

ABER *News*

Construction gets underway on green energy project

Work has begun on the installation of a new solar array that will generate green electricity for the University.

The £2.9m investment will provide up to 25 per cent of the annual electricity needs of the Penglais Campus and reduce the University's carbon emissions by just over 500 tonnes annually, and up to 12,000 tonnes over its anticipated 25-year working life.

Covering an area of 3.8 hectares of University owned land on Fferm Penglais, the new array will feature more than 4,500 individual solar panels and is scheduled to be fully operational by the end of July 2022.

The electricity generated is expected to reduce annual energy-related emissions by 8 per cent across the University's entire energy portfolio

(gas and electricity) and contribute to fulfilling the University's objective of a zero-carbon estate by 2030/31.

At a time of rising energy costs, the project is expected to deliver financial savings of over £325,000 per annum and over £13m over the lifetime of the project.

Expected to be carbon neutral within the first few years of its working life, construction on the site will also include work to encourage greater biodiversity in surrounding hedgerows. Once fully operational, sheep will continue to graze the pasture around the panels.

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Aberystwyth academics join expert panels setting higher education standards

Three Aberystwyth University academics have been appointed to expert panels which help set the standards and content of higher education courses across the UK.



Dr Louise Marshall, Dr Gareth Hall, and Dr Jenny Mathers

Dr Louise Marshall (Department of English and Creative Writing), Dr Gareth Hall (Department of Psychology) and Dr Jenny Mathers (Department of International Politics) have been appointed members of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) advisory groups, which ensure standards in higher education are upheld.

The QAA is an independent body which monitors and advises on standards and quality in higher education across the UK. It leads the development of Subject Benchmark Statements which describe the nature of study and the academic standards

expected of graduates in specific subject areas. They show what graduates might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their studies, and are used in the design, delivery and review of academic programmes.

Each statement is reviewed regularly by an advisory group, including members of the academic community, employers, professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, and students. In 2022 the QAA is reviewing Subject Benchmark Statements for 13 subjects.

[Read the full story here.](#)

University supports grass roots rugby

The University has announced a new sponsorship deal to support grass roots rugby in the local community.

The new three-year deal will see the University support Aberystwyth RFC as shirt sponsor for the club's Youth and recently relaunched Athletic teams.

Established in 1947 Aberystwyth RFC celebrates its 75th anniversary this year. The club has more than 270 playing members playing at all ages from the Under 7's to the first team, which is enjoying another highly successful season in the Welsh Rugby Union's League 1 West.

The support for Aberystwyth RFC builds on the Rugby Hub Officer partnership established by the University and the Welsh Rugby Union.

Based in the University's Sports Centre, the role promotes the



Pictured are Nerys Hywel, Club Chair receiving the new Aberystwyth RFC Athletic and Youth team shirts from Professor Tim Woods, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Learning, Teaching and Student Experience, along with coaches and players

development of rugby within the University as well as local clubs and schools, and encourages students to forge links with community clubs.

The post is currently held by former Scarlets Academy, Wales Under 20 and Aberystwyth RFC player Lewis Ellis-Jones who plays semi-professional level rugby with Swansea RFC.

[Read the full story here.](#)

The Vice-Chancellor's Column

Here at Aberystwyth, we are proud to be an international community, and I begin this column by reiterating my full support for all those affected by the terrible events in Ukraine. Members of our University community who have close personal connections with Ukraine have our full support and sympathies. This support is also extended to our students and staff from Russia during a conflict which is not of their making. As friends and colleagues, I know that we will continue to demonstrate the kindness and supportiveness that characterises the wonderful Aberystwyth community that we are all a part of.

As you're aware, we have now been living with COVID-19 for two years. I am pleased to report that, despite all the challenges that the pandemic has brought, as a University we've succeeded in achieving a great deal since the original lockdown in March 2020. This is thanks to the amazing efforts of staff across the institution. We've continued to make progress financially, we've made improvements in student recruitment, we've taken some big strategic steps forward, and we've forged ahead with major capital projects. There is a lot more progress to make of course, but we are now able to do so based on the solid foundations we have worked so hard to put in place.

Looking at recruitment, we currently have the highest number of student applications in five years, with all but a handful of departments having seen an increase on last year's numbers. We have seen good growth in the number of UK applicants, which has more than made up for the EU students we used to have. International students are also on track, and as things stand, with an effective push on turning those applications into registrations, we will have a solid intake of students in September.

Last month we received the welcome news that HEFCW has received additional revenue funding from Covid Reserves to support activities to help institutions in managing the impacts of the pandemic - this funding is to be primarily used to assist the transition to net zero and digital transformation, but also includes important additional QR (Quality-Related) funding for research.

There have been a number of developments with our major capital projects. Work has just begun on the array of solar panels adjacent to Fferm Penglais, a key element of our plans to be carbon neutral by 2030/31. The panels, which will be operational by the summer, will generate 25% of the electricity required for Penglais Campus and save the University £325,000 a year in electricity costs (see p.1).

It was really exciting to handover the ceremonial key to the Old College to our principal building contractors for the project, Andrew Scott Ltd, in January and I look forward to seeing this excellent project coming to fruition. The vast majority of the funding for this £36m project has now been secured, including £1.2m from the Old College Appeal. A new phase of fundraising has now begun, which will run until summer 2024. Every pound raised will reduce the amount that has to come from University resources (see p.6-7).



We continue to address matters raised by the Staff Survey. Almost all Heads of Department have now had a dialogue with their staff to discuss the issues highlighted from their team's responses, and I am grateful to them for returning their departmental plans addressing these. Senior colleagues are particularly looking at four areas which scored low - rewards and recognition, wellbeing, employee voice, and opportunities for career development. Just a few examples of some of the initiatives that have already begun - we've launched our Individual Contribution Award scheme which allows staff to be recognised for their exceptional performance and contribution to the University, we have introduced a raft of management development training opportunities for line managers, and we are in the process of producing a Secondment Policy for the University.

I've also been doing a round of really helpful visits to departments in recent weeks, and I am grateful to all the staff that have taken the time to update me on what is happening in their discipline nationally and internationally, share things that they are proud of, and tell me things that they think I need to be aware of. These visits have also given staff the opportunity to ask me questions, and there are common themes emerging which are proving very useful.

Another visit I recently made was to the University farms where I saw the very impressive automated robotic milking system in action, and learnt that no fewer than 123 sets of lamb triplets are expected!

I am very grateful to those staff who have been working on campus since the start of the academic year - teaching our students, keeping our catering facilities running, and keeping the campus looking clean and tidy. It's been lovely to be able to gradually welcome back more professional service staff to campus over the past few weeks, following the relaxing of the Welsh Government's work from home rules, and to see campus looking more vibrant once again. Don't forget you can use the £10 which was added to your Aber Card as a small thank you to buy a coffee, a meal, or a sports class on the campus.

Professor Elizabeth Treasure
Vice-Chancellor

Aber Creative Writing graduate tops UK fiction bestsellers list

An Aberystwyth University Creative Writing graduate has topped *The Sunday Times* Bestseller List with her debut novel.

Just days after its release, Susan Stokes-Chapman's *Pandora* became the number one bestselling hardback fiction book in the UK, toppling Richard Osman's *The Man Who Died Twice*.

Born and brought up in Lichfield, Staffordshire, Susan spent four years studying at Aberystwyth University, graduating with a BA in Education & English Literature and an MA in Creative Writing.

Responding to the news, Susan said: "I am absolutely blown away by the response to *Pandora*, and never imagined the novel would be so well received. To take top spot in *The Sunday Times* Bestseller list after only three days of publication is extraordinary, and I couldn't be more thrilled (or overwhelmed)!"

"My time at Aberystwyth's English & Creative Writing Department has been so influential to my writing journey - the MA enhanced my love of literature, equipping me with technical and editorial skills which I've never forgotten, and my

tutors were so supportive and friendly throughout. It was during my degree that I had the inspiration for my first novel, and though that story has since been shelved, I would never have learnt how to write without it. Now, to achieve success with *Pandora* as a result, it is simply amazing."

Professor Richard Marggraf Turley from the Department of English and Creative Writing at Aberystwyth University said: "Susan's fascination with the dark corners of Georgian London was already evident as an undergraduate at Aberystwyth, and her passion for the period took fire during her Creative Writing MA. With *Pandora*, she's pulled off that enviable trick of combining meticulous historical research with a rattling good story to produce a novel that's quite simply unputdownable! We're incredibly proud of her success. She joins a long list of former students who have gone on to produce acclaimed work."

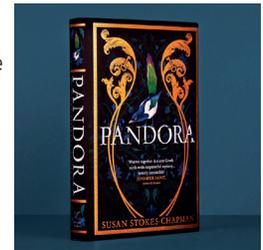
Set in London in 1799, *Pandora* is a loose reinterpretation of the Greek myth Pandora's Box, intertwined with



Susan Stokes-Chapman ©Jamie Drew

themes of secrets and deception, love and fulfilment, fate and hope. The book tells the story of aspiring jewellery artist Dora Blake and her encounter with an ancient vase that her tyrannical uncle is desperately keen to keep a secret.

Pandora was shortlisted for the Lucy Cavendish Fiction Prize 2020 and longlisted for the Bath Novel Award the same year.



[Read the full story here.](#)

Department of Welsh and Celtic Studies students sweep the board at the Intercollegiate Eisteddfod

Students from the Department of Welsh and Celtic Studies achieved remarkable success at the Intercollegiate Eisteddfod held in Bangor on 5 March 2022, winning both key literary prizes.

Twm Ebbsworth, a Creative Writing postgraduate student from Llanwnnen near Lampeter, was presented with the prestigious Crown for his prose composition of no more than 5000 words in response to 'Sea'. A regular Eisteddfod-winner, Twm has previously been awarded the Chair and the Crown at Ceredigion Young Farmers' Clubs and Intercollegiate Eisteddfodau. Fellow Welsh and Celtic Studies undergraduate, Lowri Bebb, was awarded third place in the competition for the Crown.

The coveted Eisteddfod Chair was won by third year Welsh and International Politics student Tomos Lynch from Bangor, who is studying a Creative Writing module in the Department of



Twm Ebbsworth and Tomos Lynch. Photos: Ifan James

Welsh and Celtic Studies. The Chair competition saw entrants composing a poem, in free verse or in the strict metres, of no more than 100 lines in response to 'Mountain'. Crown-winner Twm Ebbsworth was runner-up in the competition for the Chair.

The success of Aberystwyth University students in this year's Intercollegiate Eisteddfod was not limited to the field of literature. Trystan Gwyn, a third year Geography and Earth Sciences undergraduate was the winner of the Science medal. Emily Ellis, a second year History and Welsh History undergraduate, was awarded the Arts Medal.

[Read the full story here.](#)

Alligator's mating call helps solve one of astrophysics' oldest problems

The centuries-old mystery of why jets of plasma up to more than 10,000 kilometres high are shot from the solar surface of the Sun has been solved in a paper in *Nature Physics* co-written by Dr Marianna Korsós from the Department of Physics.



Its answer can be explained with the help of looking at how male alligators attract mates by bellowing bass frequencies.

These jets, or spicules, were first discovered in the 19th century by the Italian astronomer Angelo Secchi. They look like a forest of hairs dancing on the sun when looked through a telescope but are actually narrow but long jets of plasma shot up at tremendous speed. Up to three million of them can form at any one time on the surface of the sun.

The physical effect of jets being shot up in this way is known as the Faraday excitation, named after the English physicist who discovered it in the early 18th century.

An example of this phenomenon that happens on Earth is the mating displays of male alligators. They submerge their necks and bellow at bass frequencies, causing jets of water to dance above the surface of the water.

Spicules' presence may solve a long-standing mystery in solar physics: why the solar atmosphere is hundreds of times hotter than the surface of the sun – a million degrees Kelvin compared to 6,000 degrees Kelvin – even though it is a considerable distance from the main energy source.

In a paper published by *Nature Physics*, a team of researchers, including Dr Marianna Korsós from the Department of Physics, analysed data taken from the IRIS spacecraft using advanced processing techniques and found that spicules are launched because of convection.

In the Sun's interior, parcels of hot gas rise to the surface, cool off and then descend. This convection is like how boiling water acts and produces sound waves that spread throughout the Sun, causing it to vibrate.

This action is what 'kicks' the spicules into the solar atmosphere. These jets can stretch between 4,000 and 12,000 kilometres in height and between 300 and 1,100 kilometres in width.

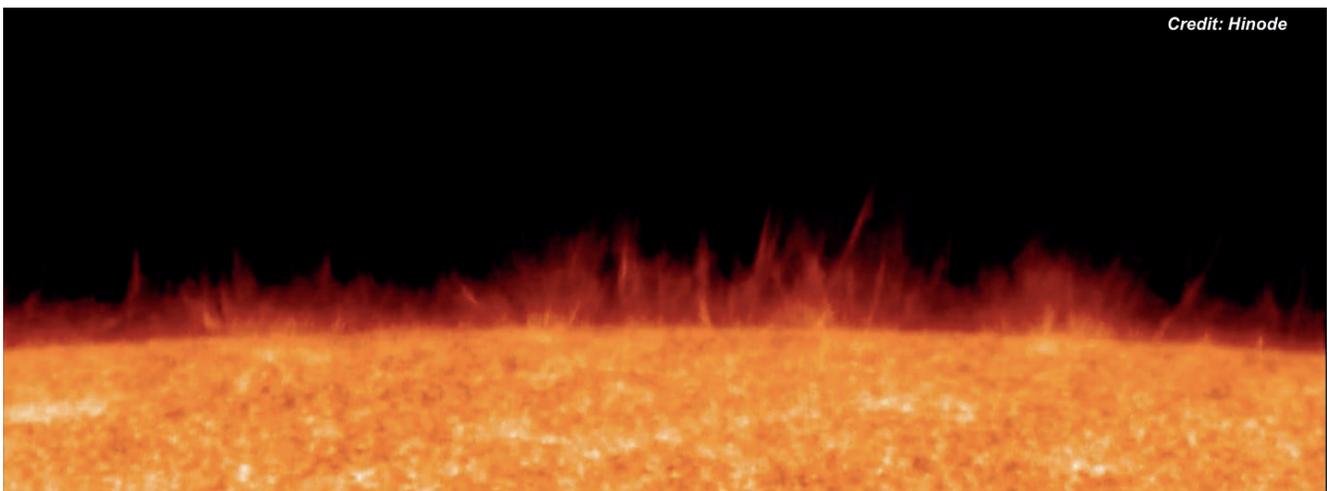
Dr Marianna Korsós said: "The results shed light on one of solar physics' most vexing problems. For decades, physicists have been trying to work out what is responsible for heating the solar atmosphere to such extreme temperatures.

"Spicules, which are among the most visually quirky of the Sun's characteristics, could be one of the elements responsible for that heating process. Because of our research we now understand what causes them and why so many exist on the Sun's surface.

"However, what fascinates solar physicists is that there is still a lot about spicules that we don't know, such as how much energy they generate. This research gives us a strong foundation on which we can further explore this strange facet of the Sun."

Dr Korsós's research was funded by the Science and Technology Facilities Council.

Credit: Hinode



Old College construction company announced as final fundraising push launched

Ambitious plans to bring new life to Old College took a major step forward recently, with the announcement of the project's principal building contractor.

Andrew Scott Ltd

Port Talbot based Andrew Scott Ltd will take on the challenge of transforming one of Wales's outstanding Grade 1 listed buildings, and home to Wales' first University College, into a major centre for learning, heritage, culture and enterprise.

The company has now taken over the site and will begin work on the project as soon as all necessary preparatory steps are completed.

The appointment of Andrew Scott Ltd marks the beginning of the construction phase on the project which will represent a £36m investment in the iconic Aberystwyth landmark.

Mark Bowen, Managing Director of Andrew Scott Ltd, said: "We are exceptionally proud to be undertaking the historic restoration of the prestigious Old College in partnership with Aberystwyth University. As the original home for the University, the Old College is one of Wales' most important cultural buildings and we are committed to ensuring its legacy is continued whilst bringing new life to the building.

"This project represents a landmark investment in Aberystwyth with a once in a lifetime opportunity to improve construction and heritage skills within the region, whilst maximising the scope for upskilling in green and sustainable technologies. As such, Andrew Scott Ltd are wholly committed to creating long-term sustainable employment opportunities for people living in Aberystwyth and the wider Ceredigion region by ensuring the project maximises the social impact of capital investment directly into the local community, via our social value policy of sustainable local procurement and employment."

Construction work on the project is expected to be completed in the summer of 2024.

The Old College Key

To mark the awarding of the construction contract for the Old College project to Andrew Scott Ltd, the University commissioned a key made of Welsh oak by Llandeilo based carpentry business Pedair Cainc, established by Aberystwyth University alumnus Geraint Edwards.

Geraint graduated from the Welsh and Celtic Studies Department in 2008 and was based in Old College during his time as a student. He is also a former President of UMCA - Undeb Myfyrwyr Cymraeg Aberystwyth.



Geraint Edwards

Measuring just over a metre in length, the key features the skyline of the Old College cut as notches into the blade, and the University crest on the head.

The key represents the handover of the site to Andrew Scott Ltd for the construction phase of the project. It will be presented back to the University to mark the completion of the construction work.



Presentation of the Old College key: Professor Elizabeth Treasure presents the Old College key to Mark Bowen, Managing Director of Andrew Scott Ltd in the company of Rachel Barwise, Aberystwyth University Students Union, Stephen Lawrence, Former President of Aberystwyth University Old Students Association and Jim O'Rourke, Old College Project Manager.

Fundraising

The University has already secured the vast majority of the funding for the project, and the appointment of the construction company marks the launch of the Old College funding campaign's final phase.

The project has received significant financial backing from The National Lottery Heritage Fund along with funding from Welsh Government, the European Regional Development Fund, The National Lottery Community Fund, the Coastal Communities Fund, the Garfield Weston Foundation, the Wolfson Foundation, the Joy Welch Educational Charitable Trust, the Foyle Foundation and the Gwendoline and Margaret Davies Charity.

Over £1.2m has also been raised from generous donations by individuals and groups in response to the international Old College appeal, the University's most ambitious appeal since it was founded in 1872.

The final phase of the appeal will run until the summer of 2024, and the funds raised will enable the University to realise the full potential of this ambitious and exciting project for the benefit of students, staff and the wider community.

To accompany the final phase of the fundraising campaign, the Old College team has produced a **new video** that features current and former students, and representatives from the community.

Further information about how to contribute to the Old College Appeal is available online www.aber.ac.uk/appeal.

New Life for Old College

Once completed, the Old College will provide a major centre for learning, heritage, culture and enterprise in three themed zones: World of Knowledge, Culture and Community, and Enterprise and Innovation.

Inspired by the University's motto, World of Knowledge will include a centre celebrating pioneering Science and Research, a University Museum, a Young People's project to provide opportunities to boost skills and aspirations and wellbeing, a 24-7 student study centre and a cutting-edge cinema facility.



Traditionally the beating heart of the Old College, the Quad will provide the focus for the Community and Culture zone's exhibition galleries that will feature curated displays from the University collections and touring exhibitions from major partners. This zone also includes the UK's first Centre for Dialogue.



The Enterprise and Innovation zone will provide 12 Creative Business Units and communal spaces to encourage young entrepreneurs in creative and digital businesses, two fast growing sectors of major economic importance to west Wales.



There will also be a new public entrance through the Georgian Villas of 1 and 2 New Promenade, a new function room for up to 200 guests with magnificent views out over Cardigan Bay, and 4* hotel accommodation.



In all, the redevelopment will provide spaces for activities and events across 7 floors and 143 rooms, including 10 rooms with capacity ranging from 60 and up to 200 people, and is expected to attract 200,000 visitors annually.

My Research

Originally from Canada, Clare Church received her Bachelor of Arts in History and Political Science from the University of Waterloo and attained her Master's in International Relations and Journalism from New York University. She came to Aberystwyth in 2020, where she is now conducting her doctoral research within the Department of History and Welsh History. Her dissertation focuses on wartime musicians, specifically exploring the role of female singers throughout the Second World War.



Clare Church

After months of relentless fighting over Monte Cassino, the Allied forces finally broke through the German line of defences on 18 May 1944. The cost of success was high and casualties were plenty; more than 55,000 Allied and 20,000 German soldiers were killed or wounded at the Italian monastery. In the battle's aftermath, medical officers from both sides navigated the war-torn landscape to care for the wounded. For the most part, the opposing medics averted their gaze from the enemy. Better instead to keep their eyes down and manage the job at hand.

In the midst of the destruction, the sounds of a nearby radio crackled through and disturbed the silence. "Outside the barracks, by the corner light," a husky-voiced woman sang, "I always stand and wait for you at night." The voice of Marlene Dietrich crooning her celebrated *Lili Marleen* halted the survivors in their tracks, be they friend or foe. For a few short minutes, the field of enemies transformed into an avid audience. Having fought against one another only the day prior, the listeners paused to experience a moment of collective nostalgia and longing for better times.

This scene was described vividly in the memoir of Reginal Rolfe, who served with the Royal Army Medical Corps throughout the Second World War. Indeed, many other former Second World War servicepeople - in their memoirs and post-war oral history interviews - comment on the fundamental power of music to unite and inspire in what was a harrowing time. What's more, the music itself remains solidly in the memory of the interviewees; even eighty years later, many can still evoke the lyrics word for word.



Marlene Dietrich performs for the NBC radio network Monitor.



German soldiers rest in a courtyard during the Battle of Monte Cassino © IWM MH 6377

Women were often the faces and voices of this music. The song *Le Chant des Partisans* written by Anna Marly, for example, became the unofficial anthem of the French Resistance, defining an otherwise disjointed movement. Vera Lynn's *The White Cliffs of Dover* quickly became a central tenet of wartime entertainment for the British forces and is often hailed for its part in encouraging the United States to join the war. Even the Andrews Sisters' *Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy* has persisted as a key staple within the popular memory of America at war.

And while women - including Marlene Dietrich, Anna Marly, Vera Lynn, and the Andrews Sisters - were frequently the faces and voices of wartime music, their prominence in the ongoing historical narrative is nominal. Instead, common narratives of the World Wars tend to adopt a male, militaristic approach, rather than looking to the valuable, yet underrepresented achievements of women.

My doctoral research seeks to redress this disparity, by once more amplifying the voices of the Second World War's chanteuses. By investigating their songs, roles, and performed identities, I aim to provide new insights into the subject of wartime music, focusing in on themes of national identity, morale, and femininity. Through the use of archival material, oral history interviews, and memoirs, I strive to highlight women's wartime accomplishments in music and entertainment, the representations of gender embodied in their performances, and their reception from both military and civilian audiences - during the Second World War and since.

In so doing, this research will comment on the capacity of music to unify and inspire during wartime, and indeed the foundational role of women in this very endeavour. Women are our storytellers, via the medium of music or otherwise. In historical moments of adversity, perhaps it is more important than ever to listen to what they have to say.



Vera Lynn croons to munitions workers in Britain © IWM P 551

Digital Strategy 2021-2025

The University has published a new Digital Strategy, outlining our future direction in all things digital.

Building on previous strategies and aligned with the University's Strategic Plan 2018-2023, the new Digital Strategy aims to empower staff and students through digital technology and information.

It has been shaped over the past few years in consultation with staff and students, and revised in 2021 in light of the global pandemic.

The Vision:

The vision of the Digital Strategy is to transform Aberystwyth University into a sector-leading digital organisation.

Tim Davies, Director of Information Services and creator of the strategy, explains: "The University cannot afford to be complacent; it needs to be technologically engaged and move forward on a path of greater digital maturity.

"The overall purpose of the strategy is to place the University on a strong footing to respond proactively to wider digital and societal trends, the rapidly changing technological environment, and ultimately to be successful in achieving its objectives through digital transformation".

Implementing the strategy:

Four pillars have been identified as specific functional areas for digital development and enhancement. They are:

- Deliver an excellent learning, teaching and student experience
- Support research and innovation excellence
- Streamline and modernise our administrative processes
- Enhance our digital presence.



In each of these areas we will utilise digital to increase efficiency, improve quality, support the development of new business models, markets and/or funding streams.

The pillars are underpinned by four cross-cutting themes: digital skills; cyber security; digital infrastructure and digital workplace.

The **full strategy** is publicly available on our website, and demonstrates how the pillars mentioned above will deliver the strategic objectives. It also lists the guiding principles which will guide all digital initiatives.





Dr Sioned Llywelyn

New project to develop student and staff digital capabilities

In summer 2021, the University launched the Digital Capabilities Project, which gives students and staff the chance to assess and develop their digital capabilities.

Dr Sioned Llywelyn is the Digital Capabilities Officer and co-ordinates the project. We invited her to tell us more about it:

What is the Digital Capabilities Project?

The Digital Capabilities Project, which was established in August 2021, is managed by the Academic Engagement team in Information Services. It aims to offer an array of services to students and staff to help them assess, plan and develop their digital capabilities, contributing to the aims of the University's new [Digital Strategy 2021-2025](#).

What are Digital Capabilities?

Digital capabilities are the skills, knowledge and practices that equip us to live, learn and work safely and effectively in a digital society.

The project closely follows Jisc's Digital Capabilities framework and will aim to assess and develop the digital capabilities of both staff and students across all elements of the framework - including presenting information, solving problems, communicating online and understanding how to build a healthy relationship with technology.

Visit the [Digital Capabilities WordPress site](#) to learn more about digital capabilities.

Why should we develop our Digital Capabilities?

As a result of the pandemic, the time that most of us spend online has increased significantly - through working, learning, teaching, and interacting with others online. We are also increasingly seeing current technologies being replaced by more advanced ones.

Being digitally capable and confident is important for both students and staff, to ensure that they can navigate through a constantly evolving digital society, to be able to succeed in the workplace and to compete successfully for future employment.

Resources to support the project

The University has licenced two resources, for an initial period of 3 years, which will support the development of the project.

The first is the **Jisc Digital Discovery Tool**, a bilingual resource which enables students and staff to self-assess their digital capabilities, allowing them to identify those areas in which they are already proficient and those areas in

which they require some development.

After answering a series of questions, which takes around 15-20 minutes, the user will receive a bespoke report, providing an overview of their digital profile. This will include suggested actions to take and links to useful resources, which will support the development of each individual capability. We are currently trialling the Digital Discovery Tool with groups of students and staff and the resource will soon be made available to all.

Another resource which is now free to all staff and students is **LinkedIn Learning**, an online learning platform which has an extensive library of expert-led online courses and short videos on digital, business and creative skills. Once the user has identified any areas for development through the Digital Discovery Tool, LinkedIn Learning offers a huge variety of courses, allowing them to learn at their own pace. Visit the [LinkedIn Learning webpage](#) to learn more about the platform and how to activate your account.

Keeping up to date

To keep up to date with the project, please subscribe to the new [Digital Capabilities WordPress site](#).

If you have any general questions about the project and these resources, please get in touch - digi@aber.ac.uk

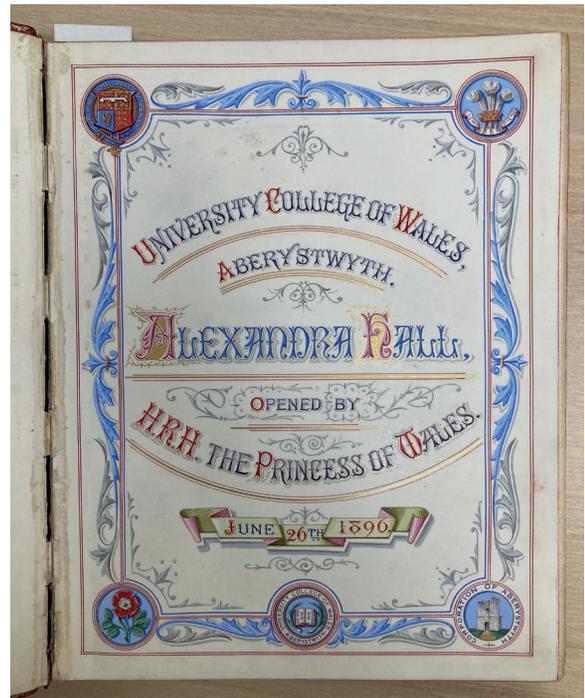
KEEZLE WACKA

As regular readers of *ABER News* will know, every now and then, we invite the University's Information Governance Manager, Julie Archer, to write a column providing us with a glimpse of some of the marvellous gems that have been preserved in the University archive.

It is often the case that, in looking for something in the archive for one purpose, you uncover something entirely different. And so it was when searching for a suitable object to represent the story of Alexandra Hall in the University's forthcoming 150th anniversary publication. An ornate hostel key, perhaps? Beautiful, yes, but commemorating the men's, rather than women's, hostel. Early 20th-century correspondence around complaints over food and conditions? Fascinating, but not necessarily aesthetically pleasing objects in themselves.

What about an autograph book? Worthy of further investigation, at least. A plain volume, it turns out to contain a pretty, coloured title page, noting the date in 1896 the hall was opened by Princess Alexandra.

Unsurprisingly, it opens with the signatures of the hall's namesake and her family, including her husband, Prince Edward, who was invested as the Chancellor of the University of Wales on the same day. Their grandson, Edward (later King Edward VIII), appears next, on the day of the unveiling of his statue outside the Old College in 1923. But it's not the royalty, nor the political figures (not even Gladstone) and their ilk that really caught my eye, but those 'ordinary' names that are woven throughout the University's history.



Louise Patrick, our first woman student; early staff like Florence Nellie Vobes, Lilian Winstanley, Lucie Barbier, Kathleen Zimmerman (who changed her name to Carpenter in 1914); long-serving giants of the college like Fleure, Ethé, J. Mortimer Angus. All have become familiar, and their presence here makes me smile, adding more depth to what we know about their lives in Aber.

Lists of signatures, some with an accompanying date, certainly merit further research as to what was happening at that time to warrant a visit to Alex Hall and a signature in its book. What occasion on 9 April 1915 could have brought together the Shaxby family, including a daughter aged 4 1/4 years old, the Fleures, mother, professor father and daughter, and the afore-mentioned Florence Nellie (now James, by virtue of her marriage to Chemistry professor T Campbell James), accompanied by 'Marjorie E C James (8 1/2 months!)?

Without context, they are intriguing, if not immediately illuminating. Both, though, are true for other entries, which include not only dates, but actual events or groups, until the book's last entries fifty years later in 1947.

And so it is that we find that in 1916 the hall had its own VAD, or Voluntary Aid Detachment, commanded by Miss C P Tremain, that the hall hosted Eisteddfod visitors, summer schools, hygiene and sanitation examinations, the College's jubilee celebrations, a missionary conference, a Czech musical trio,

numerous national conferences and more. It is a veritable who's who and what's what of significant people and events involving Aberystwyth and the College.

In terms of significance, it wasn't too often that an event of international reach and importance made its way to Aberystwyth, but two such events stood out in the book. Firstly, I was excited to spot the heading of 'Tenth Plenary Congress of the International Federation of League of Nations Societies, Aberystwyth, 1926'. Four pages of signatures and countries follow. Nowhere near all the delegates for David Davies' last-minute-substitute-for-Dresden congress, but perhaps these are the "about 60 foreign delegates" the Senior Warden, Mrs Guthkelch, agreed to accommodate?

Secondly, the International Grassland Congress began as a small group of researchers in Europe in 1927. By its own admission, "it was not until the IV Congress in 1937 at Aberystwyth ... that the meeting could claim a global constituency". Six pages of signatures and countries hint at the 37 countries represented by the 365 participants, under R. G. Stapledon's leadership.

Hopefully, happy accidents such as this can inform those whose research covers these topics or individuals. We can't claim to know the significance of every piece of information in the archive, but we usually know someone who can.

The University Archive has moved from the Old College to the Lord Milford Building, Gogerddan. The reading room is now open, by appointment only. Contact archives@aber.ac.uk if you'd like to consult material, or if you have an enquiry.

Gwenallt objects and manuscripts presented

The family of one of Wales' most renowned writers has presented a selection of his manuscripts and personal belongings to the University.

Amongst the items belonging to Gwenallt (David James Jones) are the prison badge he wore and the books he had at Dartmoor when he was imprisoned for being a conscientious objector during the First World War.

Also included in the collection are his pen and ink bottle, his glasses and his "UCW Aberystwyth" glasses case from when he worked in the University's Welsh Department (1927-1966).

The manuscripts include lecture notes, personal letters and a diary of his trip to Jerusalem - which led to the compilation of his famous poem *Y Coed*.

There are also materials kept by his widow, Nel Gwenallt, including radio presentations, tributes and a Rock Opera, all recording the poet's life and work.

The objects and manuscripts were donated to the Department where he was a student and lecturer by his granddaughter, Elin Gwenallt Jones, who lives in Ceredigion.

To ensure that researchers from all over have access to the manuscripts, they are presented to the National Library.



Elin Gwenallt Jones and Lowri Mair Saunders, Gwenallt's granddaughter and great great granddaughter, with Professor Mererid Hopwood from the Department of Welsh and Celtic Studies (left)

The objects will be used by Departmental staff and students for research and teaching purposes.

Mererid Hopwood, Professor of Welsh and Celtic Studies, said: "Many of our students have studied Gwenallt's work at school before coming to us, but being able to share these objects with them, and show the poet's handwriting, brings a special significance to the words. The new archive certainly requires in-depth scholarly analysis, and we are most grateful to Elin and the family for this generous donation."

The objects will be kept in the Department with the intention of displaying them in the galleries at the Old College when the building re-opens in its new guise.

My Research

Dr Samuel Mutter graduated in Geography from the University of Manchester, gained an MSc in Politics and International Relations: Security Studies from Royal Holloway, and completed his PhD in Politics at Birkbeck. He joined the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences as an ESRC Postdoctoral Research Fellow in October 2021.

We invited him to tell us more about his research on passenger experience of urban public transport:



Dr Samuel Mutter

Describe your research in a nutshell?

My research considers 'passenger experience' on the London Underground. It looks beyond technical and economic perspectives, and pays specific attention to the role of mobile, sensory, and emotional aspects. Considering transport as something more than just getting from A to B, and gaining a better understanding of 'passenger experience' in urban transport spaces, has the potential to improve experiences of public transportation for all.

How did you become interested in the field?

I've so far studied and worked across geography and politics, and I have quite eclectic research interests. Besides urban transport, I've spent time researching drone warfare (on which I wrote my Master's thesis), food (I authored a book on chocolate), and the geopolitics of cycling. Though they appear quite disparate topics, there's always been an underlying

link in understanding how things and people circulate - how circulation is managed, but also what circulation means and does; whether it serves to reinforce certain political and social norms, administer violence or exclusion, or maximise economic value.

My current project to deepen the understanding of the 'passenger experience' is rooted in this background, but it also reflects a passion for public transport and a desire to enable these systems to survive by making them more inclusive.

What's a typical day for you?

I often work remotely, but I've never been much good at working at home, so I always try (but don't always succeed) to get out of the house early in the morning. Having some sort of exercise is also crucial for me. There's a lido near where I live, so since November I've been trying to go for early morning swims (the pool is heated...it's the ground and air outside it that's the problem!).





I'm not teaching this year, and although I have regular meetings with my mentor Professor Pete Merriman, colleagues and stakeholders, I spend much of my day reading, making copious notes, and trying to shape articles and applications.

I'd like to say I work somewhere interesting or grand, but the truth is I spend an embarrassing amount of time in depressing café chains, mostly because I can stay there for hours nursing a single coffee, without feeling guilty.

What do you find most rewarding?

There are always days when thinking through and writing about your research is a real struggle. This makes the odd days when it's surprisingly easy extremely rewarding. The feeling of having and clearly expressing an idea that you think seems relevant, and that would help others (students, fellow academics, members of the public, maybe just a friend) to better understand or be interested in a given topic, is what makes me feel lucky to be doing what I do. These moments of clarity often come from talking to others about my research, or taking inspiration from theirs.

What do you find most challenging?

In academia one of the interesting aspects is that continuous need to switch between insular study and forms of public speaking and teaching. As somebody who, I'll happily admit, can get quite anxious, it is a difficult challenge to balance the obvious benefits of preparing well for presentations or teaching on the one hand; and the need to know when to stop, trust myself, and give more time to other things, on the other.

What is next for your research?

My current project is only for one year, so the primary focus is to publish whatever I can, build networks, and communicate the findings I already have.

Next I aim to secure a longer project grant or an academic post which would allow me to carry out a fuller empirical investigation of 'passenger experience', focusing, for example, on the experiences of disability groups.

I would also like to retain some of that eclecticism I mentioned earlier. When I get the opportunity I intend to work more on other aspects of mobilities and logistics. For instance, the transformation of urban environments through the development of on-demand food delivery is something that greatly interests me.



**Economic
and Social
Research Council**

Appointments

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

DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE



Dr Yasir Saleem Shaikh has joined the department as a Lecturer in Computer Science. Yasir obtained his PhD at Telecom SudParis & Institut Polytechnique de Paris, France in 2020. Previously, he was a postdoctoral researcher at Inria Lille - Nord Europe,

France. His main research areas include vehicular networks, wireless networks, Internet of Things, smart cities and cognitive radio networks. Personal website: www.yasirsaleem.com

Dr David Jones has joined the department as a Lecturer. After completing his BSc and MSc at Aberystwyth, David worked in industry before completing his PhD at University of Bristol's Mechanical Engineering Department, where he then worked on several research projects within the Design and Manufacturing Futures Laboratory. David's research interest lie in the development and application of advanced reasoning and artificial cognitive approaches to cyber-physical systems.



INSTITUTE OF BIOLOGICAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND RURAL SCIENCES



Dr Alison Bard recently joined the Welsh Government-funded Arwain DCG project in her role as Post-Doctoral Research Associate and Project Lead, where she will be training and supporting a network of Veterinary Prescribing Champions across Wales.

She is fascinated by human behaviour, communication and motivating change in the veterinary context, with her previous interdisciplinary research at the Bristol Vet School examining veterinary consultation dynamics, diagnostic test use and the shifting role and practice of veterinary diagnosis.

Dr Aliyah Debbonaire has joined IBERS as a PDRA working with the Acclimatize team, part-funded through the European Regional Development Fund through the Ireland-Wales programme 2014-2020. She is working on monitoring Welsh bathing water quality and its impact on public health. Prior to this, she completed her PhD at Aberystwyth exploring extreme environments as a potential untapped resource of novel antimicrobial compounds.



Dr Joanna Giles has been appointed as a Knowledge Transfer Associate and Post-doc at IBERS, linking academia and industry. Working with industrial partner TTS Pharma, she will be studying the use of hemp extract as an innovative anti-inflammatory therapy in porcine and equine endometritis. Joanna completed her PhD and undergraduate degree at Oxford University and undertook a Foundation Fellowship at Cardiff University, her research experience and interests are autoimmunity and inflammation.



DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Amy Nicholass has joined the department after managing research in the private sector and at the University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership. She is the Project Officer for the Transport and Health Integrated research Network - THINK, a project to better integrate transport and health. Amy holds a Master of Environmental Science degree from the University of Southampton and has a background in creative dance. She is passionate about using systems thinking approaches and the creative arts to tackle complex socio-ecological challenges.



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND WELSH HISTORY



Dr Alessandro Salvador has joined the department as a Lecturer in Twentieth Century German History, having previously worked at the University of Nottingham, and the Universities of Trento and Siena, in Italy. Alessandro's research and teaching interests are mostly focused on the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany. He is currently completing his next monograph on daily life in German occupied Italy.

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS



Dr Aviva Guttman has joined as a Lecturer in Strategy and Intelligence, specialising in the international relations of intelligence agencies. Before joining us, she was a Research Associate at KCL and a Marie Curie Senior Researcher at Southern

Denmark University. Aviva's current research looks at covert actions as support of and challenge to the international order.



Dr Hannah Hughes has joined as a Senior Lecturer in International Politics and Climate Change. Joining us from Cardiff University, Hannah's research focuses on the relationship between knowledge and power in global environmental politics. She is part of a new ESRC-funded project on The Politics of Science in International Climate Cooperation working alongside researchers from University of Strathclyde and CICERO in Oslo.

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Daryl Phillips has been appointed Director of ITE Partnership and will lead the PGCE programme. Daryl has taught Physics in schools in Guyana, West Yorkshire and Powys and has been involved in teacher education at Aberystwyth for many years as Lead Mentor and Assistant Headteacher at Welshpool High School. He has an MBA in Educational Leadership and a variety of professional interests including the impact of student teachers on schools, and pedagogy in physics teaching.



DEPARTMENT OF LAW AND CRIMINOLOGY



Dr Emma Roberts has joined the department as a bilingual Senior Lecturer in Law. She was formerly an Associate Professor in Legal Studies at the University of Chester, where she completed a Masters in Teaching and Learning in HE and gained Senior

Fellowship of the HEA. Her main research interests are in Private International Law, building upon her PhD (completed at Bangor University in 2014) which examined the rules relating to cross-border non-contractual obligations.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

Francesca Robinson has been appointed to the Procurement Enhancement Project as a Category Manager, joining from the Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult. After graduating with a degree in Business Administration and an MRes in Innovative Manufacturing from Cranfield University, Francesca started her career in the automotive industry with Cosworth Racing and Aston Martin before moving to the public sector and delivering Category Management. Francesca is also a qualified Mental Health First Aider.



HUMAN RESOURCES



Sharon Lilley has joined the HR Department as Head of Human Resources Services. She has moved to Aberystwyth from Sheffield City Council where she was Head of Human Resources. Prior to this Sharon has held HR roles across the public and private sector. Sharon will be responsible for managing the HR service including Business Partnering, HR Administration and Recruitment.

Retirement



At the end of January 2022, the Facilities Team said goodbye to **Alan Sadler**, who had worked as a Porter for over 24 years.

Alan started work at 16, working with his dad as a Panel Beater and Welder, and joined the University as a Porter in September 1997, the role he worked in until his retirement.

When asked what used to make his day at work, Alan told us he enjoyed helping the students, giving people directions (especially at the start of term), as well as helping to keep the buildings safe and clean.

Over the 24 years he worked here, Alan saw many new members join the Team and learnt much about the day-to-day running of the University Campus he supported as part of his role.

Alan will be spending his retirement with his family, his wife Josie, his 3 children and 4 grandchildren as well as dog walking, fishing and possibly some decorating.

Good Luck Alan!

Payroll Giving

the best way to give

£12 billion, usually raised for charities through fundraising events, has been lost due to the Coronavirus yet the services UK charities provide are needed now more than ever.

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Donations are tax-free so a donation of £10 a month will cost you no more than £8!

You can support any charity, good cause or place of worship.

To find out more and set up your donation please visit:

www.aberystwythuniversity.givingonline.org.uk





An update from AberSU

AberSU wants students to love student life. Therefore at the end of the first term we worked with Redbrick to conduct a broad survey of Aber students.

What students told us at the end of the first term

593 students took part, and we thought it would be interesting to share the top findings with University staff here in Aber News.

This is the second time we have worked with Redbrick on these surveys, with the last one taking place towards the end of the 2021 academic year.

Students were asked about their satisfaction with the University, wellbeing, sense of community, and their relationship with the Students' Union (SU).

The survey benchmarked our Students' Union and the University against others who took part.

Key findings:

First and foremost, we are very proud to say that Aberystwyth is ahead of the curve at every point.

Satisfaction

88% of students were satisfied with their overall University experience (an increase of 9 percentage points from the previous survey).

In comparison to benchmarking data, this puts Aberystwyth in-line with the Top 20 universities for student satisfaction, and 9 percentage points above the Top 20 SUs.

The majority were satisfied across all areas of their university experience, particularly aspects of their academic experience e.g. the course / learning experience (82%) and study space (90%).

Accommodation also attracted especially high satisfaction levels (82%).

Core wellbeing

3 out of 5 students rated their enjoyment of university life as 8 or more out of 10 (an increase of 8 percentage points from the last survey).

3 out of 4 students felt that the SU and the University cared about their wellbeing.

On all these measures, Aberystwyth is ahead of or in-line with all benchmarking groups.

Community

Most agreed there is a strong sense of community at Aberystwyth (72%).

This is slightly ahead of other benchmarking groups, and in-line with the Top 20 Universities for student satisfaction.

Students' Union

Satisfaction with the SU stood at 71% (an increase of 14 percentage points from the last survey).

This put Aberystwyth above most benchmarking groups and in-line with the Top 20 Universities for student satisfaction.

There continued to be a lack of understanding of the SU, however. Fewer than half of the students responding knew what the SU does day-to-day, and just over half were aware of what the SU has achieved for students.

Half felt the SU effectively represented them. The majority believed the SU promotes diversity and has the power to make change.

Students were engaging with the SU in similar ways to last year, with around 2 out of 5 having visited the SU building / spaces or being a member of a sports club / society.

13% reported that they were not at all involved with the SU (again similar to last year) - a relatively small proportion in comparison to most benchmarks.

Looking ahead:

AberSU Celebrates - www.abersu.co.uk/celebrates

Nominations are open for students to nominate sports, societies, staff and students for various awards which will be awarded during our AberSU Celebrates week at the beginning of May.

The nomination period closes on 4 April 2022.

Aberystwyth Arts Centre

National Dance Company Wales

One Another

7.30pm, Thursday 7 April

Dance to reconnect us to our theatres, ourselves and...One Another

Ludo by Caroline Finn.

Adults rarely play, but Ludo invites you to rediscover the delights of childhood and the dark thrill of mind games. Swap your day job for the dressing-up box and escape into a wild playground of imagination.

Codi by Anthony Matsena

A powerful story about communities who band together during troubled times.

Built on the foundations of Welsh mining tales and told through dance poetry and song.

A New Work By Andrea Costanzo Martini

Fearless dance full of wit that calls our bodies back to joyful movement; and reintroduces us to the stage as a place to gather, express ourselves and celebrate One Another.



Adverse Camber presents

Gwilym Morus-Baird accompanied by Ben MacCoeid

The Aberystwyth Wall

7.45pm Wednesday 13 April

Be transported a hundred years into the future with this heart-warming tale of human connection and community following climate crisis, based on the Welsh folktale, *Cantre'r Gwaelod*.

Sea level rises have forced the people of Aberystwyth to build a gigantic sea defence and on one particular night, a monstrous storm rages, threatening the safety of the town.

Join us for a rich and captivating evening of storytelling, with live music that ranges from Welsh folk ballad to electric live-looping to intricately woven guitar, that will leave you with your heart full of hope.

Strong Women Science

11.30am & 2.30pm, Wednesday 13 April

StrongWomen Science is a circus science show for children and families starring two women scientists turned circus performers. Aoife Raleigh is an engineer, Maria Corcoran an environmental scientist.

Ever wanted to know how you balance a chair on your chin, if you can juggle liquid, or how circus performers eat fire? StrongWomen Aoife and Maria reveal the scientific secrets behind their astounding tricks. In a fun, lively and fast-paced family circus performance, find out how jugglers, acrobats and hula hoop artists use science to create their amazing acts.

StrongWomen Science doesn't only illustrate scientific facts. It seeks to promote enquiry, inventiveness and accessibility in science, making it open to all, in particular young women and girls. In addition to demonstrating scientific principles in fun and accessible ways, it looks at the worth of failure and the power of teamwork, both shared by science and circus.



Credit: Ian Georgeson courtesy of Circus250

