

# BBK 40

*The 40th Edition of BBK Magazine*



**THE  
WORLD  
NEEDS  
MORE  
BIRKBECK**

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## VICE-CHANCELLOR'S WELCOME



Birkbeck is a lifelong learning institution. As members of our community, you know the life-changing benefits of education—from contributing to careers and employment, to wellbeing, enjoyment and helping us better understand and engage with the world around us. At Birkbeck, we are committed to delivering the choice and flexibility that enables our students, alumni and supporter community to make the most of their lifelong learning journey.

We will continue to create high-quality opportunities for students to extend and broaden their learning, and empower them to study when, where and how it suits them. Thanks to your engagement and support, we have been able to take bold steps to ensure Birkbeck stands out in the higher education sector as a leader in delivering and advocating for lifelong learning.

With the return to onsite teaching, we have continued offering virtual learning opportunities alongside in-person seminars. This blended teaching and learning model is in keeping with our tradition of flexibility and innovation and supports our students to balance the rigour of their studies with their other responsibilities.

This past July, we made a significant step toward achieving our long-held aim of teaching all students on the Birkbeck campus with the acquisition of the former Student Central property next to our main Malet Street building. This transformational building project will afford us the space and enhanced technology to bring our students from across London back to Bloomsbury (p.11). In addition, we have now seen the completion of two major capital projects: Mayor of Camden, Councillor Sabrina Francis officially opened 373 Euston Road, Birkbeck's new state-of-the-art teaching centre in October, and our researchers have begun work in the Wohl Wolfson ToddlerLab, the world's first facility dedicated to studying brain development in toddlers through wireless and virtual reality technology (p.10).

Our academics have been driving forward research projects with real-world impact, including examining police crime-mapping data to understand its effectiveness and limitations (p.8); building new evidence to change attitudes on consumption and waste in the home (p.14); exploring the governance of online content and the impact it has on local communities (p.24); and delving into the relationship between apes and humans to better understand child development (p.25).

Finally, over the past 12 months, the #OurBirkbeck initiative has highlighted stories of alumni, students and friends from around the world who have made an impact on their communities, professions and society, and how their Birkbeck experience played a part in that. So many of you have told me that the world needs more of what we do and more of what we offer. We listened, and on 2 December 2021—198 years after our founding—we launched an ambitious new campaign: *The World Needs More Birkbeck*. This is an opportunity for you, our alumni and friends, to play a decisive role in our third century (p.4-5). I hope you will join us in making an impact.

“

So many of you have told me that the world needs more of what we do and more of what we offer

”

Professor David Latchman,  
Vice-Chancellor of Birkbeck





# The World Needs More **Birkbeck**

## **TOGETHER, WITH YOUR SUPPORT, THIS CAMPAIGN WILL:**



Image: Birkbeck, University of London  
(Paul Cochrane)

When George Birkbeck convened a group of supporters in 1823, he brought together a community. Philosophers, politicians, philanthropists, workers and revolutionaries all united around one pioneering vision: to create an institution where education is available to all who want it.

Nearly 200 years later, at a time when we are facing unprecedented challenges across the globe, Birkbeck's founding vision is more relevant than ever.

Members of our community have highlighted the tremendous impact that Birkbeck has had around the world, the role we played for them, and the part we continue to play for the students and researchers who call Birkbeck home. So many of you have told us that the world needs more of what we do and more of what we offer.

**We have listened, and we are proud to launch our Campaign—The World Needs More Birkbeck—an opportunity for you, our alumni, donors and friends, to play a decisive role in our third century.**

### **WIDEN ACCESS TO EDUCATION**

Ensuring education is available to all is at the heart of who we are and what we do. People in our community come from all walks of life, bringing such different perspectives, expertise and skills.

For every one of our students, higher education has the potential to be life-changing and not one of them should be held back due to circumstance or background. Your support will help us build on this long-standing commitment to open the doors to education, no matter where someone is in their life journey.

### **STRENGTHEN STUDENT SUPPORT**

For many Birkbeck students, their drive and dedication enable them to overcome significant obstacles on their path to university study. But to maximise their potential and achieve the success they deserve; we need to provide comprehensive support that meets them where they are and adapts to their needs.

Together we can empower students to succeed, whether giving them confidence at the beginning of their course or helping them get over that last hurdle. Providing emergency funding when they need it most or giving them the tools and training to navigate their career; holistic financial and pastoral support is vital to ensuring every student can thrive.

### **ADVANCE OUTSTANDING RESEARCH**

Academics at Birkbeck put people at the heart of their research—pioneering new techniques, nurturing the next generation of thinkers and seeking to uncover the next 'a-ha!' moment that could be a catalyst for change.

We want to continue to challenge the role of academia and to bring in a diversity of perspectives. This will not only enhance the classroom experience but also drive

innovation in the research that informs governments, enables international collaborations and influences societal change. Your support will allow our academics to continue having an impact on the world of research and to use their research to have an impact on the world.

### **BUILD TOMORROW'S FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

Our students and academics are doing amazing things and providing them with the spaces and tools to enable them to thrive is critical. Creating state-of-the-art research facilities alongside physical and digital infrastructures to support student learning and collaboration is key, and will provide a solid foundation for our future, and theirs.

Birkbeck's forward-looking estates and digital strategy will enable our academics to advance their big ideas in science, creativity and innovation, and create new ways and spaces for students to learn, study and connect. Together, we will create environments that foster learning, drive collaboration and reflect that our radical 200-year-old traditions are still alive in shaping our future.

**Now, more than ever, your support matters. Join us today and make a gift to shape Birkbeck's future.**

Visit [campaign.bbk.ac.uk](https://campaign.bbk.ac.uk)

“

WITHOUT  
BIRKBECK, I  
WOULD STILL  
FEEL EMPTY AND  
INCOMPLETE

”



Image: Durdana Ansari OBE  
(Colorama Imaging Specialists)

## BRINGING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER



*Durdana Ansari OBE, Birkbeck BA Media and Journalism graduate, is a British entrepreneur, public speaker and activist for female empowerment. In 2021, Durdana was appointed as an Honorary Captain of the British Royal Navy, making history as the first Muslim woman to hold the post.*

Durdana recalls a free and expressive childhood in Islamabad, Pakistan: “I was a painter, singer and artist. I did pages and pages of drawings, which often depicted fairy tales. I was in my own dream world.” Durdana moved to London aged 16, having been married just days before in a match that was arranged by her family. Her parents believed she would have more opportunities in life if she lived in London.

However, the years after her marriage drastically lowered her confidence and self-esteem. She was not allowed to sing or raise her voice. Her passions, she says, were still there but buried deep inside: “I lived in a cocoon for 10 years, not knowing anything outside my own community.”

Her life changed when she was asked to sing at a friend’s birthday party. Following her performance, a BBC producer who happened to be present invited her to the BBC studios. After years of being silenced, her voice was heard by the world. She was soon approached by a number of producers who recognised her talent for oration and recitation, and her career as a BBC presenter took off.

Despite her rise to success, something was missing. Having prioritised her children’s education over her own, Durdana wanted to make up for lost time and study for a degree. “Without Birkbeck, I would still feel empty and incomplete,” Durdana states. “I learnt a lot from the course, it helped develop my writing skills, which was hugely beneficial for my career. I met some lovely people, and the evening classes suited me well. Sitting in a classroom again was amazing. I just loved everything about Birkbeck.”

Durdana’s career took her around the world as a presenter and radio host for 22 years, “I interviewed lots of amazing people, some real legends. From Bollywood film stars in Bombay and Pakistani painters, to presidents and prime ministers. I was actually called ‘the bloodhound’ by my colleagues because of the way I went after every story and made sure I got results!”

“Doing all of this while looking after my four children was hard, especially with my 12-hour night shifts. Sometimes I had to do breakfast shows without sleeping! I had to lose a lot to achieve what I wanted to achieve. But it has paid off.”

Durdana says she experiences a major life change every 10 years, which often takes her by surprise: “After working for the BBC, I directed a major charitable project that provided opportunities for Muslim women to learn basic English and IT skills. We created it with the aim of building cohesion in these communities and supporting Muslim women in the UK to have more confidence and control over their lives.” By 2012, over 9,000 women had benefitted from the initiative, and Durdana was awarded an OBE for her work that same year. “After this, I knew I wanted to continue making a difference to people’s lives,” she says.

Her latest milestone was her promotion to the rank of Honorary Captain of the British Royal Navy in July 2021, having joined the Navy just three years prior: “This is the greatest achievement of my life, and it feels like my career trajectory has been leading up to this moment. I was not expecting it at all. My heart actually stopped for a second when I heard the news! I am so grateful to Her Majesty the Queen for appointing me and for the respect and support I’ve received from the Royal Navy.

“In my role, I want to help as many people as possible. I am passionate about encouraging people from underrepresented groups to join the Royal Navy, which is a project I’m currently working on. Communities need to open their tightly locked doors, and my role is to help them understand why they should, and what there is to gain. By joining the Royal Navy, people don’t have to forget about their cultures, or change how they are. It’s just a matter of opening up their horizons and making a difference.”

When asked about her plans for retirement, Durdana laughs and says, “my life is just starting.” She is currently working on her autobiography to share her experiences and inspire the next generation—“I want the world to know how a woman from a developing country managed to follow her passions and achieve her goals.”

## A CLOSER LOOK AT POLICE POWERS



*New research highlights how mapping software can be used to better understand how police are tackling knife crime.*

Dr Megan McElhone, a lecturer in Birkbeck's Criminology Department researches the relationship between proactive, intelligence-led and pre-emptive policing and racial bias. Her work seeks to interrogate how police strategies can lead to the overuse and misuse of Section 60 stop and searches, and ultimately reinforce the racialisation of violent and gang-related crime in London.

In a bid to help the police tackle knife crime, in 2019 the government relaxed guidance on Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, enabling police to stop and search people without suspicion or 'reasonable grounds'. This resulted in the number of Section 60 stop and searches rising more than five times, from 2,503 in 2017–18 to 13,175 in 2018–19, yet only 2% of people stopped under Section 60 in 2018–19 were carrying an offensive weapon, such as a knife.

The move is controversial because police statistics for 2019–20 showed that Black people were nine times more likely to be stopped and searched than White people and 18 times more likely to be stopped under Section 60. Dr McElhone's latest research uses police data and mapping software to explore this disproportionality and question whether 'crime prone' areas are being unjustly labelled as such.

It is common police practice to use computer mapping to show areas where



(Getty Images)

crimes are most likely to be committed and allocate resources to these crime hot spots accordingly. However, Dr McElhone's initial findings indicate that the way police record and use data from Section 60 stop and searches can lead to areas being misidentified as having high concentrations of crime—especially when the discovery of weapons is so low despite such high numbers of stop and searches being enacted. As such, early findings suggest that current mapping tools more accurately track where police resources have been deployed as opposed to mapping where crimes are most likely to occur.

"The data-mapping shows that police continue to make Section 60 orders far more in parts of London where there are sizeable Black communities, even though only a very small percentage of searches result in weapons being found," she explains. "My project therefore looks at when, where and why Section 60 powers are used."

Dr McElhone argues that with growing community discontentment caused by the deployment of stop and search powers, and a body of research that demonstrates the ineffectuality of these powers, it is important to question their use and challenge politicians and police leaders who maintain that they are essential 'crime-fighting' tools. She hopes that her findings and computer-mapping approach will help to ask these questions, challenge existing narratives on crime and 'crime prone' areas and empower communities most affected by the disproportionate deployment of Section 60 powers.

## TACKLING GLOBAL DISEASES WITH THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST MINDS



*Professor Sir Tom Blundell, Fellow and former Head of Birkbeck's Crystallography Department, is an eminent figure in the field of biochemistry and has been involved in many key discoveries over the last half-century. Sir Tom is now helping the next generation of structural biologists at Birkbeck to follow in the footsteps of some of the College's greatest academics.*

For decades, Birkbeck has been at the centre of key research and discoveries in the discipline of crystallography, an experimental science that involves structural, cell and chemical biology. When Sir Tom joined the College in 1976, Birkbeck had amassed a considerable reputation in the field. Many of the top scientific minds were uncovering the arrangement of atoms, understanding the shapes of cells and testing how compounds can be designed to bind with enzymes and receptors—all contributing to how we tackle some of the most devastating diseases.

Rosalind Franklin worked alongside Nobel laureates such as Derek Barton and Aaron Klug at Birkbeck shortly after her research helped uncover the famous double helix DNA structure. Great thinkers like JD Bernal and Andrew and Kathleen Booth pushed forwards methods and technology that still play an important role in drug development today for diseases including cancer, malaria and diabetes.

During his 20-year tenure at Birkbeck, Sir Tom collaborated with leading contemporaries such as Dame Julia



(Zut Media)

Goodfellow and Dame Janet Thornton and saw nine members of his department become Fellows of the Royal Society and members of other national academies. He also led on research that informed the creation of medicines for lowering blood pressure and managing HIV symptoms. Nearly fifty years later, these discoveries continue to support our research.

Having attended a state school and been the first in his family to attend university after winning a scholarship, Sir Tom believes strongly in the power and value of social mobility. He recognises that certain groups continue to be underrepresented in his field and is committed to enabling access to education for the next generation of Birkbeck scientists.

Sir Tom gives to Birkbeck because he believes that students' ambition should not be inhibited by financial barriers: "We must make sure that Birkbeck can continue to open pathways to study and develop an academic ecosystem that facilitates world-changing work." His support not only enables students to change their lives but also to pursue work that has a life-changing impact on others.

**Philanthropic support like Sir Tom's ensures that Birkbeck's history of bringing great minds together to do incredible work continues today. The next big breakthrough could be unlocked by a student who has been given the support they need to build on the work of giants in their field.**

## BUILDING THE BIRKBECK CAMPUS



373 EUSTON ROAD

(Agnese Sanvito)



LECTURE THEATRE

(Agnese Sanvito)



SCHOOL LAB

(Agnese Sanvito)

The last two years have shown the benefit of and demand for innovative and flexible learning solutions. At Birkbeck, we were swift to act when the world moved online, and we created a strong digital offering for our students. But as the gradual return to pre-pandemic ways of living continues, the value of in-person learning is more evident than ever for our student community.

We are committed to maintaining the flexibility that digital technology adds to the Birkbeck experience, but we know that there are some things a virtual classroom simply cannot replicate. For so many students at Birkbeck, the diversity of their peers means they learn as much from their classmates as they do from their lecturers. Birkbeck spaces provide the opportunity to come together, challenge one another, build new networks and share experiences with others who understand what it takes to succeed at evening study.

During the pandemic, students expressed what the loss of access to the Birkbeck campus meant to them and the challenges it presented. For some, not being able to access the library computers meant sharing a laptop with three family members while trying to complete lectures and essays. For others, it meant the loss of the only time they had to invest in themselves; that moment of solace to focus on their learning between work, school runs and caring responsibilities. But most of all, it was the loss of connection.

Over the last year, two major capital projects have opened their doors to our students and researchers, offering new opportunities to recreate connections and strive towards the next breakthrough.

### 373 EUSTON ROAD

In September 2021, students were welcomed into our new state-of-the-art teaching centre at 373 Euston Road. After 18 months of remote learning, students have been making the most of access to high-quality new facilities.

Set over seven floors, the building houses a striking 180-seat copper-clad lecture theatre with a roof terrace, as well as 10 new classrooms, a student lounge and café, and multiple collaborative learning areas.

### THE WOHL WOLFSON TODDLERLAB

The world's first facility dedicated to studying brain development in toddlers has welcomed children and their families to take part in pioneering new research. The building houses cutting-edge wireless and virtual environment technology, which has been adapted



An early-stage artistic rendering of what Birkbeck Central could be

to be used and worn by children. This set-up allows researchers to study toddlers' brain functions during active play and social interactions for the first time ever. This leading research explores risk markers for developmental conditions, such as autism, making it possible to design and test early interventions that will help change the lives of children and their families.

### A TRANSFORMATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

We are proud to share our vision for our newly acquired site, Birkbeck Central. This transformational building is the most significant capital project since Birkbeck found its home in Bloomsbury over 50 years ago.

Located next to our main Malet Street facility, we will be transforming the building to drastically increase our teaching and student collaboration space. This investment in our campus reaffirms our mission to ensure that every student has access to high-quality education and presents us with an incredible opportunity to achieve our long-held goal of teaching all students on Birkbeck premises.

For many years, our students have emphasised the importance of having a campus that brings them together, with the space and facilities to drive innovation

and collaboration. Many Birkbeck students have overcome significant challenges to undertake university study, and we now have the opportunity to further develop the high-calibre learning experience they have worked so hard to reach.

While plans are still in the early stages, there is so much potential inside this space and we are excited for how it will shape Birkbeck's third century. We look forward to updating you on the journey and highlighting the wonderful opportunities that the space will offer.

**“From my experience, having an excellent learning environment has a massive impact on productivity and motivation levels. Knowing that you have all the resources you need, and great facilities, inspires creativity and just makes you want to be in that environment.”**

—Adeeba Kausar, MSc Cognitive Neuroscience and Neuropsychology

“ I WENT WILD WHEN I SAW WE’D WON SILVER ”



### BALANCING STUDYING WITH TRAINING FOR THE OLYMPICS



Image: Jack Beaumont (Izzy Cooper for British Rowing)

for two out of three terms a year, so I could have the summer free for competitions. I chose to study criminology because of my interest in drug-related crime. It’s something that’s close to my heart because a member of my family is a recovering drug addict. After finishing my degree, it wasn’t long before I missed the social aspect and the vibrancy of campus life. Nowadays, when I find myself in Bloomsbury, I always drop by Birkbeck and feel nostalgic. It was a busy period of my life, but really rewarding.”

Jack and Rob both grew up in Maidenhead, Berkshire, conveniently situated on the southwestern bank of the River Thames. For Rob, rowing was a sport he fell into aged 15, after he and several friends were inspired by Sir Steve Redgrave’s Olympic achievements and wanted to improve their fitness. Jack, on the other hand, was familiar with the sport from a young age as his father was an Olympic rower who competed in the Seoul Olympics in 1988 in the men’s eight crew, finishing in fourth place. His father taught him how to row and he joined Maidenhead Rowing Club aged 10. “Initially I didn’t really love it because I was quite small, and I didn’t perform well in competitions,” Jack recalls. “But after sticking at it for a few years, I fell in love with the sport and spent hours on the water trying to improve.”

Jack Beaumont graduated from BSc Criminology in 2017, and Rob Williams completed a PhD in Crystallography in 2012. Both have achieved Olympic silver medals in rowing; Jack in Tokyo 2020 (held in 2021) and Rob at London 2012. Rob, now a Managing Director at Goldman Sachs, transitioned into a career in banking after his rowing successes, while Jack looks ahead to competing at Paris 2024.

Balancing Olympic rowing training with rigorous study is no mean feat. While at Birkbeck, Rob commuted from central London to Reading every morning for rowing training, then travelled back to start nine-hour laboratory sessions, often only making it home for a short rest before returning to the lab late in the evening to finish his research. Similarly, Jack would complete a full day’s training in Reading and then commute into London from Maidenhead for three hours of lectures at 6pm.

“Life then was pretty non-stop,” says Jack. “I studied part-time and chose modules that meant I studied

“ YOU HAVE ONE SHOT TO ACHIEVE THIS BURNING AMBITION ”



Image: Rob Williams (Paul Cochrane)

Having participated casually for a few years, Rob began to take rowing seriously while studying for his undergraduate degree. He joined London Rowing Club in his second year and by the time he graduated was in consideration to represent Team GB at the London 2012 Olympics.

Despite the demands of this level of performance, his ambition to study for a PhD never wavered. Rob had always wanted to experience studying something unique and set his own research direction. He describes Birkbeck academics as being instrumental in enabling him to complete his PhD: “The department was so supportive. They even turned my PhD part-time in the summer terms so I could compete in races.”

When asked about their best Olympic moments, both Jack and Rob emphatically describe the feeling of elation and relief when they crossed the finish line. “I went wild when I saw we’d won silver,” says Jack. “Not having our families there because of Covid-19 restrictions didn’t take away from the experience of winning the medal one bit, but it did feel strange just having cameramen in front of us for the medal ceremony.” Rob adds: “The final race was the most stressful thing I’ve ever done in my life. You have one shot to achieve this burning ambition of yours. When we crossed the line and saw we

had medalled, there was a huge sense of relief that we hadn’t messed up.”

Rob is enjoying the demanding and competitive world of banking, in a role that requires problem-solving and critical thinking, skills that he developed during his Birkbeck PhD. He plans to get involved in sport again in the future: “My dream is to sit on the board of a sports research trust and help with funding decisions. I’m also a trustee of a foundation founded by an ex-armed-robber who found redemption through sport. I think sport is wonderful for giving people direction, discipline and determination.”

Jack’s sights are set on competing at the 2024 Olympics in Paris, but he also hopes to help inspire the next generation and apply his skills differently in the future: “Rowing is a small community and it is a sport that could definitely be more diverse, like Birkbeck was. I’ve been visiting rowing clubs and schools to show my medal and share my experiences. The more we can showcase rowing, the better. Looking further forwards, I hope to one day utilize my criminology degree to help people who have been impacted by drug abuse. Coming to Birkbeck was life-changing as it meant I could do a degree and prepare for my future while training and competing at Olympic level.”

## INFLUENCING HOW WE SEE THE 'ETHICAL HOUSEHOLD'

*With sustainability an essential part of tackling climate change, Birkbeck researchers are taking a new look at how household decision-making can contribute to reducing plastic consumption and meeting global sustainability goals.*

Decades of misuse and excessive consumption of single-use plastics have created a global environmental catastrophe. According to the UN, 13 million tonnes of plastic leak into the ocean, 500 billion plastic bags are used worldwide, and 100,000 marine animals are killed by plastics every year. In 2021, a parliamentary report on plastic waste predicted that in the UK alone we use 5 million tonnes of plastic each year, with much going unrecycled.

Dr Pam Yeow, Reader in Management at Birkbeck, argues that both institutions and individuals need to change their behaviour to prevent the problem from worsening. She is leading research into the things that stop or impede people and households from making changes, to enable interventions that will help to reduce consumption and save the planet.

Her research has identified a range of challenges. These include communication between household members and the people who make decisions in different types of households, the way different people view waste, and the relationship between local councils and their residents.

In collaboration with the Universities of Essex and Kent, Dr Yeow initially investigated the people who made



(Shutterstock)

decisions about products entering and leaving households. Building on the findings from this work, she began conducting interviews with householders to research the role they play in stopping and reducing single-use plastics in their homes, as well as ensuring that they are recycled when used.

Dr Yeow says: "We've looked at the different perspectives that people have about what waste is, as well as decision-making relationships in multiple-occupancy households and whether it is the tenant or landlord that has responsibility for managing waste in households. We also looked at the importance of open communication and trust between local councils and residents, and of listening to local residents."

"By focusing specifically on the way people make decisions about single-use plastics in multiple-occupancy households, where issues of responsibility and control differ from traditional family homes, we will gain a greater understanding of householders' experiences with single-use plastics and shed more light on how people can be encouraged to change their behaviour."

New insights from this research will help to influence behaviour and attitude change in household consumption and contribute to creating waste solutions that align with the UN's sustainability goals.

## TECH, POLICY AND GIVING BACK

*After leaving Birkbeck with an MSc in Innovation Management and Technology Policy in 2008, Sofia Gkiiousou has carved out a successful career in public policy. As a passionate advocate for the transformative power of a Birkbeck education, Sofia is committed to ensuring that others have access to the College's unique offering.*

One of Sofia Gkiiousou's lasting lessons from her time at Birkbeck was "the importance of surrounding yourself with incredibly talented people. I loved studying at Birkbeck because the student body is diverse, mature and passionate, so the discussions we had were deep and intelligent," says Sofia. "I have tried to recreate that environment in my professional life, by seeking opportunities where I am not going to be the smartest person in the room. It motivates me to do better." By challenging herself and fostering the inclusivity and intellectual rigour she encountered at Birkbeck, Sofia has gone on to push the boundaries in tech policy.

Sofia was drawn to Birkbeck because it offered the opportunity to combine her background in policy with her passion for tech: "I already had a strong interest in technology and was keen to work in the industry. Birkbeck's MSc in Innovation Management and Technology Policy opened that door for me. I realised I didn't have to be an engineer or programmer to follow that path. It's a privilege to now be in a position where I can work with policy makers to set rules and guidelines for tech to have a meaningful benefit to society."

Her ambition to make a difference drives Sofia's passion for public policy.



Image: Sofia Gkiiousou (Paul Cochrane)

Since graduating, she has held roles in the energy sector, with Airbnb, and recently joined tech giant Google. She is particularly proud of her contribution to the Airbnb Africa Academy, an initiative that works with partners on the ground to support local hosts in building digital skills to boost community-led tourism on the continent.

She looks back on her time at Birkbeck fondly for the impact it had on her life and the way she sees the world: "It is so valuable that Birkbeck gives people the opportunity to work full-time and study part-time for a University of London degree. The calibre of teaching and the quality of research helps create such a positive and engaged student community. It needs to be protected; it needs to be recognised and applauded. That's why I support Birkbeck."

**Every year hundreds of alumni like Sofia choose to give back after gaining so much from their Birkbeck experience. Together, their generosity ensures that students and researchers can seize every opportunity that Birkbeck affords them. Now, The World Needs More Birkbeck campaign is a chance for you to join them and ensure that a Birkbeck education remains open to all who want and need it. Visit [campaign.bbk.ac.uk/supportus](https://campaign.bbk.ac.uk/supportus)**





Image: Mark Robinson  
(Paul Cochrane)

## SHIFTING PERCEPTIONS

*Mark Robinson, Criminal Barrister at Great James Street Chambers, graduated from LLB Law at Birkbeck in 2018. He hopes to inspire young people with his unconventional journey to the Bar by proving that a career in law is accessible to people from all walks of life.*

At the height of Mark's almost 20-year music career, in which he worked as a DJ for BBC Radio 1Xtra and produced music for Akon, David Guetta and Ministry of Sound, he was targeted by a malicious allegation of assault. Mark decided to represent himself at Woolwich Crown Court and without any legal experience or training at the time, successfully secured his own acquittal after a re-trial.

"From there, I realised that law was what I was meant to do," says Mark, and this belief has been reaffirmed by the success he has gone on to achieve. Having obtained no GCSEs or A-Levels prior to joining Birkbeck, as well as being recently diagnosed with dyspraxia, Mark recalls the importance of the support he received from his lecturers: "I was confident in myself and my ability, but I'd been out of education for a long time and there were definitely areas I needed to work on. But everyone at Birkbeck seemed to know exactly what I needed."

Where it takes most graduates three or more years, Mark was called to the Bar less than 18 months after graduating, having received a total exemption from pupillage and the Bar Transfer Test. The advice he received and connections he made at Birkbeck, in tandem with having already represented himself in court, enabled him to leapfrog these steps to qualify as a barrister. Speaking about his rapid career trajectory, Mark credits the power of self-belief and persistently advocating for himself throughout his journey. Now a Criminal Barrister for Great James Street Chambers, specialising in criminal defence, prison law and extradition, he is well placed to support those facing the same challenges he once did: "There is no better feeling than leaving a courtroom with a client who rightly maintains their freedom."

After being physically abused as a baby, Mark was raised in local authority care from three months old until he

was adopted aged six. He was excluded from secondary school, got in trouble with the police and became involved on the fringes of different gangs around Forest Gate, London. "I think my background gives me quite a unique perspective in my profession," says Mark. "Remaining loyal to my roots is an important part of what I do."

Mark acknowledges his East London accent and DJ background as something that can often connect him on a more personal level with his clients, attributing good rapport as a key element to his success. He also works with more vulnerable members of society outside of his role, advising for leading youth justice charities and working with gang prevention programmes in London. Mark regularly comes back to Birkbeck to speak to new students, inspiring them about all they can achieve as they embark on their studies.

“  
**IT IS IMPORTANT TO  
SEE THAT LAWYERS  
COME FROM ALL  
WALKS OF LIFE**  
”

When not in court, Mark explains that he continues to don his beloved Adidas tracksuits and custom Air Force 1's, laughing when people mistake him for a drill artist, and occasionally having to draw up his Great James Street Chambers profile so people believe that he is, in fact, a criminal barrister. But that's all part of Mark's identity and advocacy: "It is important for people who may aspire to be lawyers to see that we come from all walks of life... this is what a lawyer looks like."

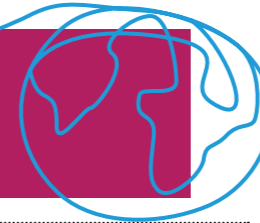
**Alumni like Mark show that education has the power to be transformative at all stages of life. He and so many others in the Birkbeck community are inspiring those around them by demonstrating that there is no one path to success.**

“  
FOR THE FIRST  
TIME IN A WHILE  
I STARTED  
THINKING ABOUT  
WHAT I COULD  
ACHIEVE IN THE  
FUTURE  
”



Image: Dr Brooke Johnson  
(Stuart Bebb)

## A DIAGNOSIS FOR CHANGE



*Dr Brooke Johnson has just completed his PhD at the University of Oxford researching Earth Sciences. It was at Birkbeck that he earned his first formal qualification and developed the confidence and skills to pursue doctoral study, despite facing many challenges along the way. Today, he continues to inspire others from non-traditional backgrounds to get into higher education.*

“It was a real low point,” says Brooke, describing his time working in a call centre in 2011. “There was nothing wrong with the job or the people, but I found the company culture dehumanising. I was depressed and I couldn’t see my reason for existing.” Having noticed the challenges he was facing, a friend suggested he pursue his lifelong interest in Geology, mentioning the distance learning courses available at Birkbeck. Brooke was keen to change his career path and explore his passion but had some reservations about higher education.

Having had a difficult time at school due to an unstable home life and other challenges, Brooke left with no formal qualifications and thought that the opportunity to go to university had passed him by. But after researching Birkbeck and the BSc Geology course, he decided to apply on the basis that he had “nothing to lose”. The Department was impressed by his intense passion and interest in the subject.

Brooke began study from his home in Newcastle and the course had an immediate impact: “I was hooked instantly. I felt like I was turning my life around, and for the first time in a while, I started thinking about what I could achieve in the future.”

During Brooke’s second year, his lecturer Mr Steve Hirons noticed that his intelligence and ability, which Steve believed was already at PhD level, was not reflected in Brooke’s work. After being supported by Birkbeck to undergo testing, Brooke was formally diagnosed with dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia. From this point, his studies and self-confidence ‘did a 180’.

His previous attempts at education, including a year studying concept art for computer games and multiple attempts to complete his GCSEs, had all been unsuccessful due to lack of support for his undiagnosed conditions. Teachers had often remarked that Brooke

must have been ‘lazy’ or ‘lacked willpower’. He laments how common it is for dyslexic or dyspraxic children of lower socio-economic backgrounds to proceed through the schooling system without receiving diagnoses. “It can be so demotivating. It caused me a lot of anxiety,” he says. “Neurodivergent students often feel that the way they approach the world is different, or incorrect, without knowing how or why.” At Birkbeck, Brooke received appropriate support in the right learning environment, which enabled him to complete his degree, achieving a First-Class Honours in 2015.

Having overcome his doubts about his academic abilities, Brooke applied for a prestigious PhD programme at the University of Oxford: “It felt incredible to go from just trying to make it through the first term of my undergraduate at Birkbeck, to post-doctoral study at Oxford.”

Motivated by his own experiences and the barriers he continues to face, Brooke has become increasingly passionate about improving access and representation for students across all levels of study, including post-doctoral researchers and students undertaking PhDs. He first became involved with outreach while at Birkbeck, visiting schools in areas of low university attainment with the hope of inspiring students to consider different pathways into higher education.

“Outreach is so important for giving people opportunities, but also because science and technology are dominated by the middle and upper-classes, so we’re missing out on huge pools of talent.” Brooke continued with this outreach at Oxford, stating the importance of having ‘someone like him’ from a different socio-economic background, to show prospective students that Oxbridge, or any university, can be accessible to people like them.

Brooke is about to begin a research position in Belgium. He hopes to continue to share his enthusiasm for geology and support the next generation of experts in his field. You can see some of his work on his YouTube channel @Geology\_Johnson

**Brooke, like so many others, has benefitted from the support he received at Birkbeck. The World Needs More Birkbeck campaign will ensure every student has the support they need while breaking down the barriers to postgraduate education. Visit [campaign.bbk.ac.uk](https://campaign.bbk.ac.uk) to learn more.**



Image: Karishma Auchombit (Paul Cochrane)

Our community is made up of incredible people with inspiring stories. Without Birkbeck, so many would not have access to university study, the opportunity to enhance their career, or the flexibility to carry out impactful research. Karishma, Henry, Rachel and Jo are among the thousands of students and researchers who make up #OurBirkbeck community and benefit from the support and flexibility Birkbeck offers.

Karishma always wanted to study maths at university but, before taking her A levels, her school's maths department was closed due to poor performance. After starting her studies at a new school, the pandemic hit and it was announced that all exam results would be based on predicted grades. Without the records from her previous school, Karishma was predicted a D and her hopes for pursuing maths appeared to be shattered.

"It was devastating to feel like I could no longer go to university, especially when I knew that a D didn't reflect my ability or all that I'd worked for. I was hopeful when a friend, who was in her final year at Birkbeck, suggested that it might be the right place for me. Birkbeck gave me the opportunity to show that I had the knowledge and drive to be studying at degree level.

Receiving a bursary meant so much more than just financial support. Bursaries are a way for Birkbeck to show its students that hard work pays off. It made me feel like my efforts had been rewarded, giving me a boost of confidence when I really needed it."

-Karishma Auchombit, BSc Mathematics and Accounting

Having been forced to withdraw from his previous studies due to financial pressure, Henry has long been aware of the extensive costs associated with pursuing an education. After years focusing on work to support his family, Henry was made redundant during the pandemic. Once he secured a new role, he began to consider the possibility of returning to education. Access to Birkbeck's unique model of teaching meant that Henry could make attending university a reality.

"I enrolled at Birkbeck not only to improve my career prospects, but also because I have a deep interest in economics. Birkbeck is a wonderful institution that affords students access to education with the flexibility to combine work and study, especially for people like me who have been out of education and are starting their journey as mature students.



Image: Henry Luzzi (Paul Cochrane)

My son, who is 16, is doing work experience with me and I am incredibly proud of all that he is achieving. Receiving a bursary that acknowledged the success I achieved during my first year at Birkbeck gave me a moment to feel proud of myself and has reaffirmed that returning to education was the right decision for me and for my son."

-Henry Luzzi, BSc Economics and Business with Foundation Year

The pandemic has thrown new light onto discussions about workplace health and wellbeing, but at Birkbeck we have been shaping this area for many years. Dr Lewis and Dr Yarker's research focuses on psychological wellbeing at work, looking at individuals working under pressure or in roles with high levels of stress. They have developed comprehensive toolkits and competency frameworks to help organisations, managers, teams and individuals better manage their work.

"Our research focuses on supporting people to thrive at work, with the aim of making a tangible difference in the way workplaces function. We want to humanise the workplace by improving levels of employee health



Image: Dr Rachel Lewis (left) and Dr Jo Yarker (right) (Paul Cochrane)

and wellbeing and enhance people management and leadership skills.

At Birkbeck, we job share, meaning the workload of one role is split equally between us, which is incredibly rare in academia. This allows us to do so much more than a traditional role; we bring double the perspectives and twice the number of ideas to one role and one area of research. It also affords us the opportunity to have real impact by putting our research into practice with organisations and businesses."

-Dr Rachel Lewis and Dr Jo Yarker, Readers in Occupational Psychology

**Every year hundreds of alumni and friends choose to make an impact at Birkbeck. Whether making a gift, giving time and expertise, or spreading the word about Birkbeck's unique model of teaching - your support matters and your generosity makes a difference. Visit [campaign.bbk.ac.uk](https://campaign.bbk.ac.uk) to get involved.**

“

**THERE  
ARE GREAT  
OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR WOMEN  
TO LEAD ON  
PRODUCTS  
FOR THE NEXT  
DECADE**

”



Image: Eva Pascoe  
(Paul Cochrane)

## BRINGING TECH TO THE MASSES



*Eva Pascoe graduated from Birkbeck with a BSc in Psychology and Ergonomics of Human-Computer Interaction in 1991. She has been working in the technology and e-commerce industry ever since and has spearheaded innovations that have completely changed the way we shop.*

Eva's career path was influenced by the Chernobyl Disaster—as a student in Poland, she witnessed a radioactive cloud spreading over Europe in the spring of 1986. Eva explains: “The user interfaces at the power plant were designed for engineers, but the people managing it were operators. The interfaces were too complicated for the operators to interpret; they were running a test but were unable to see the results until it was too late. The disaster was caused by a number of issues as the wrong people were running the tests and the technology did not show the right causal relationships.”

Driven by a mission to help avoid such disasters in the future, Eva came to London in 1987 to study BSc Psychology and Ergonomics of Human-Computer Interaction at Birkbeck. She went on to study for a PhD, working on “designing interfaces to manage risk in dynamic contexts” to address the failures that led to Chernobyl. It was during these studies at Birkbeck that Eva found that the nuclear energy sector was already losing significance: “I thought for all my passion, I don't want to end up in a declining sector and if I know my tech, there's got to be somewhere I can actually use it. And then lo and behold, the internet started happening.” Eva remembers her time at Birkbeck fondly

as she was able to work with some of the top academics in the country including John Long, Professor of Cognitive Engineering and Human Computer Interaction and Nick Pidgeon, Professor of Environmental Psychology and Risk: “I was absolutely in the right spot. I was so happy there.”

In September 1994, she co-founded Cyberia, an internet café that piqued the interests of many eager web users. “I realised that we were all obsessed with the internet and that this was the way forwards. We set up the first café around the back of Birkbeck, because I was still doing my PhD, and the next day we had a queue around the block of people just desperate to get a glance of the internet.” Eva went on to set up a franchise with locations in Bangkok, Paris and Tokyo, ensuring the success of each with the lesson she learned at Birkbeck: “Technology has to be culturally contextualised as people interact with the internet differently depending on their culture.”

Throughout her career, Eva has championed women working in the tech space. Following the success of Cyberia, she was able to use the cafés to establish and host the first ever HyperText Markup Language (HTML) courses for women, with the aim of closing an already considerable gender gap in the technology industry.

Eva pioneered the first e-commerce websites for fashion in the UK, working with the Arcadia group for brands such as Burton, Topman and Topshop on the first multi-brand portal that revolutionised the consumer retail experience. After leaving Arcadia, she continued her mission to help women founders. “Around 2007 there were quite a few women who were starting their own online fashion businesses. I started out as a mentor, but soon was able to supply them with the digital systems and infrastructure to make their businesses work. Later I ended up as an investor through CrowdCube and the UK Angel Network.”

Eva believes that the future for women in tech looks promising: “I think there are great opportunities for women to lead on products for the next decade. New products that address women's lifestyles are coming into the market, such as more apps for health and childcare, fulfilling the needs of women who are usually the primary caregivers in their communities.”

Recently, Eva has been working with charities to develop solutions that will bring them up to date at a time when donations are needed more than ever. “We need to make it easy for charities to set up shops, merchandise and receive donations.”

Looking to the not-so-distant future of e-commerce and how it will adapt to consumer demand, Eva predicts: “You'll be able to shop on every platform. The concept of buying, which was traditionally a big cash till on a desk, is now a snippet of code that can be in everything. So, when you see something you like on a social platform, it will be in your bag in one click. Done.”

## THE BLURRED BOUNDARIES OF ONLINE SPEECH AND CONTENT MODERATION

Over the last two years, people have been spending more time than ever in their local communities and social media has played a crucial role in bringing these communities together. At Birkbeck, we recognise the vital role our researchers can play in better understanding both the opportunities and challenges presented by social media today.

Birkbeck is leading independent research into online content governance that can help address pressing concerns over issues including online speech and content moderation. With two decades of research expertise in media, cities and the geographies of communication, Dr Scott Rodgers, Reader in Media and Geography at Birkbeck, is well placed to lead the project entitled *Localizing content governance in place-named Facebook Groups*.

Dr Rodgers explains, “As social networks have grown, social media companies have increasingly found themselves confronting issues of human rights, ethics and free expression, while also playing a greater role in establishing rules around what can and can’t be said online.”

The Birkbeck team is closely studying different types of place-named Facebook groups across Greater London, interviewing group moderators about how they manage and moderate their groups. This includes balancing their decision-making between standards set by Facebook, their own local allegiances and even their own personal safety.



(Pexels)

At the same time, the team is also developing a map of 3,226 Greater London neighbourhood Facebook groups to analyse them in relation to their geographies and population characteristics. This map aims to improve our understanding of the use of Facebook as a communication platform in London and the impact of this on safeguarding the communities they are intended to support.

Birkbeck’s research team found distinct forms of content moderation happening at the local level. When deciding whether content was appropriate or not, Facebook moderators described the importance of the local cultural context and social norms in interpreting Facebook’s global rules. They also tended to see themselves as catalysts for discussion and engagement, rather than content police.

The project has also found that local Facebook moderators are influential and understand the sway they can hold. They saw how their rules both helped and hindered local businesses or deemed certain political discussions as acceptable or unacceptable. This often led to very real threats to moderators’ safety. Researchers heard accounts of verbal abuse at the local pub, and threats of physical violence.

Through better understanding the approaches and experiences of local content moderators, this research has the potential to inform the governance of social media platforms in relation to local cultures, improving the experience of users in the increasingly blurred space between the online and offline world.

As Dr Rodgers notes, “Studying local Facebook groups not only reveals the fascinating world of neighbourhood social media, it also underlines the limits of large-scale moderation—whether by platforms, governments or algorithms.”

## WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THE GREAT APES

*Detecting signs of language disorders in children can be difficult. But new research by Birkbeck academics, involving great apes and their motor skills, is informing our understanding of the foundations of language development and helping to identify new risk markers for language disorders.*

The research taking place at Twycross Zoo, Leicestershire, and Port Lympne Wild Animal Park, Kent, works on a prevailing evolutionary theory that solving problems with our hands, like using tools, is a precursor for language development. Hand actions, such as cracking a nut with a rock, need to occur in a structured order to achieve their goal—in much the same way that words need to be used in the correct order to achieve one’s intended meaning.

Gillian Forrester, Professor of Comparative Cognition at Birkbeck, and Dr Georgina Donati, Research Assistant at Birkbeck, are exploring the practical applications of this theory by studying the problem-solving skills of chimpanzees, gorillas and orangutans. They give the apes puzzle boxes that require an ordered sequence of movements to release the edible rewards inside. The puzzle can only be solved if the ape learns the structured rules. Otherwise, the reward is not released, and they must try again—just like in language learning.

“The parts of the brain that control the movements of our hands and mouths have significant overlap,” says Professor Forrester. “Since apes are good tool users



Image: Prof. Gillian Forrester

and share the brain regions that we use for language processes, we are looking at what level of language structure they are capable of learning and how age affects their ability. This will help us to understand more about the behaviours that have helped us to build a language system over millions of years, and in doing so, learn more about how we develop and learn language.”

In the second stage of the project, toddlers aged 18 to 36 months are tasked with solving the same puzzles to compare the abilities of human children with the apes. This helps to better understand the relationships between their ability to solve the puzzle boxes and their language level.

“The results of child development studies results suggest that young children with good dexterity and object manipulation skills tend to develop typical language skills. Whereas children with weaker dexterity and object manipulation skills tend to develop weaker language skills,” explains Dr Donati. “By exploring how this developmental process occurs, we may be able to use motor development as a risk marker for language disorders. The earlier we can detect that motor development is unfolding atypically, the better placed we are to develop new innovations and therapies that will help individuals at crucial stages of their development.”

This project, entitled *Hand to Mouth: The Role of Tool-Use in the Evolution and Development of Language*, is ongoing and is scheduled to feature in a number of public engagement events, including the *Bluedot Festival* in July 2022, where visitors will be encouraged to take on the puzzle box challenge to compete against the great apes.



“  
**BIRKBECK HELPED  
 ME SEE THE  
 CHALLENGES  
 FACING BRAZIL  
 THROUGH A  
 GLOBAL LENS**  
 ”

Image: Sao Paulo  
 (William Luiz)

## CHANGE ON A GLOBAL SCALE



*Since studying MSc Public Policy and Management at Birkbeck in 2017, Handemba Mutana Poli dos Santos has gone on to forge a successful and rewarding career that blends law and public policy to address social inequalities in Brazil. He is currently the Global Public Policy Director at TikTok for Good.*

Handemba’s passion for social justice was inspired by his parents, who were both grassroots activists in his community in São Paulo, Brazil during the 1970s. Both Handemba and his parents drew inspiration from the Black Panther movement in the US, specifically its connections with Africa and community-based activism.

Already well established in a successful career, having worked in investment banking and then as Chief of Staff for the National School of Public Administration, Handemba was eager to do more to support his country. He wanted to develop a deeper global perspective so he could bring his learnings and new ideas back to communities in Brazil.

Birkbeck was the perfect fit. During his studies, Handemba was able to delve deeper into how public policy intersects with inequalities. “My dissertation was about inequalities and how policy can positively and negatively impact people in Brazil. The course gave me greater insight into that, but also allowed me to think globally about these issues. You get this drive to think about different countries, realities and situations—it is still something that affects me today. It helped me see certain issues, such as equality, through a global lens.”

For Handemba, this new perspective was gained as much from his classmates as it was from his teachers. He thrived in this environment, taking the time to build a global network of fellow Birkbeck students who were all passionate about creating meaningful change: “I felt really welcome because of the diversity of cultures that you find in London. It was something I haven’t experienced anywhere else. At Birkbeck I was able to use my days to experience the city and its culture while making lifelong friends.”

After completing his course, Handemba moved back to Brazil, ready to apply what he had learned. The proudest moments of his career come from when he has been able to use his education and skills to make a national impact. “My career choices allowed me to combine two powerful practices, public policy and law. I have been able to use both practices to navigate complex systems in Brazil to build impactful and scalable initiatives. One partnership I’ve set up works to empower individuals from different states in Brazil to make changes in their community by providing access to courses, mentoring and financial advice.”

In his latest role as Global Public Policy Director for TikTok for Good, Handemba is employing tech as a tool to widen efforts to reduce inequalities and address issues such as climate change. For Handemba, social media has a vital role to play in creating change and he hopes that it will inspire and encourage a new generation to have a positive impact on the planet. “This is a chance to bring discussions to wider audiences and inspire people to talk about their experiences, share their passions and have others listen. Whether it is about race, gender inequality or LGBTQ+ issues, it can empower a diverse range of people.”

Handemba and his team are looking for creative ways to encourage people to engage with global challenges such as climate change: “We established a partnership with Instituto Terra and a famous singer in Brazil, Gilberto Gil, who released a song called ‘Reforestation.’ For every video created on the platform that used the song, we pledged to plant one tree. After one week, 14,000 videos had been created, and from November 2021 we began the process of planting the trees. It just shows that there are many ways that we can use social media to bring awareness and tackle challenges.”

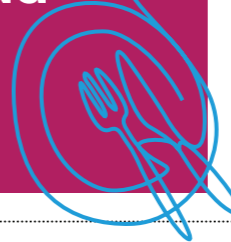
Handemba credits his impactful career to Birkbeck: “The university brought me possibilities, and that’s something you can’t take for granted. It gave me the opportunity to think about my career, study and change my world view. I had a great experience at Birkbeck, I wouldn’t be here in this role without it.”

**Update your details to hear more about the opportunities to get involved with our 73,000 Birkbeck alumni around the world. Visit [campaign.bbk.ac.uk/update-your-details](https://campaign.bbk.ac.uk/update-your-details)**



Image: Chris Corbin

## SPEARHEADING LONDON'S RESTAURANT SCENE



*Chris Corbin, Co-Founder of Corbin & King, has been the driving force behind some of London's most iconic restaurants, including The Wolseley and The Ivy. Chris studied a Certificate of Higher Education in History of Art at Birkbeck in 2010 and gained an understanding and appreciation for artistry at Birkbeck that he takes to his restaurants, providing a unique experience for his clientele.*

Chris vividly recalls having lunch with his parents at a restaurant in Bournemouth aged seven. The waiter was doing tricks with a serviette, while serving boat-shaped melon slices and smelly cheeses on a trolley. The unforgettable smells and theatre of it all got Chris hooked and later sparked his inspiration for moving from waiting tables to opening his first restaurant.

Aged 20, Chris moved to London to become a waiter, "Once you're in London, it's a very different world. The standards and clientele are completely different." After a few years in the industry, he landed a job at Langan's Brasserie, one of the most influential restaurants of the 1970s. He describes the experience as 'his university': "Langan's was inspired by the glamorous boulevards of Paris. It was open all day and frequented by artists and actors. In a sense, it was the cultural hub of London."

“

**WE DIDN'T HAVE A BUSINESS PLAN, WE JUST WORKED OFF INSTINCT**

”

Chris met his business partner Jeremy King while working at Langan's. They joined forces, both brimming with ideas for changing the restaurant scene: "We didn't have a business plan, we just worked off instinct. It was important to us to create accessible restaurants that diners didn't necessarily have to dress up for, with simple but inventive food that focused on seasonality and fresh products. We didn't even consider the risks, we had nothing to lose."

The dynamic duo went on to transform The Ivy and Le Caprice into hugely in-demand eateries, and now have nine restaurants to their names after nearly 40 years in business together.

Despite running a successful network of restaurants, Chris doesn't claim to have culinary expertise: "I don't have any of those skills. What I've developed is an appreciation of what people want, as opposed to what we think they want, as well as the mastery of presentation and making menus more desirable. People go to restaurants for an experience. I predict that the future of restaurants in London is local. Given the Covid-19 pandemic, the growing prevalence of quality restaurants, and the fact that going out to eat is now seen as an everyday event, people are generally less inclined to travel to dine in restaurants."

Having achieved considerable success in creating memorable restaurant experiences, Chris decided to further his education in 2010, studying History of Art at Birkbeck. He speaks fondly of his experience: "The modules I took were very stimulating. My appreciation of art increased and studying enabled me to relate more to artists and their work. A five-day study tour to Paris was one of the highlights. I fell in love with the work of impressionist artist Édouard Manet, having never heard of him before. I'm no artist myself, but there's a certain art in what we do as restaurateurs, and our restaurants are undoubtedly vehicles of self-expression. Artwork in a restaurant really feeds a person's senses and contributes to the experience and studying at Birkbeck really developed my expertise and knowledge."

"I personally felt very undereducated when I left school, probably because I didn't study very hard. I see lifelong learning as critical, and I've found continuing my education to be a real confidence builder. It enables you to feel more worldly and appreciative of other people and their experiences. The connoisseurship that I developed from my experience at Birkbeck has been massively valuable to me."

## THE LAST WORD

Word

Throughout Birkbeck's history, our students have shown that your background does not have to determine your future, and that anything is achievable with the right support. Over the last two years, the challenges they face have only increased, but so too has their resilience, optimism and drive. Few demonstrate this as clearly as MSc Organizational Psychology student Susan Christine.

I'm a big proponent of the saying 'you can't be what you can't see.' As a woman from a low-income family, raised by a single mother, it is so important to me to see representation and diversity in my environment and in the paths that I wish to follow.

Since joining Birkbeck, I've witnessed the impact of our incredible research and heard about the amazing work alumni are doing across every sector all around the world, and I can't help but be inspired. The #OurBirkbeck stories from alumni and friends have showcased what is possible for this generation of students and it has encouraged me to think about the impact I want to have. It has made me want to be that representation for future generations.

Seeing so many alumni give back to the College with both money and time to support students, particularly during a pandemic, has demonstrated to me the power of the Birkbeck community. It has made me so grateful that I chose Birkbeck and eager to share why the world needs more of what we do.

When I applied to Birkbeck in 2020, I was working full-time to save money for my studies and support my mother, while being a joint carer for my brother and starting my own online careers service. Thanks to the generosity of Birkbeck's supporter community, I was



Image: Susan Christine  
(Paul Cochrane)

able to access financial support that ensured I could keep up with my living costs and commitments. It allowed me to remain focused on my education at a time when I needed it most.

It has been so refreshing to see an institution truly embrace the concept of education for all. Embedding student support into the curriculum and placing such emphasis on accessibility creates a feeling of community and belonging. I have never felt like I stand out because of my background or experiences, because every Birkbeck student has such unique and interesting stories to tell. Despite completing most of my course virtually, Birkbeck feels like home.

Now as we return to Malet Street, it is exciting to see everything the College is doing to improve student spaces, learning facilities and research opportunities. Already it feels like these developments will advance Birkbeck's ethos of sharing ideas, learning from one another and pushing the boundaries.

To know the College has now launched its 'The World Needs More Birkbeck' campaign, with so many alumni, friends and supporters behind it, I am filled with such confidence and pride. I hope that soon I can give back to this community that has given so much to me and many others. I ask everyone to support this Campaign in any way they can. The world truly needs more Birkbeck.



## The World Needs More **Birkbeck**

We hope you have enjoyed this year's edition of BBK Magazine, and we hope you agree that the world needs more of who we are and more of what we do.

As a community, we can further empower our students, researchers and staff to create opportunities and tackle some of the most pressing global challenges. Become a supporter or continue your giving today. Make your impact on Birkbeck's third century.

To help us continue to improve the BBK Magazine, we would be grateful if you could share your feedback by filling in our survey. Scan the QR code or visit [campaign.bbk.ac.uk/bbk-mag-40](https://campaign.bbk.ac.uk/bbk-mag-40) to have your say.

Thank you for being part of #OurBirkbeck community.



Please use this QR code to quickly access our survey.  
Hover your smart phone in camera mode over the symbol  
and you will be asked to open the browser on your phone.





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**General correspondence**

Development and Alumni  
Birkbeck, University of London  
Malet Street  
London WC1E 7HX  
alumni@bbk.ac.uk

**Development and Alumni**

020 3926 3168  
alumni@bbk.ac.uk

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