Small things can have a big impact.
Welcome

Dear friends

Nonesuch has shrunk! You will be getting three issues a year instead of one, but each issue will have fewer pages than of old and those pages will be a little smaller than they were. The changes are a response to feedback from readers, but they also happen to reflect something about the University.

One of the more striking characteristics of this institution is its compactness. We do not have a sprawling campus and the student population is relatively modest in size. I am regularly asked why it is that, when there is such demand for student places at Bristol, undergraduate numbers stay more or less the same.

Government controls have something to do with it, as do the physical constraints of the University precinct – the planners are not keen on the University spreading beyond its current boundary. But it is also a matter of choice. While the University undoubtedly has a hugely beneficial effect on Bristol, I would not want it to dominate its locality more than it already does. As things stand, town and gown are in reasonable balance. What is more, the University feels quite intimate the way it is. If it were much bigger, some of its collegiality and sense of community might be lost.

What the University lacks in size, it more than makes up for in impact. The phrase ‘punching above its weight’ could have been invented for Bristol. Where else has no less than 31 Fellows of the Royal Society on its books (to give just one indicator)? And have you observed the string of stories in the media over the past year about research advances at Bristol? The University is making its presence felt.

One aspect of Bristol that is not small is its alumni community. We are in touch with nearly 100,000 of you and we value the relationship immensely. Nonesuch helps to maintain that relationship, and I hope you enjoy it in its new, slightly smaller form. It comes with our very best wishes.

Professor Eric Thomas (Hon LLD 2004)
Vice-Chancellor
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Regulating cells by Dr Harry Mellor and Dr Vrinda Nyak, Department of Biochemistry.

Human endothelial cells (red) expressing activated Src (green).

Endothelial cells form the lining of blood vessels. They must make tight connections with each other to seal the sides of the vessel and prevent blood from leaking out. These seals are regulated by a protein called Src. When Src is activated it causes the joins between cells to become leaky. This is important in some circumstances. For example when new blood capillaries form, the endothelial cells must loosen and reorganise to form the new vessel.

Disregulation of this process, however, can contribute to several pathological conditions, including the spread of tumour cells to secondary sites within the body. Harry and Vrinda are studying the changes to the actin cytoskeleton (the supportive framework that gives shape to cells) of endothelial cells when an activated form of Src is introduced. This is increasing our understanding of the connections between cells in a capillary and how they regulate.
Aeroplane wings that change shape in mid-air may sound like the stuff of science fiction, but radical new aircraft designs like this could become a reality thanks to a new partnership between Bristol, the University of Oxford and Smiths Aerospace.

The partnership, called SMARTCOMP, will deliver new research in composites technology and lay the foundations for more far-reaching innovation over the longer-term. It has two broad themes of research. The first focuses on approaches, such as using 3D composites to make aircraft parts lighter, more fuel efficient and cheaper to manufacture. The second will centre on self-actuating composites, creating composite components that can change their geometry or shape in response to force applied internally or externally.

Sir Bernard is currently an Emeritus Professor of Mechanical Engineering at Queen’s University, Belfast. Throughout his career, he has been an enthusiastic advocate of strong integration between industry and education. He has been heavily involved in the technical investigation of some major disasters such as the Kings Cross underground fire and the Ladbroke Grove rail crash.

The discovery of a spectacular 300-million-year-old fossilised forest has transformed our understanding of the ecology of the Earth’s first rainforests.

Bristol’s Dr Howard Falcon-Lang and US colleagues discovered the forest in the underground workings of a coalmine in Illinois, USA.

It is composed of a bizarre mixture of extinct plants: abundant club mosses, more than 40 metres high, towering over a sub-canopy of tree ferns, intermixed with shrubs and tree-sized horsetails.

The fossilized forest was preserved following a major earthquake. The quake caused the whole region to drop below sea level and the forest became buried in mud, preserving it forever.

Dr Falcon-Lang said: ‘It was an amazing experience. We drove down the mine in an armoured vehicle, until we were a hundred metres below the surface. The fossil forest was rooted on top of the coal seam, so where the coal had been mined away the fossilized forest was visible in the ceiling of the mine. We walked for miles and miles along pitch-black passages with the fossil forest just above our heads. We were able to make a map of the forest by the light of our miner’s lamps.’

The Earth’s first rainforest unearthed

The discovery of a spectacular 300-million-year-old fossilised forest has transformed our understanding of the ecology of the Earth’s first rainforests.

IN BRIEF

Honour for exceptional engineer

Eminent engineer Sir Bernard Crossland (PhD 1953) has received a Lifetime Achievement Award from Engineers Ireland.

The award, presented to Sir Bernard at the Engineering Excellence Awards ceremony in Dublin in March, is bestowed periodically to an engineer who has made an exceptional contribution to Irish engineering through practice or education.

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If you would like regular news updates, why not sign up for our enewsletter? Email ‘enewsletter’ to alumni-publications@bristol.ac.uk.
At the heart of the matter
Primary school pupils from Portishead were the first children in the country to experience the University’s new mobile laboratory (above) when they took part in a demonstration exploring the inner workings of the heart.

Around 120 year 5 and 6 pupils from St Peter’s Primary School discovered how the heart works in a special interactive demonstration in the Mobile Teaching Unit, a joint initiative funded by the University’s two Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning – Applied and Integrated Medical Sciences (AIMS) and Bristol ChemLabS. Pupils listened to their own heartbeat and pulse and found out how physiologists record the electrical activity of the heart.

From Bristol to Bolivia
This summer, Bristol student Jake Coates (Medicine 2003-) is relinquishing bars and beaches in favour of backpacks. Jake, who visited Bolivia on a climbing expedition last year, found the country made such an impression on him that he is going back. This time, however, he’s taking nine friends. Together, the group will climb five peaks in five days, raising £10,000 for five local villages in the process.

‘We came across this group of villages in the south-west Altiplano region, where the people were barely scratching an existence,’ said Jake. ‘The food they ate was meagre and yet their warmth and generosity towards us as foreigners was truly humbling. We wanted to give something back.’

Every member of the team is paying his or her own way on the trip and none of the money raised through sponsorship is going towards expenses, ensuring that every penny raised ends up in the villages.

Preventing torture
Bristol’s School of Law hosted a major international conference on the prevention of torture entitled ‘The Optional Protocol to the UNCAT: Preventive mechanisms and Standards’. The event brought together high-profile experts and representatives of national institutions from all over the world.

The Optional Protocol to the UN Convention Against Torture is a new international instrument aimed at the prevention of torture through the establishment of national and international bodies vested with powers to visit various places of detention.

Students question influence of expert witnesses
Two Bristol students joined a prestigious panel at the Annual Conference of the Society of Expert Witnesses in May this year to discuss the practical influence of expert witnesses in the justice process.

Gabe Tan (Law 2004-) and Joe Oppenheimer (Law 2004-) also recently appeared on the BBC One Rough Justice programme about the University’s Innocence Project.

Wills Building bares arms
Local artist Philippa Fawcett (above) has repainted the heraldic shields on the Wills Memorial Building as part of the restoration of the 68-metre-high tower.

There are nine shields on the exterior of the building, just above the first-stage windows. The three Arms on the west face represent the Society of Merchant Venturers, the City of Bristol and the City of Gloucester (for Gloucestershire, which did not have its own Arms at the time); those on the south face represent Sir George Wills, the University of Bristol and H H Wills (the Wills family, who made their fortune in tobacco, funded the tower and many other University buildings); and those on the east face represent the City of Bath, the County of Somerset and the City of Salisbury (for Wiltshire, which did not have its own Arms at the time).

British Council honour for Bristol student
A Bristol student has scooped a top prize in a major British Council competition designed to celebrate the extraordinary achievements of international students in the UK.

Thanks to his inspirational story of student life in the UK, Edward Moline (Politics and Social Policy 2004-) was a finalist in the prestigious International Student Awards 2007.

Kirsten Gill, International Officer at Bristol, said: ‘Bristol has had a finalist in this competition for three years running now, which in itself is testament to the strength, diversity and vibrancy of our student community. Ed was deservedly selected as regional finalist in this national competition, in particular for his work in establishing the UK’s first student film festival, Screentest.’

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News

IN BRIEF

DVD scoops award
Bristol grads Rob Finlay (BA 2003) and Martin Calder (MA 2003) picked up the prize for ‘Best Non-broadcast Production’ at the 2007 Creative East Awards for their DVD Recycling Land.

The DVD looks at the history of the Bowers and Pitsea Marshes in south Essex using animation and live footage. Narrated by Tony Robinson (Hon MA 1999) of Time Team fame, the film explains the changing land use of this area over the past 2,000 years. It includes extensive educational material, making this an ideal resource for local schools.

Rob and Martin’s company, Previsualisation Limited, specialises in storyboarding, concept art, 2D and 3D animation, pre-visualisation and motion graphics.

www.previsualisation.com

Come dance with SCA
More than 100 people kicked up their heels in April at the annual elderly dinner dance organised by Student Community Action (SCA).

Participants were treated to a three-course meal with wine at the Students’ Union and enjoyed entertainment from the University Big Band and Ballroom Dancing Society.

Many of those who attended had never been to the annual event before and had had no previous contact with the University. One guest said: ‘I was surprised and delighted to learn about all the community work the students do. I had a wonderful evening and really appreciated all the students did to make us feel welcome.’

SCA is regularly supported by the Alumni Foundation.

Big buzz for African elephants
Zoologist Lucy King (BSc 1999) is finding new ways to help humans and elephants live together in harmony in Kenya. And one of her ideas is to use beehives to keep elephants away from crops.

As the human population grows, elephants are being forced into smaller areas. ‘Six-tonne animals like elephants have a huge requirement for food and water, and naturally migrate across the landscape searching for sustenance,’ explains Lucy. ‘This brings them directly into conflict with people as new villages, roads, schools, fences, bridges and farms are being built over these natural wildlife corridors.’ As a result, many people are now killing or poisoning elephants who come onto their land to eat the crops. Researchers like Lucy are trying to help local governments find practical solutions to this conflict.

Lucy’s team, headed by elephant expert Dr Iain Douglas-Hamilton, is interested in finding crop protection methods that can be financed and managed by the farmers themselves. As part of her DPhil research at Oxford University, Lucy is exploring the use of traditional wooden beehives ‘as both an elephant deterrent and a social and economic boost to poverty-stricken rural communities through the sustainable harvesting of honey’.

Double debut success
Two debut novels by Bristol graduates have hit the bookshelves to great acclaim.

Stef Penney (BA 1987) has scooped the first Costa Book of the Year Award for her novel The Tenderness of Wolves, an adventure set in Canada. Part detective story, part romance, and part western, it tells the tale of a murder at the Canadian Frontier in 1867. Stef defeated four other authors to capture the £25,000 prize.

Described as a meditation on memory, exile and self-reinvention, Priya Basil’s (BA 1999) Ishq and Mushq spans an epic period from the Indian Partition of 1947 to present-day London.

Twenty-five years of roughing it
Most of us own at least one Rough Guide, a dog-eared but happy reminder of an amazing trip. This year, to celebrate the guide books’ 25th birthday, its founders Mark Ellingham (BA 1980) and Natania Jansz (BSc 1980) have created a new series of guidebooks to the world’s ultimate experiences.

From Africa and New Zealand to Adventure Travel and World Food, each Rough Guide 25 recommends 25 ideas and inspirations for the traveller in search of eye-opening and life-changing experiences.
BAFTA success
Two Bristol grads won BAFTAs at this year’s award ceremony.

Asitha Ameresekere (BA 1993) (above) scooped ‘Best Short Film’ for Do Not Erase and Jeremy Brock (BA 1991) was awarded ‘Best Adapted Screenplay’ for The Last King of Scotland. Jeremy worked with Peter Morgan to adapt Giles Foden’s debut novel of the same name into the smash hit Academy Award-winning film.

Ask a biologist
If you’ve ever found yourself struggling to find an answer for ‘where did dinosaurs go?’ or ‘how do birds fly?’ you may appreciate the launch of a website designed to give inquisitive children direct access to scientists.

Bristol graduate Dr David Hone (BSc 1999, PhD 2006) has assembled a team of more than 60 professional scientists from across the globe to answer the questions that leave the rest of us baffled. The result is www.askabiologist.org.uk, which offers children a chance to interact with scientists of all ages and learn more about science as a discipline. Many of the scientists are current Bristol staff, including lecturer in clinical anatomy and student in palaeopathology, Dr Alice Roberts, who presents the BBC TV series Don’t Die Young.

The site welcomes questions on any aspect of biology or palaeontology, and is still actively recruiting new scientists to help answer the questions that are flooding in.

Football insider kicks off with a winner
Dan Freedman (BA 1999) is a hot new writing talent headed straight for the Premier League. Using his experience in the game as editor of The FA, Dan has created a nail-biting tale about a young boy and his experiences of the highs and lows of football.

Dan (above) was inspired to write The Kick Off while shopping for a present for an 11 year-old football-mad boy. ‘There didn’t seem to be a football novel for kids, I couldn’t understand it’, he said. ‘I know that if someone had given me one when I was 11, I probably would have read it in two days flat. I also knew that writing about football was something that I could do. So I did it.’

Palaeontologist named young global leader
A Bristol graduate is among this year’s 250 young global leaders to be honoured by the World Economic Forum for their ‘professional accomplishments and their potential for helping to shape the future of the world’.

Dr Louise Leakey (BSc 1995), a palaeontologist at the Koobi Fora Research Project, leads expeditions to the fossil-rich regions of Lake Turkana in search of evidence of human origins. Extraordinary discoveries have included a new human species, Kenyanthropus platyops.

Windsurfers sail to victory
Bristol students triumphed at the recent 2007 British Universities Sports Association Windsurfing Championships in Southampton, taking both the individual men’s and women’s titles. Hugh Sims-Williams (Medicine 2003-) won the men’s championship; Tanya Saleh (Engineering 2003-) won the women’s event.

A record 13 teams entered the competition for the overall university title.
The quantum leap

The ideas first began to emerge about 20 years ago; the theories have developed apace ever since. This is quantum information and Bristol is blazing a trail. Eve MacFarlane gets to grips with science at the smallest scale.
When I first meet the scientists from Bristol’s Quantum Information group, it’s for a photoshoot. The photographer wants to take a picture of them ‘at work’. ‘What tools do you use?’ he asks. ‘A blackboard and a piece of chalk,’ they reply. And so he starts shooting. They write equations on the blackboard. It soon gets animated. Hands are waved, discussions and disagreements develop. The chalk clacks furiously and the blackboard is soon filled with strings of numbers and symbols.

‘Wow,’ I think. ‘Whatever it is, it looks impressive.’ But it isn’t until I talk to the people involved that I understand just how impressive.

These guys are leaders in their field. The group is among the handful of elite groups worldwide that includes IBM and MIT. It’s a compact cluster of great minds spanning a number of disciplines: maths, physics, computer science and electrical engineering. Professors Noah Linden, Richard Jozsa and Sandu Popescu came to Bristol seven years ago to set it up. They took the decision early on to recruit the very best minds. Since then, two other theorists have joined them, Professor Andreas Winter and Dr Aram Harrow, and two experimentalists, Professor John Rarity and Dr Jeremy O’Brien.

This mix of disciplines is one of the group’s key strengths, fueling creativity and new ideas. The combination of theorists and experimentalists is also a huge asset. ‘The theorists are always amazed to see the things they’ve been talking about actually happen in the lab. And for the experimentalist it’s useful to have a sounding board for new experiments and to stimulate new directions,’ says Rarity.

The group has helped to establish the field of quantum information, and this field has resulted in totally new methods of information processing and provided deep insights into fundamental physics. It is widely expected to be critical to the future of the UK economy and central to how coming generations of communication systems and computers will be built. But what exactly is it?

Quantum mechanics takes us into the realm of very small things. It was discovered when physicists exploring the atom found that the world of electrons and protons is not just smaller than our familiar world, it is also fundamentally different in character. ‘Microscopic particles behave completely differently from ordinary things,’ explains Linden. ‘It’s really quite extraordinary.’

Strange things happen here, and the physical intuition we have from our everyday life doesn’t seem to work. These rules are so different from the familiar rules of physics, so counterintuitive and unexpected, that it’s often described as ‘weird’. To paraphrase Richard Feynman (one of its greatest teachers): ‘If you think you understand quantum mechanics, you don’t understand quantum mechanics.’

It can be mind-bending, and is rife with uncertainty and riddled with paradoxes. The most fundamental is quantisation: the notion that energy, spin and other quantities only come in discrete steps. Another enigma is the probabilistic nature of the quantum world. Then there is entanglement, the profound connectedness of objects and processes even across large distances, and superposition, the property that allows an electron to be in two places at one time.

Yet it describes the world with astonishing accuracy. ‘Quantum mechanics is so counterintuitive, it’s hard to believe it really works,’ says O’Brien. ‘But it predicts things to an unrivalled precision. It’s right again and again.’

It was in the 1980s that scientist David Deutsch made the connection between computation and quantum mechanics. What if you were to treat information as a quantum concept? After all, information is not independent of the physical laws used to store and process it. And so, quantum information was born, forging deep links between the previously unrelated disciplines of physics, computer science and information theory. ‘We started to think about information processing and computing in a different way,’ explains Linden. ‘We’d always believed that information was binary, that is it could be 0 or 1, but we realised quantum information could be both 0 and 1. This is a completely different notion.’

The modern computer works with binary ‘bits’ classically represented as 0 or 1. A quantum computer adheres to the laws of quantum mechanics and its fundamental unit of information is called a ‘qubit’. A qubit can exist not only in a state corresponding to the logical state 0 or 1 as in a classical bit, but also in states corresponding to a blend or superposition of these classical states. In other words, a qubit can exist as a zero, a one, or simultaneously as both 0 and 1… Because quantum particles can exist in multiple states at the same time, they could be used to carry out many calculations at once, factoring numbers hundreds of digits long – a task impossible on conventional computers. This task is a key one since its difficulty is at the heart of many current methods of sending information securely.

In order for a quantum computer to show its superiority to a classical computer, it needs to use new algorithms which can exploit the phenomenon of quantum parallelism. Such algorithms are not easy to formulate but, once discovered, will yield spectacular results. The Deutsch-Jozsa algorithm, invented in 1992, was the first example of this. Jozsa, a co-author, recalls how a leading journal refused to publish his paper on it. Their mistake. It is now considered a seminal paper in the field.

Of course, a quantum computer has not yet been built, but that doesn’t undermine its significance. On a practical level, a quantum computer would have a huge impact on security, simultaneously undermining current security systems while offering a new alternative. Existing security systems rely on factorisation to encrypt information, and a quantum computer could crack this in minutes. Yet quantum mechanics also provides uncrackable methods of communication. Quantum cryptographers can send ‘keys’ to encrypt information using quantum particles. Any attempt to intercept the particles will disturb their quantum state – an interference that could then be detected.

Continued over page >
Rarity, who is described as the ‘father of experimental cryptography’, recently carried out a feasibility study trying to prove that in principle a ground to satellite key exchange is possible. He is driven by a desire to ‘close the loop’. ‘My motivation is to take a piece of theory, go to the lab and succeed in demonstrating the theoretical concept,’ he says. In this study, he was trying to demonstrate that you can exchange keys over 150 kilometres, which would be a world record.

Entanglement is crucial for long-distance quantum key distribution, which uses entangled pairs of photons to encode the qubits. It relies on the fact that the information defining the key only ‘comes into being’ after measurements are performed by ‘Alice’, the sender, and ‘Bob’, the receiver. The photons are distributed so that Alice and Bob each end up with one photon from each entangled pair and consequently each has a copy of the key. The success of this experiment would demonstrate that key exchange to a satellite could be possible in future – their ultimate objective being to create a global key distribution system.

Rarity and O’Brien also look at using single photons (particles of light) as qubits. Interactions between those single quantum particles can be used to construct the fundamental ‘gates’ needed to build a quantum computer. Each gate operation entangles two particles (qubits), and by repeating this operation one can build a multi-particle entangled state.

O’Brien’s work on quantum metrology – which involves using quantum mechanical effects to achieve more precise measurements than is possible through ‘classical’ methods – recently won him the Ogden Trust Early Stage Physics Research Prize. O’Brien, along with researchers in Japan, has demonstrated a way to almost double measurement precision by using photons to gauge distances. He explains: ‘The precision of such a measurement depends on the wavelength of the light used. By using a group of four photons, the set behaves as if it had a shorter wavelength than a single photon. This is rather like using a ruler with spacing four times as fine.’

Using quantum properties to develop new technology, however, is only part of the story. A quantum computer could function as a kind of simulator for quantum physics, potentially opening the doors to many discoveries in the field. This is the thing that really excites Jozsa. ‘Quantum isn’t the ultimate theory. New theories break down old ones and lead on to the next great theory that will help us to understand nature. I’m not interested in building a quantum computer for its own sake. I want to build it because it will help us to understand more.’ This is important. The work of the group is as much about understanding the very fundamental laws of nature as it is about developing technology. As Linden explains: ‘What really fascinates me is the esoteric end, the big picture. I’m preoccupied with why quantum mechanics is the way it is. Why is nature like it is?’

Entering the quantum world demands imagination and creativity. It’s a world of which we have no experience.
no intuition, and no expectations. We can’t see it, touch it or smell it. Even our language, invented by people living in the everyday world, has no words for the phenomenon. ‘Explaining the science behind the flow of water is incredibly complex,’ points out Popescu. ‘But at least you have a starting point; you can watch the flow, observe the whirlpools, the bubbles, the spray. You have some idea of what’s going on. But with microscopic particles, you’ve never seen them. You have to use this tremendous imagination to try and understand what might be happening.’

It is this creativity, this sense of possibility, which inspires passion among the group. ‘It’s wonderful to work in such a young field,’ enthuses Harrow. ‘The options are all still open. There are new directions, new problems. In other fields, the questions are already well defined and quite clear. In quantum information, questions are still being invented, and I really like that.’

This creativity has also sparked an exceptional interest in the field among Bristol students. A course in quantum information is offered to final-year students in physics, maths and computer science and it’s hugely popular. ‘It gives students the chance to learn about something that is right at the very boundaries of current knowledge,’ says Linden. ‘This is quite unusual and very exciting for them.’ Jozsa adds: ‘The subject has this wonderful imaginative quality. The fact that the world doesn’t behave in the way we see it through our senses – I think that captures their imagination.’

There is also a big demand for graduate places, and the group’s reputation attracts some of the brightest young minds to Bristol. One such mind belongs to PhD student Jon Allcock, who arrived with a first class degree in physics from Cambridge.

He has found the interdisciplinary nature of the subject both inspirational and challenging. ‘The weekly group meetings are incredibly enriching. People come from very different backgrounds,’ he says. ‘It forces you to learn about lots of different subjects, which gives you a new way of looking at things.’

For Allcock, it’s also about the scope that quantum information offers to answer some very deep questions. He cites quantum teleportation as an example. ‘It’s possible to send complete information about a system from one point to another in a way that seems to violate relativity [it doesn’t of course]. The proof is there and it’s fairly simple maths. But the result is both powerful and profound.’

This is such a young field, so cutting-edge, that no one really understands it or can say with absolute certainty where it might lead. ‘We’re still being surprised, still discovering new paradoxes,’ says Popescu. ‘The fact that it’s so mysterious tells us we don’t understand it.’ Yet the growth and interest in the field in the last few years has been phenomenal, as more and more researchers try to get to grips with its potential.

‘It’s all-pervasive,’ says Linden. ‘It’s scientific and technological. It’s highly interdisciplinary. It takes the most sophisticated ideas from many different disciplines. By linking them we get new answers, new questions, new insights and new perspectives. It’s a completely new discipline, but it’s also providing fundamental new insights into established disciplines.’

So watch this space. Who knows where it’s all going to lead. One thing’s for sure: quantum mechanics may describe things at the very smallest of scales, but understanding it – and harnessing its powers – is set to have a very big impact indeed.
Chip by chip

Digital signals are zipping through things all around us: MP3 players, cameras, mobile phones, televisions. But humans can’t decode these signals; we need a device to do it for us. And this is how Wolfson Microelectronics has made its millions. The company designs and supplies the microchips that process this digital information into signals we can hear. Its products are at the very heart of some of the world’s most iconic digital consumer products, including Apple’s iPod range and Microsoft’s Xbox.

Academic-physicist-turned-entrepreneur David Milne (MSc 1967, PhD 1969) built up the company chip by chip, turning a brilliant university idea into a major business success.

When you were young, what did you want to be?
I’ve always been practical. As a child I’d build models and jet engines. I started getting into physics at school. I enjoyed the subject and thought I’d like to be a researcher.

How would you describe your time at Bristol University?
I realised that the world of physics was even more exciting than I had already thought. The emphasis was on research and the quality of research was astounding. Some of the great physicists worked at Bristol at that time, including the Nobel Prize winner Cecil Powell. I remember these amazing conversations in the coffee room. It was quite frightening really, but at the same time incredibly stimulating: eminent scientists discussing the latest theories and challenging me about my work.

I loved living in Bristol. When I was there in the mid-1960s, it was very laid back. Bristol has similar characteristics to my home town of Edinburgh, but with its own West Country charm.

How did Wolfson Microelectronics start?
After I finished my PhD and some post-doctoral work at Bristol, I joined Edinburgh University to set up a laboratory in a new Wolfson Liaison Unit. I was soon asked to head it up and I changed it into the Wolfson Microelectronics Institute. At the time, it was a self-financing department. We worked on microchip applications for industry, and developed some of the first chips for consumer applications. I’ve always been interested in applying academic ideas for commercial gain, and in 1983 we spun Wolfson out from the university and spent ten years designing microchips to other people’s specifications for many of the emerging applications such as mobile phones. In 1995, we made the decision to design our own chips and become a component supplier ourselves. We began with imaging chips for scanners. Then we moved into chips for hi-fis and DVD players. Our speciality is now mixed-signal chips, which create a link between analogue and digital technology. They’re used in many digital consumer products.

When you set up Wolfson Microelectronics back in 1984, did you have any idea that the company would be as big as it is today?
You know, we didn’t really think about it. It was all new to us. Our timing was right and the digital consumer market grew rapidly. Our first big success was supplying the microchip for the Microsoft Xbox. It was quite an accomplishment: Microsoft, one of the world’s largest companies, buying a key component from a small, private company in Scotland.

When the company floated in 2003, you became a multi-millionaire. How did this affect you?
You get rid of your mortgage, pay off debts, pass on a bit of money to your kids. But really, it hasn’t changed the way I do things at all.

You have said that money is not your prime motivation for working. What drives you?
It’s a combination of things. I do think that making money is important. But the drive for me is much more complex than just that. I want to create something. I also have a fear of failure.

What is the secret to the success of Wolfson Microelectronics?
Getting the right people on board was crucial. And having the confidence to grow. There’s a process: get the technology to work, get the customers, get revenue, become profitable. There’s a big pressure to sell before the company is making a profit. But we had the confidence that we could build the company.

What new opportunities do you see for the company?
As mobile phones become more multimedia-capable, they’ll need more of our type of products. Then there are other growth areas, such as digital TVs, global tracking systems and in-car navigation and entertainment systems. Wolfson is a very innovative company, full of intellectual capacity.

Are you a gadget man? Do you own an iPod?
I wouldn’t describe myself as a gadget man, but I do use technology quite a bit. And yes, I do own an iPod, but I only really use it on long-haul flights.

What do you consider your greatest achievement to be?
Building Wolfson into a global company valued at $1 billion. I’m very proud of the wealth that this has created for its employees. Also, I do get a bit of a kick out of the fact that we chose to base ourselves in Edinburgh and that we set a model for other businesses in Scotland.

You recently retired from executive duties at Wolfson Microelectronics. What are your plans?
I still sit on the board and work part-time advising the company. Not being in executive management has certainly given me more time, but I’m still busy. I’m building a chalet in Switzerland. I’m closely involved with Edinburgh University. And I’ve got time to get involved in more social things. In fact, I’ll be coming back to Bristol for the reunion weekend this year.
"I realised that the world of physics was even more exciting than I had already thought."
Lights, camera, action

Screentest, the nation’s only student film festival, is now in its third year. Lara King (English 2004–) gets animated with the rising stars who make it happen.
What does it take to make it in the film industry? The standard prerequisites are notoriously elusive: funding, contacts and lots of luck are usually just the start. But at the Screentest National Film Festival, there are only two requirements for silver screen success: student status and talent.

Step inside the University of Bristol Union in the first week of March each year and you’ll find yourself inside the only national film festival run entirely by students. Dim the lights, take your seats, and get ready to see the future of British film.

The real stars of this show are not the ones with their names in lights. They are a group of hard-working student volunteers, running a thriving not-for-profit organisation that provides exposure for student-produced films and assists students in pursuing careers in a competitive field. ‘Work in the film industry is often more about luck and who you know than raw talent, but Screentest allows us to circumvent this, and ensure it’s the most talented voices that get heard,’ says Ed Moline (BSc 2007), one of the founders of Screentest and the festival’s co-ordinator for the last three years. ‘This is why the competition is free to enter, and why we make it as easy to attend as possible by keeping prices down and providing accommodation. We’re not trying to promote any agenda, we just want to promote what’s good.’

Screentest began with Ed in the summer of 2004, when the University’s Filmmaking Society (UBFS) was looking back on what Ed describes as a year of ‘particularly good films being made’. The society wanted to enter these films into a festival, but couldn’t find a national event that would consider them. To Ed, the answer seemed simple: create one. ‘When Ed suggested the idea, my initial reaction was amused disbelief,’ recalls Ben Williams (BA 2006), then President of UBFS. ‘But the more the idea developed, the more sense it made. Bristol has some major connections to the film industry, an above-average amount of cinemas and two universities with well established film production courses. There was also a clear gap in the festival market for a celebration of student film, and if other film societies were as active as ours, we were sure there would be sufficient material out there to exhibit. So we set a weekend comfortably in the future of the following year and prayed everything would work itself out.’

Ben and Ed took up the task of designing the one-of-a-kind film festival from scratch. ‘We had nothing to base it on, and we were setting up a national festival with a five-month deadline,’ Ed recalls. ‘But the whole UBFS committee got on board, delegated roles, and Screentest was born.’ Those five months saw unreliable venues, vanishing sponsors and a case of mumps that took Ed out of action, but in March 2005 the University Union opened its doors for the first-ever nationwide film festival to showcase and celebrate the work of UK students. The only prerequisite for the event was that the filmmaker must have been a student at an institute of further or higher education during the production of the film. Age, ability, education or experience were no object. ‘Film is an extremely important medium for communicating ideas, and in recent years there have been documentaries and movies which have changed the world’s perspective,’ Ed explains. ‘Because of this power, I think it’s important to encourage a wide range of voices and to make sure independent filmmakers have the chance to get their work shown.’

Three years on, the range of voices being heard is growing wider and wider as Screentest submissions increase in both quality and quantity with each festival. ‘This year’s Screentest involved 24 universities and showcased documentaries, comedies, animations and dramas alongside events including lock-in screenings and video game tournaments,’ Ed says. The 2007 programme also included an opening speech from UK Film Council Chairman Stuart Till and a Q&A with Cold Feet and Starter for Ten writer David Nicholls (BA 1988). As well as the festival, this year has seen the growth of Screentest Distribution, a network of cinemas, film societies, broadcasters and online sources developed to offer improved access to the best submissions, and Screentest has also launched its own SUBtv channel to deliver films to students over their pints in more than 90 student union bars. The festival has even started to flicker onto screens far beyond the student union: BAFTA allowed Screentest to be the first public place this year to screen their Orange Short Films and Animation nominees, and the festival
has recently received National Union of Students endorsement, giving entrants the opportunity to win awards for campaign films highlighting student issues. Suddenly, student film has become more than just a hobby.

For some of the first volunteers behind Screentest, that hobby has also become their career. Ben Williams’ first industry job came as a direct result of his involvement with the festival. ‘During the second Screentest the then Chairman of BAFTA, who was opening the festival, took me to one side and asked me to send me my CV to his office in London. I did so and, after a meeting in London, he offered me a job as his assistant. We now work together in the offices of a major film production company in Soho, where big-name writers, actors and directors wander in for a chat most days,’ Ben says. ‘I feel now what I felt in my first year at Bristol. Essentially, I’m an innocent fresher in a big community of experts, eager to learn and make things better, and if Bristol and Screentest are anything to go by, I feel justified in having confidence that I can do just that.’

Isabel Kongsgaard (Sociology 2005-) , who was responsible for co-ordinating the guest speakers for Screentest 2007, has found that her involvement with the festival has also opened up new possibilities. ‘I got involved because I have always been interested in film and cinema, not because I thought it might look good on my CV, but I enjoy it so much that I’m considering pursuing a career in the film industry because it’s such an exciting area to work in. I’m even going to do my dissertation on the festival!’ At this year’s festival, national training organisation Skillset were on hand to offer a CV and self-marketing seminar and one-on-one careers advice to Isabel and others wishing to pursue film careers. For those who give their time to the festival, the door into the industry seems to have become a little easier to open.

As Screentest 2007 draws to a close and the lights in the auditorium dim for another year, a larger team has already been lined up for 2008 and committee roles have been delegated. And as Ed steps down from his post, he has high hopes for the future of Screentest. ‘There were 24 universities on board this year, and I hope that will increase next year. I’d also really like to see the distribution side of Screentest take off, and our relationships with BAFTA and the UK Film Council grow. We want to get lots of films seen by lots of people, and develop associate societies in different universities rather than just send them films to screen.’

One of the 2008 leaders ready to step into Ed’s shoes is Tomas Martin (Physics with Astrophysics 2004-).

‘2008 will be the first time someone else will be in charge following Ed’s excellent stewardship,’ says Tomas. ‘It’s a complex beast, running such a major event. But seeing the films and filmmakers – and the fun of the weekend itself – makes it more than worth it. I can’t wait to get started.’ The determined, ambitious and hard-working stars of Screentest may not have their own names in lights just yet, but watch this space.

Find out more at www.screentestfest.co.uk
I like looking at different angles, and they’re usually very small, quiet angles that may be blown up into something larger.
“Making a short film is about telling a story that can only be a short film, that could never be anything else,” Asitha explains earnestly, reclining on a comfortable sofa in the London office where he carries out his day job. ‘A lot of “short films” are miniature feature films, or single scenes from bigger films, but that’s not my style. I like looking at different angles, and they’re usually very small, quiet angles that may be blown up into something larger, I would only make a feature film if the story tells me that I should. Story dictates everything for me. Maybe that’s a little naïve, but it’s the only thing I know,’ he shrugs.

Naïve or otherwise, the shiny new BAFTA award glittering on Asitha’s mantelpiece tells a story all of its own. It’s a story that begins with his childhood in Sri Lanka, where his father introduced him to myth and set him on a path that took him to Bristol to study classics. But it’s a bit of a departure from Virgil and Ovid to lights, camera and action, isn’t it? ‘Not really,’ he says. ‘Filmmaking was a very natural progression from classics. I was very attracted to the comedies and tragedies, and the huge drama of the classics. It’s all about storytelling, but the medium varies.’

So with his classics degree in hand (and some experience gleaned from Bristol’s Amateur Filmmaking Society), the next chapter of Asitha’s life found him travelling in Peru, returning to Sri Lanka to teach English, and then enrolling on a three-year masters degree in film in Los Angeles. ‘It was there that we started talking about dramatic structure and Aristotle’s Poetics, which I’d studied at Bristol,’ he recalls. ‘I knew nothing about film and was surrounded by people who’d spend their undergraduate degrees immersed in it, but my knowledge of classics got me through. And after my masters, I came back to England, got a job, and have been making films ever since as a hobby.’

If every short story has a deeper angle, Asitha’s proffered biography is no exception. What he describes as a “hobby” has led to international recognition and acclaim for a twenty-nine-minute production entitled Do Not Erase, which has been shown at nine film festivals across the globe and won a BAFTA for Best Short Film. Written in two days and shot in three, Do Not Erase is short film at its most compact. ‘The way I usually work is that I think about things, without writing anything, for a long time,’ Asitha laughs. ‘I spent two years thinking about Do Not Erase. I spent two years putting myself into the mind of Annie, the forty-something mother at the centre of the story. So when it came to writing it, it only took two days because it wasn’t really me writing any more. It was Annie.’

Inspiration for Do Not Erase struck in March 2003, when coalition forces first entered Iraq. ‘The media was saturated with stories and photos from soldiers on the front line to an extent that we’d never experienced before,’ Asitha recalls. ‘But I started thinking about the people who were left behind. What did the families feel if they got a letter telling them that their son or daughter was missing in action? Their feelings never made the headlines. I just wanted to know what a normal working-class family felt when it was their loved one who had gone missing in action. For these families, it’s irrelevant whether they’re for the war or against the war. All they have to do is support their children.’

Do Not Erase became a collaborative effort to answer these questions. Asitha took a low-key approach to sourcing his cast, and scoured London plays and graduating company showcases to find faces that would fit. ‘At that point I didn’t even have the script. I cast it first, and then, having these people’s faces in my mind, I could write for them.’ The film’s production was equally understated.

‘We used a friend’s house in North London as our set. The camera doesn’t move. We don’t use any lights. It’s all very natural, exactly like a video diary should be,’ Asitha explains.

The reception of the film, however, was anything but understated. ‘It was a tiny, tiny little film, funded by me, made in our spare time, and so just getting the BAFTA nomination felt like winning,’ Asitha smiles. ‘To go on and actually win was a bit surreal.’

The man who doesn’t like glamour found himself delivering an unprepared acceptance speech to a sea of famous faces and, shortly afterwards, celebrating his status as the first Sri Lankan to receive a BAFTA nomination with a champagne reception at the Sri Lankan High Commission.

So what’s the next twist in this story of a modest man with big achievements? Whilst critical acclaim for Do Not Erase continues to flood the film industry, this summer also sees the release of Asitha’s first collection of short stories. ‘Eventually I’d like to be earning a living out of either writing books or writing scripts and making films,’ he says. ‘But money is not the motivating factor for me. Passion is. I can if I get these things made, whether they’re successful or not, I’ll be learning something from them.’ In the meantime, of course, there’s another short film in the pipeline. ‘A lot of people have asked why I’m doing another short film. They’re telling me that I’ve done my short film now, I can go and make any feature film I want. That’s just not the way it works for me though. Short film is so important as a genre. It’s totally untapped in Britain and I’d like to push it. I’d love to have short films played before feature films in independent cinemas, like they used to.’

Coming from the man who produced a BAFTA award-winning film in five days, the realisation of this next dream seems almost inevitable. Get your popcorn now.
How I became a magazine editor

Karen Packham (BSc 1984) is a freelance editorial and website consultant based in London. After graduating from Bristol with a Physics degree, she became a journalist and spent several years as editor-in-chief of a successful newsstand magazine before working in the internet market and then going freelance.

Starting out
As a girl I loved reading books and writing stories. I was lucky to be taught spelling and grammar in a very traditional way and at 12 I won the school English prize. However, I was always good at mathematics and science, so, with no clue about what career I wanted, I chose a Physics degree.

At Bristol I discovered that I really enjoyed the written aspects of my course. Having been warned off technical writing by my (technical writer) father, I decided to pursue a media career and use my choice of degree to my advantage. Sure enough, a well-written CV from a female with a Physics degree stood out from all the wannabee scribes with arts and journalism qualifications, and I landed an editorial assistant’s job on a technical magazine.

Becoming an editor
The first time I saw my name on the masthead of a magazine I was hooked. The thrill of producing something from scratch that was informative and that people wanted to read was very exciting. Starting at the bottom in a small company meant I learned a lot of valuable skills quickly, as I had to do layouts and editing, as well as writing.

My first editor’s job was on a monthly computing magazine. Even as a child I’d been told I was a good organiser, but when I was given responsibility for the whole editorial process, I realised that being good with words is just a minor part of the role.

Moving on
Later I landed a features editor position on the first magazine to be launched in the UK by a major US publishing firm. A couple of years later I became editor-in-chief. The magazine covered the mail order PC market, and its huge success mirrored the growth in that industry during the 1990s. At its peak we published an issue with nearly 1,000 pages, of which over a quarter were editorial – a major feat of planning.

Ups and downs
Being an editor is hard work and carries a great deal of responsibility. You have to be good at planning but you also need to be able to make decisions fast when you’re up against a deadline. And you have to stand up for what you believe the readers want and for your journalistic ideals in a business where advertising pays the wages.

There are bonuses. Foreign trips weren’t glamorous but did offer chances to see places I’d never otherwise have visited. I’m not a techie, so learning to write about the PC business enabled me to write about almost anything, and I also learned to write speeches and marketing materials, and to give presentations.

Since turning freelance, I’ve worked for a wide range of clients including charities and trade unions. Funnily enough, though, the very technologies I wrote about as a magazine editor are the ones that now let me juggle my freelance career with looking after my children.

What you need to make it
Good writing and management skills are imperative: you can be taught how to improve, but you need innate skills in both. Journalism and media courses can help but it is possible to get into publishing without doing one. Having been an editor, though, I would recommend getting any relevant experience you can to make your CV stand out from the crowd.
How to get your ‘five a day’

Our expert: Sue Baic (BSc 1984), dietician and lecturer in nutrition and public health

Why does it matter?
Studies show that eating fruit and vegetables can protect against major chronic illnesses common in today’s society: high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, obesity and asthma, as well as many age-related conditions. The World Health Organization recently stated that eating more fruit and vegetables was the second most important thing we could do to reduce the risk of cancer. Fruit and vegetables are important because they contain a range of plant chemicals – fibre, vitamins and antioxidants – which help protect our cell membranes and DNA against damage from free radicals in the environment.

Dietary guidelines say that we should eat a minimum of five portions a day. However, recent surveys show that as few as 14 per cent of adults in the UK manage this.

What does ‘five a day’ mean?
A wide range of fruit and vegetables can count towards this daily total, including fresh, dried, canned and juiced. Frozen fruit and vegetables count too, and may even be higher in antioxidants than fresh ones that have been on the shelf for a while. A glass of fruit juice, a handful of dried fruit or nuts and a portion of cooked pulses count, but only once each. Try to ‘eat a rainbow’ by selecting items of different colours to get a good balance of antioxidants.

How can I encourage my children to eat more?
Children who eat fruit and vegetables are more likely to eat them as adults. As a rough guide, a portion for children is the amount that will fit into the palm of their hand. Often raw fruit and vegetables that children can eat with their fingers go down well. Try incorporating fruit and vegetables into pasta sauces, pizza toppings, soups and fruit smoothies. For a great range of practical ideas, see www.5aday.nhs.uk/TopTipsForTopMums/

Sue Baic is a registered dietitian and lecturer in nutrition and public health at the University of Bristol. She is co-author of Nutrition for Dummies, GL Diet for Dummies and Living Gluten Free for Dummies.

How to market your company on a shoe-string

Our expert: Sean Jackson (BA 1997), marketing director

Marketing budgets are great. Believe me, they are. But if you don’t have one, don’t worry; there are some key things you can do to promote your business without it costing the earth.

Website
We live in the digital age so you need a website. But don’t feel that you need to engage a web design agency. There are a number of cost-effective solutions out there. One of the key things to do is populate the website with as many terms and keywords that reflect your business as possible.

PR
Again, PR isn’t all about expensive PR agencies. It’s just a question of knowing the right people and building good relationships with them. It is far better to focus on targeting three or four key journalists and engaging with them regularly than trying to hit every journalist out there. Send them Christmas cards. Invite them out to lunch now and again. Write letters to the local press on issues to do with the business you are in. Start a blog. You never know who might read it.

Advertising
If you can’t afford an advert in the paper, try an insert instead. Create pamphlets and have them distributed in the free local press. Make sure your company is listed in as many free directories as possible. Your company vehicles should shout about your business.

Trade shows and seminars
If you cannot afford to exhibit your products at a trade show or seminar, go along as a delegate and network. You might meet a prospect or some key contacts with whom you can partner.

Your staff
Your staff are the most valuable asset you have. Look after them and make sure that all customer-facing staff act professionally. Every time a member of staff speaks with a prospect or indeed a client, they are marketing the company.

Sean Jackson is a marketing director who has worked in marketing at various companies for over ten years. He currently works at Kognitio, a company that offers Business Intelligence and Data Warehousing solutions. www.kognitio.com
From the collections
The Bristol diamonds

This (above left) was William Camden’s description of the cliffs of the Avon Gorge in his book Britannia in 1586. The gems that he wrote of were not quite diamonds, but multi-faceted quartz crystals that have become known as ‘Bristol diamonds’.

Now recognised as quartz geodes, the ‘diamonds’ are believed to have formed in the cavities of fossilised scree, deposited around 250 million years ago against the sides of the long-since eroded mountains. Water percolating through the scree carried silica that was deposited in the hollows; and, in these spaces, the quartz crystals grew and adorned the gorge for 16th-century observers such as Camden.

His assessment of the solidity of these particular ‘diamonds’ was correct: on a scale of hardness for naturally occurring minerals, real diamonds are at the top with ten, while quartz scores only seven. However, the crystals were in popular demand for jewellery and were collected from the gorge for this purpose. For the 21st-century observer standing in Camden’s place, the gorge is no longer studded with diamonds, but a few hidden gems remain in the University's geology museum.

The University holds a number of important collections and archives. The Department of Earth Sciences’ Geology Museum contains around 100,000 specimens of vertebrate and invertebrate fossils, rocks, minerals and gemstones from the UK and abroad. It is housed in the Wills Memorial Building.
The raving reporter

Just four years after graduating from Bristol, former Epigram News Editor Zoë Griffin (BSc 2003) has scooped a top job: showbiz columnist at The Sunday Mirror. Lara King gets the gossip.

Legend has it that journalists rank alongside estate agents and politicians at the top of the league of most disliked professions. Spend five minutes with Zoë however, and you’ll be left wondering how this old adage could possibly be true. Bright, bubbly and always smiling, Zoë is giving hardened hacks a run for their money after cutting her journalistic teeth at The Daily Telegraph, The Mail on Sunday and The London Paper. Now, the former Epigram News Editor has become headline news herself: just four years after graduating from Bristol, she has been poached to fill the coveted spot of showbiz columnist at The Sunday Mirror.

It doesn’t take much journalistic instinct to come up with my first question. How on earth did Zoë, dubbed by The Sunday Mirror as ‘the youngest, hottest columnist out there’, rise so quickly through the ranks of such a competitive profession? ‘I worked my way up,’ she says simply. But it soon becomes clear that modesty is another endearing characteristic of Zoë, who counts supermodel Caprice amongst her personal friends and has discussed Buddhism with Orlando Bloom.

Ambitious, talented and very hard-working, Zoë had decided she wanted to be a journalist by the time she reached her teens. ‘As soon as I got to Bristol, I knew I had to find Epigram and get on board,’ she explains. And get on board she did, clinching the post of Deputy News Editor by the end of her first year and ascending to News Editor in her second year. By her third year, she ‘could just relax a bit’.

Long lie-ins and daytime television were conspicuously absent from this particular student’s idea of relaxation. ‘I knew I had to get as much work experience as possible, so I applied everywhere. I got my first placement in my first year at Bristol with The Times. Once you have The Times on your CV, everyone else takes you a bit more seriously.’

So seriously, in fact, that when the time came to apply for highly competitive graduate training schemes, Zoë made it to the final two at the News of the World and eventually won a place at The Daily Telegraph, beating thousands of candidates to a paid training post on the highly regarded national. In the course of her year at The Telegraph, Zoë worked on the diary pages, the news desk, the business section and The Telegraph Magazine. She learnt shorthand and media law, and went through the journalistic rite of passage of gritty reporting, spending ‘hours and hours’ at the Old Bailey during the Soham trial. The Telegraph also gave Zoë her first celebrity experience. ‘The premiere of Love Actually took place in my first week there,’ she recalls. ‘It was an amazing celebrity party, but I was so excited to be there that I forgot to be scared. I started chatting to Hugh Grant, and, before I knew it, I had my first celebrity scoop.’

With solid journalistic training under her belt and an acquired taste for celebrity culture (and canapés), Zoë switched from roving reporter to raving reporter, moving into showbiz proper at The Mail on Sunday. Her desk chair was barely warm when she found

Continued over page >
herself on a plane to Monaco for her first overseas assignment. ‘I didn’t know anyone out there. I just had one event invitation, to Fashion Rocks Monaco, and that was it,’ she says, recalling the sight of Victoria Beckham and Mariah Carey among the host of celebrities and designers that greeted her.

Amidst the glamour, she befriended a group of girls who invited her for lunch on Georgio Armani’s yacht, where ‘you virtually don’t eat anything – you have a salad and that’s it,’ she laughs. Zoë rounded off the trip by chatting to members of band Il Divo, watching Bon Jovi in concert and then, frustrated at not getting a story from her spot in the audience, sneaking backstage and dodging security guards to make it to the green room. ‘I ended the night at a party in Bon Jovi’s yacht. After that, I knew I had to go on more of these trips.’

But ambitious Zoë was already becoming frustrated with the constraints of her role. ‘There are so many unsung heroes in newspapers, and I didn’t want that to be me. Because I was a deputy, I wasn’t getting my name in the paper, so I decided I had to do something to get noticed,’ she explains. After her repeated requests to branch into travel writing were rebuffed, she went ahead and used her PR contacts to organise a trip anyway. When she returned, article in hand, and offered it to the paper, they snapped it up. ‘And once you’ve done the first one, that’s it. It’s just about getting a foot in the door. After that, I stayed in a six-star hotel in Oman, went shopping in Dubai, learnt how to play golf in Gleneagles, reviewed a health spa, went to China.’

All of this raised Zoë’s industry profile to the extent that, when News International launched The London Paper, hers was the name on everyone’s lips. After eighteen months at The Mail on Sunday, she bade farewell to join the capital’s newest media project. ‘It was such a great opportunity to start a column from scratch,’ she recalls. ‘Everyone was talking about The London Paper and everyone wanted me to come to their club or eat at their restaurant. My life was suddenly like Sex and the City.’

So when The Sunday Mirror revamped their celebrity pages earlier in the year, rising star Zoë Griffin was the natural choice to take the helm. ‘The London Paper was a regional paper, so the offer of joining a national publication was amazing,’ she smiles. ‘I’ve got more of a challenge here. When you have a bad day on a daily paper, you can dismiss it and try to do better tomorrow, but you can’t get away with that on a weekly. It’s scary and exciting, and you just have to have faith that if you do the work, put the calls in, it will come.’ And after a star-studded column launch party in Soho where celebrity guests danced to Peaches Geldof’s DJing and nibbled on chocolates made by Gordon Ramsay, it seems as if this faith is already being validated.

Now finding her (stiletto-clad) feet in her new role, Zoë works Tuesdays to Saturdays at The Sunday Mirror headquarters in Canary Wharf, clocking off at around 6pm before heading out onto the party circuit. ‘Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays are the biggest nights for celebs,’ says Zoë, who has been known to set two alarm clocks after a particularly long night. She describes the late hours as ‘a bit like being back at uni’, except this time she always has a photographer on call in case of an exclusive. And while most student partygoers can look forward to their weekend lie in, Saturday is Zoë’s busiest day. ‘I get in at nine on a Saturday. I have photos waiting for me from the night before, stories of who’s been out clubbing where, who’s been doing what in LA. I spend the day writing, reacting, designing, and getting everything ready to go to press.’

For the girl who shared a flight to the Oscars with David Furnish and once stood on Naomi Campbell’s foot (‘Naomi apologised’), what’s left on her list of things to do? Zoë is determined to continue making her mark in showbiz. ‘I’ve found my niche now. I know the right people and want to use my contacts,’ she says, recounting a number of Epigram alumni that still feature in a now bulging little black book. ‘In ten years, I’d love to be editing a magazine like OK! and I’m also interested in television work. I want to emulate someone like Janet Street Porter: a powerful, successful woman.’ If Zoë’s supersonic career progression to date is anything to go by, Janet ought to be quaking in her boots.
I got my first placement in my first year at Bristol with *The Times*. Once you have *The Times* on your CV, everyone else takes you a bit more seriously.
I grew up in the Alps. I loved it. The camp is just across the valley from my childhood home. I used to sit at my desk, look out at the rain and dream of the mountains back home. Gradually it dawned on me that I needed to rebalance my life and do something that inspired me. I wanted to share the experience of being in a beautiful, natural environment, but in a comfortable and ecological way. The business plan turned the idea into a reality. A first draft, then a second, then a third... Many drafts later, the idea started to take shape. It wasn’t easy to convince people that it was a good idea. As with any innovative concept, it takes time for people to get on board.

I’m really proud of the pods. I looked at tepees, but they can’t stand the heavy snowfall. I looked at yurts, but they don’t always have windows and I wanted guests to admire the views. Then I came across the pods – domes with a geodesic design based on triangles. They can withstand a snowfall of 45 lbs/sq ft with winds of up to 130 mph. They’re funky, comfortable, luxurious and eco-friendly. They’re pitched on a raised wooden platform, so have little contact with the ground and can be taken down anytime without leaving any trace. When you wake up in them and look out over the surrounding views, it’s quiet, romantic and magical.

I followed my gut feeling when deciding where to pitch them.

The pods are a hub for activities from skiing to snowshoeing, ice-climbing to dog-sledging. Guests can snowshoe the ancient way. As the first stars glow, they head out of camp to the nearest viewpoint, finding their way through forests and pastures with the natural light of the fire torch. The guests appreciate the peace and quiet. This, combined with activities during the day, seems to be the perfect combination.

There are new challenges everyday, but that’s just part of running your own business. If it’s not your employees, it’s the suppliers or the quality of the products. Sometimes the challenges seem too tough to overcome.

Ultimately, you’re responsible. So you need to keep a clear head and a well organised diary.

There have been as many highlights as challenges: the first time the pods went up, the first day the clients arrived, every morning when I wake up in the mountain and realise this is my office. Environmental sustainability is central to Whitepod. Respect for the environment has been part of my education since I was a child. I’ve held on to this and always knew that if I was going to do something in nature, I had to address sustainability before anything else.

We want to stay small. We only have 20 guests at a time. That way, we can provide a personalised service and have a low impact on the environment. And it’s a nice contrast to modern society.

Winning the Responsible Tourism Award for Innovation in 2005 gave me a great boost. There are doubts when you set up your own business. Winning the award confirmed that I was heading in the right direction.

The past winter in the Alps was unusually warm, and most of all, unpredictable. One day we would have a heavy snowfall and a few days later it would be 15 degrees centigrade.

Venturing into the unknown is bound to show you new limits and inspirations. I guess I’m more conscious of my limits today, but I’m also more aware of my potential.

I have fantastic memories of my years at Bristol. I wish I could turn back time and do it again. Back then, I never thought that I would be running my own business. I thought I was going to be a solicitor in the City for the rest of my life.

Deciding to set up my own business, choosing the pods and staying true to my initial inspiration – these have all been my best decisions.

For more information about Whitepod, visit www.whitepod.com

Round, white and green all over

No crowds, no busy streets, no hotels, no restaurants. Just breathtaking scenery and 12 white canvas igloos surrounded by snow. This is no ordinary holiday resort; this is Whitepod, a super stylish, eco-friendly camp perched high in the Swiss Alps. Sofia de Meyer (LLB 1996) traded in her life as a London solicitor to set it up.
“Venturing into the unknown is bound to show you new limits and inspirations.”
Student eye

David Speirs (LLB 2006) on small acts that make a big difference.

"It’s been truly amazing to see first-hand the huge, positive impact that Bristol students have in their community."

I sometimes come across people who have this strange misconception about Bristol students: that we are disconnected from our local community. They believe that we spend most of our time trapped within a student bubble, isolated from the ‘Real Bristol’, concerned only with our own affairs. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Bristol has one of the most active student volunteering organisations in the country and a long tradition of community action.

Bristol Student Community Action (SCA) started in 1970, when a small group of students decided that raising money for local charities was not enough and that students should get more involved on a practical level. One of the first projects to be set up was a social group for psychiatric patients at Barrow Hospital. Although the hospital has now closed, the project continues to this day.

Today, SCA has 36 projects which are led, managed and staffed entirely by student volunteers. My job as SCA Co-ordinator is to support all the projects and ensure that students get the most out of volunteering.

I caught the volunteering bug in my first year when I ran play sessions for children from single parent families. I then went on to volunteer with a number of SCA projects: working with elderly people, the homeless and also at Barrow Hospital. In my final year, I co-ordinated a project taking children with learning difficulties on daytrips and away for weekends. Then in March 2006, after a two-week campaign, I was elected SCA Co-ordinator.

When I applied to university, I didn’t expect that I would end up taking groups of disadvantaged children to the zoo and elderly people to the seaside, as well as supporting psychiatric patients in a hospital. However, it’s proved to be a hugely valuable experience and key to my development as a person. Some of my happiest memories of being a student at Bristol are from my volunteering experiences with SCA. It’s helped me to find ways of thinking and develop valuable skills and it’s also given me a new perspective on life.

As I come to the end of my term in office, I can’t help feeling a sense of sadness that I am coming to the end of my journey with SCA. I believe that small acts by individuals can collectively make a big difference. It’s been truly amazing to witness this in action; to see first-hand the huge, positive impact that Bristol students have in their community. I’m absolutely sure that this tradition of community action will endure for years to come.

Find out more about SCA at www.community.org
If you still think networking is about boardrooms and business cards, think again. Through the University’s Contact Scheme, Bristol alumni are sharing their professional expertise with current students and connecting with a new generation of eager employees; and all without having to leave their desks.

Launched by the Careers Service in 2005, the Contact Scheme is an online portal with over 650 graduate members willing to offer informal careers support to those wishing to follow in their footsteps. Self-starting students and prospective professionals make contact via the site’s messaging system, which protects members’ privacy and ensures that the scheme is only used for relevant enquiries.

The most clicked-on contacts are those working in PR, advertising, investment banking, the BBC, management consultancy and law, but the ever-expanding database includes Bristol graduates studying, researching and working in fields as diverse as animal conservation and aircraft manufacture. Students can search the database by job types, degree subjects or employer names, ensuring the perfect match between professionals and their protégés.

Tim Beggs (BSc 1980) is an Associate Partner for Accenture and one graduate member of the Contact Scheme. He has received messages from a number of students also contemplating careers in management consultancy. ‘Several people have wanted to know the secrets of getting through competitive application processes,’ Tim explains. ‘While there are no secrets, there are some attributes that are sought and valued above others, and I have no issue with detailing these for those who contact me. Knowing what they are will not advantage a candidate if they cannot demonstrate real abilities in these areas.’

For Tim, the biggest reward comes from abandoning aptitude tests and helping students choose the career that is really right for them. ‘Personally, the most satisfying interactions are those where people are considering several roles, and I am able to draw on my varied range of experience to give them things to consider,’ he explains. ‘I enjoy the contacts and find them stimulating, and would definitely encourage more people to use the service.’

As well as guidance, Contact Scheme members can also choose to offer work experience and vacation employment to the savvy students who seek them out. Alex Peal (English 2005-) is one student who is about to get a step closer to her career goals with a coveted summer placement. ‘The Contact Scheme provides a focused and personal way of making contact with a company, and so often this is exactly what students need,’ Alex explains. ‘I’ve secured a month’s work experience at the Environment Agency this summer, and have made a really useful contact for life after Bristol. I would recommend the scheme to anyone.’

If you’re interested in sharing your employment expertise with current Bristol students or just want to find out more, email Mary Wakeling at mary.wakeling@bristol.ac.uk or visit www.bristol.ac.uk/careers.

Find out more about how you can help current students at www.bristol.ac.uk/alumni/involved
Twenty small grants, a whole lot of difference

Alumni donations – whatever their size – make a difference every day at Bristol. **Hannah Ford** looks back over the past 20 years and highlights some of the smaller grants that have had a big impact on University life.

1. **Books, books, books**
   At the heart of every university is a great library, and Bristol is no different. Every year, hundreds of books are added to the library, thanks to alumni donations. The average cost of a new book is £50.

2. **Brunel sketch books**
   In 1984, a £250 grant helped the University buy Isambard Kingdom Brunel’s famous sketch books, a key piece of Bristol’s history.

3. **Postgraduate travel loans**
   Over the past 20 years, 740 postgraduate students have received grants totalling £183,543, enabling them to attend conferences around the world to present their findings. That’s an average of £248 each. Not a lot of money, but what a great opportunity for the students. And it’s great for the University’s international reputation as well.

4. **Hodgkin Scholarship**
   The Hodgkin Scholarship may not affect thousands of students at Bristol, but it has an incredible impact on the life of the student who receives it every year. Fundraising by students, topped up with donations from alumni, enables students from developing countries to come to Bristol to study for a Masters degree. On returning home, many Hodgkin scholars have used their new skills to fuel development in their home countries.

5. **ENVIRO ’06**
   Every year, Environment Week raises awareness of environmental issues and encourages students to think about how they can live in a more sustainable way. In 2006, a grant of £640 helped cover the costs of running the week. It was a huge success and, with thousands of students taking part, it was a great way to spread the green message.

6. **Festival of Youth**
   In 1997, Student Community Action set up and ran the Bristol Festival of Youth with a grant of £1,000. The festival showcased the positive contribution young people make to the life of the city. Bristol students were joined by students from schools and colleges across the region to take part in the many workshops, exhibitions and discussion groups.

7. **Volunteers for Development Abroad**
   Thanks to the work of a group of dedicated Bristol students, Bristol Volunteers for Development Abroad became an official student society in 2001. A grant of £250 helped attract volunteers for its summer projects. It now has lots of members who work with communities across the developing world, including Rwanda, Thailand and Uganda.

8. **Wall map of Ireland**
   A wall map of Ireland was bought for £20 for the Department of History in 1990, and it’s still being used today.

9. **Fair Trade café**
   With a grant of just £345 two ethically minded students opened a Fair Trade café in 2004. Run by volunteers, the café fast became a firm favourite with staff and students, serving homemade cakes, sandwiches and soups. It also supports both the University’s and the city’s bids to achieve Fair Trade status.

10. **RAG collection buckets**
    In 1998, RAG received a £100 grant to replace its old, tattered collection buckets. Thousands of pounds are raised every year by Bristol’s bucket-shaking students, who travel the length and breadth of the country collecting people’s loose change and then giving it to good causes.
11. Reading machine for blind staff and students
A grant of £1,000 in 1989 enabled the University to buy a reading machine for blind staff and students.

12. BSc in International Health
In 2005, the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry was able to get the new BSc in International Health off the ground, thanks to a grant of £10,700. The money bought teaching and learning resources for the course.

13. Stop AIDS society
The Bristol Stop AIDS society is part of a nationwide student organisation that raises awareness of the worldwide AIDS pandemic. In 2005, a grant of £250 covered the costs of two key awareness-raising events on campus. And that meant that all the money they raised went straight to HIV/AIDS charities.

14. Rocket team
In 1997, the University Rocket Team entered the Aspirespace National Rocket Challenge with a grant of £700.

15. Student restroom
Vet students on overnight duty at the Veterinary Hospital in Langford now have a room to rest in after a hard night’s work thanks to a grant of £10,000. This is an important safety initiative, as previously students had to drive home, tired, in the early hours of the morning.

16. Students for Kids International Project
During 2006, a group of medical students set up the Bristol branch of Students for Kids International Projects, which organises students to work with, and fundraise for, children in developing countries. A grant of £250 was provided to help the new scheme get off the ground and buy new equipment. The students are already making a difference in South Africa where they are currently working.

17. Conservation society
For the past three years a grant of £200 has enabled Bristol’s Conservation Group to take an annual working summer holiday to the Isle of Arran in Scotland, where they carry out conservation work that helps regenerate the island’s natural ecology.

18. Arts bursaries
On average, four £600 arts bursaries are awarded each year, encouraging and supporting postgraduate students to study at Bristol.

19. Popcorn production
Appearing at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival is every drama student’s dream. In summer 2004, Bristol’s drama society Spotlights took their production of Ben Elton’s Popcorn to the festival, thanks to a grant of £1,050.

20. Havana water project
A grant of £240 helped six undergraduates travel to Havana to continue their research into the optimisation and control of urban Cuban water supplies in summer 2006. The long-term plan is to help the local community set up an optimised solution for the CUJAE University closed water network, which currently uses up to five times the amount of water the community needs.

Find out more about giving to the University at www.bristol.ac.uk/alumni/donate
Your news

1940s
Trevor Jaggar (BSc 1946) has been elected Chair of the Britain-Tanzania Society for 2006-07. CDR Pengelly (MB ChB 1946, MD 1959) was admitted to the Fellowship of the American College of Physicians (Philadelphia) on 6 April 2006.

1950s
Edward Forbes (BA 1953, Cert Ed 1954, MLitt 1971) was recently elected Vice-President of the Society for Theatre Research. Jean Samaan (MB ChB 1957) moved to the US in 1964 and worked at a family practice in Houston. She now lives on a ranch in Cal Spring and has two herds of Santa Gertrudis cattle.

1960s

Robin Swales (BA 1960, PhD 1964) has retired after 44 years teaching history at the Universities of London and Lancaster in England, and Regina, Memorial Newfoundland, Queen’s, and Victoria in Canada. Wilfred Thackray (BSc 1960) spent 28 years as an Ivy League professor, and is now in a parallel career in the non-profit world.

1970s
David Russell (BSc 1972) has retired from the post of Director of Development Services at South Cambridgeshire District Council where he led on major developments.

1980s
Marc Abbey (JYA 1986) has been made managing partner of US-based consulting, merger and acquisition advisory firm, First Security Ventures. Neil Smart (BVSc 1984) was appointed vicar of the village of Brockenhurst in the New Forest, Hampshire. He will be installed on 11 July 2007 by the Bishop of Southampton.

1990s
Thomas Chesshyre (BSc 1993) has written a travel book entitled How Low Can You Go? Published by Hodder and Stoughton, it’s about low-cost flights to unsellable parts of Europe. Joseph Deats-James, son of Lara James (BA 1996, PhD 2000) and Gareth Deats, was born on 17 December 2006.

Sudhakar Bhandare (MSc 2007) has been appointed an Emeritus Professor of Astronomy at the Open University, was awarded an Emeritus Professorship by that institution at a degree ceremony on 5 May 2007. Peter Koch (BSc 1962) was awarded the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers Silver Medal on 13 October 2006 at the Haberdashers Hall, London. Chris Norton (BA 1968) has recently been appointed Chairman of the West of England Premier Cricket League. He is married to Margaret (née Barker) (BA 1968).

Jonathan Pace (Cert Ed 1968, BEd 1969) is working with VSO on an educational management placement in Namibia. Andrew Parkin (PhD 1969) recently published Shaw Sight and Sounds: a Collection of Oil Paintings and Poetry (Shaw College, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2006).

Obituaries
The University extends its sincere condolences to the friends and families of those listed below for whom the University has received notification of death. Please email any notifications of deaths to alumni-obituaries@bristol.ac.uk.

1930s
Agar, Mr Martin (BSc 1934) died 3 March 2007, aged 93.
Ashley-Smith (née Smith), Mrs Marian (BSc 1934) died 7 July 2006, aged 92. Baker, Mr Stanley Victor (BSc 1939, Dip Ed 1946) died 22 December 2006, aged 90.
Bunce (née Smith), Mrs Gwendoline May (BA 1936, Dip Ed 1939) died 15 January 2007, aged 89.
Cresswell, Mr Roy William (BA 1939, Cert Ed 1948) died 5 September 2005, aged 87.
Filor, Mr Clarence George Horatio (BSc 1937) died 19 November 2006, aged 91.
Hitchman (née Towner), Mrs Sally (BA 1936) died 7 January 2007, aged 93.
Luckwill, Mr Leonard Curtis (BSc 1935, PhD 1937) died June 2005, aged 91.
Nicholson, Dr Matthew Andrew (MB ChB 1935) died 20 December 2006, aged 95.
Pugh (née Palmer), Mrs Muriel Alice (BSc 1939, Dip Ed 1940) died January 2007, aged 88.

Ahli Adan, son of Anna Roslani (MB ChB 1997) and Alik Zakaria, was born on 11 February 2007 in Kuantan, Malaysia. Anna also has a two-year-old daughter, Leela Scott, daughter of Daniel Scott (BSc 1993) and Rozita Scott, was recently born in Sydney. Shyam Vyasa (BSc 1993) is currently living in New Jersey, US with his wife and son, where he is a manager for a scientific software company. Joshua Wong’s (LLB 1999) son Jeremiah Wong Tian Lik was born on 12 March 2007.

2000s
Joanna Bargioni (BSc 2005) returned to the UK in March 2007 following a year of travelling.
Sudhakar Bhandare (MSc 2007) has been awarded a Massey University Doctoral Scholarship at Massey University, New Zealand. He started his PhD in June 2007.
Helen Lambert (BSc 2004) plans to retrain as a vet. She is starting a BVSc in Veterinary Science at the University of Liverpool in September 2007.
William Mudd (BSc 2003) recently returned from Iraq after being injured on operations.
Pieric Schoch (MSc 2001) married Hirinko Sano on 8 June 2006 and they had a boy, called Leo, on 20 November 2006.
Alex Varey (MB ChB 2000) MRCS has been made a Hunterian Professor of Surgery at the University of Bristol for the work he did during his PhD.
1940s
Allen (née Whipp), Mrs Marjorie (BA 1943, Cert Ed 1944) died February 2007, aged 85.
Bartlett, Dr Michael John (LDS 1948) died 7 February 2007, aged 81.
Bourke, Mrs Nadine Joy (BA 1944) died 29 August 2003.
Bradbury, Mr Cecil James Marchant (BA 1949, Cert Ed 1950) died February 2006, aged 82.
Denham (née Holt), Mrs Helen Marie (MB ChB 1944) died 1 December 2006, aged 85.
Foster, Dr William Peter (MB ChB 1944) died 29 January 2007, aged 86.
Gardiner (née Richardson), Mrs Dorothy Temple (Testamur in Social Study 1949, Cert in Applied Social Studies 1971) died April 2002, aged 76.
Gredu (née Jeffries), Mrs Muriel Kathleen (BSc 1949, Cert Ed 1950) died 30 January 2006.
Johnson, Mr Eric Arthur (BSc 1940) died 6 February 2007, aged 87.
O’Shaughnessy, Mr Kevin Joseph (BSc 1949, MSc 1962) died 2007, aged 79.
Parker (née Johns), Mrs Pauline Gladys (BA 1954) died 14 December 2006.
Gifford, Mr Roger Nicholas (MB ChB 1957) died 27 December 2006.
Gilbert, Mr Victor Francis (BA 1951) died 14 October 2006, aged 80.
Hawkins, Mr Peter Edward (BA 1956) died 3 May 2006, aged 71.
Hilborne, Mr Hugh Rodney (BSc 1952) died 2007.
Hopkins, Professor Keith Vernor (MB 1953) died 14 March 2007, aged 77.
Lott, Mr Brian (BSc 1957) died 27 February 2007.
Marshall, Mr John Henry (BDS 1951) died 8 December 2006, aged 83.
Mortimer, Professor Keith Vernon (BDS 1955, PhD 1964) died 27 May 2005, aged 73.
Pointer, Mr Peter (BSc 1950, Cert Ed 1953) died 14 March 2007, aged 77.
Pryce, Mr John Charles Vaughan (BSc 1957) died 18 July 2006, aged 73.
Selwyn, Mr William Kenneth (Diploma in Public Admin 1950) died August 2003, aged 82.
Stone, Mr Reginald David (BA 1951, MSc 1971) died 28 March 2006.
Thorpe, Dr Derek Sydney (BSc 1951, PhD 1953) died 25 March 2006, aged 76.
Uzzell, Dr Peter Stanley (BSc 1955, PGCE 1958) died 15 February 2007, aged 76.
Williams (née Mitchell), Mrs Enid (BA 1952) died 20 February 2007.
Zutshi, Dr Derek Wyndham Hariram (MB ChB 1957, Honorary LLD 1999, Chairman of Convocation 1988-99) died 14 February 2007, aged 76.

1950s
Chatfield, Dr Terence Herbert Peter (MB ChB 1954) died 9 May 2006, aged 79.
Collier, Mr Robert Norman Wordsworth (BSc 1950) died 25 April 2007.
Coogan, Dr Clive Keith (PhD 1952) died 17 December 2006, aged 80.
Donovan (née Saward), Ms Shirley Louise (BSc 1957) died 19 February 2007, aged 71.
Downes, Dr Peter William Edward (MB ChB 1953) died March 2004, aged 79.
Ellis, Mr Bryan (BSc 1951) died 14 April 2007.
Epiplestone (née Shipton), Dr Beryl Maude (MB ChB 1953) died 22 February 2007, aged 76.
Fowler, Dr Denis Byron (MB ChB 1954) died 3 January 2007, aged 83.
Gifford, Mr Roger Nicholas (BA 1953) died September 2004.
Gilbert, Mr Victor Francis (BA 1951) died 14 October 2006, aged 80.
Hawkins, Mr Peter Edward (BA 1956) died 3 May 2006, aged 71.
Hilborne, Mr Hugh Rodney (BSc 1952) died 2007.
Hodnett (née Dabner), Mrs Sheila Elizabeth (BA 1950, Cert Ed 1951) died 13 April 2007, aged 78.

Larkin, Mr James Alan (BA 1971) died February 2007, aged 57.
Little (née Stansell, formerly Mealing), Mrs Patricia Ann (BA 1971, Cert Ed 1972) died 5 March 2006, aged 55.
Miller, Dr Andrew Graham (BA 1976) died 22 March 2007, aged 52.
Miller, Mr John (BA 1970) died September 2005, aged 56.
Mugaju, Dr Justus Buringili (PhD 1977) died 14 May 2007.
Purkiss, Miss Maureen (BA 1970) died February 2006.
Reed, Dr Robert James "Bob" (BEd 1970) died November 2005.
Skates, Mr Barry Charles (BSc 1977) died August 2006, aged 51.
Totman, Mr Alan Robert (BSc 1976) died 24 October 2006, aged 51.
Winter, Dr Raymond (Cert Ed 1974, BSc 1943, PhD 1951) died 17 February 2007, aged 84.

1990s
Cor, Mr Liam Henry (MEng 1988) died April 2007, aged 41.
Kerwin, Professor Robert William (PhD 1986) died February 2007, aged 81.

2000s
Basak, Miss Swagota (BSc 2002) died March 2007, aged 26.
Dare, Dr Mark Gavin (Pathology and Microbiology undergraduate) died 21 June 2006, aged 21.
Field, Mr Charles Edward (Chemistry undergraduate) died May 2007, aged 20.
Janaway, Mr Christopher Henry (BSc 2000) died 8 May 2007, aged 28.
Pitcairn, Mr Hugh (Mechanical Engineering undergraduate) died 10 January 2007, aged 20.

Friends and supporters of the University
Arthur, Emeritus Professor Geoffrey Herbert died March 2007, aged 91.
Barnett, Mrs Helen Margery Burchill died 21 November 2006.
Butler, Emeritus Professor Neville died 27 February 2007, aged 86.
Corner, Dr Beryl Dorothy (Honorary MD 1996) died 4 March 2007, aged 96.
Peregrine, Emeritus Professor Dennis Howell died 20 March 2007, aged 68.
Selwyn, Mr William Kenneth (Diploma in Public Admin 1950) died August 2003, aged 82.
Williams (née Mitchell), Mrs Enid (BA 1952) died 20 February 2007.
Zutshi, Dr Derek Wyndham Hariram (MB ChB 1957, Honorary LLD 1999, Chairman of Convocation 1988-99) died 14 February 2007, aged 76.

1960s
Adams, Dr Margaret Joan (MB ChB 1964) died 3 April 2006, aged 64.
Anning, Mr Roy John George (LLB 1965) died 18 November 2006, aged 63.
Bailey (née Mitchell), Dr Christina Margaret (BSc 1966, PhD 1970) died March 2004.
Copson (née Sturdy), Mrs Pamela Jean Everett (BSc 1961, Cert Ed 1962) died 30 November 2006, aged 67.
De’Ath, Mr Terry John (Cert Ed 1962) died November 2006, aged 70.
Haarhoff, Mr Keith Norman (PhD 1969) died November 2005.
Howard, Mr Peter Aylmer (BVSc 1968) died 12 May 2006, aged 60.
Hume (née Hooper), Ms Mary Elisabeth (BA 1962) died 3 February 2006, aged 84.
Lane, Mr Stephen Paul (BSc 1966) died 29 December 2006, aged 62.
Madden, Lieutenant Commander Louis John (LDS 1962) died 1 June 2006.
Robson (née Wheatley), Mrs Joanna Margaret (BSc 1963) died 11 January 2007, aged 64.
Salter, Mr David John “Henry” (BA 1966) died 2006.
Smith, Dr John William (PhD 1968) died 18 January 2007, aged 65.

1970s
Amerasinghe, Dr Felix Prashantha (PhD 1977) died 7 June 2005, aged 56.
Fox, Mr Shamus Croker (BSc 1974) died 4 November 2005, aged 54.
Hopkin, Dr Steve Paul (BSc 1977) died 19 May 2006, aged 50.
Jennner, Dr Peter John (BSc 1976) died in 2001.
In print

A selection of recently published books by Bristol alumni.


‘There are only two things you can’t hide, Ishq and Mushq, Love and Smell …’

Set against the violent backdrop of India’s Partition in 1947, Ishq and Mushq tells the story of Karam and Sarna, a young Sikh couple, who meet and fall in love before being brutally separated in the stampede to partition. Reunited after the chaos, they marry and set sail for Kenya to begin a new life. But history cannot so easily be forgotten. Traumatised by his brush with death in a refugee camp in Lahore, Karam restlessly searches for a new kind of history which he can be part of. And Sarna, retreating inside her kitchen, tries to forget the shameful secrets of her past by cooking up an alternative version of reality. She is tracked down by Nina, the illegitimate daughter she abandoned at birth, and the secrets of her past begin to unravel. She must marry Nina off or risk exposure; but first she must teach her how to cook.

Spanning the second half of the 20th century and shifting between India, Africa and Britain, this family saga dramatises the Sikh experience and the secrets which bedevil unhappy families.


The modern workplace is a hotbed of office politics. Watch out for back-stabbing colleagues, incompetent team-mates, self-serving spin doctors and toxic bosses. Discover how to defend yourself and get ahead in the world of work. In this pithy and entertaining book, executive coach and BBC TV psychologist Dr Rob Yeung explains how to turn office politics on its head.


This book is a futuristic satire about a robot who taught the world to be human. Thinkbot is the world’s first sentient robot – a thinking, feeling, spiritual, compassionate, human-like being in a tin can. The world into which Thinkbot emerges is one of advanced high-technology, where all manual work and related activity is carried out by robots: waiterbots, plumberbots, hortibots. More worryingly, robots of mass destruction now constitute the ultimate weapon of the new world order.


David presents a model for successfully instructing bilingual students in international schools across the curriculum.

Find more books written by Bristol alumni at www.bristol.ac.uk/alumni/books
Ten and 15 year reunion

A perfect spring evening welcomed Bristol graduates from 1992 and 1997 back to Bristol for their reunion. The sun went down, the BBQ fired up and the Pimms poured freely, as alumni gathered at what has to be one of Bristol’s most spectacular spots, the terrace at the Avon Gorge Hotel. One happy graduate said: ‘It was the perfect venue overlooking the Clifton Suspension Bridge, it couldn’t have been better.’

Bristol graduates bond in China

Their paths had never crossed in their time at Bristol, but during a five month stay in China, Susan Springhall (BA 2004) developed a lasting friendship with Bristol contemporaries Lili Guan (MEd 2005) and Lu Jing (MA 2005).

Susan was on a teaching placement at a university in the small city of Wenzhou when she met the fellow graduates, and they built a friendship that made her time in China ‘extremely special’. Susan ended her stay in China by celebrating Jing’s wedding as her bridesmaid.

Alumni in the City

Investment bankers, hedge fund managers, accountants, actuaries and lawyers all gathered for the first ‘Bristol alumni in the City’ event held in May at the USB conference centre. Over 100 industry leaders listened to Sir Derek Higgs (BA 1965, Hon LLD 2005) provide an insight into what it feels like to be caught in a media maelstrom. There was plenty of time for informal networking afterwards.

A giving beyond

This year, Lilian Brown (BA 1951, Cert Ed 1952, Hon MA 2005) steps down from her role as Convocation’s Knowlson Award representative. The award was established in 1963, when John McKerrow Knowlson made a bequest of £20,000 to the University to provide travel grants that would broaden students’ educational experiences. Recipients of the grant are also eligible for an additional award for the best report of their excursion.

Since 1998, Lilian has been responsible for recommending prizewinners from the pool of reports. ‘The Knowlson Award, aided by funds from the Alumni Foundation, has enabled students to work in Europe, the Americas and the Far East, improving medical facilities, sanitation and education. They have also undertaken marine, zoological and biological research as far afield as Africa, India, and South America,’ she explains. Lilian takes away lasting memories from a ‘immensely rewarding and painfully moving’ role: ‘It has been a great privilege to learn of the dedication of Bristol students, which is so far removed from the student stereotypes of the press, and to see that Mr Knowlson’s hope in his bequest has been more than realised by students whom he could never know.’

Alumni at the City event

Over 100 alumni from 1947-53 travelled from far and wide to attend their reunion in April. An action-packed afternoon of activities followed a leisurely lunch in the Victoria Rooms. Some of the group took a coach tour of the precinct, others enjoyed a tour of the University’s Botanic Garden while the rest chose to kick back and relax in the Victoria Rooms, listening to music performed by students. It was a memorable day for all, with some people bumping into friends they hadn’t seen for over 50 years.

Graduates from 1992 and 1997 catch up at their reunion

Alumni business directory

To find discounts on businesses and services offered by other alumni visit www.bristol.ac.uk/alumni/businessdirectory.
Events

Saturday 29 September 2007
The Big Bristol Reunion, London
Get a group together and join other recent graduates at a Bristol-flavoured club night. The event is spear-headed by Bristol alumni. For more information, visit www.thebigbristolreunion.com.

Thursday 1 November 2007
London Branch of Convocation
Autumn Lecture
Baroness Vivien Stern (BA 1963, MLitt 1968, Hon LLD 1990) is giving the London branch’s second autumn lecture on ‘Human Rights and Prison Reform’ at the Houses of Parliament. Baroness Stern is currently Research Fellow at the International Centre for Prison Studies and active in prison reform in the UK.
For more information, email lords@4088.co.uk.

Thursday 6 November 2007
Annual Convocation Reception
Come and meet students, alumni and staff at the University’s Annual Convocation Reception. For more information, contact Julie Gough on +44 (0)117 928 8612 or at julie.gough@bristol.ac.uk.

Friday 4 to Sunday 6 July 2008
Convocation Reunion Weekend
All alumni are invited to return to Bristol for the annual reunion weekend. There will be special celebration lunches for those who graduated in 1958, 1968, 1978 and 1983.

Autumn 2008
Join us for an evening with Coast presenters Dr Mark Horton, Miranda Krestovnikoff (BSc 1994) and Dr Alice Roberts (part-time PhD student in palaeopathology). More details in the next edition of Nonesuch.

The University organises an extensive programme of events which alumni are very welcome to attend. Here are just a few of the highlights:

Tuesday 11 September 2007
The World of the Stage: University of Bristol Theatre Collection

Wednesday 19 September 2007
Abolition 200: Documenting slavery and the abolition controversy

Thursday 20 September 2007
The 2007 BN Annual Symposium - Beyond the synapse: nonsynaptic signalling in the nervous system

Wednesday 10 October 2007
No Vibration: the new Centre for Nanoscience and Quantum Information

Wednesday 17 October 2007
Earthquakes and Engineering: a tour of the new BLADE complex

IMA has pioneered alumni travel in the UK, and alumni from Bristol have travelled with us all over the world. Our tours are designed for people with a general interest in the country that’s featured, but all our itineraries have a strong educational element which is provided by our accompanying expert Bristol lecturers.

The Ultimate South Africa Safari
13-21 September 2008, £2,890
In our latest African safari we feature three of the best private safari venues in southern Africa, each on the on the edge of Kruger National Park, which is renowned for its diversity of wildlife.

Byzantium and a Mediterranean Cruise
24 June - 5 July 2008, £1,390
This tour begins with the famous Byzantine and Ottoman sites of Old Constantinople, followed by a eight day private Mediterranean cruise to visit the archaeological sites of ancient Greek and Roman Caria.

Galapagos Islands Cruise & Ecuador
27 November - 9 December 2008, from £3,220
After a visit to colonial Quito, with its many churches and protected buildings, and a tour along the Avenue of the Volcanoes, the group will fly to the Galapagos Archipelago for an eight day cruise through the Islands. You can combine this with a visit to the Ecuadorian Amazon Rainforest.

For a full brochure contact IMA, 13 THE AVENUE, KEW, RICHMOND, SURREY TW9 2AL
TEL: +44 (0) 20 8940 4114  Email: ima@templeworld.com  Website: www.imatravel.com  ATOL 2903
Nicknamed the ‘tiddler’, the halfpenny was the smallest decimal coin in both size and value. By 1984, when the coin was withdrawn from circulation, it was practically worthless. But some bright Bristol students decided to use this diminutive denomination to make a big statement.

The ‘halfpenny parade’ took place on 24 February 1983 and was part of a national day of demonstrations and ‘sit ins’ that highlighted the National Union of Students’ grants campaign. In the Wills Memorial Building, students worked through the night to lay out, in halfpennies, a sum equivalent to the student grant (£1,595).
Bristol was rated 49th in a recent league table of world universities.*

*And we're one of the smallest in annual turnover among this top-ranking group.