Alumni impact

We met at Bristol

Blue sky thinking

Dr Lis Kutt (MB ChB 1980), one of the many Bristol alumni featured inside
Welcome

We have arrived at a pivotal point, with the centenary celebrations coming towards an end and a new academic year under way. We have had an amazing centenary year, with a host of events and initiatives organised for – and by – alumni, as well as several major projects aimed at the wider public and current staff and students.

In a year that has inevitably been marred by the impact of the global economic downturn, the warm and enthusiastic response of alumni, friends and Bristol residents to our centenary celebrations has been truly heartening.

In the previous centenary issues of *Nonesuch*, we have focused on 100 years of teachers and teaching and 100 years of student life at Bristol. In this issue the focus is on our alumni. We are in touch with about 100,000 of you in over 180 countries and it is clear that, for many of you, your three or more years at Bristol had a profound effect on your lives. It is here that the foundations were laid for a multitude of successful careers, that numerous lifelong relationships were formed and that countless alumni discovered a passion or cause that would shape your futures.

And so it is that for its alumni, Bristol is more than a collection of memories; it is part of your identity. The same will become true for the students who have just joined us. Our centenary may be nearly over, but the great story goes on.

*Professor Eric Thomas (Hon LLD 2004)*
Vice-Chancellor
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The big picture

A surprising view thrown up by *Follow Me*, a new public sculpture created by internationally acclaimed artist Jeppe Hein for the University’s centenary celebrations. The artwork comprises a square labyrinth of 76 vertical polished steel plates sited in Royal Fort Gardens. Once inside the labyrinth, the reflections of visitors and their surroundings – in this case, Royal Fort House itself – are multiplied.

A podcast interview with Jeppe Hein is available at [www.bristol.ac.uk/centenary/look/art/](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/centenary/look/art/)
**News**

If you would like regular news updates, why not sign up for our enewsletter? Email ‘enewsletter’ to alumni@bristol.ac.uk.

![Image]

**Lost stone circle discovered**

Bristol archaeologists have discovered evidence of a lost stone circle on the west bank of the River Avon, a mile from Stonehenge. The new circle, being called ‘Bluestonehenge’, is 10 metres in diameter and was surrounded by a henge – a ditch with an external bank.

The stones from the newly found circle were removed thousands of years ago but the sizes of the holes in which they stood indicate that this was a circle of bluestones that were brought from the Preseli mountains of Wales 150 miles away, like the inner stones at Stonehenge.

The University’s Dr Josh Pollard explained: ‘This is an incredible discovery. The newly discovered circle and henge should be considered an integral part of Stonehenge rather than a separate monument. Furthermore, it offers tremendous insight into the history of its famous neighbour. Its riverside location demonstrates once again the importance of the River Avon in Neolithic funerary rites and ceremonies.’

![Image]

**‘Quietest’ building in the world opens**

The University opened its new Centre for Nanoscience and Quantum Information in September. The £11 million building provides state-of-the-art, specialised laboratories where vibration and acoustic noise levels are among the lowest ever achieved, despite being located in the centre of Bristol. The basement houses the ‘low noise’ area with a suite of ultra-low-vibration nanoscience laboratories that are anchored to the rock below.

The architecture of this unique building incorporates several unusual scientific features. The curved Portuguese limestone on the main elevation is set out in the ‘Fibonacci Series’, a sequence of numbers first created by the Italian mathematician, Leonardo Fibonacci, in 1202. The atrium dome is shaped like a Buckyball, a molecular structure (resembling a football) made up of carbon atoms. Self-cleaning glass has been installed which uses nano-particles to break down dirt that is then washed away by rainwater.

The purpose-designed environment will house a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research community drawn from science, engineering and medicine.

![Image]

**A calculated step**

A team from the Centre recently performed the first-ever mathematical calculation on an optical quantum computer chip – a major step forward in the quest to realise a super-powerful quantum computer. The primitive quantum computer uses single particles of light (photons) whizzing through a silicon chip. The chip takes photons carrying the input for the calculation, then it implements a quantum programme to find the prime factors of 15 and outputs the answer 3 and 5.

‘This task could be done much faster by any school kid,’ said PhD student, Alberto Politi, who, together with fellow PhD student Jonathan Matthews, performed the experiment, ‘but this is a really important proof-of-principle demonstration.’

Finding prime factors lies at the heart of modern encryption schemes, including those used for secure internet communication.
Record turnout for Sir David

Sir David Attenborough FRS (Hon LLD 1977) received a standing ovation after delivering a lecture, *Alfred Russel Wallace and the Birds of Paradise*, to a capacity audience at the University on 24 September. More than 850 people packed the Great Hall in the Wills Memorial Building to hear the legendary and much-loved broadcaster give an illustrated talk about one of his great heroes, British anthropologist, biologist, explorer and geographer Alfred Russel Wallace, one of the early proponents of the theory of natural selection.

After the lecture, Sir David answered questions on subjects as diverse as controlling population growth, the ethics of eco-tourism, time travel and breeding birds of paradise in captivity. He also delighted the audience by recounting some of the highlights of his 50-year career.

The lecture was a highlight of the centenary lecture series organised by the University in 2009 as part of its programme of centenary celebrations. Tickets for the event sold out in under two hours.

Eye for talent

Holly Lopez (BA 2009) has co-curated a new exhibition of contemporary art at The Bristol Gallery, Harbourside. *New Contemporaries I* brings together some of the best and brightest emerging contemporary artists. Holly graduated from the Department of History of Art and is currently studying for an MA at Bristol.

The exhibition runs until 7 January 2010; for details see [www.thebristolgallery.co.uk](http://www.thebristolgallery.co.uk)

Step forward in MS treatment

Bristol scientists believe that results from a research project into multiple sclerosis (MS) could lead to treatment to reduce the severity of the disease. An experiment on mice found that those with higher levels of galanin, a protein within brain nerve cells, were resistant to an MS-like disease.

Professor David Wynick set up the project with other Bristol scientists – Dr Neil Scolding and Professor David Wraith – who are working on a vaccine for the treatment of MS. Professor Wraith said: ‘The results were really remarkable: rarely do you see such a dramatic effect as this. Mice with high levels of galanin just didn’t develop any signs of disease. We have a lot more work to do but the results are extremely promising.’

MS is a neurological condition that affects the transfer of messages from the central nervous system to the rest of the body. It affects 85,000 people in the UK with 2,500 new diagnoses each year.
News

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University commits extra cash for books

Students at Bristol are to benefit from a £350,000 boost to this year’s library budget to enable the purchase of extra books. Over £300,000 of this total has been generously donated by Bristol alumni and friends.

Professor David Clarke, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, said: ‘The extra funding will help to deal with a backlog of unmet need and improve students’ learning experience at Bristol. This is part of a wider programme that includes making the best possible use of existing resources, including online provision.’

The additional spending follows the investment of over £4 million in 2008/09 in physical improvements to the Arts and Social Sciences Library and the Medical Library.

Historian charts lost voyage

A personal letter – now in The National Archives – written by Henry VII to his Lord Chancellor on 12 March 1499 in which he writes that William Weston shall shortly ‘with God’s grace pass and sail for to search and find if he can the new found land’

University historian Dr Evan Jones has brought to light evidence of a previously unknown voyage to North America in 1499, led by a Bristol explorer. A letter written by King Henry VII suggests that a Bristol merchant, William Weston, undertook a voyage to the ‘New Found Land’ just two years after the first voyage of Venetian explorer John Cabot who sailed from Bristol to ‘discover’ North America in 1497.

Dr Jones said: ‘Henry VII’s letter is an exciting find because so little is known about the early English voyages of discovery. Up till now, no one had ever even heard of William Weston. Yet this letter reveals him to be the first Englishman to lead an expedition to North America.’

Although the letter itself does not reveal what Weston achieved, research suggests that his expedition took him up into the Labrador Sea, possibly reaching as far as the Hudson Straits. ‘If so’, Dr Jones continued, ‘this can probably be counted as the first Northwest Passage expedition, commencing a centuries-long search to locate a sea route around North America.’

Antibiotics breakthrough

University researchers have developed the means to understand and exploit a fungus that could form the basis of a new class of antibiotics.

Researchers focused on the organism *Clitopilus passeckerianus* which produces a natural antibiotic called pleuromutilin. In 2007, a derivative – retapamulin – was approved for use in humans as a treatment for impetigo and infected wounds. However, despite its increasing importance, no molecular tools were available to fully understand and exploit this type of antibiotic – until now.

Professor Gary Foster said: ‘The emergence and spread of bacterial resistance to existing antibiotics is of major concern worldwide to animal and human health. Therefore, there is an urgent need to identify and exploit new classes of antibiotics. The ability to transform and manipulate the host organisms that produce these new antibiotics will be a vital tool for discovery and development of new antibiotic products.’
Why we give

Philanthropy has been a significant part of Bristol since its earliest beginnings and continues to make a difference in all areas of the University thanks to the exceptional generosity of alumni and friends. Last year, 93.4 per cent of all donations made to the University were from alumni. This proportion is higher than most other UK institutions, reflecting a common desire among those who know Bristol best to help it move from strength to strength.

As well as alumni, Bristol parents and staff are also choosing to make gifts in greater numbers than in previous years, making a difference to University libraries and many other projects impacting students and researchers at Bristol today.

Over 5,900 individuals and organisations gave to Bristol in 2008/09, including some 1,300 who made gifts for the first time.

Why We Give, the 2009 donor report, highlights just how many alumni and friends are helping Bristol through philanthropic support. To see who gave and learn more about the impact of such generosity, please visit www.bristol.ac.uk/alumni/donors

One hundred years of history

Dr Sarah Whittingham (PhD 2005) has written The University of Bristol: A History, which tells the story of how the institution progressed from its humble origins to today’s thriving, international enterprise of around 12,000 undergraduates, nearly 5,000 postgraduates and over 5,500 employees. Published to coincide with Bristol’s centenary year, The University of Bristol: A History is priced £10. For details please visit www.bristol.ac.uk/centenary/books

New funding for Alzheimer’s research

The answer to why people develop Alzheimer’s disease could be a step closer thanks to a £264,000 grant. A local charity, Bristol Research into Alzheimer's and Care of the Elderly (BRACE), has awarded the grant to Dr Patrick Kehoe and Professor Seth Love who lead the University’s Dementia Research Group. The group were involved in one of the largest-ever studies to discover genes that may be involved in the development of Alzheimer’s disease – a study that found two new Alzheimer genes (CLU and PICALM).

The grant will enable the group to continue with their research into the underlying causes of the common late-onset form of Alzheimer’s disease, which affects over half a million people in the UK.

Reptiles stood upright after mass extinction

A University study of fossil tracks has revealed that reptiles changed their walking posture from sprawling to upright immediately after the end-Permian mass extinction, the biggest crisis in the history of life, that occurred some 250 million years ago and wiped out 90 per cent of all species.

Professor of Archaeology, Mike Benton said: ‘Dinosaurs – and later the mammals – owe their success to being upright. An upright animal, like an elephant or a Diplodocus, can also be very large because its weight passes directly through the pillar-like legs to the ground. In addition, other upright animals, such as monkeys, could use their arms for climbing or gathering food.’

Up to now, the transition from a sprawling to an upright posture was seen as possibly lasting some 20-30 million years, but the new evidence suggests that the process was much more rapid, and was perhaps initiated by the mass extinction crisis. This new understanding shifts evolutionary assumptions as well.
Bristol and me

In our final centenary feature, alumni explore the impact university had on their own lives, in their own words.
Nobody in my family is a medic, but from the age of about 12 it was the only occupation I ever considered. I don’t think I knew an awful lot about it, but it just seemed a caring, good thing to do – all those things that children think are nice!

I grew up in Hong Kong. I chose Bristol because it had a good reputation and because I thought it was close to the sea. On a map of England, Bristol looks like it’s on the coast – I didn’t realise that the Severn Estuary isn’t quite the same as the South China Sea! Coming to university was a shock. It felt very different from home, so I probably didn’t get as much out of university as I might have done, certainly nothing like the exuberant social lives that my children’s generation seems to enjoy.

We had fun, with university revues and cocktail parties, but it wasn’t anything like as constant. Work was what we did.

Most doctors have to make a decision about what area of medicine they want to go into and most require specialist training, but being a doctor is easy, in the sense that you’re on a career path from the beginning. However, if you want a home and children as well as a career, just juggling it all is very challenging.

When your children are young and demand so much of you and your job is so busy because you’re relatively junior and on call a lot, life can be pretty frantic. You feel you’re not giving enough time to your children, your work, or your husband or partner, the house is a tip, and so on.

I had my first child when I was still training but wasn’t encouraged to go part time (I think some of my older colleagues weren’t allowed to go part time). I felt obliged to come back to work as soon as I could, so I took only four months off with each of my children. And even when I went part time after our third child, I was working full time and getting paid part time, which didn’t make any sense. It’s much better for women junior doctors now, because there’s none of the stigma of part-time work and I think, for women, medicine is a really fair career now.

I’ve worked mostly in breast cancer screening. When I talk to a woman about her possible condition, I feel I’m able to give her really good advice, based on evidence and my experience. Women are very grateful for that. It’s not the prospect of an operation that scares most women; it’s the many uncertainties associated with having the condition, so if you can help to fill in those gaps, you can take some of that anxiety away.

For me, like many doctors, the most interesting part is the diagnosis. You have a puzzle: this patient has this symptom or that symptom – can you tell the referring doctor what the problem is? We have a lot of toys at our fingertips to help make that diagnosis: X-rays, ultrasound, computerised tomography and magnetic resonance imaging. However, if anything, this makes life more complicated, as you tend to do things because you can do them, not because you have to. Also, because imaging is so easily available, you risk relying less on your clinical findings, and feel you have to back it up with two or three tests. And then you may find other problems that you need to investigate as well.

Bristol has invested in a clinical research and imaging centre, currently being built at St Michael’s Hospital, because the University understands that it needs to be involved in clinical research and that a good relationship with its teaching hospital is really important. Doing pure science is one thing, but being able to access patients, particularly with regard to new imaging techniques, really makes a difference.

Bristol was very good to me. Because I was personally involved with, and benefited from, the University, I feel an allegiance and a reason to give something back. We are well paid as doctors, we want to see universities like Bristol thrive and we realise that funding is a big problem. I know people often complain about fees but we don’t pay the full cost of what it costs the country and the University to educate us, and I think it’s only right that we give something back.

Dr Lis Kutt (MB ChB 1980) is a consultant radiologist at the Bristol Royal Infirmary.
I’ve always had a social conscience. My mum is very active in the community; she encouraged me to consider other people beyond my own family and friends and try to help if I could.

When I was in sixth form at my Leeds comprehensive school, a group of friends and I made a video called ‘There’s more to drugs than dying’. Our aim was to present a real view of substance use that young people could relate to and it was a big hit, getting shown at many schools across Leeds.

As a result, I was given one day a fortnight off school to work as a peer education officer, developing drugs workshops for young people.

My Sociology and Social Policy degree marked a turning point. In my seminars there were people from completely different backgrounds from mine – it really challenged my views of class and status. More importantly, the theoretical focus of the course opened my eyes to the link between problems faced by the young people I’d worked with and the policies that could contribute to or help alleviate those problems.

I also got to have a hand in some policymaking when I was elected to Student Council. I thrived on the environment of debate and change, as we campaigned against top-up fees or tried to make the university greener. My experience encouraged me to stand for Vice-President of the Students’ Union in 2004 and I was duly elected. It was the most challenging, exhausting and exhilarating year of my life – I successfully campaigned to make Bristol a fair trade university and ran a student support survey that led to real changes in the University’s welfare policy.

After university, I worked for Bristol City Council, designing campaigns to improve school attendance and determine the reasons behind the high levels of non-attendance in the city. In 2008, I felt it was time for a change of scenery and of responsibility. I applied for the Voluntary Service Overseas Youth for Development programme, which places young people in international development work around the world.

As District Education Adviser for Cambodia’s Ratanakiri province, I assist with school management issues, advise the teachers and generally try to get more children to go to school. My knowledge of social and education policy, gained mostly through my time at Bristol, has given me the experience to approach this task confidently. I feel that I’ve had an impact on the individual schools and it’s been extremely rewarding. However, the political issues are more difficult to overcome.

The province has only been safe to travel in since 1998. Only 30 years ago the Khmer Rouge killed three million people in Cambodia including many teachers in Ratanakiri. Corruption is widespread and the province’s remoteness also makes mass education difficult; many villages have no schools and ‘commuting’ is impossible. Almost three-quarters of the population are illiterate; teachers earn $30 a month, which is not enough to live on, so they must take other jobs in order to survive. Despite everything I read about at university, or experienced through previous work, I never knew what poverty really meant until I came here.

My time in Cambodia has made me realise how privileged I am to have been born in a country that supported my education and offered so many opportunities. Now I look back on my time at university with a great deal of affection and gratitude: Bristol opened my mind to the possibility of professional success and the ability to make changes at many levels of the social scale, something that has spurred me on ever since.

WORDS BY ROSE DOW

Sarah Galvin (BSc 2004) moved to Cambodia in 2008 to become a District Education Adviser.
I think my ego wanted to be an actor, but my brain thought about the entire show.

Greg Doran (BA 1980) is Chief Associate Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company.

I had directed and acted at school. Lots of my classmates were heading to Oxbridge but my headmaster said, ‘You’re clearly going to go into the theatre; think about a joint honours degree at Bristol’. When I came to Bristol for my audition and interview, I said I wanted to do a production that summer, so the production tutor, Jenny Bolt (BA 1958), took me into the Theatre Collection and showed me Roy Strong’s book *The English Icon: Elizabethan and Jacobean Portraiture*. I thought it was fantastic that she should care enough to take a prospective student to see a resource.

Bristol graduates at that time were distinguished by their strong, technical knowledge of the theatre. I directed a play, designed a play and acted in plays, all within the department itself. The amount of productions we did and the professionalism with which those productions were carried out was very stimulating. One of my contemporaries was the now-journalist Misha Glenny (BA 1980) – we played ugly sisters in panto at the Winston Theatre. I didn’t have time to get involved with the television side of the department, which I felt I missed out on a bit.

I went on to do an acting course at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, partly because I didn’t think its directing courses were particularly good in those days – I assume they’ve changed now. Teaching directing is perhaps harder than teaching acting because of all the skills and techniques involved. Then I followed my nose, really. The first production I was offered was *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in upstate New York while I was still at theatre school.

At the beginning of my career, I seemed to double up – acting and directing. Then I read Flaubert (to be honest, I read Julian Barnes’ *Flaubert’s Parrot* where he quotes Flaubert!), which said: ‘Most people end up doing what they do second best in life. The trick is find out what you do first best and to do it.’ This made sense to me. I think my ego wanted to be an actor, but my brain thought about the entire show. Also, I had been lucky enough to work alongside very good directors and I knew that it was a rarer craft. But the feeling that caught up with me in my late twenties was that I wanted more control in my life. You can say ‘I’m going to direct *Hamlet*’ but, even if you shout from the rooftops that you want to play *Hamlet*, you’re not necessarily going to get to play him.

I use a technique in rehearsals called crossroads. When an actor comes to a particular point as a character, because he knows the text, he can miss the crossroads where he goes, ‘Shall I kill myself? No, it’ll work out. No, I’ll kill myself’. That moment of tension, opportunity and choice is what makes the audience sit on the front of their seats and believe that tonight it could all turn out differently. Great productions make me believe that.

I’ve done nearly half the canon of Shakespeare’s plays and it took me a while (2008) to get round to *Hamlet*. It will take me longer to get around to *King Lear*, but I think that you grow up with Shakespeare. As a kid, you like the stories, then you become interested in the language or the characters, then maybe the psychology or the politics. It appeals in each stage of your life.

Many drama students in my day graduated with a sense of anxiety about whether they should do a ‘classical’ theatre course. There are no direct routes into the theatre; you can do as many courses as you want or you can jump straight in. If you want it, you will get it, but you have to want it. If there’s anything in your head which goes, ‘Maybe I’ll do this instead’, do that instead.

Sixteen years ago, I didn’t know anything about the military.”
If you’re not certain about what you want to do at 16 or 17, you tend to choose what you enjoy. I thought, I’ll study biology and see what happens. During my degree, I leaned towards more creative pursuits so when I graduated I got a job with the BBC Natural History Unit. After five or six years, I decided my passion was in news and current affairs so I did a postgraduate diploma in Broadcast Journalism.

The British Forces Broadcasting Service was set up during World War Two; now it broadcasts TV and radio to troops and their families all over the world. There are lots of human stories to be told – on the frontline and in the barracks – and I love telling them. The news service is editorially independent; although we are funded by the Ministry of Defence, we’re a charity.

Sixteen years ago, I would never have believed I would join the Territorial Army (TA) or go to Afghanistan on operations. I didn’t know anything about the military. People I met at Bristol really broadened my horizons. They were in the Officer Training Corps and Air Training Corps, having fun at weekends and earning money in the holidays – while you’re waitressing, they’re on some amazing camp somewhere, getting paid for it and gaining leadership skills too.

I joined the TA at 23. I’m in the intelligence corps, whose ranks tend to be full of well-educated people: we’ve got barristers and people with PhDs. The army knew I had journalism skills so, in 2006, I was asked to go out to Afghanistan to serve in Information Operations. In a nutshell, it’s like military marketing, finding out what makes the local people tick and what’s going to make them change their attitude about something. Then you develop posters, leaflets, TV and radio programmes to feed into the local Afghan media to educate, inform or try and persuade people to behave in a certain way. The messages range from things as basic as ‘Don’t throw stones at soldiers’ or ‘Don’t drive really fast at a Snatch landrover because they’ll think you’re a suicide bomber’, to more hard-hitting messages like ‘Don’t support the Taliban in your village because they’re treating you really badly and we need to get them out of there’.

I served with the Royal Marines, a very male environment, although mine wasn’t a fighting role. My brains made up for any lack of brawn! When I held shura consultation meetings with male elders, I often asked if I was offending the men by being there, but was told not, because they understood that our cultures were different. Also, because you’re a soldier in a uniform they look at you neither as a woman nor a man but as something in between, which I found quite funny.

There were three women in my team of nine, which gave us the advantage of being able to speak to Afghan women, who have a lot of influence inside the home and consequently over the next generation, who may or may not grow up to support the Taliban. Before I went out there, the team was all men so no one was engaging the women. You can’t just ignore half of society. Now the army makes sure it always includes women in that team, so they can speak to the local women. People have told me they’ve made significant progress, so I feel proud of that.

When I joined the TA, no one mobilised. These days people have racks of medals; they’ve done two or three tours of Iraq, two of Afghanistan – it’s expected of you. Once you’re within an institution and you’re trained, you’re keen to go out and do the job – I know that’s a cliché, but it’s true. I don’t know anyone who doesn’t find Afghanistan a fascinating place; even though it’s frustrating and there are issues, it’s a very rewarding place to go.

Charlotte Cross (BSc 1994) is a journalist for the British Forces Broadcasting Service and a Territorial Army officer. She served in Helmand province in Afghanistan in 2006.
You can’t do a course that tells you how to make a wildlife film.

Unless you’re studying to become a doctor or lawyer or vet, I don’t think you make it to university with a firm idea of what you want to do; you don’t have enough exposure to the outside world. I’m from Kenya so I grew up around African mammals. I knew I wanted to work with wildlife, but I probably wasn’t clever enough to be a vet and, as an overseas student, it would have been difficult for me to afford five years of study. I was interested in photography, but I never spent much time at university developing that, which I regret.

When you come to make decisions about your career, if you don’t already have an interest, it’s hard to start from scratch aged 25.

**Jeff Wilson (BSc 2001)** is an Assistant Producer at the BBC Natural History Unit.

Lots of Bristol graduates work at the BBC Natural History Unit, but I don’t think any of us assumed that we’d get to work there. The University Careers Service, to give it credit, suggested BBC work experience, so I spent two weeks doing odd jobs around the Unit, trying to meet people. Then I prostituted myself for free to independent companies for as long as I could. I said, ‘I don’t want to be paid, I just want to learn.’ I had to pay the bills, so I worked in a bar at night. Eventually, it paid off because the wildlife filmmaking community in Bristol is so small that the same people have a beer with each other, and your name gets passed around.

I was extremely lucky – my first job was on *Life of Mammals*. I went to Sri Lanka for three weeks to film macaques (a type of monkey), which had colonised a beautiful ancient citadel with Buddhas carved into the cliffs. In the final week, Sir David Attenborough arrived. I’d never met him before; obviously he’s my hero. I was sitting on the veranda when this chair got pulled up next to me and Sir David sat down. We talked about rugby for over two hours, had a beer and watched the sun go down.

You can’t do a course that tells you how to make a wildlife film. You just need to be able to distil scientific or factual information and re-communicate it. People come to us with firsts in Zoology from Cambridge: they’re fantastically clever but they’ve never thought about how things work visually so there’s not much we can do with their brain. We’ve had Biology graduates who will say, ‘There’s an unbelievable hardy fungus that lives in the Antarctic rocks. Here’s three days of research I’ve done’ but how on earth can you film a fungus to make it exciting?

With the help of researchers, my first job is to come up with the storyline, the species and the habitats we want to film. Then I direct the shoot. Usually, it’s myself and the cameraman for up to three months on location, camping or using whatever little hut we can find. On a big series, we commission our own music and graphics too, then I’ll spend about six months with the producer editing hundreds of hours of footage down to hour-long programmes.

I’m reluctant to say that work is my entire life, but it’s definitely a lifestyle that you choose – you know that you’re going to be away a lot, you’re not going to become a millionaire, you do it because you’re passionate about communicating how wonderful the natural world is.

It’s said that everybody who works in television wants to be in front of the camera. I’m not sure that’s true. As a presenter, you don’t have to know everything about the subject, but you do have to be an extremely natural communicator. I’ve worked with a lot of people who would be very good presenters but I wouldn’t be – verbal communication isn’t my strength. My time’s better spent making beautiful imagery and sticking somebody else in front of the camera.

*Planet Earth* - narrated by Sir David Attenborough (Hon LLD 1977) - was the first BBC nature documentary series to be filmed in high definition. Jeff is currently working on *Frozen Planet*, the follow-up to *Planet Earth*, which will be broadcast in 2011 on BBC One.

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Jeff Wilson (BSc 2001) is an Assistant Producer at the BBC Natural History Unit. Lots of Bristol graduates work at the BBC Natural History Unit, but I don’t think any of us assumed that we’d get to work there. The University Careers Service, to give it credit, suggested BBC work experience, so I spent two weeks doing odd jobs around the Unit, trying to meet people. Then I prostituted myself for free to independent companies for as long as I could. I said, ‘I don’t want to be paid, I just want to learn.’ I had to pay the bills, so I worked in a bar at night. Eventually, it paid off because the wildlife filmmaking community in Bristol is so small that the same people have a beer with each other, and your name gets passed around.

I was extremely lucky – my first job was on *Life of Mammals*. I went to Sri Lanka for three weeks to film macaques (a type of monkey), which had colonised a beautiful ancient citadel with Buddhas carved into the cliffs. In the final week, Sir David Attenborough arrived. I’d never met him before; obviously he’s my hero. I was sitting on the veranda when this chair got pulled up next to me and Sir David sat down. We talked about rugby for over two hours, had a beer and watched the sun go down.

You can’t do a course that tells you how to make a wildlife film. You just need to be able to distil scientific or factual information and re-communicate it. People come to us with firsts in Zoology from Cambridge: they’re fantastically clever but they’ve never thought about how things work visually so there’s not much we can do with their brain. We’ve had Biology graduates who will say, ‘There’s an unbelievable hardy fungus that lives in the Antarctic rocks. Here’s three days of research I’ve done’ but how on earth can you film a fungus to make it exciting?

With the help of researchers, my first job is to come up with the storyline, the species and the habitats we want to film. Then I direct the shoot. Usually, it’s myself and the cameraman for up to three months on location, camping or using whatever little hut we can find. On a big series, we commission our own music and graphics too, then I’ll spend about six months with the producer editing hundreds of hours of footage down to hour-long programmes.

I’m reluctant to say that work is my entire life, but it’s definitely a lifestyle that you choose – you know that you’re going to be away a lot, you’re not going to become a millionaire, you do it because you’re passionate about communicating how wonderful the natural world is.

It’s said that everybody who works in television wants to be in front of the camera. I’m not sure that’s true. As a presenter, you don’t have to know everything about the subject, but you do have to be an extremely natural communicator. I’ve worked with a lot of people who would be very good presenters but I wouldn’t be – verbal communication isn’t my strength. My time’s better spent making beautiful imagery and sticking somebody else in front of the camera.

*Planet Earth* - narrated by Sir David Attenborough (Hon LLD 1977) - was the first BBC nature documentary series to be filmed in high definition. Jeff is currently working on *Frozen Planet*, the follow-up to *Planet Earth*, which will be broadcast in 2011 on BBC One.
I don’t think many university students expect to have a child in their 20s. People in my generation tend to see themselves becoming parents much later in life, once career, travelling and socialising have all been ticked off the list. I was no exception: I wanted to have fun and have a good career, and I thought the responsibility of becoming a mother was incompatible with that.

I used my years in Bristol to explore many different interests. I loved the scientific aspects of my Psychology degree and I envisaged working in the healthcare profession one day. I also had an interest in the arts so I thrived on the culture of the city, doing different part-time jobs including working at Arnolfini and taking graduation photographs. When I left university, I really felt that I could achieve anything I wanted to. My peers and I built up high expectations for ourselves and everyone I knew intended to spend their 20s pursuing their ambitions.

After graduation, I spent a year in a media role that had sprung from one of my part-time jobs, before going to Japan to teach English for a year. I then returned to Bristol; I was still with the boyfriend I’d met in my second year and we felt Bristol was our home. I got a job as a marketing assistant for Garrad Hassan, the energy consultancy firm, worked hard, and after a year I was promoted to a management position.

A month later, when I discovered I was pregnant, I was completely bowled over. I hadn’t factored a child into any of my plans, and, at 26, I felt as if I was still at the very beginning of my career. None of my Bristol friends were even close to having children. I worried that having the baby would isolate me from them and jeopardise all the plans I’d made for my future.

I soon started to see things differently. I spoke to some older family friends who’d had children at my age and gone on to have both successful careers and lovely families. I realised that having the baby would just be another kind of achievement and needn’t sidetrack my other plans. It was a huge shift in mindset for me to think that I could still achieve all the things I wanted to while also being a young mother. However, my many experiences to date, including my time at Bristol, had given me confidence in my abilities. I knew that, as well as being able to multi-task (and deal with a lack of sleep!), I could learn and adapt to this as I had always done before.

My daughter, Maia, arrived in July 2008. Being a new mother was undoubtedly challenging, but I was relieved to find that I didn’t change much and still felt like ‘me’. My short-term priorities had not altered the long-term goals I’d held since university. If anything, having Maia galvanised me and made me focus on my real ambitions rather than just the immediate success I’d been pursuing. Once again, I found myself thinking about the career in healthcare. Like having children, I’d been putting it off while doing other things, but I realised that now was as good a time as any to get back on to that path.

I applied to the University of the West of England to study Physiotherapy when Maia was a few months old. I see physiotherapy as a way to help people help themselves – it’s very much about understanding the mind as well as healing the body, so in that sense it was very relevant to my degree. Having Maia also made me think more about what I could do to help others improve their own futures.

I started my course in September 2009 after 14 months as a full-time mum. Being a student means I can be flexible with my working hours and look after Maia full time in the holidays. It’s all working out really well. Though I never thought I would be raising a child or going back to study so soon after graduating, I know I am on the right path and feel as excited about the future as I did on the day I left university.

Kelly Steed (née Kimmer) (BSc 2004) is mother to 16-month-old Maia. She has just started a second degree in Physiotherapy.
Outside the classroom, I was something of a novelty to my peers
position have also felt. We discussed why there were no organisations to represent the interests of black accountants, when they exist in other professions such as law.

I wanted to get more involved, so Anton suggested I conduct some research. I contacted some of the big accounting firms to gather preliminary statistics about numbers of employees of African-Caribbean origin. They drew a blank – people were either reluctant to, or simply could not, give me any numbers. Obviously, I was asking the right questions.

Shortly afterwards, I met an academic at Middlesex University who is a leading expert in this area. She was interested in the research I’d begun and suggested I apply to the university to do a PhD. I was extremely flattered, if unsure about how I could fund a three-year study programme. However, as I realised that yet again my then-job was quickly becoming another unfulfilled prospect, pursuing the PhD opportunity became the only option. I resigned from my job soon afterwards.

My aim now is to promote the issue of diversity as much as I can. ‘Equal opportunities’ should not be about quotas, it should be about making sure that, for example, a numerate person is supported and encouraged in the accounting profession because they are numerate, not because they are a white male or an Asian woman or a black man from Ilford.

My research is an opportunity for me to have an impact in a small way, beginning with my own demographic.

I don’t think I realised back in 1995 how crucial my time at Bristol would prove to be. In beginning a research project, the academic techniques I learned at Bristol will once again be relevant. However, I believe it’s the appreciation of social dynamics I learned at Bristol that will really inform my research. Although my time at Bristol wasn’t always easy, the experience was one of utmost importance to me and I am thankful for the awareness and aspiration my university years gave me.

WORDS BY ROSE DOW
When I was growing up, I watched a British TV series called *Crown Court*. It was shown in Uganda every week and I loved it, even if they repeated episodes. So I said to myself, ‘I want to practise criminal law’. I didn’t mind whether it was as a prosecutor or a defence lawyer. It was just the thrill of going to court – I thought how brilliant it would be! But when I got to university I discovered all these other subject areas that you have to pass to get the degree!

When you start you don’t think you’ll be able to absorb it all, but there’s something about going to university – your head expands. I studied at Makerere, which is the oldest research university in Uganda. I enjoyed my life there and the way we were taught law, which is different all over the world. I got my teeth into the more practical elements in my undergraduate degree and that has served me well.

I worked in private practice in Uganda then I did my Master’s in Law at Bristol. When I finished in 1994, I went back to Uganda to work in the Directorate of Public Prosecution as a prosecutor. I used the knowledge I’d gained at Bristol to set up the first computerised record system in the Ugandan criminal justice system. Now every department has one, but the Directorate of Public Prosecution pioneered it. It was very exciting. I was working with IT experts, supplying the information they needed – the different courts we were prosecuting in, conviction rates, appeal rates. I went back last year and it’s a fully-fledged unit, properly staffed and running well. Then I moved on to a job with the Law Development Centre, which runs Uganda’s equivalent of the Bar, teaching my favourite subject, criminal procedure. Without a Master’s of Law degree, you can’t teach there.

I came back to Bristol to do my PhD on international sentencing procedure, human rights, and what you can learn from traditional African courts – clan courts that operate under the radar. The constitution abolished them in 1962 so they’ve just been operating quietly and it’s only recently that there’s been an interest in them and what we can learn from them. I find the procedures they use to handle their criminal cases, which are mainly derived from clan law, very different from courts of law because the judge is a chairman. He’s not infallible; if he makes a mistake, he can be corrected by any member of the audience, so the court is very participatory. That’s what intrigues me – how you can have a court where a judge is willing to listen to criticism on his conduct of a case and where anyone can interject at any time.

University broadened my mind and encouraged me to think about issues on an academic and intellectual level, as well as a societal one. If I look at the law, it’s not just to say, ‘Section 1 says this,’ (I used to be good at that!). Now I say, ‘Section 1 says this, how does it affect society? What does it mean for people?’ I’ve learned to dig very deep.

I’ve been supervised very well here in the School of Law. I love taking tutorials and discussing law with undergraduate students, but I also love the courtroom. For the immediate future, I’ll be doing some tutoring here in Bristol. And after that? You never know where you’ll find me!

**Maureen Owor (LLM 1994) is an advocate who has helped to modernise Uganda’s criminal justice system. She is currently completing a PhD in Bristol.**

“There’s something about going to university – your head expands.”
Rugby played an immense part in my early life, even before I could speak any English. My parents arrived in the UK in 1959 as political refugees from Hungary, following the 1956 November uprising. Mr Tucker, Headmaster of Royal Grammar School (RGS), High Wycombe, to his eternal credit, took me on probation. Sport, especially rugby, was pivotal to my introduction to an entirely new way of life. I went on to captain both rugby and tennis teams in my last year at school in 1966.

In September 1967, I arrived in Bristol for pre-season training to be greeted by two RGS chums at the gate to Coombe Dingle, which immediately made me feel at home. As a freshman I played open side, then moved into the centre. I played twice weekly and trained three times a week, more during the 7s season. As for highlights – I guess winning the Universities Athletic Union (UAU) 7s at Roehampton in 1968 under the captaincy of Pete Etheridge, playing for UAU and for Bristol Academicals under floodlights at the Memorial Ground against Orange Free State, which was my first serious excursion into the backs.

I would have loved to have stayed for the full six years at Bristol, especially as in my third year, quite against the grain, I was elected captain of the University Rugby Club. But it was not to be. The relentless coursework of an architectural education had taken its toll and I guess failing to submit a full portfolio at the end of my third year was the final straw for Professor Douglas Jones, who gave me my marching orders in the summer of 1970. It was tough for a young man to find that what he was did not quite gel with what he wanted to be.

For as far back as I can remember, I had always wanted to follow in my grandfather’s footsteps and become an architect, so there was nothing for it but to have another go. I was fortunate to find work for a year with Professor Ivor Smith in his Ewelme office. With his support and encouragement, I enrolled at the Oxford School of Architecture, now part of Oxford Brookes University. It is rather ironic that only 11 years later in 1982, the Bristol School, technically one of the most forward-looking in the country, itself was axed on Ivor’s watch by the late Vice-Chancellor, Alec Merrison, in an effort to deliver Maggie Thatcher’s 15 per cent saving on higher education.

With rugby having taken a back seat, I graduated in the summer of 1974. After working for several large firms in London, I joined the award-winning practice of Melvin Lansley and Mark in Berkhamsted in 1978. Later the same year, my son, Tom, was born and we moved to our present home at High Wall on Headington Hill, overlooking the dreaming spires of Oxford. Our garden was registered by English Heritage in 2001, rekindling my interest in the Arts and Crafts movement. At present, I’m attempting to rise to the challenge of Bristol Professor Timothy Mowl, issued in his book on Oxfordshire Gardens, to publish my research on the Edwardian architects Harold Peto and Walter Cave.

My experience at Bristol was invaluable when my son Tom was studying medicine. In the ‘60s, Oxbridge had made considerable efforts to accommodate sporting talent, but when Tom got there, he found a situation that was similar to mine in Bristol 30 years before, with the Medical School in Oxford offering little flexibility to accommodate rugby. However, having gone through the mill myself meant that I was able to pass on the lessons learned the hard way in Bristol. Tom had already become a scholar at Christ’s College, Cambridge, and ended up playing rugby for both the Light and then the Dark Blues.

The most important thing by far that happened to me at Bristol was meeting my wife Megan. I was absolutely blown away the first time I saw her in the Long Bar, although I didn’t actually speak to her until a year later. We got married soon after leaving Bristol. We are still happily married and have a wonderful son in Tom, so my time at Bristol was life-changing in more ways than one.
As a child I was interested in rocks and fossils – how sad is that? I love geology because it’s a science where you can find the evidence if you go on a walk somewhere; it’s something you can hold and touch.

I got so much out of being at university. I learned about the processes behind being a scientist and also the discipline of having to learn for yourself. At the time, it feels really difficult but that’s part of the learning. If I could go back and talk to myself at 18, I would say, ‘Trust your instincts and go with them. You don’t necessarily have to listen to what everyone else says.’ Confidence has a big part to play. Whenever I met academics, I thought, ‘Wow, they must really know their stuff.’ Then you grow up and feel you shouldn’t have been so intimidated. I don’t mean to do academics a disservice, but, when you’re a teenager, you don’t realise that adults will always give you an answer, even when it’s not necessarily the right one!

When I graduated, I didn’t want to go into academia, but I still wanted to be involved in science and inspiring other people to enjoy it. Teaching crossed my mind, but my mum’s a teacher and I wanted to do something different. What really interests me is informal learning, not being constrained by the National Curriculum and the classroom, but getting out and doing stuff.

At first, I did part-time jobs. I was working on reception at the University sports centre when the job came up for Deputy Warden at Durdham Hall. I thought, they may not want a receptionist as they usually employed academics. But I applied and got the job; it was one of the best things I ever did. I managed the tutors, who are all volunteers. They’re amazing; they do it because they really care about students having a good time. I learned a lot from them.

My job at Explore-at-Bristol is to give people a really memorable day out. I look after the Planetarium (the big silver ball in Millennium Square) and co-ordinate the public events programme. We run ‘Meet the Expert’ sessions and a science café where people can come and listen to a speaker, with a glass of wine or cup of coffee – then they ask questions and give their own opinions. It’s great because we have scientists from the University on our doorstep. The last one was in September, called ‘When engineers were heroes’.

If I hadn’t gone to university, I wouldn’t have an understanding of the breadth of what such an institution does: it’s a learning institution, a place of study and a place of research. That gave it a sense of worth to me. Some people interpret higher education as study for study’s sake, but I think it’s a way of driving human understanding forward. University is where I met my fiancé too – for seven years we were just friends, but now we’re engaged. So I’d say Bristol’s had a massive influence on my life.

Katy McDonald (MSc 2000) is an Education Officer for Explore-at-Bristol.
I was a chemist from an early age, making explosives in the back garden when my parents were out. By the time I had my first chemistry lesson at school, I was hooked.

I had a fantastically good A level teacher who had a PhD from Bristol and recommended it to me. Also, it wasn’t too far from home to make travelling awkward, but far enough that I wouldn’t have mum and dad visiting every weekend.

I chose chemistry because I enjoyed the subject, not because I wanted the degree as a ticket to a career (although there’s nothing wrong with that). I worked hard – I went to lectures, did the practicals, handed everything in on time. For me, the work came easily – even though some of the material was challenging, I enjoyed doing it. But I also had a good time as well – it’s important to take advantage of all the opportunities three or four years of university offer you.

I’m inspired by science generally – chemistry, physics, biology. I think I would have struggled with physics, because I’m not a great mathematician. I was a keen astronomer before I became a back-garden chemist, but I decided not to pursue astronomy because there weren’t many career opportunities; also, I can keep up astronomy to a pretty high level on my own, just by reading about it.

Chemistry’s different – if I’m going to understand it, I need to be in the presence of lecturers who can help me with the difficult bits.

There are risks to practical chemistry, but we have hundreds of students going through our labs and they’re not blowing themselves up every other day, because we teach them how to work safely. I came to university without any fear of practical chemistry because we did loads of experiments at school, so I was confident without being blasé, but a lot of students come here a little bit scared because they haven’t had hands-on experience and don’t have confidence. We try to put that right pretty quickly.

After my PhD, I spent two years as a post-doc in America and a year in Manchester, then I was at Newcastle as a lecturer for ten years. One day Professor Guy Orpen phoned me: Bristol was taking on a new lecturer in main group chemistry and they were interested in me. It was an easy move to make – although I enjoyed my time very much in Newcastle, the fact is, Bristol’s School of Chemistry is better, so I was very happy to come back.

I don’t do as much research as I used to, but I’ve always enjoyed that side of the job. I enjoy the teaching too. I’m a better scientist through having taught over the years – there’s nothing like teaching something to find out whether you understand it or not. Universities, uniquely, are able to offer advanced, degree-level teaching in a research environment, where you are being taught by world leaders in research. Students work in research groups when they do final-year projects – they end up with their names on research papers, and that’s a great thing.

In 2005, the School of Chemistry received a government grant to become the UK’s first Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning devoted to chemistry: ChemLabS. The redevelopment of Bristol’s teaching labs – as part of the ChemLabS project – was completed in 2007. Over 27,000 schoolchildren were enthused, excited and inspired through the ChemLabS outreach programme in 2008/09.
We met at Bristol

Lilian Brown (née Oakman) (BA 1951, Cert Ed 1952, Hon MA 2005) and Dr Richard Brown (1948-57)
Lilian: Every few weeks there was a Union General Meeting and there I spotted this man: he had the most marvellous voice and he looked slightly decadent – he wore a green Lovat tweed coat and had a cigarette in a holder. This was Dicky Brown – everybody seemed to know Dicky Brown – and I was fascinated by him. Then he was invited to a party in Manor Hall, where he and a friend accidently set fire to my bedroom curtains with a candle.

Richard: After the party I thought “that girl looked quite reasonable”, so I thought I’d ask her out but I’d completely forgotten her name. So I gave my friend Mike a description of her: “short, dark hair” and so on. But this description fitted another girl at the party as well, whose name he couldn’t remember, luckily. If he had, he would’ve said Olive and I would have rung Manor Hall and asked Olive out, and she already had a boyfriend so she would’ve said no. But he said, “Why don’t you ask Lilian?” and I said “Lilian, that was her name!”

L: My friend Rita’s boyfriend came to visit with a friend for me – it was sort of a blind date. Richard phoned me that night asking if I’d like to come out. I replied, “I’m awfully sorry but I can’t, but you will ask me again, won’t you?” So I went off with Rita and this blind date, who I did not like at all. We went into The Quinton Arms for a drink and there was Dicky – I couldn’t get out fast enough! I thought, he’s going to think that this revolting fellow is my boyfriend and he’s not going to ring again. But he did.

R: Christmas vacation came and Lilian wrote to me. Her handwriting wasn’t the clearest but in her letter she mentioned this chap who she referred to as “Monty the oaf”. And that gave me a bit of a stir – I thought I did not want “Monty”, even if he was “an oaf”, taking charge of my Lilian! So I made up my mind to propose straightaway – I had had an inkling that this was more serious than other girls I had been out with. I found out later that she’d actually written “Monty the dog”. If I’d realised Monty was only a dog I might not have been so precipitous!

L: Richard met me on that first day back in January. He proposed to me by the coal heap outside Manor Hall, in the dark. I was so taken aback – I just wasn’t expecting it. I said “Ask me tomorrow”. But I was in love with him, no doubt about that. Still am, of course.

R: I said “Could I have an answer?” and she replied, “What answer do you want?” “Yes’ would be good,” I said.

L: We all used to troop across to the Berkeley opposite the Wills Memorial Building for morning coffee. I met Dicky there the next day and we held hands under the table but I’d hardly slept that night, thinking, did he really propose? Was it a dream?

Much later, Richard said “We’ve got to get an engagement ring”. He didn’t have very much money so we went round the secondhand jewellery shops, where I found a lovely ring. It was a couple of pounds, which was quite a lot of money back then. Richard said “Can you come out of the shop for a minute?” We went outside and he said “Can you lend me ten bob? I haven’t got enough on me to pay”. We got married in 1953.
1948
Chris Birch (1946-50) and Betty Birch (née Andrew) (BA 1951)

‘Betty and I met when I sold her a copy of the Daily Worker on the steps of the Victoria Rooms. I was secretary of the student branch of the Communist Party. Betty was a fresher.

‘Betty joined the party and we saw a lot of each other in the following months. It wasn’t love at first sight but I gradually realised that she was a remarkable woman. And she seemed to like me. In March 1950 I proposed, not kneeling but sitting on the front upstairs seat of a double-decker Bristol bus.

‘After we got married we found ourselves a nice flat in Rodney Place, Clifton, but we were not there very long. The 10 November issue of Nonesuch News had a front-page story: COMMUNISTS GET NOTICE TO QUIT. The story began: “Chris and Betty Birch, who got married last summer, have been evicted from their pleasant Clifton flat because they are members of the Communist Party.”

1956
Christine Gorman (née Wilson) (BA 1958) and Mike Gorman (BA 1960)

‘Mike came up the year after me and immediately went to the Nonesuch office (then a weekly newspaper) for a job. The previous year’s editor had failed his exams so, faute de mieux, Mike was immediately made editor and, consequently, sat on Union Council. “Who is this fresher?” I thought.

‘Mike says he saw me walking up to the Vic Rooms and told his friends he was going to marry me. When he bought me a half-pint in Aunty’s (on the Triangle) I became suspicious. We were both involved in a Rag stunt in Weston-super-Mare involving fictitious Russian spies, on the night the “Busby Babes” were killed in the Munich air crash. He invited me back to his room for a cup of tea after it was all over and the rest is history.’

1964
Sheila Woods (née Carter) (BVSc 1968) and Stuart Woods (BVSc 1968)

‘We first met in the anatomy dissection room in the Vet School (over a dead dog!). First impressions of each other were not dramatic (we were probably overcome by the surroundings and the smell of formalin!).

‘Socially, we led separate lives for the next three years until we were thrown together when our year moved to the Langford Field Station for the final year. Stuart, never the most organised of students, needed my notes to revise from – at least that was his excuse – and romance blossomed. We thought we had succeeded in keeping it under wraps until the academic staff sang a little ditty about it for the Langford pantomime...’

1967
John Howes (BEng 1969) and Sue Wilford (BSc 1970)

‘We met at a disco in the Union Building in Sue’s Freshers’ Week. I was in my second year. A friend suggested it was a good way to check out the pick of the first years and he was right!

‘My friends had noticed this good-looking girl who wouldn’t dance with anyone. I was sent to try. She told me “in a minute”, so I stood in front of her for a whole minute looking at my watch. Seemed very corny afterwards, but it worked: she did dance with me. I’m not sure how impressed Sue was with me – I think my old Austin Healey Sprite stole the show.

‘Without Sue I may not even have got a degree. I was never going to be an engineer (spent my working life with IBM), but she made me work – she still does!’

1979
Sarah Mitchell (née Wood) (BSc 1982) and Dave Mitchell (BSc 1982)

‘We met at Bristol too ...’
in our first year. We both joined the Hall’s Christian fellowship group, where we got to know each other and made several good friends. We got married at the end of our second year (an unusual decision).

‘Although we’ve lived in Bristol for 30 years, I sometimes feel nostalgic if I visit the area around Manor Hall or go to an event at the Students’ Union. The recently refurbished Clifton Lido brings back lots of memories – we swam in the old open-air swimming pool there when we were students.’

1987
Gareth Davies (BSc 1989) and Sherri Davies (née Ousley) (1987-88).

‘I was Treasurer of the Churchill Hall bar. Sherri was at Bristol for a year as part of the Junior Year Abroad (JYA) programme. We met each other through a mutual friend, another JYA student, and she also worked shifts at the bar. I thought her attractive and friendly in a more reserved way compared to her fellow Americans. I suspect she was as much amused by me as anything else – I was going through an extroverted goth phase at the time!

‘We met up in central London the day before she flew back to St Louis for the Christmas break. I escorted her on a “tour” of my hometown, starting in Oxford Street and taking in the London Dungeon and a meal at Chi-Chi’s in Leicester Square.’

1992
Dr Stuart Chatfield (BSc 1992, MSc 1994, PhD 1998) and Rebecca Chatfield (née Wiles) (LLM 1994)

‘We met in the old SCR of Manor Hall in September 1992. Rebecca thought that I looked very posh(!), quite young and kindly. I thought she looked very sweet, unassuming and innocent (“like someone you might meet in a church” was what I said at the time!).

‘After a drink in Manor Hall bar Rebecca agreed, despite being a Liberal Democrat, to go with me to the Conservative Association annual dinner and dance. John Patten was the guest of honour – one of a number of MPs deemed the “next prime minister” in the early ‘90s. The next year Rebecca was treated to a dinner and dance with David Mellor!’

1999
Govind Dhar (BSc 2002) and Jyoti Dhar (née Kumar) (MB ChB 2004)

‘We met in the Refectory in Freshers’ Week. We struck up a conversation across the table, ignoring the friends we’d come with. She had been talking about cadavers and slicing them open (over lunch). She claims that she was dumbstruck by the fact that, as an Indian, I was studying Politics rather than Medicine, Dentistry or Accounting.

‘Jyoti asked me out (with a little help from Smirnoff Ice). She marched up to me in the Lizard Lounge and announced: “I’ve fancied you for two and a half years and you’ve done nothing about it”. I took that as an invitation to go out. Our first date was at the Boston Tea Party on Park Street and ended up at the Avon Gorge and Cotham Tandoori.’

2001
Helen Lamper (BSc 2004) and Jim Carter (BSc 2002)

‘We met through the Union pantomime society – Jim was the president. He was sat at the panto sign-up desk at Freshers’ Fair. No one had signed up for ages, then I came bounding up to the stall and ask very loudly where I could sign. He says he was very scared!

‘We did the typical student thing of going to a nightclub, getting drunk then snogging on the dancefloor. We then drunkenly revealed that we’d both liked each other for ages and decided to meet up the next day.

‘About a week after we first got together Jim surprised me with a trip to the Hippodrome to see Beauty and the Beast (it was just before the Christmas break). I was very impressed because I love the theatre.’

We were overwhelmed by your response to our appeal for couples who met at Bristol. We didn’t have room for all your stories in Nonesuch, but they appear online at www.bristol.ac.uk/alumni/wemetatbristol
Blue sky thinking
Convocation is the formal name for the graduate body and acts within the University as a voice for alumni. Membership of Convocation is automatic and free; if you’re a graduate of Bristol, you don’t need to join – you’re already a member.

Dr Stuart Goldsmith (BA 1966, Hon LLD 2007) has been Chairman of Convocation for 11 years. Here he discusses past, present and future with the new Chairman, Bill Ray (BSc 1975).

Nonesuch: Stuart, what was the most enjoyable experience you’ve had as Chairman?

Stuart: The celebration of the centenary of the University, when we saw everything we’ve been working for bearing fruit. We welcomed 1,500 alumni and friends, did 100 events over a whole weekend; people came from 25 countries to enjoy their university.

N: Bill, why you have decided to become heavily involved in Convocation now, without having any previous history of involvement?

Bill: My family moved to Bristol in 2006 after more than 20 years abroad, and I was thinking about what I could do outside my business interests that would both be interesting and contribute to the local community. Bristol is a fantastic city, made more so by its interaction with the University and the students. The synergy between the city and the University is clearly apparent so, when the University contacted me, one thing led to another and here we are…

S: Bill, you’ve not been to these reunions before – what were your impressions?

B: I thought it was very well-organised and everyone I met enjoyed themselves enormously. The strongest social networks appeared to be primarily through the halls, then the year groupings, and last, the specific degree subjects – which I thought was a bit surprising. Everyone I spoke to had nothing but glowing things to say about the quality of these events and the organisation.

S: I was a little surprised that more academic staff didn’t participate. We were hoping that as 2009 is the University’s centenary year, all 45 departments might open their doors so that staff could meet with alumni and tell them what’s been going on. In the event, 20 departments took part. I believe they thoroughly enjoyed the occasion and I’m grateful to them. In one sense it was a great success that we got that many departments involved – it’s a record for a reunion weekend and I know that academics lead busy lives.

B: I agree this is surprising, and the departments should be in no doubt that those alumni who are interested in the University in general are especially interested in their current work. A common theme among alumni I met in San Francisco and Vancouver recently was, specifically, that they would like to hear firsthand from professors and students if they were visiting their cities.

S: I’m not sure that all academics have been persuaded of the usefulness of contacts with the alumni. Chemistry was the first major investment the University made in new buildings for some time, when money started becoming more available. The chemists will tell you that the relationship with their alumni was a key part of getting donations in the first place and has been a real reward for them afterwards. And in many North American universities there is an alumni advisory board for every faculty or department, who meet with the academics on a regular basis. That doesn’t happen in many UK universities, as far as I’m aware.

N: Don’t many alumni find the term ‘Convocation’ confusing?

B: Yes! Many people I met have never even heard of ‘Convocation’. However, when it’s explained that it’s really the sum total of all the University’s alumni, present and future, it becomes clear. It is important to note though, that it has had a formal role as a statutory body since the formation of the University and is entitled to comment directly on any University matter.

S: In the dictionary it just means a meeting, used in a university context. All the older universities have Convocation, some of them are not very active – I think Bristol’s is one of the most active. But it does simply mean ‘the graduate body of the university’ and I always use ‘alumni’ when talking about meeting socially and ‘Convocation’ when talking of alumni being part of the corporate governance structure of the University. There are 5,000 staff in the University, 15,000 students, 100,000 active alumni members in over 180 different countries. In a real sense, they are the
University. The diaspora of Bristol graduates has the ability to create the image of the University around the world. Ten years ago this was viewed with some suspicion by the University – many alumni graduated some time ago and, in many cases, may not be up to date with their knowledge of the University and therefore may project an image that’s based on the past rather than the present. My response was that we must inform the alumni better so that they do reflect what the University is today. One can appreciate and enjoy reminiscing about the past, but it is important to understand the present and the desires for the future.

Enormous investment has taken place in the alumni relations function of the University, as a result of which I think that Convocation is better informed about the University’s present activity and its priorities. So I would say to people, yes, we’d like you to donate money but the very best thing you can do is to say how proud you are to be a graduate of Bristol, loudly and clearly to everybody you meet, and that is what will dictate the image of Bristol University throughout the world.

N: How can we keep our alumni not only informed and aware, but also a representative body of people participating in the development of the University?

B: It’s telling that in our centenary year, the attendance at the reunion weekend was 1,500 people. Although it was a record, it represented only one-and-a-half per cent of all contactable alumni. So the question of how we can increase the engagement with all alumni, both individually and as groups, is front and centre of what we will be addressing. It would be great to hear from all contactable alumni – which numbers now, for the first time, over 100,000 people.

S: The only mechanisms we have for doing that are Nonesuch magazine and the web.

B: Nonesuch and the web are the core but not necessarily the only communication tools. There are thriving alumni communities in some parts of the world, but it is not a uniform picture. The Convocation Committee and I would like to hear from anyone who has suggestions as to how to build these networks. At the moment we have some cities that are brilliant and very active but there are other parts of the world where we are under-represented. We need to understand what we can do to support these networks.

S: You’re right, we have many more alumni groups around the world than we’ve ever had before, yet this still engages a very small proportion of the total. At the AGM, Convocation elects 100 alumni to Court. This year we publicised it on the web, and for the first time in years there was a competitive election for these places. It’s a small step in the direction you’re suggesting, but a positive one.

B: As you say, Convocation elects 100 members of Court – in principle 25 each year for four-year terms – but, under the current system, they can only be elected by alumni who attend the AGM. This does seem to be rather constraining and we will be looking at how to make an election process more inclusive of the broader alumni base. However, it needs to be thought through very carefully.

N: Stuart, what are you most proud of?

S: I’m pleased that we have extended the reach of Convocation significantly in the last 15 years. My predecessor Dr Derek Zutshi (MB ChB 1957) (1930-2007) started setting up branches internationally and I built on that foundation. As a result, we have groups
Did you know?

The Revd Dr deLacy Evans O’Leary (1872–1957), the University’s special lecturer in Aramaic, Syriac and Hellenistic Greek, served as Convocation’s first Chairman between 1910 and 1928. A scholarly and eccentric bachelor, he was readily recognised throughout Bristol dressed in a cassock and biretta.

Association of Alumni dinners were held in Manchester and London as far back as 1918/19, and the annual reunion weekend in Bristol used to be organised by alumni. As the University expanded and alumni numbers grew, it was decided that alumni needed greater recognition and support. The Development & Alumni Relations Office (now Campaigns & Alumni Relations) was established in 1990.

There are four UK alumni groups or Branches of Convocation: Bristol; Birmingham and the Midlands; London; and Manchester and the North West. There are groups around the world in Australia, Canada, Eritrea, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Mauritius, New Zealand, Singapore, St Lucia, Thailand and the US.

If you’d like to find out more about Convocation and its role in the structure of the University’s governing body, go to www.bristol.ac.uk/alumni/get-involved/groups

Alumni gather for the celebration of the University’s jubilee in 1959

in many more locations than we had 15 years ago.

I’m also pleased that we’ve changed the functions of Court in relation to the University. Court used to be the governing body, but ten years ago it became more of an advisory body and Council became the governing body. This made Court uncertain about its future role, and I argued that one of the important functions Court should have is to elect the “lay members”, as we call them, of Council. The alumni should not run the University – it’s not what they are there to do – but they should have an influence over who does run the University, and that was achieved in that reorganisation.

I would also pick out the development of the strategy for student residences, a matter very close to people’s hearts. Many older alumni spent two or three years in halls and had a great time but, as the University expanded, we simply couldn’t build enough residences to replicate that. Convocation became fairly engaged in the debate about what residences are there for and how they should be run. It was a very productive dialogue leading to a clear consensus that there’s much more to managing a residence than just providing a bed.

N: Bill, what’s the highest priority for you?

B: In a word: engagement. The mandate of Convocation is to consult and represent all alumni, so I think it’s important that the Convocation Committee reaches out and engages with the whole alumni body. You need to have mechanisms for doing that, via the branches and associations, by printed media or Facebook, and we will be reviewing how to make these more effective.

There is a definite sense of pride from Bristol alumni of having attended a great university, but we should not forget that Bristol has become one of the best universities in the world in just one hundred years. Its trajectory is positive and forwards. It has a rich history and an exciting future, and the value of the Bristol degree will increase as a result of the work going forward. The slogan for the centenary celebrations is perfect: great past – greater future!

Stuart has been Chairman for 11 years and, in that time, Convocation has gone from strength to strength. I intend to build on his work. So, to start the process of engagement, I would love to hear from you on any subject at bill.ray@bristol.ac.uk
Alumni news

Geoffrey Jones (LLB 1959, LLM 2009) celebrated the 50th anniversary of his graduation this year by graduating with an LLM from the University of Bristol in July. Congratulations Geoffrey!

Dr David Searle (BSc 1961, PhD 1966) has written The True Marvel of Numbers: and how Fermat Proved his Last Theorem! published by AuthorHouse.

Ann Henderson-Sellers (née Futtit) (BSc 1973) has co-written The Great North Walk Companion, which celebrates the 21st birthday of Australia’s most accessible wilderness trail. Find out more at www.thegreatnorthwalk.com

Professor Russell Foster FRS (BSc 1980, PhD 1984) and Leon Kreitzman (BSc 1964) have written their second book, Seasons of Life: The Biological Rhythms that Living Things Need to Thrive and Survive, published by Profile Books in the UK and Yale University Press in the USA.

Melanie King (BA 1990) is attempting to row into the British record books by racing 3,000 miles across the Atlantic in under 75 days. Melanie – who started rowing at Bristol – and rowing partner Annie Januszewski will begin their challenge on 6 December. Find out more at www.atlanticworldfirst.co.uk

Stuart Heywood (BA 1994, MA 1998) now works as a Will Consultant in Bristol, offering will-writing services in the comfort of his clients’ own homes. Contact him at stuart.priorheywood@bristolalumni.org.uk

Sarah Baillie (BVSc 1986) has won the Most Innovative Teacher of the Year award at the Times Higher Education Awards 2009. Sarah, who teaches at the Royal Veterinary College, London, is the inventor of the ‘Haptic Cow’, a lifelike simulator that trains veterinary students in internal examinations.


Anne-Marie Rawden (BA 2006) has launched a new tuition agency, Bristol Tutors, to provide affordable one-to-one tuition for school children in the Bristol area. Many of its tutors have been recruited from the University’s postgraduate education department. Find out more at www.bristoltutors.co.uk

Class act

Exactly 23 years after their graduation, Bristol’s Law class of 1986 came together for a reunion dinner at London’s Athenaeum Club to catch up with old friends, reminisce about their time at university and toast the future of Bristol. The event, organised by Dan Schaffer (LLB 1986), was a huge success with over 60 attendees from 12 countries, including Hong Kong, Nigeria and the US. All alumni contributed to a reunion yearbook, which was presented to guests on the night.

Anticipation is also mounting for the first Alumni Forum of 2010, on Competition Law – see page 34 for details.

Record reunions

Following reports in the Spring 2009 issue of the 1956 veterinary graduates’ commitment to organising reunion events so many years after leaving university, several alumni have contacted Nonesuch to challenge this impressive record.

Dr Eric Dorling (BSc 1953) drew attention to the regular reunions held by the choir of undergraduates, postgraduates and staff who sang in Bayreuth in Bavaria, Germany in 1952. The group have met annually, without fail, since 1955.

John Morris (BVSc 1960) revealed that he and his fellow veterinary alumni have held a reunion every year following their graduation. In 2010 the class will celebrate 50 years since graduation.

Claire Knowles (BEng 1986) reports that the civil engineers of that year meet regularly in London and are planning a reunion in Bristol to celebrate 25 years since graduation.

If you think you can beat any of these records, please get in touch: email at alumni@bristol.ac.uk.
His Honour Peter Northcote (BSc 1940) died 28 June 2009, aged 88.
Dr Michael Kerby (MB ChB 1944) died 22 December 2008, aged 88.
Dr Jean Oakes (née Christie) (MB ChB 1944) died 28 July 2009, aged 89.
Lieut Cmdr Geoffrey Tonkin (BSc 1945) died 6 March 2009.
Dr Jean Morgan (née Morrell) (MB ChB 1948) died 6 November 2008.
Dr Geoffrey Herapath (MB ChB 1950) died 4 April 2009, aged 83.
Kenneth Lowe (BA 1953) died 17 May 2009, aged 77.
Dennis Maguire (BSc 1953) died 16 July 2009, aged 80.
Anne Westcott (née Porter) (BA 1953) died 8 May 2009, aged 78.
Gwendoline Wilson (née Croney) (BA 1953) died 3 August 2009.
Dr Gwynfryn Bond (PhD 1954) died 10 April 2009, aged 80.
Peter Moore (BSc 1954) died 2009, aged 78.
Anne Clark (née Knight) (BA 1955, Certificate in Education 1956) died 15 June 2009, aged 76.
Peter Johnson (LLB 1955) died 3 August 2009.
Trevor Lloyd (BVSc 1956) died 14 May 2009, aged 79.
Dr Brian Selman (BSc 1956, PhD 1959) died 1 August 2009, aged 75.
Professor Keith Puttick (PhD 1957) died 2009, aged 83.
Dr John Welsted (BSc 1958, Certificate in Education 1961, PhD 1971) died 21 September 2009, aged 73.
Professor Robert Jefferies (BSc 1958, PhD 1962) died 8 July 2009, aged 73.
Professor Laurance Hall DSC FRSC (BSc 1959, PhD 1962, Honorary DSc 2000) died September 2009, aged 71.
Katherine Hucker (née Parsons) (BSc 1959) died 21 August 2009.
Dr Alan Davenport (PhD 1961) died 19 July 2009, aged 76.
Alan Scott (BSc 1962) died 29 August 2009, aged 69.
Alan Lawrence (BDS 1963) died 3 September 2009, aged 68.
Dr Kenneth Heron (BSc 1964) died 3 June 2009, aged 66.
Professor Peter Burberry (MSc 1973) died 20 June 2009, aged 84.
The Rev Dr David Molyneaux (BA 1973) died April 2009, aged 56.
Geoffrey Relton (Diploma 1973) died 5 July 2009, aged 68.
Mervyn Sluming (BDS 1975) died 27 June 2009, aged 55.
Dr Michael Stanford (MEd 1974, PhD 1978) died 31 August 2009, aged 86.
Jeffrey Hussey (BSc 1980) died 4 April 2009, aged 49.
Dr James Holmes (DSc 1989) died 22 December 2008, aged 84.
Adrian Hockridge (LLB 1989) died 2009, aged 42.
Michael Peck (BA 1996) died 23 March 2009, aged 53.
Alison Martin (née Sharp) (MA 1997) died 2 June 2009, aged 76.
Robert Abbots (Diploma 2002) died 2009, aged 53.

Please email any notifications of death to alumni@bristol.ac.uk

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ALUMNI TRAVEL PROGRAMME 2010

A Cruise through Burgundy
19-25 June 2010  £1,690
We have chartered a luxury hotel barge to take our party of no more than 22 people on the Burgundy Canal from Dijon, then along a short stretch of the Saône, and the Canal du Centre. The experience is a relaxing mix of regional wines and the lovely cuisine of France together with a programme of escorted visits to the Medieval sites of northern Burgundy. We also travel through the fabulous vineyards of the Côte-d’Or where the Chardonnay grapes of Rully and Beaune vie with the Pinot Noir harvests of Nuits St George and Gevrey Chambertin to produce some of the most luscious vintages in the world.

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 featured, but all our itineraries have a strong educational element which is provided by our accompanying expert lecturers.

The Ancient Levant: Syria and Jordan
19-28 September 2010  £2,150
The sites of Apamea, Bosra and Palmyra in Syria are among the finest remains of the classical world, as are the Hellenistic city of Jerash and the Nabatean capital at Petra in Jordan. Combining these in this exciting tour makes it a fascinating kaleidoscope of Near Eastern history.

Galapagos Islands Cruise & Ecuador
18-30 November 2010  £4,350
We are really pleased to offer this special Galapagos tour again which has proved so popular. After a visit to Colonial Quito, with its many churches and protected buildings, and a tour along the Avenue of the Volcanoes, among stunning scenery, the group will fly to the Galapagos Archipelago for an eight-day cruise through the Islands on board a privately chartered, first-class yacht, Coral I. The Galapagos are home to an amazing variety of wildlife and birds – red and blue footed boobies, frigate birds, giant tortoises, marine iguanas, sea lions and many more. And you can combine this with a visit to the Ecuadorian Amazon Rainforest, a world of verdure, colourful bird life and ecological adventure.

For a full-colour 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
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For further information, please contact:
Laura Serratrice, Planned Giving Manager, University of Bristol
+44 (0)117 331 7560  laura.serratrice@bristol.ac.uk
www.bristol.ac.uk/alumni/planned-giving
May

At midday on Sunday 24 May, church bells across Bristol rang to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the University, just as they did in May 1909 when King Edward VII granted the University its Royal Charter to grant degrees.

January

On 13 January Will Hutton (BSc 1972, Hon LLD 2003) (pictured left) launched the University’s Centenary Campaign to raise £100 million by 2014. Launch events were held in Bristol and London.

February

Record snowfalls brought the city to a standstill, though it was business as usual for students and staff at the University – albeit with a few distractions!

July

One-and-a-half thousand alumni and their guests returned to Bristol to enjoy over 100 events during the Centenary Alumni Weekend, 3-5 July.
September

Bristol celebrated its centenary this autumn with alumni based in Asia, Australasia, Europe and North America. Photos from all 12 international events will appear in the next issue of Nonesuch.

Sir David Attenborough (Hon LLD 1977) sold out the Wills Memorial Building for his lecture on 24 September – just one of the highlights of the University’s centenary public lecture series.

A major new public artwork, by internationally acclaimed artist Jeppe Hein, was unveiled on 5 October as part of the University’s centenary celebrations.

Here’s to the next 100 years!
Dr Lis Kutt (MB ChB 1980) at her graduation in Bristol

www.bristol.ac.uk/alumni