Year](#) webpage.

Everyone who takes part in My20 will receive a certificate to celebrate their achievement.

Why not join the [Wales Air Ambulance My20 Facebook group](#) or use the Twitter hashtag #My20 to share photos of your activities.

Give As You Earn

The University offers staff the opportunity to [Give As You Earn](#) through the Charities Aid Foundation's payroll giving scheme. See p.13 for more information about this easy and effective way to make a regular donation to a UK charitable organisation.

The graphic features the text 'My20' in large, red, brush-stroke font at the top. Below it, a red box contains 'March 2021'. To the left is a circular logo with a red helicopter and the text '#My20'. The central text reads 'Celebrate Our 20 with 'My20'' and 'Take part in this special Wales Air Ambulance challenge to celebrate the Charity's 20 years as a lifesaving service.' Below this is an illustration of six diverse people engaged in various activities: a woman gardening, a man at a whiteboard, a woman at a laptop, a woman in a yoga pose, a man with a soccer ball, and a woman in an apron. The bottom section is a red banner with white text: 'For 'My20' you can choose any challenge, task, or activity you like related to the number 20 and complete it during March. Whether you want to walk 20 miles during the month, learn 20 new Welsh phrases or complete 20 minutes of gardening a day, there is something for everyone. For more information please visit www.walesairambulance.com/my20'.

My20

March 2021

#My20

Celebrate **Our 20** with 'My20'

Take part in this special Wales Air Ambulance challenge to celebrate the Charity's **20 years** as a lifesaving service.

For 'My20' you can choose any challenge, task, or activity you like related to the **number 20** and complete it during **March**. Whether you want to walk 20 miles during the month, learn 20 new Welsh phrases or complete 20 minutes of gardening a day, there is something for everyone.

For more information please visit www.walesairambulance.com/my20

 ELUSEN AMBIWLANS AWYR CYMRU
WALES AIR AMBULANCE CHARITY

Mynodd
20
Years
2001-2021

Achub Bywydau. Dros Gymru.
Serving Wales. Saving Lives. 24/7

The Vice-Chancellor's Column



When I wrote my column this time last year for the February 2020 edition of *ABERNews*, I reported on the early signs of spring on campus, how I had recently visited Washington to celebrate the centenary of our Department of International Politics, and the fantastic news that our project to bring new life to Old College had been awarded a further £16 million in funding.

At that time there was no mention of some of the everyday terms we have become so familiar with - global pandemic, remote working, furlough, home-schooling, lockdown, studying from home, R-rate, asymptomatic testing, self-isolating, mass vaccination programme, the list goes on...

It is just over a year since the first cases of coronavirus were confirmed in the UK, but I can safely say that none of us anticipated the huge shift in our day-to-day lives that this virus would bring. Indeed, when myself and colleagues left the office for the start of the first lockdown and said "see you in six weeks", we would never have imagined that we would still be in this very strange situation almost twelve months on.

As a University we are continuing, in these uncertain times, to try to maintain elements of certainty where we can. The agreement between universities in Wales and the Welsh Government to maintain low levels of in-person teaching until after the Easter break has taken away some of the uncertainty for staff and students. Going forward, we will continue to act in line with Welsh Government and public health guidance and work closely with the HE sector to try to minimise the effects of this ever-changing situation.

There is a great deal that we can learn from our experience so far during the pandemic, and we are keen to capture and evaluate what has worked well and what has not worked well. This will allow us not only to improve our ways of working for the remainder of the pandemic, but also to identify areas of good practice that we might wish to continue after the

pandemic. We're currently looking at how best to get a wide range of staff input into this exercise. On an associated note, however, we will be asking you for your views on a wide range of issues through a full staff survey, so please look out for updates on this, and engage fully with it to ensure that it is an effective and worthwhile exercise.

I have said it before, but I will say it again - the efforts that staff and students have put in over the past eleven months have been immense. Everybody has been working very hard under incredibly unusual conditions and I and senior colleagues, along with the University Council, are extremely grateful for all that you have done.

We are under no illusions that the past year has presented numerous challenges to both home and work life. However, there are causes for optimism that better days are ahead. Whilst there is no place for complacency, transmissions in and around Aberystwyth are currently at relatively low levels, and this is testament to the conduct of students and staff, as well as the wider community. The vaccination against COVID-19 is being rolled out here in Ceredigion and across Wales and the UK, and I am pleased that we have been able to play our part in the delivery of the mass vaccination programme by making the Thomas Parry Library on our Llanbadarn campus available to our colleagues from the Hywel Dda University Health Board.

In the immediate future, Monday 1 March is what has become our annual Wear Red Day to support our University Charity of the Year. Whilst we are not all able to be on campus for our usual fundraising efforts, myself and other members of the Executive invite students and staff to join us in wearing something red and making a donation to help keep the Wales Air Ambulances flying.

However, I very much look forward to a time when planning for events remotely will be a thing of the past.

I hope to see you soon.

Professor Elizabeth Treasure
Vice-Chancellor

In addition to the day job

As 2020 was drawing to a close, the University was faced with the considerable challenge of how to mitigate the risk of the further spread of COVID-19 as hundreds of thousands of students travelled home to re-form households with their families for the festive period, before returning a few weeks later.

Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests were a useful tool for identifying those students who needed to self-isolate before travelling. However, rapidly setting up and staffing a COVID-19 testing centre in Aberystwyth Arts Centre was no mean feat, and involved the efforts and goodwill of members of staff from across the University.

One of those people was the Arts Centre's Operations & Planning Manager, Auriel Martin. *ABERNews* spoke to Auriel about the experience:



Tell us a bit about what was involved in setting up the LFD testing centre at the Arts Centre?

The Arts Centre had been largely closed since March and we had a disastrous incident at the end of August when torrential rain overwhelmed our drainage system and flooded the building. Our beautiful oak floors were a total loss on both levels. Any hopes we had of re-opening in September disappeared like a pantomime fairy and the mess and damage were very disheartening.

My role in the Arts Centre is largely event management and by the time I was approached to join the Student Testing Initiative Logistics group, I had not had an event to manage for 9 months. So I was strangely excited!

What were some of the challenges you encountered?

The timescale was the biggest challenge, we had a matter of days to get the testing site and all its demands up and running. Converting the Arts Centre from a building site to a completely sanitized medical facility took a little more than some creative lighting and a few props. Just keeping the building above the required 15°C for testing to take place was a challenge in December.

Under normal circumstances, this would have been almost impossible, but there was unfaltering commitment from the entire team to make this happen. We were of course 'led by the science' but Kraig Pugh had managed to pull together a fantastic (and fabulous) group, all confident in their particular areas of expertise and with a remarkable determination to 'make it happen'.

What sort of roles did the volunteers take on, and what were the training requirements?

University staff stepped firmly outside of their comfort zones and retrained as test assistants/processors/queue managers/IT support and cleaners. Many of them uncomfortable, but uncomplaining, in full PPE. Much of the training was done online under the watchful, uncompromising eye of Kate Wright, and this was followed up by practical sessions by the dedicated team leaders. To run successfully, the testing site needs up to 40 staff. Bob McIntyre had corralled sufficient volunteers to keep us fully operational at all times. An awesome achievement.



What was the atmosphere like at the testing centre?

We have laughed a lot! Practising our 'swabbing' technique was a highlight, I think most of us can now find our tonsils in the dark. I had dipped my toe in the science water when the Arts Centre hosted the IBERS Parasitology conference, but the 'Mr Science' of the testing team, Dr Arwyn Edwards has me as a big fan - he introduced scientific rigor into my world, but I like to think I may have put a little 'jazz hands' into his.

How many tests were carried out before students headed home for Christmas?

In total 2,539 students and 230 staff were tested at the Arts Centre in the lead up to Christmas.

What did it feel like to be contributing to helping keep students and their families and communities safe?

I have never felt more grateful to be living in Ceredigion and working at the University than I have been this past year. Helping to protect my community using skills I have developed whilst working at the Arts Centre was a small ask and I am happy to oblige.

One-on-one Writing Sessions

Love it or hate it, writing is a major part of university life. Regardless how good you are at your subject or how diligent you are at your post, the way you write has a huge bearing on how you're judged. Given this, the Royal Literary Fund places published authors into universities to help people write better.

You might want to discuss essay structure, tone or confidence, or find a more productive way to use your writing time. You may want to turn a piece of formal, academic writing into a magazine article, or improve at editing. Whatever your subject or level of study, I can tailor support to suit you in a confidential 50 minute one-one-one session.

Given the COVID-19 situation these sessions are now online. Video meetings take place on *Whereby* and there's no app or software to download. I don't proofread and I don't provide English for Academic Purposes (EAP) tuition but if you'd like a chat about any other aspect of academic writing, get in touch.

To book a slot, email cynan.jones@rlfeducation.org.uk



Cynan Jones is a multi-award-winning fiction writer. He has published five novels, and his short stories have appeared in a variety of anthologies and magazines including Granta and the New Yorker. He has also written a screenplay for the crime drama Hinterland, and a collection of tales for children. His most recent work, Stillicide, is a set of twelve stories originally commissioned by BBC Radio 4. Cynan has worked extensively as a tutor with the Arvon Foundation and Literature Wales and designed and presents Curtis Brown Creative's Writing Short Stories course. In 2019, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and has been the RLF Writing Fellow at Aberystwyth since 2016.

UMAbEr yn Dathlu AberSU Celebrates



Enwebwch Heddiw! Nominate Today!

Mae enwebu mor hawdd ag 1, 2, 3!
Nominating is as easy as 1, 2, 3!

1. Ewch i www.umaber.co.uk/ynathlu
Go to www.abersu.co.uk/celebrates
2. Dewiswch y Wobr
Choose the Award
3. Dwedwch wrthym ni PAM eu bod nhw'n haeddu'r wobwr a sut mae'n ateb y meini prawf ar gyfer y wobwr
Tell us WHY they deserve the award and how it meets the award criteria

Spotlight on... the Centre for Welsh Language Services

Aberystwyth University is renowned for delivering education and research through the medium of Welsh. The Centre for Welsh Language Services team operate to support and promote the use of Welsh and ensure that the University is able to operate bilingually.

ABER*News* spoke to Dylan Hughes, who joined the University as Manager of the Centre for Welsh Language Services in April 2020, to find out more about the Centre's work:



What does the Centre for Welsh Language Services do?

Our work involves supporting the University to operate bilingually, by promoting the use of Welsh, advising staff and departments on how to provide services effectively in Welsh, and how to comply with the Welsh language standards regulations.

Our aim is to support the University in creating an environment where students can live, study and socialise in Welsh, and to support opportunities for students, staff and the wider community to use Welsh.

We also provide Welsh translation services within the University, and support academic departments to develop Welsh medium projects, as well as assisting students studying their courses in Welsh.

The Centre for Welsh Language Services is also home to the Aberystwyth University branch of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. Coleg staff work with universities in Wales to develop Welsh medium courses and resources for students.

How many people work in the Centre and what are their roles?

We have 15 members of staff all together. Two Coleg Cymraeg branch officers, a Welsh Language Skills tutor, a team of

five translators in part time and full time posts, the Centre's secretary and a Welsh Language Development officer.

We also have three members of staff working for Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol directly on national projects.

Describe a typical day in the Centre for Welsh Language Services.

Having joined the University in April 2020, I haven't had the opportunity to meet the team in-person yet or come to the campus, which is a bit strange.

Our day to day work varies. For translation it would involve assessing the requests we have in, establishing the priorities and deadlines, and assigning the work between the translators. The team are extremely busy as you can imagine, and translated over 1.7 million words (2,850 requests) last year.

The Centre manages requests for Welsh training, and advises departments on different aspects of the Welsh Language standards or the University's Internal Use of Welsh policy.

At the start of the academic year we ensure that departments have arrangements in place to provide Welsh speaking personal tutors for students for example. We also assess all advertised jobs for Welsh language requirements as well as the Welsh language impact of University policies and decisions.

On the academic side, the Welsh Language Skills Tutor provides classes to support students who are taking the Coleg Cymraeg Language Skills Certificate. The Branch Officers administer the Coleg Cymraeg Branch and provide support with grants applications and administration, Coleg undergraduate and research scholarships, subject grants, recruitment, marketing, registration and running the Language Skills Certificate exams.

The Coleg Cymraeg staff work on national projects developing Welsh medium provision in the sciences and social sciences, including coordinating the Science and Technology Village in the National Eisteddfod, arranging conferences and supporting subject planning via the Subject Panels.

What is the most rewarding aspect of the Centre's work?

The supporting role of the Centre in developing the Welsh language provision for students and staff who work and study at the University, and the public who use the University's facilities. We also arrange the Gwobrau Gŵyl Dewi Aber Awards each year to celebrate outstanding members of staff and students who have contributed to the University's Welsh identity and use of Welsh. I'm looking forward to celebrating the achievement of staff and students.



Left to right:

First row - Nia Peris, Elin Williams, Alaw Dafydd.

Second row - Geraint MacDonald, Ffion Hughes, Matthew Clubb.

Third row - Lowri Angharad Jones, Heledd Davies, Dafydd Morse.

Fourth row - Erin Myrddin, Janet Evans, Sion Jobbins.

Fifth row - Tamsin Davies, Sharon Owen

What is the most challenging part of the Centre's work?

Currently, similar to many teams, not being on the campus brings challenges in terms of supporting and working with departments, but also brings opportunities to develop new ways of working. For example, we've recently worked with the Learn Welsh team to arrange a short virtual Welsh taster course for staff. The use of Zoom also allows us to continue to provide effective simultaneous translation in bilingual meetings.

In terms of Welsh language policy, it can be challenging in large organisations to ensure that we communicate the wide ranging requirements of the Welsh language standards to all staff effectively. But we are always here to advise and support staff should they have any queries.

Are there any misconceptions that staff at the University have about the work you do?

Difficult question! As I'm fairly new I'm not aware of the potential misconceptions yet! Perhaps some staff might not be aware that the Centre is here to support everyone - from non-Welsh speaking staff that need translations or advice on Welsh language matters, to Welsh speaking academic staff who contact the Centre for advice when planning for a new provision.

Our focus is on promoting the Welsh language among students, staff and local community and supporting the University to provide an excellent Welsh-medium student experience.

Mental health and wellbeing support for students

The Student Wellbeing Service has been working hard, and in collaboration with other organisations, to deliver a range of mental health and wellbeing support options to Aberystwyth University students this year, both on campus and when studying at home.

We know that academic life can sometimes be hard and the COVID situation may also add difficulties.

So whether it is a chance to chat, learn more about mental health and wellbeing issues, gain skills to manage difficulties, or engage with counselling or CBT type support if this is considered helpful, then the Student Wellbeing Service can get our students to the right place.

The [Wellbeing Service webpages](#) set out what help is available, so whether a student is experiencing homesickness, loneliness, anxiety, depression, levels of distress where they feel unsafe, or if they have concerns about someone else, then the right advice and support information is there for them.

Some of our key supportive provisions are listed below:

Online registration form

Students can complete our online form and a qualified practitioner, Counsellor or Mental Health Specialist, will respond offering a resource appointment and advise on other areas of support that may also be of help, relating to the difficulties detailed on the form.

www.aber.ac.uk/en/sscs/wellbeing/access.

Raising Concerns form

If you have concerns about an Aberystwyth University student, then complete our simple form and tell us about it and one of our qualified practitioners can advise from there.

Available on the Student Wellbeing Service webpages -

www.aber.ac.uk/en/sscs/wellbeing/concerns-student.

Quick Chats

Our qualified practitioners have daily slots available for a phone or Microsoft Teams quick chat about any worry or concern. The practitioner will advise you on where you can get the support that is best for you.

To book a slot phone 01970 621761 or email

studentsupport@aber.ac.uk

Togetherall

Free 24/7 online support for Aberystwyth University students

Togetherall offers an anonymised, clinically monitored, peer supported community where a range of help and advice, assessment and development modules are available.

- Chat anonymously with peers
- Complete assessments for a range of issues like sleep, anxiety, depression
- Gain new knowledge and skills through the range of self-help courses available:

Students can access Togetherall at:

<https://togetherall.com/en-gb>

Student Minds, Student Space

Free text, phone, webchat or email service. Available to students 4pm - 11pm daily.

Call free on 0808 1895260

Text 'STUDENT' to 85258

Email students@themix.org.uk

Or start a chat through Student Minds webchat available on their website: <https://studentspace.org.uk/>

Aberystwyth MIND charity

Active Monitoring Service

Student can self-refer for care and guided CBT type treatment under Hywel Dda Health Board - for mild to moderate mental health issues.

www.mind.org.uk/about-us/mind-cymru/active-monitoring

Student Steering Group

Aberystwyth MIND are working in collaboration with the University to enable students to share the student voice on what students want for well mental health, to help MIND deliver activities and 121 support to students.

More information available at:

www.aber.ac.uk/en/sscs/wellbeing



togetherall

An update from AberSU

AberSU wants Aberystwyth students to love student life. With everything that's going on in the world around us it's fair to say that it's been a challenging year for our students. Here's a little roundup of what AberSU staff and officers have been up to in an effort to offer support and a little positivity during a difficult time:

- **Isolation packs:** We have provided support packs to students who are isolating – so far we have delivered around 400 packs on campus and in town.
- **Wellbeing projects:** Early this year we launched 3 wellbeing projects; a wellbeing ideas fund, weekly Brew & Chat sessions and weekly wellbeing drop-ins on Wednesdays.
- **Christmas Dinner:** We worked with the University to support any student in Aber on Christmas day to get a three course Christmas dinner delivered for £10.
- **Student Secret Santa:** A student Secret Santa project saw 24 students exchanging gifts anonymously.
- **Pack a Parcel:** Students packed 32 Christmas present parcels for named elderly residents of local care homes that signed up to the project.
- **Christmas cards:** the SU worked with students to write cards to elderly residents in the community. Students were able to pick up free Christmas cards and send home with the SU paying the postage.
- **Christmas goody bags:** The SU packed and delivered around 200 goody bags to students who were staying in Aberystwyth on Christmas day.
- **Coaching Connections:** Students can now access one free hour of [1-2-1 coaching via the SU website](#). We have 28 coaches on board at the moment who specialise in a range of topics.
- **Virtual quizzes and socials:** A range of online socials (from crocheting to virtual pet parade), meet and greets and officer-run quizzes have been held while not possible to do so in person.
- **Virtual alternatives:** The Opportunities Team have worked hard to plan and deliver virtual alternatives for favourite events that unfortunately couldn't be held this year. One example is [AberSU Super Challenge](#) – a challenge series (that is COVID-restrictions friendly) running throughout February and March.

Thank you to everyone that helped make the above possible in order to support Aber students during this challenging period.

Looking ahead:

For the first time ever we will be holding a completely digital [SU Elections voting week](#) (8-12 March 2021) to elect next year's team of full time and volunteer officers to lead the Union and represent Aberystwyth students.

Nominations are currently open for [AberSU Celebrates 2021 Awards](#): our chance to recognise the hard work and achievements of students and staff across the University. Nominations close on Friday 19 March.

This year we have 34 awards to give out across our three awards evenings:

- Societies Awards, Tuesday 5 May
- Staff and Students Awards, Wednesday 6 May
- Sports Awards, Thursday 7 May



Nate (SU President) and Trish (CEO) delivering the Christmas goody bags

Chloe (Academic Affairs officer) and Amy (Volunteer coordinator) with the Pack a Parcel project.



A minute with the new Director of Research, Business and Innovation

Helen Jones joined the University as Director of Research, Business and Innovation on 1 February:



Tell us a bit about your background

I'm joining Aberystwyth from the University of Bath, where for the past few years I led research, business and innovation partnerships external to the University. This included relationships with public and private sector organisations, government departments, funders, regional communities and other research institutions and of course, this needed good relationship networks within the University as well.

Much of the work involved developing the University's research grant capture capability, knowledge exchange activity, project and program management and marketing our research, as well as aligning the business development strategies to support our research excellence record.

I've worked in industry as well as the research sector before joining Bath, and

most of this time in Australia. At Sydney University, my scope of responsibility was broader [than my last role at Bath] but I focused on the science-related research. The Australian funding systems for research and the prolific inventorship at the University made global partner engagement a large and exciting part of the job, particularly in the area of knowledge exchange and building large research consortia with businesses and government funding agencies.

My favourite memories of working at Sydney are developing partnerships in the Veterinary and Agriculture space, working directly with researchers and their partners on the variety of University farms in country New South Wales.

My private sector experience is mainly in the area of fast-moving consumer goods. Having a science background, this includes technical roles as well as leadership of cross disciplinary groups, people and programmes for innovation and research across Australia, New Zealand and further afield.

How do you feel about joining Aberystwyth University?

I'm excited to be joining Aberystwyth for many reasons.

Of course, it's great to be back in Wales. I'm originally from Neath in South Wales, my family still lives there and the Welsh culture is just fabulous.

It is great to be joining a University with such great heritage, a great teaching and research record and, importantly, core

values that are a really good fit with my personality and purpose.

Everyone I've spoken to that has some history with Aberystwyth has so much affection for the town and the University, regardless of how long ago they were there, and everyone I've met from Aber so far has been so welcoming and friendly.

I am also looking forward to working with the RB&I team, our colleagues and partners to build on the great breadth and quality of research that is underway at the University.

What do you plan to do first in your new role?

In my initial weeks I hope to (virtually) meet and speak with as many of the professional services teams and faculty groups as possible, to listen, absorb and explore the needs, ambitions, strengths and incentives that drive research, business and innovation activities across the University.

I am really impressed with the clarity and practicality of the two key strategies that drive this activity at Aberystwyth, and I'm eager to continue to deliver on these with a talented and growing group of individuals at R&BI.

Do you have a motto or personal mantra?

Yes, treat others how you would like to be treated. It's such a simple concept but it can have such a positive impact on so many things in life.

Join in *The Conversation*...

In early February, the University received its annual report from *The Conversation* – if you do not know what *The Conversation* is then have a look, it's worth it: <https://theconversation.com/uk>

What is striking is how effective *The Conversation* is at promoting research. The 16 articles published by AU colleagues had over 480,000 reads in the UK and internationally.

These included articles by Mark Whitehead on why people leave Facebook (73,000 reads); by Stephen Tooth on how Australia's inland rivers will become unrecognisable by 2070 (53,000 reads); and by Gil Greengross on whether we can laugh during a pandemic (20,000 reads). These were all topped however by one of our PhD students - Justyna Anna Nalepa-Grajcar - writing on 'cat poo' and toxicity (98,000 reads).

As impressive was how colleagues contributed to what *The Conversation* identified as the 'big themes' of 2020: Liz Gagen on life in mental health hospitals; Ryszard Piotrowicz on whether forced birth control constituted genocide amongst the Uighur; and Mariecia Fraser on Brexit's effects on habitat recovery.

The Conversation not only has a large and significant readership, but can lead to articles being re-published elsewhere, raising our profile internationally.

As the knowledge exchange agenda becomes ever more important for us, so it is hugely encouraging to see the success of colleagues not only in making their research more widely accessible, but in addressing many of the pressing issues which face us as communities. I hope that in the coming years we can increase both the number of articles published and the number

reads – it is good not only for our research, but in promoting greater understanding of many of the issues, big and small, which face us.

Professor Colin McInnes

Pro Vice-Chancellor Research, Knowledge Exchange and Innovation

The Communications Team has arranged several Zoom briefing sessions and writing workshops with an editor of *The Conversation* over the coming months. These are aimed at AU academics, researchers and PhD students. If you are interested in attending one of the sessions, please visit:

www.aber.ac.uk/en/staff/conversation:

- Wednesday 3rd March, 10am-12pm
- Wednesday 21st April, 10am-12pm
- Wednesday 26th May, 10am-12pm
- Wednesday 23rd June, 10am-12pm



THE CONVERSATION

Aberystwyth University Award for Exceptional Research Impact

Congratulations to the 2020 winners of the Aberystwyth University Award for Exceptional Research Impact, which recognise a key change or benefit that Aberystwyth University research has made to society.

The Award for Exceptional Research Impact in Arts & Social Sciences was awarded to Dr Elizabeth New (History & Welsh History) for her CSI Medieval project exploring the contribution of medieval seals to scientific research and heritage practice.

The winner of the Award for Exceptional Research Impact in Sciences was Dr Rachel Rahman (Psychology) for her work on using telehealth to support the psychosocial needs of palliative care and cancer patients.

Nominations are now invited for the 2021 awards. One again, there are two awards available; one for the Sciences and one for the Social Sciences and the Arts and Humanities.

Awards are considered in relation to both the reach of the impact described, and its significance to the beneficiaries.

Winners receive £500 for the purposes of supporting new impact activities from their research. An individual or a group can be nominated for the award, which is open to all academic staff irrespective of contract type.

Individuals/groups can self-nominate or be nominated by colleagues. The nomination form can be found [here](#), which once complete needs to be e-mailed to research@aber.ac.uk. The closing date for nominations is 31 March.

25 years and still going strong (ish).....

Dr Jamie Medhurst, Reader in the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies celebrates a quarter of a century in the department this summer. To mark this milestone, *ABER News* invited Jamie to send us some of his memories.



It all started with a chance meeting over an egg sandwich and a coffee in The Cabin. Well, hang on ... before that, let's go back a bit.

I first came to Aberystwyth as a fresh-faced undergraduate in September 1986 and spent three very happy years as a student in the Department of History. Being taught by such eminent historians as Rees Davies, Deian Hopkin, Aled Gruffydd Jones, Ted Ellis, Edmund Fryde, Gareth Williams, together with Geraint Jenkins and Llinos Beverley Smith in the (then separate) Department of Welsh History, was an incredible experience.

After graduating, I spent a year in what was then the new Department of Information and Library Studies and in 1991, was awarded my Masters in Librarianship. The subject of my dissertation - the history of broadcasting and broadcast archives in Wales - sparked an interest in the media and I stayed in DILS for a couple of years on an annual tutor's contract, teaching media information sources and services, and on more general courses relating to the emerging Information Society. And then my short-term contract ended. Ah. What to do?!

I decided that I would return to my History roots and train as a secondary school History teacher and got as far as a successful interview with the late W. Gareth Evans in Aber's Department of Education. Well, I say interview. It was more of a chat over a cup of tea in his office in Old College.

And then the chance meeting. Not long after the interview/chat, I was in The Cabin in the spring of 1996 when Elan Closs Stephens joined me at my table. We both had an egg sandwich and a coffee (the memory is a strange and wonderful thing - how on earth do I remember that?). Elan asked how things were going and I explained my plan of action. She mentioned that she had been awarded a grant from the Thomson Foundation to establish a broadcasting compliance unit in the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies in collaboration with the National Library of Wales. As part of this grant, she would be seconded to the project and the Department would be appointing a lecturer to take her place. Elan knew of my interest in the media, especially broadcasting, and asked if I might be interested in applying. After finishing the sandwich (it was a good one too), I mulled this over. I'll be honest - the thought of me working in what I knew as the Drama Department, the title only having been changed two years previously, resulted in mixed reactions. Excitement at the prospect of finally being a 'proper' lecturer, but trepidation at working alongside ... well ... drama people.

It didn't take long for me to decide that I would apply and on a hot early summer's day in 1996, there followed a lengthy interview. The interview was in the Seddon Room in Old College and was chaired by the Principal Derec Llwyd Morgan. If I recall, the then Professor of Welsh, who was also on the panel, asked why I wanted to teach what some might consider a 'Mickey Mouse' subject. As it happens, as part of my prep the previous day I had read an article in *The Guardian* on the very subject - and confidently stood my ground!

And so, 25 years later, I'm still here! It's been a privilege to work in such a vibrant, innovative, forward-looking, and dynamic department.

When I started in the Department, it was based in 1 Laura Place although I, together with colleagues teaching the new Film and Television Studies degree scheme, were based behind the old Soddy Labs on the Buarth. The four years spent on the Buarth are ones I'll treasure. The small group of us who began teaching that degree scheme were a happy bunch - Elan, of course, me, R Gerallt Jones and John Hefin (now both no longer with us, sadly), Ben Halligan and Catrin M S Davies. As the degree scheme grew, we were joined by others, and in 2000, we moved into the Parry-Williams Building on campus along with colleagues from Laura Place.



Jamie as Deputy Dean of Arts, presenting students at a graduation ceremony in 2005

To be honest, I can't believe that almost 25 years has passed. I've had the pleasure of working with hundreds of students and have worked alongside the most dedicated and committed of colleagues. I've undertaken some key admin roles in TFTS, from degree coordinator, exams officer, welfare officer, year tutor, Director of Teaching, and then followed John Edmunds, Elan Closs Stephens, Ioan Williams, and Adrian Kear when I was Head of Department from 2011 to 2014.

I've seen the Department expand its provision into areas such as Scenography, Media and Communication Studies, and Performance Studies, and more recently, Film-making. The Department has grown and has reduced in size. There have been great times (oh, the staff-student karaoke nights on the Pier, duetting with our now Faculty Manager!) and there have been difficult and testing times. But I can say, hand on heart, that there's nowhere else I'd rather work.

Here's to the next 25 years!

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How it works

Donations are taken from your pay after your National Insurance contributions are removed but before Income Tax is calculated and deducted. This makes it one of the most tax effective ways to donate to charity.

So, for example, if you're a standard tax payer at 20% and make a monthly donation of £20 to your chosen charity, when the money is taken from your salary you'll be paying £16 net from your pay and the remaining £4 comes from what you would have paid in tax.

If you're a higher rate tax payer at 40% and wish to make a monthly donation of £20 to your chosen charity, when the money is taken from your salary you'll be paying £12 net from your pay and the remaining £8 comes from what you would have paid in tax.

How to set up Give As You Earn

If you would like to set up a regular donation to a UK charitable organisation, all you need to do is complete a simple online form. You will need your payroll number and National Insurance number handy.

The University's Payroll Office will be sent the necessary information to make the deductions from your pre-tax salary, but will not be told which charities you are giving to.

If you like the idea of giving regularly through your pay but don't have a particular cause that you support, choose a CAF Charity Account and save your donations until the time is right.

For more information, visit the Aberystwyth University dedicated page on the CAF website at <https://www.cafgiveasyouearn.org/MjQwMDEyMzMzMzc1>, and look at the frequently asked questions.

WELCOME TO CAF GIVE AS YOU EARN

CAF Give As You Earn is the easy way to support the causes you care about.

If you like the idea of giving regularly through your pay but don't have a particular cause that you support, choose a CAF Charity Account and save your donations until the time is right.

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Spotlight on... eMentoring

A joint scheme run by the Careers Service and the Development and Alumni Relations Officer (DARO), eMentoring provides online mentoring for our students and graduates from experienced AU alumni who have volunteered to act as mentors.

ABER *News* spoke to Anna McAdam from the Careers Service about the scheme and its relevance to all departments across the University:



What is eMentoring?

Unlike a traditional face-to-face mentoring scheme, eMentoring interactions are all online giving those involved much greater flexibility.

As we use an online platform, students who register with the scheme have access to our global alumni network and all their knowledge and experience. We have hundreds of mentors representing a huge variety of sectors.

Mentors offer practical advice, insider insight and ideas about where a degree can take them.

We don't match students with a mentor, so they are free to browse through all the profiles and contact the mentors that interest them.

How can departments make the most of eMentoring?

Encourage students to register with the scheme! Departmental and support staff are vital in promoting how a mentor can help students start career planning both during and after university, the importance of industry contacts and the inspiration of seeing what other graduates from their department have gone on to achieve.

We'd particularly like to see students from widening participation backgrounds and underrepresented groups encouraged to engage with mentors.

What are the latest developments with the scheme?

eMentoring has really come into its own during lockdown, being an online scheme means mentees can continue to be mentored.

For those students and graduates whose placements or job offers have been withdrawn, eMentoring has offered an opportunity to stay connected with a mentor and use their time productively.

The effects of COVID-19 on the graduate labour market and placement opportunities will continue for some time, so eMentoring is an ideal resource for our students to start building contacts and to feel much-needed encouragement from a mentor.

DARO have done an amazing job of recruiting more mentors to the scheme in the last few months and with the Careers Service promoting it across the University, students have registered in record numbers.

We are always on the lookout for new mentors. A recent change means that mentors can now be any career professional (not just AU alumni), this way we can continue to broaden the mentor offering. Any departmental staff that can introduce potential mentors are welcome to contact me.

Can you give us an example of how students have benefited from eMentoring?

Aberystwyth Business School graduate Megan needed the help of a mentor during her final year. She is now a Marketing Communications Executive:



"In my third year I was finding it difficult to imagine what career path my degree could take me down.

When I first heard about eMentoring I thought it was a great idea, getting advice from an Aberystwyth graduate who has achieved success is inspirational as well as incredibly useful. If I want a career path that is not related to my degree, I can seek advice from graduates who have gone into other areas as there is such a varied range of mentors on the eMentoring scheme. The scheme made my final year at university less stressful and intimidating as I was able to speak to mentors and make a decision about life after university."

InterPol graduate Sneha is a research analyst with Defence and Security think tank RUSI, and had a long mentoring relationship both during and after university:



"My mentor would help me with career options, what Masters degree to do, his wider network influence and helping with dissertation interviewees. He helped me to get in touch with an employer for an interview related to my research and to work on my methodological skills where my degree had not been

able to. I realised that my degree wouldn't teach me everything, the mentoring system helps to plug some of those gaps. Being mentored made me realise what routes of entry there are to career paths in policy. I am now a Research Analyst and my understanding of research and analysis has been shaped by the mentoring system and the help my mentor gave me."

What can you tell us about the mentors?

One of the highlights of this scheme for me is reconnecting with our graduates and finding out what they have gone on to do in their professional lives. We are so lucky to have very generous alumni who volunteer to help our students as mentors. With fewer opportunities for placements and work experience in the ongoing lockdown conditions, our mentors can offer the tacit knowledge that gives our graduates a head start when it comes to career planning and the graduate job market.

Here are just a few examples of our mentors:

Josh Fedder - Assistant Director for Oxfordshire - Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

"Policy areas: Devolution, City deals, Disaster recovery, Research & Innovation, Clean growth, Inward investment.

Local sector knowledge: Space, Fusion tech, Autonomous vehicles, Quantum computing, Cryogenics, Life sciences."

Kok Liang Chew - Senior International Lawyer, Barrister in England & Wales, Advocate and Solicitor of the High Court of Malaya, Advocate & Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Singapore

"As someone who has worked and survived recessions in life, i.e. early 1990s UK recession, 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, 2008 Global Financial Crisis and now COVID19, there is always hope and light at the end of the tunnel. Hard work, lifelong learning and curiosity has served me well all these years."



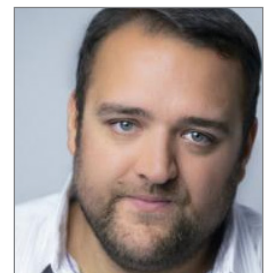
Elizabeth Franks, Environment and Natural Resources Specialist, Hafren Dyfrdwy/Severn Trent, Wales Lead



"Since graduating I have held a range of roles within Environment Agency Wales & Welsh Government covering a number of topics - water resources, process industry regulation, environmental permitting and waste management policy - before moving into the water industry as an Environment Manager in 2016."

Alan Mehdizadeh, professional actor of stage and screen, roles including Don in Kinky Boots and Big Davey in Billy Elliot the Musical.

"As well as acting, I have written, directed and produced for the stage. My experience also includes casting, design and technical aspects of theatre, as well as company managing."



Where can people find out more about eMentoring and the registration process?

Take a look at our webpages: www.aber.ac.uk/ementoring

Anna McAdam, Project Lead, is happy to discuss any eMentoring matters and can be contacted via email:

anm43@aber.ac.uk

Appointments

A warm welcome to colleagues who have joined the University in recent months, including:

DEPARTMENT OF WELSH AND CELTIC STUDIES



Eisteddfod-chaired poet **Mererid Hopwood** has been appointed a Professor of Welsh and Celtic Studies. A graduate in Spanish and German at Aberystwyth University, she went on to complete a PhD in German literature in University College London. Since then she lectured in the departments of Welsh and Modern Languages at

Swansea University, before joining the University of Wales Trinity St David's as a Professor of Languages and the Cwricwlwm Cymreig.

Dr Ben Ó Ceallaigh has joined the department as a lecturer in Celtic Studies. Originally from the west of Ireland, he recently completed his PhD in the University of Edinburgh,



where he studied the effects of neoliberalism on minoritised languages, and in particular the impact of the 2008 economic crisis on Irish-speaking communities.

INSTITUTE OF BIOLOGICAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND RURAL SCIENCES

Dr Chris Pirson has joined the University as VetHub1 Laboratory Manager. Most of his career has been working in government at the Animal and Plant Health Agency, the Home Office, the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, and Public Health England with a focus on biological warfare agent detection and response. He has a PhD from the University of Birmingham studying the bovine immune response to lipids from tuberculosis. He moved here from an Oxford-based biotech company, where he was the biological safety lead. Chris is also a mental health first aider.



Morag Taite is a new postdoctoral research associate at IBERS. She is working on the EU-funded Ecostructure project, investigating non-native marine species of the Irish Sea. She previously worked on cephalopods at the National University of Ireland, Galway.



Gareth Thomas joins IBERS as a part-time Senior Field Ecologist working on the ECHOES project studying wintering birds on the Dyfi estuary. Previous to this he has worked for the RSPB, Birdwatch Ireland and Scottish Natural Heritage in a variety of roles. More recently he has worked as an ornithological consultant and some of his work has been on the Dyfi. Gareth is particularly happy to continue contributing to the conservation of the Greenland White-fronted Goose in Wales.



DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

Dr Xiaowei Gu joined the department as a lecturer in Computer Science. Xiaowei obtained his PhD at Lancaster University in 2018. Previously, he was a Senior Research Associate at School of Computing and Communications, Lancaster University. His research interests include machine learning, data analytics, computational intelligence and signal processing.



Dr Faroq Al-Tam has joined the department as a lecturer.



He obtained his PhD from the University of Algarve (Portugal). He worked as a researcher at the Center of Electronics, Optoelectronics and Telecommunications (CEOT). His main research interests include optimization problems in image processing and communication systems.

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Dr Peter Rees has joined the department as an ESRC Postdoctoral Fellow. His project is titled 'Citizenship as Method' and it investigates the relationship between universal human rights and citizenship, through a focus on irregular migration. He joins us from Goldsmiths, where he previously taught and completed his PhD.



Dr Beatrix Futak-Campbell, who works as an Assistant Professor of International Relations at Leiden University (The Netherlands), has joined the Department of International Politics, for two years as a Marie Skłodowska Curie Fellow with the EU-funded project, "Secure Borders: The EU Migration/Refugee crisis and border security" which focuses on borders and security practices in Hungary.



Dr Sonia Garzon has also joined the department as a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellow and will be working with Professor Berit Bliesemann de Guevara. Her research lies at the intersections of peacebuilding, transitional justice, and gender and its intersectionalities. Sonia received her PhD from Central

European University, Budapest.

ABERYSTWYTH BUSINESS SCHOOL

Dr Lyndon Murphy has recently joined the Business School from Cardiff Metropolitan University where he was a Reader in local economic development. He is an alumnus of Aberystwyth. His research interests include the design and management of regional innovation and community regeneration policy.



Vince Dispenza has joined the Business School as Director of Executive Masters Programmes. Vince was previously Director of the Executive MBA at Leeds University. He has over 25 years' experience of teaching, consultancy and applied research in Higher Education, and has held a number of leadership roles. He is an accredited 360 degree leadership development coach, working mostly with senior managers. He has also worked in the building industry and as a Learning & Development consultant.



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND WELSH HISTORY

Dr Rachael Gillibrand has joined us from the University of Leeds as a Lecturer in Medieval History and Heritage. Her research focuses on the relationship between health, technology, and the body in the premodern world - most recently focusing on the construction, sale, and use of disability aids in the sixteenth century. Rachael is a passionate advocate of interdisciplinary research methodologies, and regularly draws upon visual and material sources in her work.



HUMAN RESOURCES

Emma Gibbons has joined the Human Resources team as Head of Organisational Development and Learning. Originally from Llanybydder, she studied Management and IT at the University of Wales Lampeter, and spent 16 years living and working in New Zealand as HR Director for Lincoln University and HR Business Partner for Christchurch City Council. She returned to Wales in 2018 and joins us after working as HR Business Partner at Cardiff and Swansea universities.



DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND EARTH SCIENCES

Dr Amy Sanders joins us in the WISERD Civil Society Research Centre from Cardiff University. Her PhD was in third sector-government relations, focusing primarily on equalities organisations. Amy is an alumnus of Swansea University. She previously had a career in community development and promoting equality and citizen participation.



STUDENT SUPPORT AND CAREERS SERVICE

Kayleigh Evans has been appointed Student Wellbeing and Support Practitioner - Mental Health Specialism. Kayleigh gained her first degree in Psychology in 2017, before studying Mental Health Nursing at Swansea University where she gained an MSc. She is now



a registered nurse (NMC) and has worked on in-patient psychiatric wards with patients in crisis.

DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE, FILM AND TELEVISION STUDIES

Mx Marcy da Silva Saude has joined the department as a Lecturer in Documentary Film Practice. Saude received an MFA from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 2011, and is an active artist filmmaker. Drawing on experience with international artist-run film labs, they will support development of Labordy Ffilm Aber.



Siân Llewellyn has joined the Student Support Services as part of the Wellbeing Team. Sian graduated in Counselling Psychology from Worcester University in 2017 and has been working as a Counsellor online and in schools, for Kooth (an organisation that provides free counselling support to children and young people across the UK).



RESEARCH, BUSINESS AND INNOVATION



Helen Jones has joined us as Director of Research, Business and Innovation (RB&I). Originally from Neath, and a graduate of Warwick University where she studied Biochemistry, Helen migrated to Australia in 2000 and worked in the field of R&D in the private sector and as Life Science knowledge exchange and research

partnerships lead at University of Sydney. She returned to the UK in 2016 and joins us from The University of Bath where she has been Head of Research Grant Development, Industrial Strategy (Industrial Partnerships Team) since 2018.

ABERYSTWYTH SCHOOL OF VETERINARY SCIENCE

Dr Gwen Rees joins us from the University of Bristol as Lecturer in Veterinary Science. Graduating as a vet from Liverpool University in 2009, she worked in Wales and New Zealand before undertaking a PhD exploring medicine use by UK farmers. Gwen currently leads the Rural Development Programme-funded Arwain Vet Cymru project and her research interests are antimicrobial stewardship, human behaviour and ethnography.

