

PROM

Aberystwyth School of Veterinary Science
going from *Strength to Strength*



Queen's anniversary prize
for pioneering research

University congratulates alumnus on election as *First Minister of Wales*

PROM 32

It is a pleasure to share this year's **PROM** magazine with our wonderful alumni community after another year of busy activity and developments.

It has been extremely enjoyable and a privilege to meet so many of you in person, and to represent an institution with such ambition for its communities, both here in Aberystwyth and in networks stretching across the world.

In this edition, we bring you the latest news and developments from Aber, highlighting key research and stories from across the University.

Make sure you get the most out of this alumni network, including our popular monthly newsletter- see 'Stay Connected' below.

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It is great to have this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Vice-Chancellor of Aberystwyth University.

Like you, I am an alum of this fantastic institution, and over the years I have enjoyed keeping in touch with University news through this magazine.

I moved to Aberystwyth to work and live 33 years ago and, after a few years, enrolled at the University as a mature student. Whilst studying for my degree and then my PhD in the Department of Computer Science, it never occurred to me that I would be back all these years later as Vice-Chancellor.

This institution and Aber as a place are very dear to me, and I feel privileged to have this opportunity to lead this University which means so much to me, and I know means so much to many of you.

This University played an incredibly important role in my own development in academia. Since finishing my studies here, I have worked in both academic and latterly in senior executive roles at universities in Kent, York and most recently, in Sunderland. Academically, I am an interdisciplinary researcher, working across Computer Science, engineering and the biological sciences, in particular immunology, but I trained as a computer scientist and I was always delighted to have an opportunity to come back here to Aber as an alum, in part thanks to the links I still had with colleagues in the Department of Computer Science.

My first few weeks in my new role have been spent getting to know Aberystwyth University as it is today. One thing that has really stood out is the tangible sense of pride and commitment shared by staff and students, and the feeling of collective ownership of what we do here.

These are testing times in the world of higher education and I know that our University, along with other UK universities, faces challenges. Alongside these challenges, however, there are opportunities to be harnessed, ambitious paths to follow, and successes to celebrate and take pride in.

It is no exaggeration to say that Aberystwyth University changes lives. The teaching and research carried out here is truly transformational, opening up new opportunities, developing vital skills, and bringing about improvements for wider society.

I recently had the considerable pleasure of accompanying a group of our world-leading parasitologists to Buckingham Palace to receive the prestigious Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher Education in honour of their pioneering research into parasitic flatworms. This edition of **PROM** also reports on how Aberystwyth University research is leading the search for life on Mars, progressing our understanding of human evolution, investigating the prevention of age-related disease, and studying the historical treatment of refugees to improve the lives of children fleeing conflict today.

You can also read about exciting progress on our ambitious redevelopment of the Old College. The extensive scaffolding alone is a feat of extraordinary engineering, but as work now begins on the new public entrance and atrium, the iconic building is continuing to reveal its secrets - such as the recent discovery of the scorched remains of the huge fire of 1885.

There's also a chance to learn more about the University's new Dialogue Centre, which is unique in Wales, and which is striving to foster connections and collaborations between researchers and the wider world for the exchange of knowledge to the benefit of all.

Finally, you can read about some of the ways in which members of the alumni community are continuing to make a difference to Aber - helping to fund a replica veterinary clinic on Penglais Campus, flying film and television students to a world-leading film festival, giving entrepreneurial students the chance to make their business start-up a reality, and establishing a major new fund to support student study opportunities in Europe.

I hope to meet with more fellow alumni in the coming months, and I look forward to working with you to help to further the success of this greatly valued and respected institution.

Professor Jon Timmis
Vice-Chancellor

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Students with Calf

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Elain Gwynedd

Welsh Culture Officer and UMCA President

Undertaking the role of Welsh Culture Officer and UMCA President has truly been a pleasure so far, and we have had a very successful first semester. The highlight for me was certainly Y Ddawns Ryng-gol (the intercollegiate dance) in November as we welcomed over 500 Welsh students and some of the best bands in the Welsh Rock Scene, including Tew Tew Tennau, Dros Dro, Fleur De Lys and Candelas to Aberystwyth. Along with organising a large number of events for UMCA members, including Sŵn, Cuppa and Chat sessions, the Welsh Language Music Day Gig and the Welsh Language Rights Day film night, I have also had the privilege of sitting on some of the University's



most important committees, including the Council and the Senate. This has certainly been a valuable experience to represent the voice of Welsh students, and to protect Welsh medium modules, which is one of my top priorities during my term as Welsh Culture Officer and UMCA President.

This academic year is undoubtedly an extremely exciting one for UMCA, as we celebrate half a century since the establishment of the Welsh students' union. One of my main roles in the coming months is therefore to organise the celebrations which will take place on the 15th of June here in Aberystwyth. If you have any photos or stories about your time at the University, please contact umca@aber.ac.uk. I look forward to welcoming current and former UMCA members back to the town for an unforgettable weekend.

Bayanda Vundamina

Union President

It's been amazing to work with students on campus this year and I'm looking forward to building upon last year's wins to create an even better student community.

With the growing population of international students one of my main priorities this year is to make sure they are supported and their voice is heard. Moving to a new country can be very daunting and I want to make sure they have access to all the necessary resources to succeed.

I have run an anti-racism campaign to educate students on the importance of being an active bystander to establish an anti-racist mentality that will spread into the local community. I have had the privilege to work with the University on various committees such as Council and Senedd to ensure that students love student life and I will be working hard to make sure they have all the necessary support.



University congratulates alumnus on election as First Minister

Meri Huws, Chair of Aberystwyth University Council and Professor Jon Timmis, Vice Chancellor of Aberystwyth University have congratulated Aberystwyth graduate Vaughan Gething on his election as First Minister.

Vaughan Gethin graduated in Law from Aberystwyth University in 1999 and served as President of Aberystwyth University Guild of Students and President of the National Union of Students Wales.

Elected to the National Assembly of Wales (now the Senedd) in 2011 as the member for Cardiff South and Penarth, he has served in the Welsh Government as Health and Social Services Minister and, more recently, as Economy Minister.

In a letter to the First Minister, they said:

"It is our pleasure on behalf of Aberystwyth University, to wish you our warmest congratulations on being elected to the post of First Minister. As Aberystwyth alumni ourselves, we know that your election will be a matter of great inspiration and pride to our students, staff and all those associated with this institution. Your



election as the first black person to reach this position is an historic moment for the whole nation to celebrate.

"In recent years we have been pleased to work with the Welsh Government and local stakeholders to deliver important developments. For example, in healthcare, we have established our new Health Care Education Centre and two new degrees in nursing. In animal health, our Centre of Excellence for Bovine Tuberculosis (CBTB) for Wales was established with the support of the Chief Veterinary Officer and works alongside our new School of Veterinary Science, which opened in 2021.

"We are keen to strengthen our civic mission even further, including supporting your government's skills agenda. We wish you every success in your role as First Minister."

On becoming First Minister, Vaughan Gething will be the second Aberystwyth University alumnus to be elected to the role. Carwyn Jones, currently Professor in Law at Aberystwyth University, served as First Minister from 2009 to 2018. He graduated in Law from Aberystwyth in 1988.

Awards and Accolades

Aberystwyth was named Welsh University of the Year for 2024 by *The Times* and *The Sunday Times Good University Guide*.



The University was awarded a Queen's Anniversary Prize 2023 for its pioneering work in helping to tackle the devastating impact of parasitic flatworms.



Aberystwyth University was top in the UK for Lecturers & Teaching Quality and Student Life at the WhatUni? Student Choice Awards 2023.



Aberystwyth was rated top university in Wales for student satisfaction in the National Student Survey 2023, a position it has retained for the past eight years.



Royal award for pioneering parasite research

Aberystwyth University has been awarded a Queen's Anniversary Prize for its pioneering work in helping to tackle the devastating impact of parasitic flatworms.

The prestigious award, which is part of the British Honours system, was presented by Queen Camilla at a ceremony in Buckingham Palace on 22 February 2024.

The royal honour recognises the work of scientists at the University's Department of Life Sciences who specialise in a particular group of parasitic flatworms which cause devastating diseases such as Schistosomiasis in people and Fasciolosis in livestock.

Schistosomiasis is a tropical disease usually spread through contact with contaminated fresh water, killing an estimated 12,000 people and infecting more than 200 million individuals every year.



Left to right: Professor Jon Timmis (Vice-Chancellor), Professor Karl Hoffman (Professor of Parasitology), and Right Honourable Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd (Chancellor)

Fasciolosis affects more than 300 million cattle and 250 million sheep worldwide, at a cost of over £2.5 billion a year to the agriculture industry.

Full story: bit.ly/3Tv4MX8



Vice-Chancellor Professor Jon Timmis receiving the award from Her Majesty The Queen at Buckingham Palace

NEWS

Aberystwyth scientists to take lead on Mars rover project

Aberystwyth University scientists are leading the work to replace a Russian-made instrument on the Rosalind Franklin rover, so that it can launch to Mars in 2028.

The rover, which was built by Airbus in Stevenage as part of a European Space Agency programme, was due to launch in 2022 but the collaboration with Russia's space agency (Roscosmos) was cancelled following the illegal invasion of Ukraine.

The additional £10.7 million funding from the UK Space Agency will allow a UK team to replace the Russian-built Infrared Spectrometer for ExoMars (ISEM) so that the mission can recover its full scientific potential.

Work on the new instrument, named Enfys (meaning 'rainbow' in Welsh), will be led by Aberystwyth University with support from UCL, STFC RAL Space and Qioptiq Ltd.



Dr Matt Gunn, Principal Investigator on Enfys, the new infrared spectrometer being developed for the ExoMars mission, with a full size model of the Rosalind Franklin rover at Aberystwyth University.

Enfys will identify targets on the surface of Mars for sampling and analysis, building on the scientific discoveries of the Mars rover mission.

Dr Matt Gunn from Aberystwyth University, Principal Investigator on Enfys said:

"This is a challenging and complex technical endeavour which has the potential to make a significant contribution to our search for signs

of life on Mars... it is really exciting to be leading the development of one of the mission's key science instruments. This investment from the UK Space Agency is also a massive endorsement for the quality of space research here in Aberystwyth University, which will have an impact for our world and others for generations to come."

Full story: bit.ly/493ZSWQ

Archaeologists discover world's oldest wooden structure

Half a million years ago, earlier than was previously thought possible, humans were building structures made of wood, according to Aberystwyth University research.

The research, published in the journal *Nature*, reports on the excavation of well-preserved wood at the archaeological site of Kalambo Falls, Zambia, dating back at least 476,000 years and predating the evolution of our own species, *Homo sapiens*.

The specialist dating of the finds was undertaken by experts at Aberystwyth University. They used new luminescence dating techniques, which reveal the last time minerals in the sand surrounding the finds were exposed to sunlight, to determine their age.

Analysis of stone tool cut-marks on the wood show that



The wood being excavated in Kalambo Falls in Zambia

these early humans shaped and joined two large logs to make a structure, probably the foundation of a platform or part of a dwelling.

This is the earliest evidence from anywhere in the world of the deliberate crafting of logs to fit together. Until now, evidence for the human use of wood was limited to its use for making fire, digging sticks and spears.

Professor Geoff Duller from Aberystwyth University said:

"At this great age, putting a date on finds is very challenging and we used luminescence dating to do this. These new dating methods have far-reaching implications - allowing us to date much further back in time, to piece together sites that give us a glimpse into human evolution."

Full story: bit.ly/3To8PEo



Tired young refugees on their arrival at Harwich (Essex), early morning of 2 December 1938.

Kindertransport - uncomfortable truths at heart of heroic wartime scheme

A new book about the Kindertransport scheme by an Aberystwyth University academic reveals a darker side to the feel-good wartime success story.

Over a ten-month period in 1938-9, around 10,000 Jewish child refugees were brought to the UK via Kindertransport to escape Nazi persecution. Most would never see their parents again, many of whom were murdered in the Holocaust.

In 'Kindertransport - What Really Happened', expert Professor Andrea Hammel suggests that although the Kindertransport scheme is often viewed as a positive example of the UK's humanitarian and altruistic attitude towards refugees in the past, in reality its legacy should be viewed through a more critical lens.

Highlighting poor resourcing by the British government, Professor Hammel argues that in fact the Kindertransport scheme relied on charitable donations and volunteers. She also points out that the government only relaxed visa rules for children not their parents, and that the selection criteria did not prioritise the most urgent cases, but those who were likely to make the best contribution to society.

Professor Hammel, who is Director of the Centre for the Movement of People at Aberystwyth University, said:

"There is much that history can teach us about historical treatment of refugees, which could make life easier for children fleeing conflict today, and it's important that we are realistic about the success but also the shortcomings of the Kindertransport".

Full story: bit.ly/4cxpDBG

Can green tea prevent age-related disease?

Aberystwyth University scientists are testing how nutrients in green tea can affect age-related diseases by monitoring people's brain activity.

The food and behavioural experts will test whether supplements containing natural blends of ginseng and omega oils can improve people's health.

As we age our body becomes less able to absorb nutrients from our diet and this contributes to some of the health difficulties we may experience as we get older.

Changes to our body as we age can include problems with digestion which in turn can make us vulnerable to illnesses, including cardiovascular disease and diabetes, but also cognitive decline.

The study uses the EEG (Electroencephalogram) facility at the University's Department of Psychology to measure whether there is any relationship between how the gut is functioning and brain activity - in this case memory and various aspects of information processing.

Dr Amanda Lloyd from the Department of Life Sciences at Aberystwyth University said:

"Improving older people's health is a major focus of much of our dietary, health and future foods work here in Aberystwyth. Diet can make a big difference in improving people's welfare, reducing illness and in turn lessening pressures on our health service. We do know that specific products can improve the function between the gut and the brain, and this study will be looking at whether these products have an overall health benefit."

Full story: bit.ly/4crmpzN

An EEG test at Aberystwyth University's Psychology Department.



Aberystwyth School of Veterinary Science



Professor Darrell Abernethy – Head & Chair Aberystwyth School of Veterinary Science

The Aberystwyth School of Veterinary Science is now three years old and going from strength to strength. What was a dream for so long became a reality in 2021 when the first cohort of veterinary students commenced their BVSc degree, thanks to a unique collaboration between Aberystwyth University and the Royal Veterinary College (RVC). Following years of planning and hard work by so many, a programme was developed whereby students spend their first two years at Aberystwyth and most of the following three years at the RVC in London. Students therefore have the best of both worlds: starting at a small university in rural Wales with a strong pedigree in agriculture and student experience before moving to a vet school consistently ranked as the best in the world.

The first years of the course have been occupied with bedding in the teaching programme, assisting students with their "AHMS" - self-arranged work experience on farms and animal establishments - and completing the next essential steps in the school's development. These included a successful audit by our accrediting body (The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons) in mid-2023, our first student cohort settling well into the RVC from September 2023, and finalisation of a new programme - veterinary nursing - that will commence in September 2024.

The School's teaching personnel are from various backgrounds including teaching, research, clinical practice and industry. We work closely with scientists and administrators in our parent department, the Department of Life Sciences, and are strongly supported by local veterinary practices and many veterinarians across Wales. We have appointed honorary lecturers and professors who provide valuable insights and contribute to teaching, while external specialists are recruited when required. It is clear therefore, that our students benefit hugely from a rich variety of inputs that extend well beyond the complement of staff in the vet school.

And what about the veterinary students? They are equally diverse, with about half the intake each year from Wales and the remainder mostly from England, although this year we have several from outside the U.K. About half of each class applied directly from school while the remainder had already completed a science degree. A key priority has been to ensure our students transition smoothly into the RVC in their third year; to this purpose we strive to align our programme with that of the RVC, with similar teaching goals but slightly different content that speaks to the strengths of Aberystwyth. So far, this seems to have worked - feedback from our BVSc 3 students has been positive; they have mostly adjusted well and passed their first assessments - phew! We will see them again when they return in their fourth and fifth years for clinical training





and small group placements in Welsh practices. It is gratifying to hear from some how much they enjoyed their years at Aberystwyth and how well prepared they felt. This is from one student:

"...I just wanted to thank you and the rest of the Aberystwyth Vet School team for all of your hard work and dedication that made the first 2 years of the course so enjoyable. I feel so lucky to be able to have experienced such a great learning environment and feel so well prepared for my clinical years. I, and many others, feel that we could not have had a better start to our veterinary careers, and I wanted to express how good of a job you are all doing to create not only an exceptional curriculum with great teaching, but an environment where I felt supported, and as an individual, my professional interests nurtured. You are doing the veterinary profession and Wales proud, and I look forward to coming back for rotations! Diolch!..."

This September we commence a veterinary nursing programme and there appears to be strong interest judging from the applications we have already received. Our students will spend 18 months at Aberystwyth before undertaking a year-long placement in practice. They will then return for six or 18 months, depending on whether they choose a diploma or degree route.

The vision of the veterinary school is to meet the needs of the Welsh veterinary profession, agriculture and society, and we are progressing on that journey. We seek to address the perennial shortage of veterinarians in this part of the country and build a local school, based on national pride, meeting local needs, and culture and language. Wales needs a School that is tuned to, and meets the needs, of its own vets – from providing graduates who can speak Welsh, who come from Wales and are thus more likely to stay in Wales, to supporting the profession with post-graduate training and undertaking research that is both excellent and locally relevant. The journey is underway!

Aberystwyth Vet School plans expansion with major donation

Plans for expanded facilities for vet students at Aberystwyth University have taken a step forward thanks to a major bequest.

The £100,000 gift from the estate of the late Gordon Burrows will help fund a replica veterinary clinic on the University's Penglais campus.

Once all the funds are secured, the new clinic will include standard facilities such as waiting, examination and treatment areas along with key equipment used for small animal care.

Professor Darrell Abernethy, Head of Aberystwyth University's School of Veterinary Science said:

"As part of their learning process, it is important that our students gain experience in veterinary clinical training and an understanding of the key equipment and processes undertaken at veterinary clinics. We are deeply grateful for this generous bequest which allows us to take a step forward with our plans to expand our facilities and further enhance the teaching we offer at Aberystwyth."



The first students started studying at Aberystwyth University's School of Veterinary Science in September 2021.

An executor on behalf of the estate of the late Gordon Burrows said:

"Gordon Burrows would have been pleased to know that his legacy is contributing to the enhancement of veterinary training for future generations of students. It has been a privilege to work with the University to ensure the bequest makes a lasting contribution to the work of the first School of Veterinary Science in Wales in his memory."

Aberystwyth's Centre of Veterinary Science was officially opened by King Charles III in 2021, following an investment of more than £2 million in new teaching facilities on the University's Penglais campus.

The course provides opportunities for students to study specific areas of veterinary science through the medium of Welsh, which is partly funded by the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol.



FEATURE

The Old College

Credit: Mark Lewis Photography

New atrium key to unlocking vast potential of the Old College

Excellent progress is being made on the redevelopment of the Old College into a major new centre for learning, heritage, culture and enterprise.

Encased in scaffolding, the grade 1 listed building is being reroofed from one end to the other, and the Quad, its beating heart since the great fire of 1885, has a new floor.

April will see work begin on the construction of a stunning new entrance and atrium.

Extending over seven floors and providing easy access to all levels of Old College and the Cambria, the atrium will also feature a new glass-fronted 200-seater function room offering stunning views of Cardigan Bay.

According to the project's architect, Lyn Hopkins from Lawray Architects, the new atrium will unlock the vast potential of the Old College.



The new entrance and atrium from King Street will unlock the vast potential of the Old College



"Over the years the Old College has been notoriously difficult for anyone wishing to make their way from one end of the building to the other as it always meant having to return to the ground floor before climbing again, and its numerous narrow staircases meant it was inaccessible for many people. Drawing on the work of Seddon and Ferguson and how they played with spaces, we set about designing a contemporary area that opens up the entire building and enables everyone to access all levels of

this wonderful landmark for the very first time."

"Featuring new staircases and lifts, the atrium has also made it possible for us to retain many original architectural features and the character of Old College. Without it, this simply would not have been possible", Lyn added.

Offering a contemporary interpretation of the Old College's architectural heritage, the atrium will provide a new public entrance from King Street to complement the new main entrance from the promenade through the Georgian Villas.

Set back from the road, it has been designed to preserve the view of Old College along the road from Pier Street.

The atrium also provides the foundations and cantilever for the new function room that will 'float' above the Georgian Villas.

Offering panoramic views across Cardigan Bay, this new space is key to the economic viability of the project.

Lyn added: "Our brief was to create a new space that is big enough to complement other areas in the building that could host larger events, such as weddings in the Old Library, which are important for the viability of Old College as a venue.

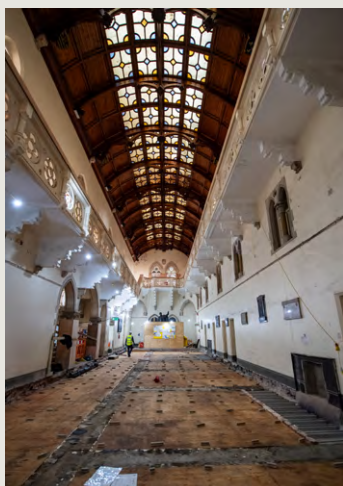
"As well as affording incredible views of Penrhyn Llŷn and Yr Wyddfa on a clear day, the new function room has enabled us to retain many of the building's larger spaces, such as the Old Hall and the Seddon Room, in their original format, and respecting their architectural heritage and integrity."

The function room will also be set back so it does not hinder the view of the Old College, The Cambria and the Georgian Villas, as people approach it from the promenade.

An evolving building

The atrium is the latest addition to the Old College that has seen many major changes since Castle House was built on the site by Sir Uvedale Price in the mid-1790s.

Designed by John Nash, whose other buildings include Llannerch Aeron and Buckingham Palace, Castle House



*Preparing to lay the new floor in the Quad
Credit: Mark Lewis Photography*



Left to right Lyn Hopkins from Lawray Architects; Shaun Davies, Senior Project Manager with Andrew Scott Ltd; Jim O'Rourke, Old College Project Manager and Professor Anwen Jones, Aberystwyth University Executive Lead on the Old College Project at the site of the new King Street entrance and atrium.

was acquired by Oswestry draper turned railway contractor Thomas Savin in the 1860s.

Working with architect J P Seddon, Savin set about transforming the site into a hotel to coincide with the arrival of the railway in Aberystwyth.

Badly affected by the financial turmoil of the mid 1860s, Savin's venture failed and the site was acquired in 1867 as the first home of the University of Wales.

Seddon continued with the work of adapting the building, even after the great fire of 1885, when much of the north wing was destroyed.

Further changes were made during the second half of the 1890s when Castle House, the Principal's residence for several years, was demolished to make way for a new science block by the architect C J Ferguson.

New Life for Old College

The Old College Appeal is one of the most successful fundraising campaigns in the history of Aberystwyth University and the generosity of alumni and friends has been incredible. Over £4m has been raised from trusts, foundations and individuals, and new donations continue to come in.

Coupled with funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Welsh Government and the European

Regional Development Fund, the Coastal Communities Fund, the National Lottery Community Fund and the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund, the project has attracted over £30m support from funders.

However, there is still a way to go before we can realise the full potential of this landmark project. To learn more about how you can support the Old College Appeal, visit <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/oldcollege/old-college/>



For more information about the Old College project, visit <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/oldcollege/>

The Dialogue Centre

About Dr Wolowic

Jennifer Wolowic was born and raised near San Francisco in California, USA. She studied Anthropology as an undergraduate at San Francisco State University before going on to study for a Masters in Anthropology followed by a PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of British Columbia in Canada. Dr Wolowic worked in the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue at the Simon Fraser University co-leading projects working to improve democracy and public engagement.



Dr Jennifer Wolowic Principal Lead of the Aberystwyth University Dialogue Centre

An exciting development at Aberystwyth University has been the launch of a brand-new Dialogue Centre. Its aim is to foster collaborations and innovative opportunities for exchanging knowledge and building collaborations between researchers and the wider world. Here, the Principal Lead of the Dialogue Centre, Dr Jennifer Wolowic, explains more about what's been happening and what plans lie ahead.



The Dialogue Centre worked with a range of local partners to coordinate the University's 2024 Festival of Research, with 20 events held in different locations including Ceredigion Museum in the old Coliseum building in the centre of town.



In July 2023, the Dialogue Centre brought together 35 members from Aberystwyth's creative communities to explore how creative entrepreneurs and industries in the area could further develop and flourish. Held in the bandstand on the promenade, this collaborative event was designed and facilitated by FlourishCafé™.

Writing this article at the end of January 2024 has given me a chance to reflect on my first 12 months as Principal Lead of the Aberystwyth University Dialogue Centre. It's been a busy year as I worked with colleagues not only to lay foundations for this ambitious new initiative but also to design, lead or advise on a wide range of events and activities across the University.

Our varied programme of work included coordinating the The Pursuit of Peace, this year's [Festival of Research](#). It was an opportunity to celebrate the centenary of the Welsh Women's Peace Petition, which was launched at a conference in the University in May 1923 and signed by almost 400,000 women before being taken to the USA in 1924. Over a six-day period in November 2023, the Festival offered 20 different events with a focus on peace and attracted more than 600 attendees.

We also collaborated with the University's Communications and Public Affairs to design and facilitate a high-profile event at the Senedd in Cardiff Bay in May 2023. The session brought researchers together with politicians, policy makers, refugee organisations and other third sector practitioners to explore how Wales could achieve its ambition to be a Nation of Sanctuary.



We've also delivered Interactive workshops to teach dialogue skills to students on the University's Masters course in Behaviour Change, facilitated internal team-building sessions, and designed away days for staff as well as provided one-to-one coaching to researchers.

In August 2023, we launched a new meeting space on Penglais campus where researchers can gather to talk about their work, hold knowledge exchange events, and develop collaborations. Known as our [Ty Traford Ymchwil](#), this bespoke space has already been used to host more than 70 events as well as numerous informal meetings.

And as we look to the future, the Dialogue Centre's diary for 2024 is already filling up. We'll be delivering training to the [Commissioner of Future Generations Leadership Academy](#) and [Learned Society for Wales](#). We will also host the director of Virginia Tech's Centre for the Communication of Science, who will inspire us to improve our communication through theatre games and creative facilitation.



The Dialogue Centre's Ty Traford Ymchwil is located in the Visualisation Building on Penglais Campus.

There will be additional coaching for our first Dialogue and Facilitation cohort and we'll launch a second cohort in the Summer. We'll also be supporting the development of the University's industry-led continuing professional development portfolio and launching a fee-for-service training and facilitation consultancy to external clients.

If you're planning to visit the Hay Festival between 23 May and 2 June, join us for the three sessions featuring Aberystwyth academics and the Dialogue Centre. These include the launch of our *Doing Democracy Differently* project with the University's Centre for Welsh Politics and Society. We'll also be at the Royal Welsh Show in July and the National Eisteddfod in August. And towards the end of the year, we'll be hosting a national gathering in Cardiff for advancing public engagement in democracy.

A few weeks later we hosted a [FlourishCafe](#) event in Aberystwyth, where representatives from across the creative industries in Ceredigion discussed how they could work more closely together and with the University to ensure their sector can thrive. Their comments and recommendations have been shared with officials working on culture strategy at Ceredigion County Council.

Dialogue is about creating different kinds of spaces and ways of working. Providing training opportunities is another key element of the Dialogue Centre's remit. We piloted hosting a cohort of 20 academics and professional services staff for training in group Dialogue and Facilitation methods. They have since used these methods in lecture rooms and at international research gatherings.

Looking further ahead, we have our eyes on opening the Dialogue Centre within the iconic walls of the Old College, the University's first home on Aberystwyth promenade in 2026. By the time this historic building reopens, we will have put down firm roots for the Dialogue Centre to become a self-sustaining global magnet - opening up community and international collaborative opportunities; offering training to staff, industry clients and others; contributing to the University's civic mission and using collaborative methods for the wider benefit of society.

You can find out more about the work of the Aberystwyth University Dialogue Centre on our website dialogue.aber.ac.uk or email us at dialogue@aber.ac.uk.

Old Students' Association

It's been such an exciting year since I last had the pleasure of writing in PROM, and a period of great change too.

I'm in no doubt that all alumni would join me in sharing deep thanks and appreciation for Professor Elizabeth Treasure, for everything she achieved for the university as Vice Chancellor over the past seven years, and to Dr Emyr Roberts for his leadership of University Council over two busy terms.

On behalf of the Old Students' Association (OSA), I'm looking forward to working with Professor Jon Timmis (and not just as a fellow Aber alumnus!) as he undertakes what I'm sure will be an equally exciting tenure as Vice Chancellor, and working to strengthen the role the OSA and our alumni community can play more widely in the university's future. We send our best OSA wishes to him, and Meri Huws as Chair of University Council, for the years ahead.

The highlight of the last year was surely the celebrations marking 150 years of Aberystwyth University, and 130 years of the OSA. Especially, being able to connect, and re-connect, with so many members and alumni at events and activities which marked this incredible milestone, and to look ahead to the future. This is the privilege I enjoy most in my role; sharing memories, hearing others' Aber stories, and catching up on developments which fill me with a sense of pride for where the university continues to head.

In particular, the [Reunion Weekend](#) we enjoyed in June was back with a bang, and around 250 OSA members



Lauren Marks,
President of the
Old Students'
Association

and alumni joined us back in Aber, after a few years where the Reunion couldn't be held due to the pandemic. We kicked the bar on the Prom, re-visited our departments for brilliant activities and talks, ate a few slices of cake and even partied on the Pier! But most of all, I hope everyone who attended enjoyed being back in the town by the sea with fellow alumni from many different graduating years, sharing their Aber spirit.

I hope to see many of you back in Aber again this year, or at one of the other events during the year - keep an eye out for events at the Eisteddfod, Royal Welsh Show, and we look forward to meeting many graduating students and their families during graduation week.

Of course, my thanks as always to the OSA Officers and Committee, OSA Branches and our members for all of the hard work and dedication you continue to give to the OSA and bringing our community together.

We're always welcoming new Life Members of the OSA and happy that many alumni want to take the small extra step with us on our journey, keeping in touch with the University and its alumni, and working with us to support the University, current students, and looking to the future. If you'd like to know more, please get in touch or visit our [website](#).

www.osaaber.org

www.aber.ac.uk/en/development/osa/

Since 2016, the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies has benefited from a unique partnership with one of the most prestigious cultural festivals in the world. Ben Thompson, who graduated from the department with a degree in Film and Television Studies and Drama, is now the Vice President of Shorts at the top-tier Tribeca Festival, which was set up in 2002 by Robert de Niro, Jane Rosenthal and Craig Hatkoff to culturally and economically revitalise the Manhattan neighbourhood following the attacks on September 11th 2001.

With over 1000 screenings and events, and hundreds of thousands in attendance, the festival is now one of the



(Left to right): Molly Clarke, Tom Bow, Sam Aitken and Tayjib Kerstan - 2022 winners

biggest and most reputable in the world. Every year, four students from Aberystwyth have the opportunity to attend the festival as part of a truly inspirational and transformative experience. Previous TFTS students have attended talks and masterclasses with Robert De Niro, Martin Scorsese, Werner Herzog, Jennifer Lawrence, Scarlett Johansson, Jamie Foxx, Ewan

McGregor, Jane Fonda, Bradley Cooper, David O. Russell, Pharrell Williams and many more.

This opportunity is only made possible by Ben and his fellow alumni who contribute so generously to the Aber Fund, for which the students and Department are eternally grateful.

Alumna donates £3.1m for research at Aberystwyth University

One afternoon at the office last summer I received a phone call I knew would be coming, but which was still surreal when it happened. A bank manager at the other end told me matter-of-factly that she was about to transfer £3.1 million to the University, from the Joy Welch Trust. Could she double check our bank details? And did I want to speak to Christine Heseltine, trustee, who had given the instruction to transfer the funds and who was sitting next to her? Christine and I subsequently had a slightly giddy conversation in which I thanked her again on behalf of the University and she replied, 'Aunt Joy would have been so pleased!'.



Joy Welch as a WRN in 1943



Joy Welch (front row, middle) at University College Wales Aberystwyth as Tennis Captain in 1948

'Aunt Joy' referred to Margaret Joy Welch, philanthropist, founder of the Joy Welch Educational Charitable Trust and proud Aber alumna, who died in 2017. But who was she? As Ms Heseltine describes in the obituary she wrote for her aunt:

'Joy was born at Galgate, just outside Lancaster. She was home educated, then sent to board at Birklands School in St Albans. The whole school was evacuated during World War II to Burford House just over the Welsh border in Hereford. Aged 17, with the war still going on, Joy volunteered to join the WRNS. She scrubbed floors in Scotland, released meteorological balloons in Cornwall and was then posted to Eastcote, near Ruislip. Eastcote was an outpost of Bletchley Park'. There Joy learned to operate the machines used to decode German Enigma messages. 'Friends, and even her closest family, were told nothing of Joy's role until the information became declassified in the mid- 1970s'.

In 1946 Joy went to Aberystwyth to study Economics, Geography and Philosophy, graduating with a BSc. in Economics in 1950. She also really enjoyed playing tennis, becoming the women's tennis captain in 1948 (see photo).

'For much of her adult life Joy lived in London. She continued to play tennis for as long as she was able to thump a ball. She painted, travelled widely, read avidly, gardened, escorted ill children to hospital and dental appointments; and thoroughly enjoyed visiting cafes and restaurants at every opportunity – much appreciated by visiting friends and family.'

In 1988 she established the Joy Welch Trust which over the years has supported many primary schools, as well

as university research projects that sought to benefit the UK economy. Aberystwyth, as her alma mater, regularly received grant funding from the Trust, and so did Lancaster

University because Joy's father, John Welch, was one of its founders. In 1998 the (then) University of Wales, Aberystwyth awarded Joy a Fellowship of which she was justifiably very proud.



Dr Eva De Visscher, Trusts and Foundation Manager, DARO

In the mid-1990s Joy moved back to County Durham, to be near her 3 nieces, their children and her younger brother. From there she continued to govern the Trust together with her nieces, until her death. Close to a

hundred of our researchers, ranging from postgraduates to Professors, secured Joy Welch funding over the years for small catalyst projects, which not uncommonly paved the way to larger research grants and publications.

It was Joy's wish that most assets from the Trust were to be divided equally between Aberystwyth and Lancaster Universities- resulting in that memorable phone call. This incredibly generous gift, one of the largest endowments the University has ever received, is now held in perpetuity as 'The Joy Welch Research Fund'. All academic disciplines are included, and so Joy's legacy will support current and future generations of researchers, irrespective of changes to different fields of study over time.

Joy and I sadly never met in person, and I will therefore leave the last word to her family: 'she is remembered as a forthright, determined, unconventional woman. She was a loyal friend and relative and hugely generous to many who were lucky enough to know her and to many people she never met'.



Unleashing Innovation at AberInnovation

Aberystwyth University has long been a beacon of academic excellence, nurturing bright minds and fostering innovation across various fields. Taking its commitment to new heights the university invested in 'AberInnovation' – their new Innovation and Enterprise Campus at Gogerddan, alongside the Welsh European Development Fund and the BBSRC part of UK Research and Innovation. AberInnovation is designed to be a hub for entrepreneurship and research & development (R&D), providing the necessary support and resources for budding entrepreneurs to test and validate their ideas, particularly in sectors such as biosciences, food & drink, agri-tech, and environmental sciences.

AberInnovation offers four technical zones of laboratories and processing halls, custom-designed for collaborative agri-food and circular economy R&D including a Future Food Centre, Biorefining Centre, Advanced Analysis Centre and a central Innovation Hub. The University's new prestigious Seed Biobank facility is also co-located in the site. There's a range of practical resources tailored to the needs of businesses, including fully-serviced offices available for rent, known as the 'Incubation Offices' as well as flexible membership



options, granting access to its vibrant community, specialised support services and facilities. Furthermore, the new facilities include coworking space and meeting rooms, enabling a dynamic setting for collaboration between like-minded individuals, further solidifying the development 'ecosystem' offer.

At the heart of AberInnovation and its team of 13 staff lies a dedication to nurturing and empowering entrepreneurs, ensuring they have access to the mentorship, guidance, and facilities needed to turn their innovative ideas into successful ventures. One such success story is that of Jamila La Malfa-Davidson, whose journey illustrates the transformative potential of AberInnovation.



Jamila's venture, Prohempotic, began as a PhD project at Aberystwyth University, where she focused on developing cultivation, processing, and testing methods to extract valuable medicinal compounds from hemp. Her dedication and ingenuity caught the attention of the university, leading her to win Aberystwyth University's InvEnterPrize competition in 2022, securing a £10,000 business investment to kickstart her entrepreneurial journey.

But Jamila's accolades didn't stop there. Her business idea continued to garner recognition, earning her the £500 prize for rural business sponsored by the Growth, Rural Resilience and Innovation Network, as well as The INNOVATE UK Young Innovator's Award.

As part of AberInnovation's Solutions Catalyst programme, Prohempotic was granted access to a private office, state-of-the-art facilities, access to expertise, and an extensive network of collaborators. This support has been instrumental in accelerating the growth of the company, providing Jamila and her team with the environment and resources they need to thrive.

Prohempotic is just one example of the impact AberInnovation is having on the entrepreneurial landscape of Mid Wales. Through its holistic approach to fostering innovation, AberInnovation is empowering a new generation of entrepreneurs to realise their potential and make a meaningful impact in their respective fields, whilst also providing entrepreneurs with the tools and a

physical innovation location which they need to succeed in the region.

Furthermore, AberInnovation aims to continue to support staff from Aberystwyth University, ensuring exposure to entrepreneurship routes which could ignite students' passions and empower them to pursue their entrepreneurial ventures in the future. Through initiatives like internships, workshops, and networking events, AberInnovation creates a bridge between academia and industry, giving students firsthand experience and insight into the world of research and innovation.

Additionally, AberInnovation's focus on key sectors reflects the region's unique strengths and potential for growth. By channelling resources and support into these areas, AberInnovation is not only driving economic development but also addressing pressing global challenges.

As we look to the future, the impact of AberInnovation is poised to extend far beyond the confines of the university campus. By encouraging entrepreneurs like Jamila and fostering a culture of innovation at a local level, AberInnovation is laying the groundwork for a brighter, greener future for Mid Wales and beyond.

Links:

www.aberinnovation.com

<https://www.ukri.org/councils/bbsrc/>

<https://aberinnovation.com/en/working-with-us/facilities/>

<https://aberinnovation.com/en/development-hub/solutions-catalyst/>



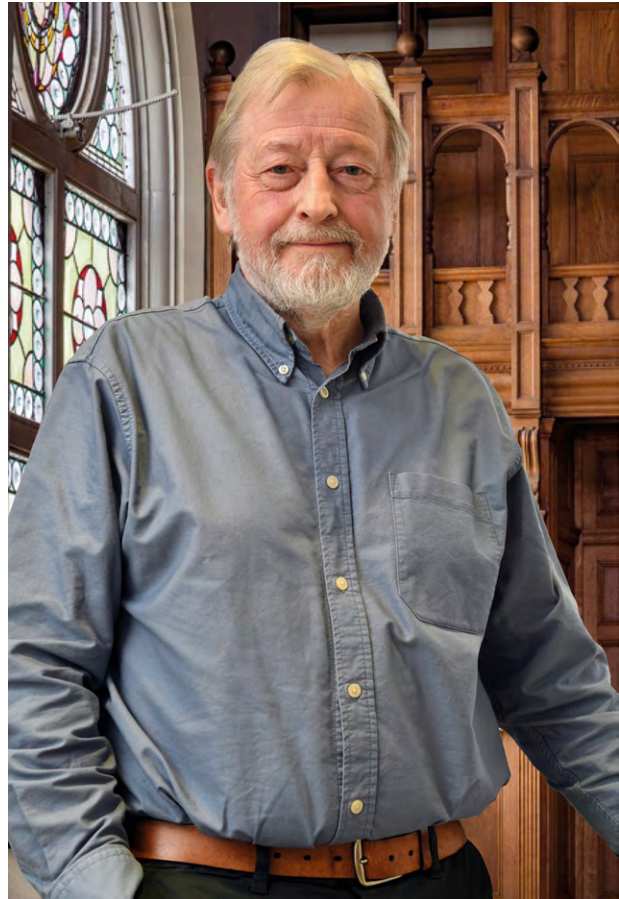
An interview with Elgan Philip Davies

Elgan Davies will be familiar to many alumni from his time as the welcoming and knowledgeable librarian of the Old College Library. He graduated from Aberystwyth in 1978 with a joint-honours degree in Welsh and Welsh History, gained a Diploma in Librarianship at the College of Librarianship Wales, and joined the staff of the University Library where he worked until 2015, retiring as Manager of Collections and Resources. John Gilbey talked to him about his career, writing and music.

I was born in Pontrhydfendigaid, a village near Aberystwyth where my father was a policeman. It was common then for officers to be moved quite often, so by the time I was 13 years old we had lived in five different places and I had attended six schools, ending up at Ardwyn Grammar School here in Aberystwyth.

By then I had had a bellyful of education, and against the grain, and not really knowing what I wanted to do, I was persuaded to go on to the sixth form. I did very little work there, concentrating more on music, sport, and reading books that I wanted to read rather than those on the courses. It came as no surprise to anyone that I failed my 'A' Levels.

In the meantime, I had seen an advertisement in the *Cambrian News* for a Library Assistant post at the university, and as I liked books I applied for it and was invited to an interview. I started at the General Library in Old College in October 1971 on the grand salary of £684 a year.



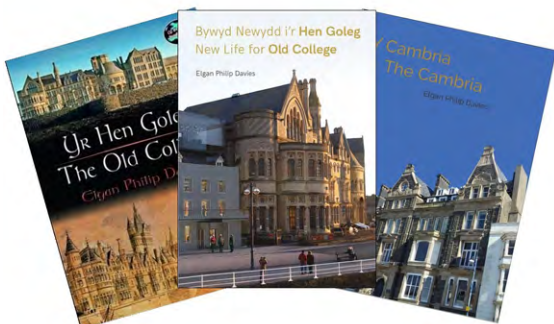
Did you remain with the library until you retired?

Not quite. William Dieneman, the College Librarian, suggested that I should consider librarianship as a profession, but if I did so I would have to get professional qualifications. I first went to Coleg Harlech before returning to Aberystwyth to do a degree and then on to the College of Librarianship Wales.

And then returning to UCW Library?

Yes. The library was engaged in a major project, converting the book stock from the manual Browne card issue system to a computerised system, and as a result I got my first experience of computerisation.

Most of the science departments had already relocated from town to the Penglais Campus. In 1976 the Hugh Owen Building opened, and more departments moved up the hill. This meant that Education would migrate



from other sites in town to the emptying Old College Building, and I was put in charge of moving the libraries.

Then you were in charge of the Old College Library until it closed in 2011?

Yes. As more departments left Old College, the future of the building was under discussion. Bringing everything together on one campus seemed inevitable, but no one knew what would become of the Old College.

I had often been asked to give presentations on the history of the building, which meant that I'd collected a lot of material, including historical records, photographs, plans and reminiscences. So as the rumours that it was for sale grew, I thought that I should put this material to good use.

The publishers Gomer had a bilingual series called *The Wonders of Wales/Cip ar Gymru* that featured one iconic Welsh place, person or tradition per book, and another Aberystwyth graduate was one of Gomer's editors. I sent him a mock-up of a book on Old College to see if it could be included in the series. As most of the work had already been done, he agreed, and *Yr Hen Goleg/The Old College* was published in 2011.

But this wasn't your first book?

No. I published a children's book in 1985. My daughter was about 9 years old, and told me that she'd read all the books she liked in the library - so I wrote it for her and her age group, over my lunchtimes in Old College. Since then I have published over 50 books for children, young adults and adults. One of the adult books was shortlisted for the Welsh Book of the Year award in 1999, while another was longlisted for the same award in 2004.

During your student days, you were part of the popular band Hergest. Have you been making more music since you retired?

I left the band in 1976, but the other three members have carried on making music over the last 50 years as solo artists or members of other bands, but the last time the four of us had reunited as a group was for Bryn Terfel's Faenol Festival in 2004. And as it was music that had brought us together in the first place, I thought that it



would be good to do some more. They agreed, so with a dozen new songs we went into the studio in September 2018 to record them. I had hoped to release the album at the National Eisteddfod in Tregaron in 2020, but Covid delayed the Eisteddfod and the CD release until 2022.

I've also continued researching and writing about the Old College, completing *Bywyd Newydd i'r Hen Goleg/New Life for Old College* in 2020 and *Y Cambria/The Cambria* in 2023. I also contributed articles to *Ceiniogau'r Werin/The Pennies of the People*, the 150th anniversary publication of Aberystwyth University in 2022. I'm currently researching the history of 1 and 2 Marine Terrace, the two Georgian houses that are squeezed in between the Old College and the Cambria, and which will be the new main entrance to the Old College. I hope to have that ready for the reopening in 2026.

Alumni Profiles

Every year our graduates go on to achieve great success in a wide range of career paths across the globe. As a university we are extremely proud of the achievements of our students as we watch our graduate family grow in their chosen careers.

Below is a small selection of the many achievements and successes of our graduates.

Jessica Gerken

(BSc International Politics and Strategic Studies 2013)

Jessica is the Programme Manager of the North Africa and Sahel Observatory of the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) – a Geneva-headquartered civil-society organisation analysing TOC, providing policy guidance, creating a platform to promote greater debate and innovative approaches, and fostering resilience in affected communities around the world. Jessica has been with the Global Initiative since summer 2015, first as an intern, then an associate, a policy officer, and an analyst.

"I strongly believe that my bachelor's degree in international politics & strategic studies ideally set me up



not only for my Master degree at the Graduate Institute, Geneva, but also for an analysis-based job. It was much more Aberystwyth than Geneva that taught me to think critically and independently, to understand the different schools of IR and position myself within one of them. What I've learned at the Interpol department gave me a significant advantage compared to other students.

An international politics / international relations degree enables a wide range of different possible fields, it's somewhat of a coincidence that I ended up with transnational organised crime, as I could have easily chosen a job in humanitarianism (as many of my latter classmates did) or continue with a PhD to become a scholar."

Jeffrey Salkilld

(BA English Literature and Creative Writing 2013)

Jeffrey works as a freelance independent film producer and for his newly established production company Verve Bee Media (www.vervebeemedia.com). He has just shot 'The Green Man' in Ireland, a folklore horror feature film that he also wrote and produced.



"Aber was such a fun place to grow as a person and a writer. So many creative people, many costume parties were had. Two of my best friends I met at Aber. I got a 2.1 which the tutors knew was my goal and really helped push me to that. Which was so valuable, allowing me to go onto

a MA in screenwriting in 2018 in London."

If you would like to feature in the next edition, please contact alumni@aber.ac.uk

Abigail Obre

(BA English and Writing 2005)

Abigail is a Healthcare Marketing and Communications Executive for GenesisCare in Florida USA. Soon after her degree, Abigail secured an internship at a video editing company in New York City. The move became permanent when she was offered a full-time position as a producer of pharmaceutical commercials. Much of Abigail's career has been spent in the healthcare marketing and communication field, either in the hospital setting or advising local and national clients as an agency partner.

"My degree in Creative Writing nurtured my love of language and taught me how to make words work harder. It set me on a path in healthcare advertising which segued into marketing and communications. The art of storytelling is especially important in the oncology space. It enables me to have a direct impact on the patients whose stories I tell; each one as unique and poignant as the next.





Kier Olsen

(Sports and Exercise Science 2014)

Kier is the founder of OlsenFitness which has its own coaching facility near Penarth, Cardiff. Along with two other coaches working under the same values and beliefs, Kier has helped countless clients achieve phenomenal results and lead a healthier life whilst achieving their physique goals. Kier has worked with Athletes from grassroots through to those who represent their country in their given sport. Over the past 10 years OlsenFitness has been recognised with 9 award nominations and wins both locally and nationally including "The Great British Entrepreneur Awards". Kier has also worked with actors/actresses and other TV personalities from shows such as the U.S hit series Orange is the New Black, Fargo & The Handmaids Tale and blockbuster movie Sherlock Holmes.

"The Sport & Exercise Science department and Aberystwyth University as a whole has played a pivotal role in OlsenFitness being the business it is today. Taking skills applicable from exercise psychology, biomechanics, physiology and nutrition and applying them to the coaching model at OlsenFitness."

InvEnterPrize 2023

A company looking to harvest and harness a natural animal feed enhancer and food additive from Welsh trees is the overall winner of Aberystwyth University's annual student business idea competition, InvEnterPrize 2023.

Tannin is a substance present in trees and plants. With natural antioxidant and antibacterial properties, tannins have the potential to revolutionise the food industry.

Maria Luisa de la Puerta Fernandez, a PhD scholar in the Department of Life Sciences at Aberystwyth University, has been working with tannin rich plants for several years, and is investigating the possibility of exploiting the benefits of tannins for a wide range of industries in Wales.

Fernandez' innovative business idea, Tannos, won her a £10,000 business investment sponsored by alumni of the University and a year of office space at [AberInnovation](#) in the University's InvEnterPrize 2023 competition.



Biotechnologist and animal nutritionist, Fernandez, was delighted to have won InvEnterPrize and explained that through Tannos, she intends to focus on the many practical applications of tannins, which is a hugely underutilised resource, and to set up industrial-scale tannin production using local and sustainable resources. Initially she will focus upon the use of tannins as supplements in compound animal feed production with the aim of reducing methane emissions and improving silage quality. The next step is to provide tannin as an affordable, efficient, and natural solution to other sectors in Wales – such as leather, drinks and the pharmaceutical industry.

The six teams of students that reached the final of this year's contest had developed ideas ranging from a car sales and rental platform to a hydroponic business looking at growing fruit and vegetables in nutrient-rich water without soil.

The finalists pitched their ideas to a group of 'dragons', many of whom are alumni of Aberystwyth University who have gone on to have successful careers in business.

For more information about the University's programme of events to support entrepreneurial activity amongst students, graduates and staff, visit the [AberPreneurs](#) webpage.

Thanks to you



Lyndsey Stokes
Director,
Development &
Alumni Relations

It is a privilege to be the new Director of Development and Alumni Relations at this truly special institution – one that is founded by philanthropy, on the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion, and with the desire to have world class education in and for Wales.

As we look to the future, towards the final chapter of the Old College Appeal and with it, the realisation of this magnificent building being put back into use for the benefit of students, staff, alumni and local communities, I would like to thank you now as ever for your continued support.

Your donations are providing a safety net for Aber students in their hour of need, enabling students to embrace the opportunities of university life, supporting students to become entrepreneurs, giving new life to the Old College and accelerating world leading research into globally significant challenges facing communities today. We could not do this without you.

Thank you to all our donors listed in our 2023-24 Donor Roll and to those who have given anonymously www.aber.ac.uk/thankyou

Supporting our students

Your generous philanthropic support – both time and money – has an invaluable impact on the University and our students.

Alumni volunteers

Whatever stage you're at in your career, volunteering is a fantastic way to give back to your university. This is your chance to inspire, guide and advise the next generation of Aber alumni.

Why volunteering is good for my soul

Dr Julie Finch, BSc, PhD Zoology

My time in Aber shaped my entire future so I'm keen to support the University and current students in whatever way I can.

I love hearing how current students find the Aber experience and so I was more than happy to become a mentor for one of this year's Peter Hancock Scholars. Being a mentor (someone who's prepared to listen, to be a sounding board and to be able to offer moral support based on my post-graduate experience) keeps me in touch with student life and makes me feel useful – I get a lot of pleasure from that!

I'm also a member of the OSA Committee. With most meetings held by Zoom, Committee members can connect from wherever we are and, in return for a relatively modest time commitment, I've enjoyed helping organise OSA reunions/events, updating our website and getting involved in local branch activities. I value the close links that we have with the Vice-Chancellor and feel privileged to hear first hand about the challenges and opportunities the University faces. By supporting the University like this I feel connected and that, in my own small way, I'm helping to make a difference!



Dr Julie Finch with mentee Laurie Stevenson

How your donations help

Your donations to Aber are funding life-changing scholarships and pioneering research.

Student Hardship

373 students were awarded Hardship Grants from the Advice and Money team in 2022-2023. The team ensures that students are given the right support to continue their studies without financial worries or burdens. These larger hardship awards were made alongside 350 £50 shopping vouchers.

This figure represents the continued unprecedented disruption and uncertainty faced by students today. The

ongoing cost-of-living crisis, and world events such as the war in Ukraine are some of the issues that have affected some students' ability to fund their education.

Thanks to our generous donors these students facing hardship were able to receive financial assistance, enabling them to cover rent, bills and meet unexpected costs.

When you make a gift, you'll help to support the brightest talents - no matter what challenges they face.

Thank you, as always, for your support.

Impact of legacies

A gift in your will is an extraordinary way to celebrate your life and a special way to remember Aberystwyth University.

Many of our past achievements have been made possible by legacies from alumni and friends. Your gift is a unique way to celebrate an institution you treasure, the people you have encountered and could help shape Aber's successes in the future.

Legacy gifts of any size have a lasting and significant impact on the University's work in education and research, enriching the lives of future generations of students to discover, innovate and influence.

Making your will is a personal decision and we appreciate the importance of looking after your family and loved ones. Once you know that your family and friends are taken care of, a gift to Aber will ensure that your legacy remains beyond your lifetime.

If you have a question or would like to receive more information, please contact our Alumni office on alumni@aber.ac.uk or call 01970 621568.

Supporting the University



We recognise and celebrate the impact that your giving has made, and Aber's success would not be possible without your support. Thank you.

Your gift, of any size, together with others from the alumni and supporters around the world, can make a real difference across our three priority areas:

Student Support (AberFund)

The Old College Appeal

Research and Academic Development

You can make a single or regular gift online at www.aber.ac.uk/give

International donations can be made through our partners SWIFT system or British Schools and Universities Foundation (BSUF)

If you'd like to discuss your donation in more detail, please contact our Alumni office at alumni@aber.ac.uk or call 01970 621568.

2022-23 Philanthropy in numbers



£698,659

donated by alumni and supporters



£4,322,395

from Trusts and Foundations



384

individual donors



311

donors who give regularly



FUNDRAISING PRIORITIES

£467,229

The Old College Appeal



£42,211

Student Support (AberFund)



£3,767,856

Research and Academic Development



116

Current members giving at Vice-Chancellor Giving Circle level

Fifty years of Theatre, Film and Television Studies

This academic year, the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies celebrates its fiftieth anniversary. For half a century the Department has played a major role in learning, teaching, research, and engagement with the creative industries in Wales and beyond. But where did it all start?

Professor Jamie Medhurst

Jamie Medhurst is Professor of Film and Media in the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies. He joined the department in 1996 as a Lecturer in Film and Television Studies and is a former Head of the Department.



The first mention of a potential Department of Drama came in a meeting of the Faculty of Arts on 9 February 1972. A Subject Group Meeting of Faculty 'recommended that the Development and Policy Committee be informed that the Faculty strongly supports the development of Drama within the College'. It went on to recommend that two lecturers in Drama be appointed, one of whom would be responsible for Welsh-medium teaching, together with two Visiting Tutors or Fellows in Acting and Production. In response, the University's Development and Policy Committee noted in its meeting on 28 February 1972 that '...it was important that the College should quickly build up a Drama Department in order to make full use of the Theatre [Y Werin]. This Department should have comparable status to the Music and Art Departments'. What is interesting to note is that the College (as it was then) – and the Principal, Sir Goronwy Daniel, in particular were keen to create links from the outset between the fledgling department and the newly opened Theatr y Werin on the expanding Penglais Campus.

In a meeting of Senate on 15 March 1972, the Principal noted that efforts were being made to raise funds to develop Drama in the College. It's clear that developments continued apace, because by a meeting of the College Staffing Committee in June 1973, 13 applications for the post of Director of Drama and

Harlech Fellow¹ had been received. 6 applicants were interviewed, and the College appointed Dr David John Edmunds.

The Department of Drama opened in September 1973 and was based on the old Barn Centre on Alexandra Road (now occupied by Morris and Bates Solicitors and others). 'The aim of the department', noted an early prospectus entry, 'is to provide a firm foundation in the history of European theatre and dramatic literature, and a basic training in acting and technical skills'. Drama as subject was intended to be offered only as a Part 1 (first year) subject, but through John's persistence, and with the support of colleagues such as Emily Davies



Picturing Eugene Ionesco, Emily Davies and John Edmunds, together with students Kevin Graal, Gay Wardle, and Nick Malicka

¹ The Welsh Board of the ITV licence-holder for Wales and the west of England, HTV, had agreed to make a grant of £2500 p.a. for 3 years from 1st June 1973 for the appointment of a Harlech Fellow in Drama.



The Fall and Redemption of Man

and Elan Closs Stephens, a joint honours scheme was established, with a single honours degree offered from 1978 onwards.

The Department has always placed an emphasis on practice and production work. The first production was the Victorian melodrama, *Lady Audley's Secret*, which was performed in Theatr y Werin on the 29th and 30th November and 1st December 1973. Other early productions included *The Fall and Redemption of Man* directed by Emily Davies and Eugene Ionesco's *The Chairs* which the author attended.



2000, although Theatr y Castell and the Joseph Parry Hall in town are also used for departmental teaching and research. TFTS now has a staff of around 35, and around 550 undergraduate and postgraduate students. In addition to learning and teaching, there is a thriving research culture and excellent connections with external organisations in our field.



From these humble, yet ambitious, beginnings grew what was, at one point, one of the biggest departments in the University and one of the largest of its kind in the UK. Welsh-medium teaching and research has been a key part of the department since the beginning with a Welsh-medium first year being introduced in 1975. In 1996 a new degree in Film and Television Studies was introduced and that was followed by Scenography/Theatre Design, Performance Studies, Media and Communication Studies, and more recently, Writing for Broadcast, Media and Performance, and Film-making.

The Department has been housed in the purpose-built Parry-Williams Building on the Penglais Campus since

The challenges to the cultural and creative industries are numerous, both from outside higher education and within. TFTS is ready to face those challenges and to equip its graduates with the requisite skills and aptitudes to thrive in the future – and to make a difference in the world, just as they have done since 1973. The current Head of Department Dr Kim Knowles, who joined the University as a Lecturer in Film Studies in 2011, states: 'I am proud to be leading a department with a rich history and strong tradition of creative experimentation and risk-taking. It's not an easy time to be navigating the choppy waters of Higher Education, but with such a talented team of teachers and researchers it's exciting to imagine where we might end up.'

APPOINTMENTS, HONOURS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Appointments

Professor Jon Timmis – Vice Chancellor

Meri Huws – Chair of Aberystwyth University Council

Professor Angela Hatton – Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research, Knowledge Exchange and Innovation

Simon Crick – Director of Finance and Planning

Lyndsey Stokes – Director of Development and Alumni Relations Office

David Wilson – Director of Aberystwyth Arts Centre

Professor Catrin Webster – Head of School of Art

Honours 2023

The following individuals received an Honorary Fellowship as part of the graduation ceremonies in 2023:

Tina Evans, 'Human on Wheels' inspirational blogger and motivational speaker, and television presenter (alum – Theatre, Film and Television Studies, 2006)

Ann Griffith, Leader of Wales and the World at the 2022 National Eisteddfod (alum – Education, 1970)

Ian Gwyn Hughes, Head of Public Relations at the Football Association of Wales and former BBC Wales football correspondent (alum – History and International Politics, 1980)

Professor Dato' Dr Rahmat bin Mohamad, Professor of Law at MARA Technological University in Malaysia (alum, PhD Law, 2001)

Kate O'Sullivan, veterinary surgeon for Mill Referrals, Director of Ystwyth Vets and British Small Animal Veterinary Association volunteer

Helen Prosser, Director of Teaching and Learning at the National Centre for Learning Welsh (alum, Welsh, 1983)

Phil Thomas, veterinary surgeon, Director of Ystwyth Vets and Director of Iechyd Da

Ben Thompson, Short Film Programmer at Tribeca Festival in New York (alum – Theatre, Film and Television Studies, 2002)

In Memoriam

Remembering those who sadly passed away between August 2022 and July 2023

*Denotes OSA member

Fellows

Baba, Dato' Zawiyah (Librarianship, 1973), died May 2023*

Harries, Professor John Edward, died December 2022

Hogg OBE, Mr Francis Norry, died October 2022

Morris KG PC KC, Rt Hon Lord John, (Law, 1952), died June 2023*

Staff

Bache, Mr Nick, died April 2023

Barker, Emeritus Professor Martin John, died September 2022

Davies, Mr Benjamin Lewis, died March 2023

Edmunds, Dr John, died May 2023

Ghuman, Emeritus Professor Paul Avtar Singh, (Education, 1994), died August 2022

Linklater, Emeritus Professor Andrew, died March 2023

Ovendale, Professor Ritchie, died August 2022

Provan, Dr Jim, died December 2022

Kittle, Olga, died November 2022

Roland, Janet, died April 2023

Saycell, Mr Jeff, died December 2022

Alumni & Supporters

Allen, Mr David Luke (English Literature, 2006), died December 2022*

Bayliss, Dr Deryck David (Geology, 1953), died October 2022

Bottoms, Mr David John (Zoology, 1981), died September 2022

Brindley, Dr Graham (Applied Mathematics, 1971), died December 2022

Clarke, Mr Charles Nicholas (Education, 1979), died September 2022

Collins, Mrs Agnes, née Riley (German, 1952), died September 2022

David, Miss Eilonwy Ann (Dairying, 1945), died December 2022

Dean, Mr Bill (Botany and Zoology, 1964), died January 2023*

Dzeryn, Miss Kirsten Barbara, née Green (International Relations, 2005), died May 2023

Elliott, Ms Valerie Jean (French, 1978), died February 2023

Groves, Dr Nicholas William (Music (BMus), 1977), died June 2023*

Hammond, Mrs Deborah Noelyne (International Politics and The Third World, 2012), died January 2023

Hollows, Mr Jack William Llewellyn (Film and Television Studies, 2002), died September 2022

Hughes, Dilwyn Ellis (French and Russian, 1976), died December 2022

Jacquet, Mrs Cathy Elisabeth Anne, née Hull (German, 1974), died May 2023*

Lawrence, Dr Thomas Rhidian (Physics, 1962), died July 2023

McMillan, Dr Ian Kenneth (Geology, 1974), died June 2023

Pritchard, Dr William Hubert (Chemistry, 1957), died May 2023*

Rowley, Professor Gwyn (Geography (Arts), 1961), died May 2023*

Thornley, Mr David James Falklan (Law, 1987), died August 2022

Trice, Mr John Edward, died December 2022*

Valentine, Mr Matthew (History, 1995), died November 2022*

Whittaker, Dr John Eustace (Geology, 1967), died July 2023*

Wilkinson, Ms Delwen Eirlys, née Williams (Russian and French, 1975), died June 2023

Williams, Mr David Hugh (Statistics, 1969), died October 2022

If you would like to report the death of an Aberystwyth University graduate, please let us know by emailing: alumni@aber.ac.uk

Achievements

Students

Student winners at the Aberystwyth Students' Union Teaching, Learning & Student Experience Awards 2023 were: **Lilly Casey-Green** (Student Staff Member of the Year), **Muhammad Naveed Arshad** (Student Mentor of the Year), **Andrine Vangberg** (Student Volunteer of the Year), **Cai Phillips** (Welsh Culture Champion), **Zoe Hayne** (Academic Representative of the Year) and **Dax Aziraphale FitzMedrud & Elena Bloomquist** (Liberation Champion Award)

Film and television students - **Elena Bloomquist, Juliette Daum, Justas Kavaliauskas** and **Lucy Thomas** - won a departmental competition to spend four days at New York's prestigious Tribeca Festival, funded by alumni contributions to the Aber Fund.

At the University's 2023 Welsh Language Awards, **Ffion King** won the Studying through the medium of Welsh award, and **Cai Phillips** was awarded Welsh Language Champion.

Staff

Staff winners at the Aberystwyth Students' Union Teaching, Learning & Student Experience Awards 2023 were: **Andrew Baldwin** from the School of Art (Lecturer of the Year), **Dr Helen Miles** from the Department of Computer Science (Personal Tutor of the Year), **Professor Luis Mur** from the Department of Life Sciences (Supervisor of the Year), **Helen Williams** (Support/Service Staff Member of the Year) and **Abby Monk** from the Department of History and Welsh History (Postgraduate Teacher of the Year).

Department of Psychology Lifelong Learning Tutor, **Anna Udalowska**, won the Aberystwyth University Exemplary Course Award 2023 for her module 'The Science of Wellbeing'. Highly commended in this year's competition were: **Dr Alexander Taylor** from the Department of Psychology for the module 'Behavioural Neuroscience'; **Dr Kathy Hampson** from the Department of Law and Criminology for the module 'Youth Crime and Justice'; **Dr Lara Kipp** from the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies for the module 'Contemporary Drama' and **Panna Karlinger** from the School of Education for the module 'Making Sense of the Curriculum'.

The Aberystwyth University annual Award for Exceptional Research Impact in the Arts and Social Sciences was presented to **Professor Ryszard Piotrowicz** from the Department of Law & Criminology for his outstanding work on human trafficking regulation law and policy. The Award for Exceptional Research Impact in Science was presented to **Michael Christie**, Professor of Environmental and Ecological Economics at Aberystwyth Business School for his contribution to a landmark report for the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

Professor Qiang Shen, Pro Vice-Chancellor and a world-leading researcher in computational intelligence, is to receive the 2024 Fuzzy Systems Pioneer Award at the IEEE Computational Intelligence Society's World Congress.

Three Aberystwyth academics were elected as Fellows of the Learned Society of Wales in 2023: **Professor Andy Evans**, Head of the University's Physics Department, Professor of Biology **Hazel Davey** and Professor of Physical Geography and Director of Research Excellence and Impact, **Helen Roberts**.

Rhys Jones, Professor of Human Geography in the Department of Geography & Earth Sciences has been elected as Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences.

Dr Patricia Shaw, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Computer Science, won the UK Robotics and Autonomous Systems Community Award 2023.

Mererid Hopwood, Professor of Welsh and Celtic Studies, was the winner of the 2023 Hay Festival Medal for Poetry. Lecturer in Creative Writing (Department of Welsh and Celtic Studies) and award-winning poet, **Eurig Salisbury**, has been appointed as Aberystwyth's first ever Town Bard (Bardd y Dref).

At the University's 2023 Welsh Language Awards, **Kate Barber** and **Dr Martine Garland** were awarded Exceptional Learner awards, **Abigail Crook** won the Promoting Welsh in the Workplace award and **Professor Elizabeth Treasure** was awarded the Panel's Special Award for her key support to the Welsh language during her term as Vice-Chancellor.

Alumni

Sue Crowley, who is Somerset's long-serving libraries manager, was awarded an MBE in the New Year Honours List 2023 for her contribution to public library services.

Congratulations to alumna **Caryl Lewis** (MA Writing: Process and Practice, 2001) whose novel, *DRIFT*, was the inaugural Waterstones Welsh Book of the Year 2022.

Ernie Richards (Agriculture with Animal Science, 2015) was announced winner of the NFU Cymru/NFU Mutual Welsh Livestock Champion of the Year Award 2022.

Katie-Rose Davies (Agriculture, 2012) won the NFU Cymru/NFU Mutual Wales Woman Farmer of the Year Award 2023.

Siôn Eilir Roberts (Agriculture, 2017) won the New Auctioneer of the Year Award at the *Farmers Guardian* Marts the Heart Awards 2022

Llio Rhydderch (Welsh, 1960), who is recognised as the foremost exponent of the Welsh Triple Harp, received an Honorary Fellowship of Bangor University for her services to Music.

Congratulations to **Octavia Madden** (Fine Art, 2023) on winning the Thelma Hulbert Gallery Visitors' Choice Prize 2023 for her artwork featuring Aberystwyth - 'Colour of the Harbour'.

Alumni events and reunions

Every year we host a variety of on campus, UK wide and international events. These events provide fantastic opportunities to reconnect with old friends, expand your network of 'Aber alumni' and to get updated on recent University developments.

Old Students' Association Reunion June 2023

Alumni, friends, supporters, staff, and students came together to celebrate both the University's 150th and the Old Students' Association 130th anniversaries. This was a wonderful chance to mark milestones, reminisce with old friends and catch up with new developments in a weekend full of nostalgia.



The National Eisteddfod Llŷn and Eifonydd August 2023

Following a successful application to the 'JDR and Gwyneth Thomas' Fund by a team of students from the Department of Life Sciences, Gwen Jenkins,

Tara Taylor, Mari Thomas and Lloyd Warburton, a science exhibition was organised at the National Eisteddfod in Boduan.



The students held scientific workshops in the Eisteddfod's Science Village which included creating microbes and viruses, population immunity activity on the use of vaccinations, as well as showcasing the University's research work. There was also an opportunity to discuss research and learning within the department with Vaughan Gething MS, Minister for the Economy, Welsh Government.

It was a pleasure to meet the family of Professor Ron Thomas, his daughter Gaenor Taffinder and his granddaughter Rhiannon. JDR established the fund in memory of his parents, after his father studied Agriculture in Aber over a century ago.



Founders' Day

■ Aberystwyth October 2023

Our Founder's Day events began with the traditional "kick the bar" procession on the Promenade followed by a celebratory breakfast on Penglais Campus. The annual event commemorates the day Principal Thomas Charles Edwards welcomed the first 25 students to the Old College in October 1872.



■ Cardiff October 2023

Alumni and supporters continued the Founder's Day celebrations at the Norwegian Church, Cardiff Bay in the company of guest speaker, and alumnus, Meri Huws.



Malaysia December 2023

We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of our alumni and friends who attended our reception at the Kuala Lumpur Golf and Country Club. This was a great opportunity to share memories and reminisce. Thank you to the Alumni Club of Malaysia for their continued support.

With over 100,000 alumni living all over the world - the Development and Alumni Relations team is here to help you stay in touch with each other. If you are thinking of organising a reunion, we can support you by helping you contact lost friends.

We'd love to hear from you and help put you in touch.
alumni@aber.ac.uk

With a little help from our friends.

This will be old news to many readers but, back in 2015, we were alerted to a postcard for sale on eBay. Its connection to the University meant that we just had to buy it.

There wasn't a specific archives budget, so we quickly set up a fund with contributions from a few colleagues. In the event, the photo postcard of Iris de Freitas only cost around £13 plus postage. Nevertheless, the archives fund was born. It's been ticking along ever since, thanks to generous colleagues and alumni, plus occasional fees for the University Archivist-for-hire giving talks to local groups.

The fund has given us a helping hand to look after our collections and to ensure we can make them accessible for future generations.

We use any donations to carry out conservation work, by repairing damaged or fragile items; to preserve items, by buying appropriate protective packaging; and sometimes to buy relevant items to add to the collection. We'd like to show you some examples.

We were able to fund conservation work by National Library colleagues on our League of Nations Union Congress photograph; repairing and packaging the original so it can be safely handled and creating a digital and physical copy.



Penang Congress - 1

LNU Societies

Advertising the

We've also been able to preserve existing collections. Until recently, I'd always thought that the records of the Welsh Agricultural College (which merged with the then University of Wales Aberystwyth in 1995) had been lost. That was proved last year not to be the case, thanks to the good auspices of staff that joined the University from WAC.

We were able to retrieve the material from Edward Llwyd, move it to the archive in Gogerddan, and think about getting it into some semblance of order. Timely, as the Department of Information Studies came knocking, looking for a cataloguing project for their Archives and Records Management students. It's a project that forms an important part of the professional course, and it's great to be able to use an in-house collection.

The students costed the archival packaging and finished their project with a completed catalogue and a tidy-looking collection.



We've also been able to make purchases, like this Students' Union photo album from the 1966-67 session. The album illustrates the academic, sporting and social life of mid-60s Aber students. How it ever left Aber, who knows.



The fund also enabled us to enter the exciting world of bidding at a 'proper' auction. Advertising an event at the Great Hall in the University's centenary year, organised by the Students' Union's events committee, this David Bowie poster was for sale in a Sheffield auction house. A great memento of the days before 'The Most Beautiful Person In The World' became too expensive a booking for Aber.

We couldn't do what we do without the support of friends and colleagues. Financial assistance is great, but just as important is people looking after records and objects, flagging things they think should be with us, and drawing our attention to things that are for sale.

MY DETAILS

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If you would like to support the University in a different way,
please contact us on 01970 621568 to discuss in further detail

Thank you!

WAYS TO DONATE



You can also donate online at:
alumni.aber.ac.uk/en/donate



Donate by phone: 01970 621568



Please send your donation form to us at our address:

Development and Alumni Relations Office, Aberystwyth University
P.O. Box 2, Aberystwyth. SY23 2AX

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