

BBK

 **Birkbeck**
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Early electron microscope, 1970



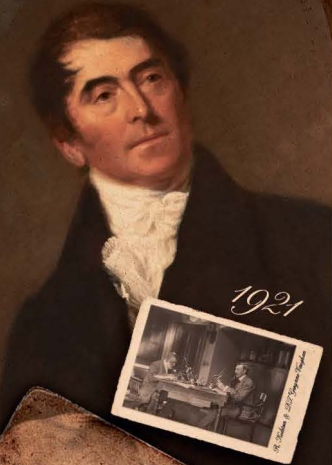
Dr Rachel Lewis & Dr Jo Yarker, 2021



College netball team, 1925



George Birkbeck M.D.



373 Euston Road, 2021



Department of Botany - Research Laboratory



Mrs. G. BIRKBECK
ALBUM
SEPTEMBER, MDCCCXX

200

1823-2023

ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Ramsay MacDonald



Graduation, 2021



Marcus Garvey, 1924



The Breems Buildings, c.1884



Crystallography research, 2000

London Mechanics Institute.



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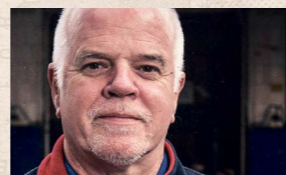
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VICE-CHANCELLOR'S WELCOME

PROFESSOR DAVID LATCHMAN CBE

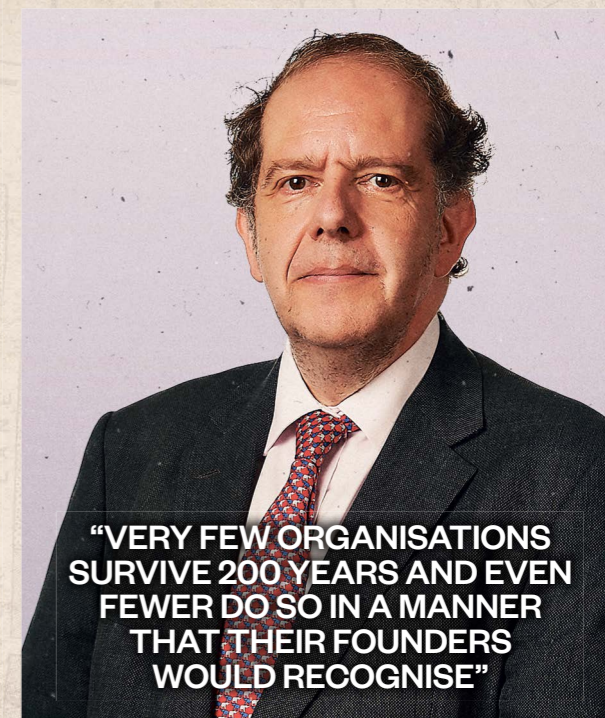
Many of you may have heard me say this before, but at this pivotal milestone for Birkbeck it is more relevant than ever: very few organisations survive 200 years and even fewer do so in a manner which their founders would recognise.

Birkbeck, London, and the world of today face challenges and changes that our founders could never have foreseen, but the pressing need for Birkbeck's unique model remains unchanged. Since the launch of The World Needs More Birkbeck campaign, we have seen so many in our community lend their voice, support, and expertise to ensure that our founding vision to provide access to education for everyone, regardless of background or circumstance, endures.

Prior to the pandemic, Birkbeck began developing a digital infrastructure to enhance our online learning offering to support our in-person teaching and increase student attainment. This proved invaluable when COVID-19 forced all classes online. Now, in post-pandemic society, shifts in the way students want and need to access education have accelerated. After years of feedback from students that the physical space they are taught in is essential to their learning experience and demand for greater flexibility through online provision to fit alongside their working lives, we are now moving closer to creating a model that our students want and deserve.

With the support of a £3M grant from the Office for Students, Birkbeck is pioneering a dynamic new learning model, which will introduce new technology into our classrooms. By investing in this 'HyFlex' technology alongside essential physical infrastructures to bring our diverse community together, like our new Birkbeck Central building, we are creating one of the UK's most supportive and flexible learning environments.

Many times, throughout Birkbeck's history, the College has undergone periods of change, rejuvenation and regeneration to adapt to the world and the changing needs of our students. This year, we have been consulting with staff on proposals that would maintain our academic breadth while bringing small academic units together to create larger faculties with greater collaboration across teaching and research. These changes, if approved, will come into effect later in 2023, helping us to deliver on our bold and ambitious vision to develop as the foremost provider of flexible higher education.



"VERY FEW ORGANISATIONS SURVIVE 200 YEARS AND EVEN FEWER DO SO IN A MANNER THAT THEIR FOUNDERS WOULD RECOGNISE"

Personally, the next year will also be a significant one for me. I will turn 67 in January and retire from my position as Vice-Chancellor at the end of December 2023. It has been a huge privilege to serve as Birkbeck's Vice-Chancellor since 2003, working with so many members of the Birkbeck community, including students, alumni, and donors, and leading the College through phases of both major challenge and significant development and progress. My role has been both demanding and stimulating in equal measure, and it has been a privilege to play a part in continuing Birkbeck's unique and important mission, strengthening it for the future, and increasing its relevance and benefit to students. Over the coming year, I look forward to continuing in my role, leading the changes ahead and Birkbeck's 200th anniversary commemorations.

As we mark this milestone year, we will commemorate all that Birkbeck, and the thousands of people who make up our rich history, have achieved. We invite you to join us as we celebrate the influential people of Birkbeck's past and the inspiring alumni and researchers who are shaping the future. The year will be filled with events, stories and opportunities to reconnect with the College, and this edition of BBK magazine starts the year with some examples of the incredible impact our community is having around the globe.

Thank you for being part of our Birkbeck community and for joining us at this important moment in Birkbeck's history.

200 YEARS OF BIRKBECK

Birkbeck, as it is known today, has been through many phases of evolution and reinvention across its rich 200-year history. Starting life as the London Mechanics Institute (LMI) in 1823, the College was founded at a time when London was the largest city in the world, the capital of a sprawling British empire, and a place where working men and women were mostly illiterate. Proposing to educate working people was radical. Many feared that it would disrupt social norms, give people ambitions beyond their status and "sow the seeds of evil in our society." It was therefore bold, when on the evening of 11 November 1823, thousands flocked to the Crown and Anchor Tavern on the Strand to hear Dr George Birkbeck extoll that "now is the time for the universal blessings of knowledge."

"NOW IS THE TIME FOR THE UNIVERSAL BENEFITS OF THE BLESSINGS OF KNOWLEDGE"



Yet George Birkbeck was not the College's sole founder. Five men played a vital role in establishing the original LMI: patent agent and editor Joseph Clinton Robertson, journalist and economist Thomas Hodgskin, tailor and professional radical Francis Place, prominent Whig politician Henry Brougham, and physician and philanthropist George Birkbeck. The founders were all complex characters, with their own interest and, for some, their own controversies.



In 1830, 'The Birkbeck', as it was commonly known, took another radical step in admitting women to attend classes. While female students were initially forbidden from using the College's front entrance and could not become full members until 1896, it was nevertheless an extremely progressive step and put Birkbeck among the first institutions in the UK to provide access to higher education for women.

It was George Armitage-Smith who solidified the College's future, transforming it from the Birkbeck Literary and Scientific Institution into Birkbeck College, University of London. As the Principal, he reorganised the College and transformed a fragmented list of classes into coherent, discipline-focused university courses. Armitage-Smith successfully fought for Birkbeck's admission into the University of London in 1920, with his powerful message that "the evening student has more stamina and greater capability of work ... [Birkbeck students] represent not the average nor the many but are the chosen few."

In the 20th century, Birkbeck became a hub for pioneering and radical thinkers. It oversaw the creation of the first academic department in the UK, and possibly worldwide, devoted to teaching and research related to computing. Renowned computer scientists Andrew and Kathleen Booth developed some of the earliest digital computers while managing the department. World-leading scientists such as J.D. Bernal, Rosalind Franklin and David Bohm, along with Nobel Prize winners Aaron Klug and Roger Penrose, carried out transformative research at Birkbeck in an environment that championed a culture of collaboration, curiosity, and egalitarianism.

However, there were still many challenges to overcome. Between 1986 and 2008 a series of government changes cut deeply against Birkbeck's core support for part-time learners and adult education. Changes to university funding for part-time students put Birkbeck at risk. The College grappled with meeting changing requirements and shifting student demographics, but ultimately emerged stronger as it entered the millennium.

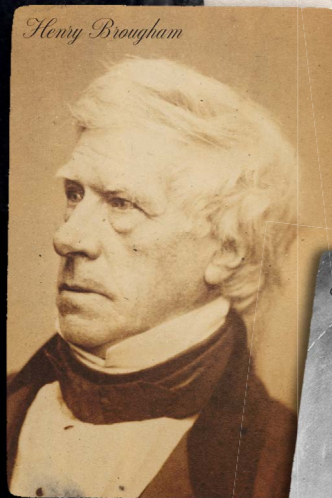


George Armitage-Smith

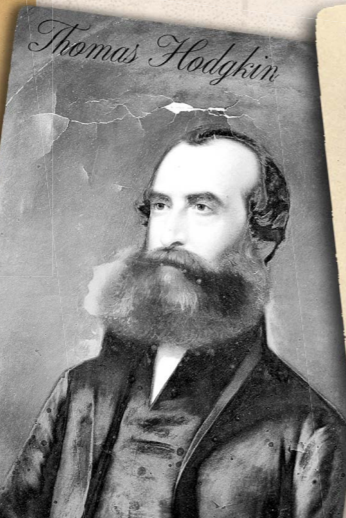
March 2020 and the COVID-19 outbreak instigated another major shift for Birkbeck. Prior to the pandemic, only a few classes had any online components but within thirteen days of restrictions being in place, everything had been transferred online. Thanks to the support of the Birkbeck community, financial and pastoral assistance was increased to help students continue with their studies, at a time when many were made extremely vulnerable by the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. While student satisfaction dropped across the country, 80% of students at Birkbeck felt satisfied with their academic experience during the pandemic, compared to 56% nationally.

Now, as the College enters its 200th year, it continues to adapt. Birkbeck is committed to addressing the challenges of a shifting higher education landscape and a post-pandemic economy while continuing to meet the changing needs of the communities it serves. The College is investing in developing courses, advancing online provision and improving learning facilities. It remains committed to maintaining its academic breadth and excellence to ensure students from all backgrounds can learn from leading academics conducting world-class research. Now stepping into Birkbeck's third century, the College, with the support of its community, is proud to deliver on a 200-year-old mission to provide access to education for all.

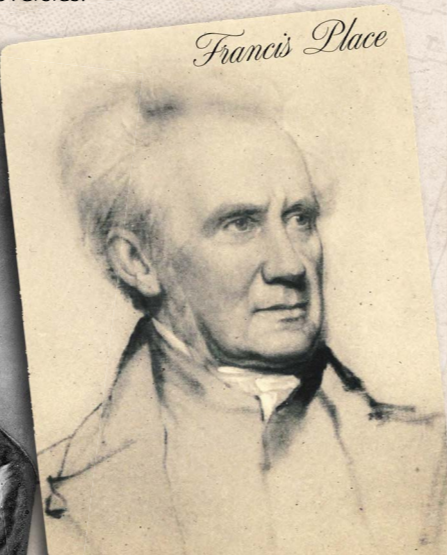
George Birkbeck M.D.



Henry Brougham



Thomas Hodgkin



Francis Place

WINNING IN THE WORLD OF FOOTBALL

Birkbeck's sport management degrees attract a hugely diverse group of students from across the globe. We spoke to three women whose studies at Birkbeck have helped them thrive in the world of football, where women are still woefully under-represented.

PREETI SHETTY

(MSC SPORTS MANAGEMENT, 2013)

Preeti is passionate about evaluating the role of sport in driving social change, providing opportunities to those who might have been overlooked and encouraging diversity of thought in decision-making. As Chief Executive of Upshot, a social enterprise originally created by the Football Foundation that helps over 1,000 not-for-profit organisations measure the impact of their community work, she has countless opportunities to indulge her passion.

Named as one of the Sport Industry Group 'NextGen Leaders' in sport, Preeti was also recently appointed as a Non-Executive Director of Brentford Football Club, making her the only South Asian woman in a Premier League boardroom.

"My master's dissertation at Birkbeck focused on impact measurement," Preeti explains. "This gave me a foot in the door to Upshot, which was a tech start-up at the time. I was able to develop the company from its infancy, so it can help demonstrate sport's social value to communities worldwide."

Talking about challenging perceptions of senior people in sport, she adds: "The adage of 'you have to see it to believe it' rings true for me. If you don't see people like you in positions of power and success, then you never think it's possible for you."

"Football is changing but is still very male dominated and predominantly white. Other South Asian women can look at me and say, 'if I want, I can do that too!' But equally, there are so many other roles we haven't touched. There are so many glass ceilings."

"We are living in a difficult, divisive time and it has never been more important for us to be inclusive, to be tolerant and to focus on equity before we even think about equality."

FAÏNA MSELLEM

(MSC SPORTS MANAGEMENT, 2015)

Faïna was raised in the shadow of Emirates Stadium, Arsenal's north London home, yet has always been a fervent Manchester United fan. She was a committee member for the women's football team at the University of East Anglia, but left sport behind when she went to work for a trade union after graduating, until she enrolled at Birkbeck in 2013.

Faïna has held numerous senior roles in the commercial and sponsorship side of football since her master's. In 2021, she became the Content Manager for OneFootball, a news website committed to reinventing how more than 100 million fans worldwide consume football stats, scores, news and streaming. Her role involves growing the platform in emerging markets, which she says provides a great opportunity for her to continue to develop: "There's never a set point where I've reached a level of comfort. There is always something more. I always want to learn."

As well as excelling in the commercial side of football, Faïna is also the Co-Founder of Lived Equity, a website that supports companies to achieve their diversity and inclusion goals. She explains, "If I can help ensure that the next generation doesn't have to face the bumpy roads most of us have, that would be amazing."



Brooke Chaplen
(middle)



BROOKE CHAPLEN

(MSC SPORTS MANAGEMENT, 2022)

A former professional footballer, Brooke credits her transition to women's football management and her role in the development of the FA Women's Super League, to her master's at Birkbeck.

Brooke enjoyed a successful career on the pitch, including winning the FA Cup at Everton and representing England at the European Championships and World Cup. However, her playing career ended abruptly after a cancer diagnosis in early 2022.

Now General Manager for Reading F.C. Women, she explains: "I had no idea I'd need to retire early, but I was already aware that as I approached 30, I needed to start considering what would come next. It was this that prompted me to study sports management while I was still playing. Now it's provided me with a second career and lessened the stress of no longer being able to play professionally."

She describes the degree as having "covered so many different elements of the football industry." This breadth prepared her for a multifaceted role at Reading, where despite being a top Women's Super League team, the club does not have extensive operations support comparable to most professional men's teams.

Reflecting on England's UEFA EURO 22 win, Brooke comments, "the Lionesses have generated huge interest in women's football, which really helps to develop the women's game commercially. It will be important for me and others across the industry and domestic leagues to really capitalise on the opportunities this provides. If now isn't the time for it to really take off, I don't know when it will."

"IF NOW ISN'T THE TIME FOR [WOMEN'S FOOTBALL] TO REALLY TAKE OFF, I DON'T KNOW WHEN IT WILL"

OPTIMISING RENEWABLE ENERGY

DR PAUL ELSNER

As the world's finite fuel sources become increasingly scarce and costly, and high-carbon energy production continues to damage the environment, the need for effective implementation of renewable energy is more important than ever. Dr Paul Elsner is an expert in geographic data science, with his current research focusing on the use of geo-spatial modelling to inform the placement and positioning of renewable energy investments.

The opening up of global satellite data archives from NASA, the United States Geological Survey and the European Space Agency in the last 15 years has revolutionised our capacity to make better decisions about renewable energy. "We now have access to 50 years of uninterrupted satellite data, as well as the first near-global modelling of Earth's wind fields," says Paul. "This allows us to create digital models with different data layers that can be used to explore the potential of different areas for the generation of low-carbon electricity. This information helps to optimise spatial decisions about where we place wind and solar energy projects, to ensure the greatest possible energy output."

Paul's work focuses on wind and solar because these are 'mature' technologies that are competitive on a market level. They have been the cheapest way to generate electricity for the last few years, well before the current energy crisis. "One of the underappreciated benefits of developing offshore wind or solar parks, beyond just being cleaner energy, is that you can lock in a safe price guarantee for the next 30 years," explains Paul. "In times when access to gas and other fossil fuels is compromised by geo-political conflicts, this also provides energy security for many countries."

One of Paul's most exciting projects examines offshore wind potential in Africa. When over 600 million people on the continent lack access to electricity, and the majority of their largest energy producers have committed to reaching net-zero emissions by mid-century, it is an area where sustainable energy development could make a real difference. By using radar data sets, Paul has established that many African coastal states have immense potential for wind energy, including South Africa, Mozambique, Madagascar, - Madagascar, Algeria and Morocco.

"In identifying these specific locations and demonstrating their cost-effectiveness, we are giving decision-makers the tools to develop clean energy policy pathways. It is about facilitating a long-term outlook and the development of safe, reliable energy infrastructures."

To ensure that this research reaches the right people and that discussions are brought up to date with the technology, Paul has been working with the World Bank Group and the Global Wind Energy Council to look at new markets for offshore wind. He is also a consultant for UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission on marine spatial planning and the sustainable use of ocean and coastal resources. Paul is passionate about enabling further research in this area. He recently spoke at a meeting of the UN Working Group on Marine Geospatial Information about the value of free and open geospatial information for global sustainable development.

"WE ARE GIVING DECISION-MAKERS THE TOOLS TO DEVELOP CLEAN ENERGY POLICY PATHWAYS"



TRANSFORMING DIGITAL EVIDENCE FORENSICS

TIGGEY MAY

As the online world becomes increasingly entangled with our everyday lives, almost every crime leaves a digital footprint — either on social media, messaging platforms or beyond. Birkbeck researchers are working to help police forces collect and use this evidence more effectively when investigating and prosecuting rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO).

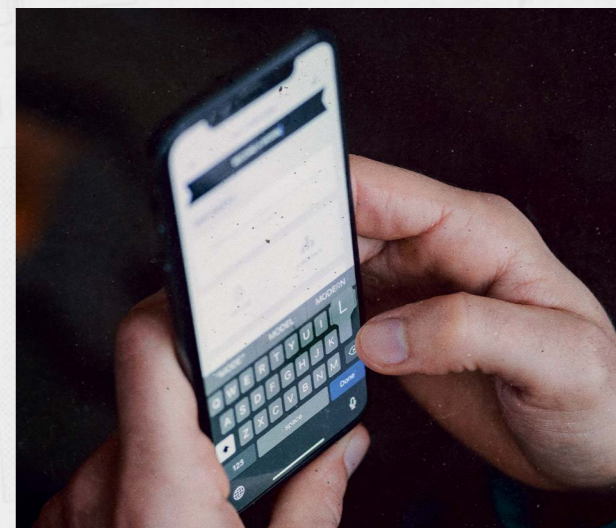
Data from the Office of National Statistics show that 2021 saw the highest recorded number of rape offences to date at 63,136, with only 1.3% of these resulting in a charge or summons, compared to 8.9% in 2017.

Birkbeck's Institute for Crime and Justice Policy Research (ICPR) is taking part in a Home Office-funded research and change programme that aims to transform the policing response to RASSO. Tiggey May, Senior Research Fellow at ICPR, is focused on improving how digital evidence is extracted, stored, analysed and utilised in the investigation of these cases.

"We are looking at the reporting and investigative journey, and mapping this against the digital evidence journey. This helps us see how these systems interact and where the issues lie. The main problem with digital evidence is that the police are always playing catch up. The technology evolves much faster than legislation and procedure, and the vastness of data our phones collect poses significant problems for the police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)."

"THE HOPE IS TO MAKE THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE EXPERIENCE LESS HARROWING FOR VICTIMS"

The findings show gaps in both technological resources and capability, with protocols around digital data storage either unknown or not followed. Tiggey's research suggests that specialist digital knowledge within RASSO teams needs to be improved and that when considering what digital material to include in an investigation, officers need to follow a proportionate approach, rather than an intrusive one.



"New approaches for this are evolving, but slowly. There's technology being trialled that will enable police to selectively extract relevant data from phones to minimise the intrusion to victims and witnesses."

By bringing together police forces with academics and policy experts, the next stage of the project will create a National Operating Model for use by all 43 police forces in England and Wales, to guide them through RASSO investigations.

"Traditional forensics didn't evolve as quickly as digital forensics has, but it did experience many of the same problems, particularly around the collection, storage and presentation of evidence in court. So, one of our approaches will be to examine the evolution of traditional forensics and look at the policies and practices that could be transferred into the digital world of policing."

"It is refreshing to see the will within government, policing, the CPS and academia to improve the investigation of RASSO cases and to see collaborative projects that allow all partners to engage and contribute. Ultimately, the hope is to make the criminal justice experience less harrowing for victims and to enable an increase in the overall conviction rate."



Stay updated on the latest Birkbeck research developments and hear how our academics are having real world impact in our monthly digital newsletter. Update your details at bbk.ac.uk/alumni/update

AWARENESS RAISING AS ACTIVISM

AMR SOBHY

Amr Sobhy, an Egyptian information activist and entrepreneur, graduated from Birkbeck with a Master's in Public Policy and Management in 2016. Amr balances a career in technology with activism work that involves developing specialist software to drive public awareness of local and global issues.



"I WANTED TO MAKE SURE PEOPLE REMEMBERED MOHAMED MORSI'S PROMISES"

To develop his knowledge of activism and influencing change, Amr began a Master's degree in Public Policy and Management at Birkbeck in 2015. He was struck by how the academics wanted to hear the perspectives of the students on different topics, and also appreciated the university's flexibility, "Birkbeck is different from other universities as it enables you to have a professional life while receiving a top-quality education."

Currently, Amr is working for a start-up that investigates financial crime, enabling banks to better detect fraud and money laundering. Technology has evolved greatly since he first began his career in 2010.

Amr references a 'dark side' to all this innovation, in particular the advances in facial recognition technology and how this can threaten democracy if exploited by oppressive regimes. Despite this, he is positive about the benefits of technology: "The pace of innovation is remarkable, and I need to make sure I'm always learning to keep up with it. I always try to think about how I can be useful in mobilising social change for the better."

ENABLING PROJECT SUCCESS WITH TECH

EMMA REES

Emma Rees (BA Management, 2010) is a tech entrepreneur and the CEO and Co-Founder of Deployed, a start-up designed to digitize and improve efficiency in acquiring and delivering complex services. After an unorthodox route to higher education, Emma recently won the global Melinda Gates Female Founders award and continues to lead the way for women in tech.

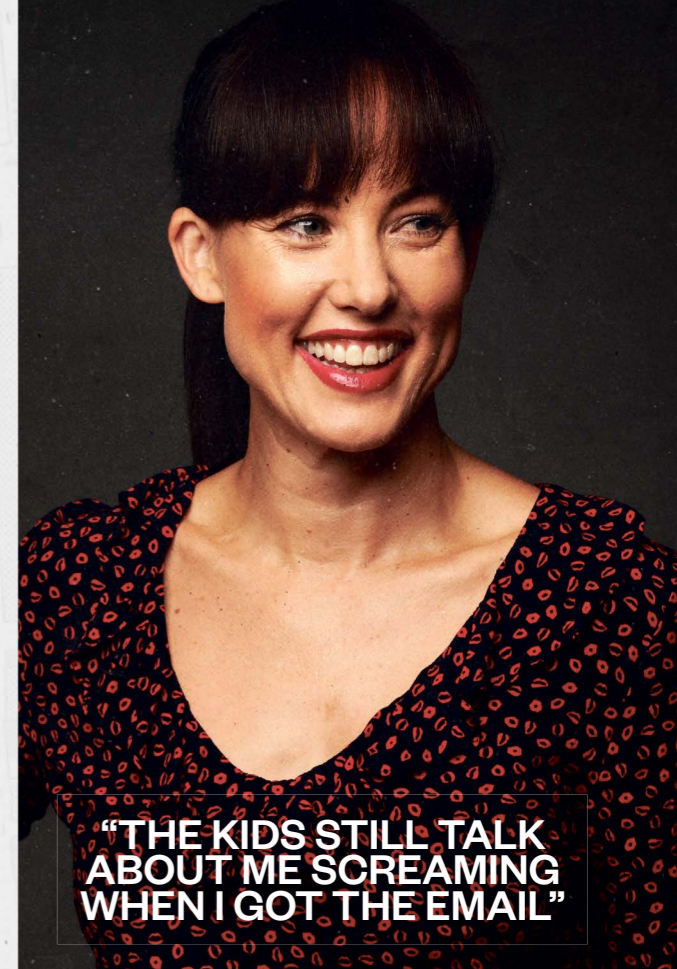
Living in a mining town just outside Perth, Australia, Emma left school at 16, describing herself as "a bit of a rebel, who wasn't ready for a strict educational environment." But she was ambitious and after working as a hairdresser for five years, bought her own shop and built it into a successful salon.

By 25, she'd moved to London and was eager to develop her entrepreneurial skills: "I wanted a theoretical understanding that would enable me to build a business. I enrolled at Birkbeck and quickly 'found my tribe'. It was brilliant being in a class full of ambitious, driven people who wanted to do something more."

Just six months into the course Emma started her new venture — one of the first on-demand digital platforms for hair, makeup, nails and massage. She brought together 150 freelancers on her platform but following expansion setbacks decided to close the business: "It's a cliché but I learned a lot from failing. It enabled me to take some time out. I immersed myself in family life and reassessed what to do next."

One night in 2019, Emma and her husband met with a friend over dinner, who spoke about the challenges of project delivery for large firms and the archaic systems used. Having seen the potential for using tech to remove friction between buyer and seller, Emma saw an opportunity to address this issue. So that evening, the three soon-to-be Co-Founders set to work:

"I've heard that 70% of projects fail to deliver. A lot of companies spend a fortune on project-based work but don't have a proper framework for determining outcomes or success. We wanted to build the infrastructure to support the rapidly growing project economy. The goal is to enable clear definition of the work, then track progress and collaborate in one system."



"THE KIDS STILL TALK ABOUT ME SCREAMING WHEN I GOT THE EMAIL"

They launched Deployed with two government grants, and in 2020 won the global Melinda Gates Female Founders award for enterprise technology. "The kids still talk about me screaming when I got the email," says Emma. "It was game-changing. It brought funding and investors and gave us belief in our product and the size of the market."

Emma now runs a team of 15 people and is grateful to be able to help elevate other women in the industry. She has spoken publicly on the barriers faced by women in tech and how these can be overcome. Emma's experiences demonstrate the value of unique perspectives and greater diversity when it comes to innovation, and of continuing to learn throughout one's life.

Your support can help Birkbeck continue to make education accessible to people from all backgrounds and circumstances. Read more about The World Needs More Birkbeck campaign and how you can help transform lives through education: campaign.bbk.ac.uk



STORYTELLING AND SOCIAL IMPACT

JJ BOLA

*Since studying a Master's in Creative Writing at Birkbeck in 2017, JJ Bola has gone on to establish himself as a successful writer, poet and advocate for refugees. His creative work draws on his own lived experience of seeing racial and social inequalities in action. His second novel, *The Selfless Act of Breathing*, interrogates these themes through the lens of mental health and is now being adapted into a feature-length film.*

After arriving in the UK as a refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, JJ reflects that he simply had to "somehow get on with life" despite the challenges of starting over with his family and beginning school without understanding any English. He soon discovered a love for reading and literature, but as a student was not made aware of the resources or opportunities available to him for developing a career as a writer. Instead, he dedicated himself to a career as a youth worker, supporting young people with behavioural and mental health problems. Having grown up on a council estate facing numerous challenges, JJ did not consider this work to be 'activism' but simply saw the importance of carrying on the positive community work that had been a cornerstone of his childhood experience. From everyday tasks like helping other families on the school run, all the way to protesting deportations, community was a crucial force for achieving social good.

However, he maintained a passion for writing and often found himself crafting poetry in his spare time. With encouragement from friends and family, JJ decided to pursue his talent by studying Creative Writing at Birkbeck: "I was initially unsure whether to go ahead with it. There can be a lot of pressure for a master's to lead to a secure job and I was sceptical about how precisely you can teach someone to be creative! I used to think that my process was sporadic and intuitive, but I didn't realise how much I needed structure to write until I started at Birkbeck."

With a flexible schedule, a supportive community of student writers and the accountability of academic deadlines, JJ was able to hone his craft.

He has since published further poetry collections and novels that incorporate themes from his family background and experience as a youth worker: "I'm fortunate to have a unique lens on the world that reflects my many conflicting identities — refugee, anglophone, francophone, Black, working-class. With my work, I hope to offer an alternative perspective on issues across lines of race, class, ethnicity and sexuality."

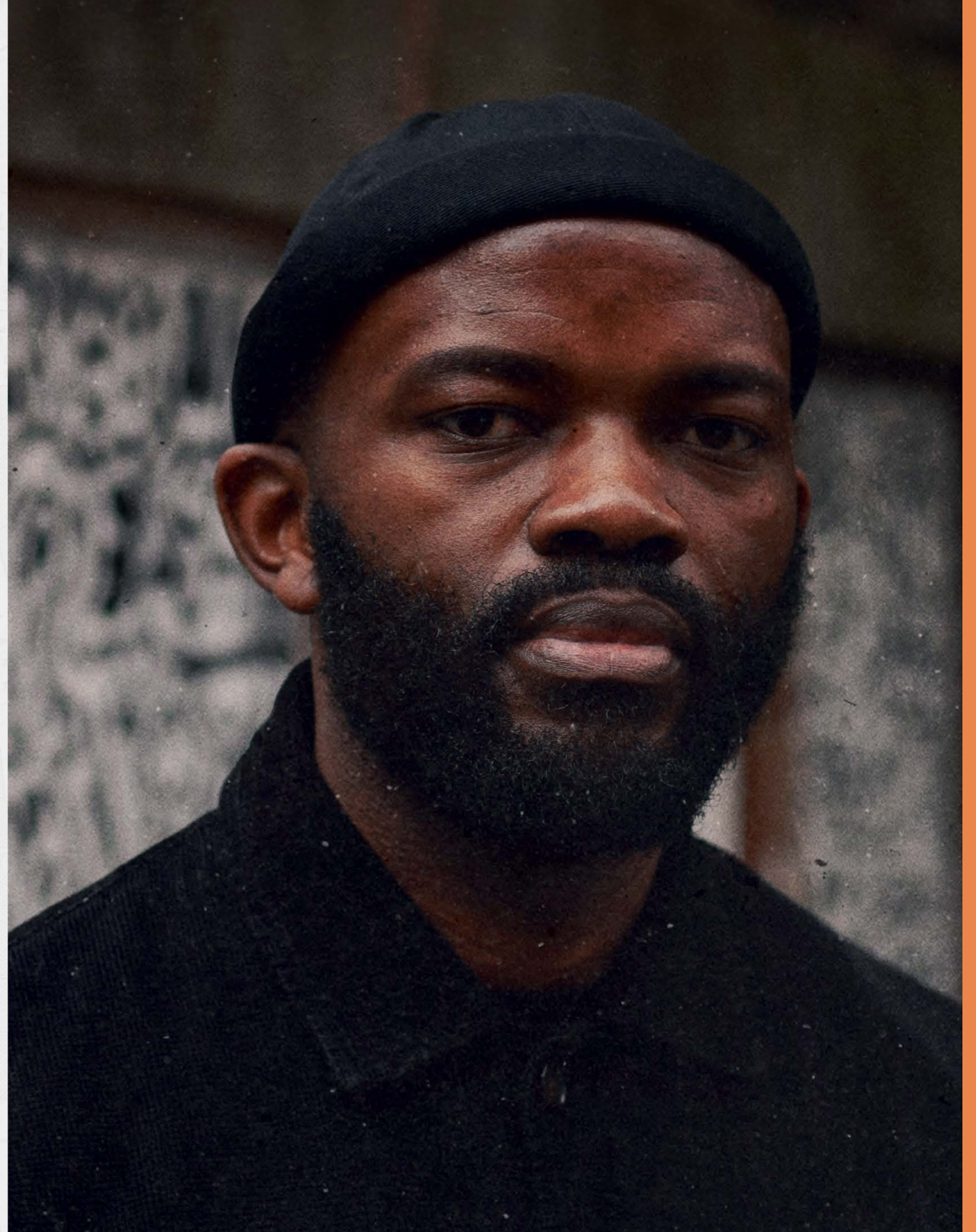
His second novel, *The Selfless Act of Breathing*, is currently being developed as a feature-length film by Bron Studios, a Canadian motion picture company that has produced recent acclaimed films including *Joker*, *Queen & Slim* and *Greyhound*.

The novel follows the story of disillusioned British-Congolese teacher, Michael, who decides to quit his job and travel to America to establish if his life is truly worth living. JJ describes how the novel provides an account of depression that reminds us of its impact at an individual level and how it can affect those closest to us.

He hopes the story will encourage people to take a more empathetic approach to those struggling with mental health and remind people that feelings of depression "are not alien; they are common and they are accepted." For JJ, the connection between storytelling and social impact is evident: "Art is a way to really impact the world. Through storytelling, we learn and 'unlearn' about the world and about each other."

"ART IS A WAY TO REALLY IMPACT THE WORLD"

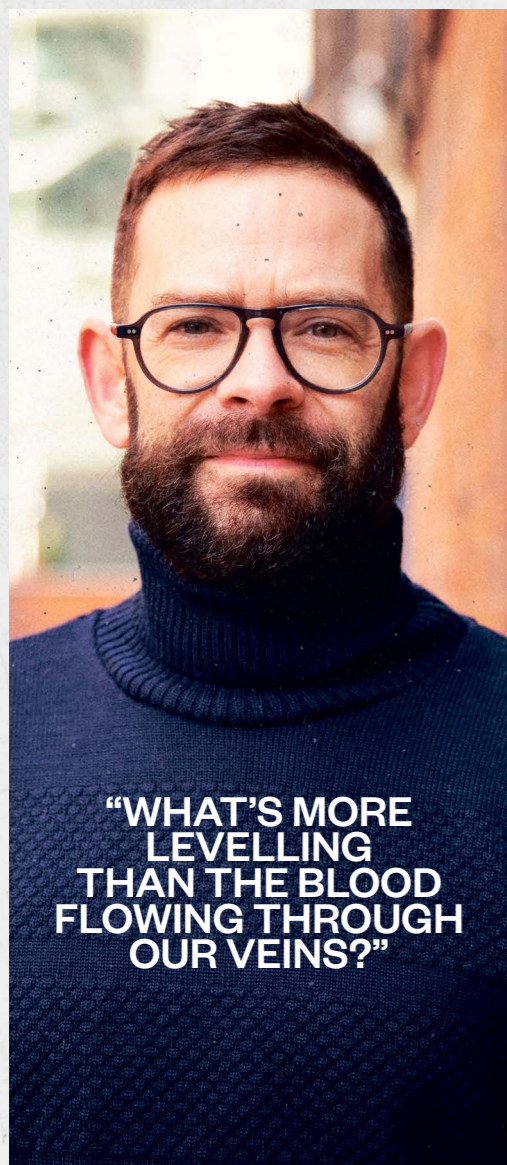
JJ also promotes social good outside of his writing in his role as a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Ambassador and through his advocacy for the importance of education in society: "Education is the passport to your future. Having the opportunity to return to study at Birkbeck was a life-changing experience for me. Institutions like Birkbeck that provide access to education are essential for unlocking the next great innovation in someone's mind, and ultimately, that creates value, which can be reinvested into society."



BLOOD, MONEY AND BELONGING

PROFESSOR ANTHONY BALE

'Blood: Uniting & Dividing' and 'Jews, Money, Myth' are two major exhibitions recently hosted by the Jewish Museum London that drew on the research and expertise of Birkbeck's Professor of Medieval Studies, Anthony Bale, and Professor David Feldman, Director of the Birkbeck Institute for the Study of Antisemitism.



"WHAT'S MORE LEVELLING THAN THE BLOOD FLOWING THROUGH OUR VEINS?"

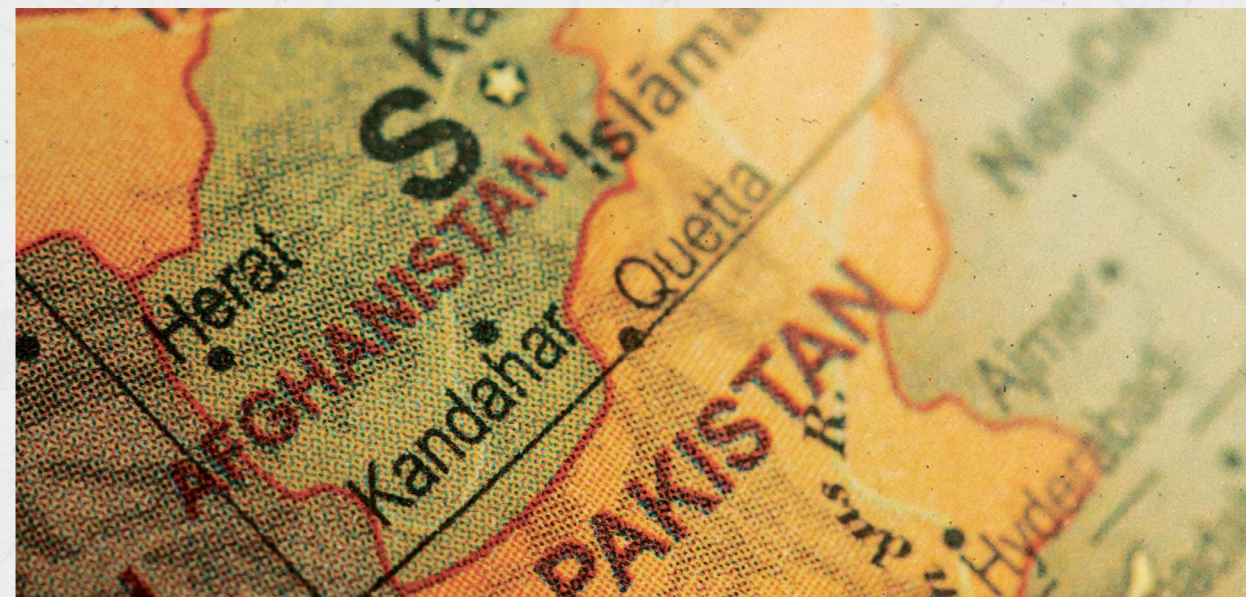
Museums play a vital role in the way we understand, think and form opinions about the world. When presented with carefully curated objects or records, visitors can travel through space and time to see the hopes, dreams, trials and tribulations of others. Anthony was determined that these exhibitions would deliver new, provocative and nuanced ways of questioning the representation and understanding of Jewish people, both historically and in the present day.

"We came up with the topics of blood and money because they are common to all religious traditions and very human," Anthony explains. "What's more levelling than the blood flowing through our veins and our relationships with money? But there's also a long history of antisemitic narratives around both topics, so it felt important to explore them and create teachable moments for the public."

The 'Blood' exhibition investigated literary and historical perspectives of Jewish-Christian relations, with Anthony contributing expertise on medieval blood libel and ritual murder, circumcision, the portrayal of Jewish characters in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and theories of antisemitism. The 'Money' exhibition included material on the medieval representation of Jews, the history of Judas Iscariot and the role of the Anglo-Jewish community in finance.

Anthony argues that throughout history, cultural attitudes toward Jewish people can be used as a barometer for attitudes towards immigration, foreigners, whiteness and about whether Britain is a Christian country: "The research and artefacts presented deal with major ideas around racism, diversity and multiculturalism, which we wanted to share with youth groups, schoolchildren and non-Jewish visitors. It felt important to share the variety of Jewish narratives and experiences in Britain, not least because Jewish museums in the past either tended to focus on the Holocaust or on telling stories of good Jews who became worthy citizens. We were trying to broaden that and complicate it."

Both exhibitions generated unprecedented critical acclaim. The 'Blood' exhibition attracted over 11,000 people and was toured to several international museums. 'Money' reached 290 million people through press and media, won the Museums Association 'Museums Change Lives' award, and had approximately 22,000 visitors. In the UK's Research Excellence Framework, Anthony's work was graded as 'world-leading' in terms of impact, originality, significance and rigour. Continuing his work in understanding medieval culture, Anthony is currently working towards new exhibitions with several museum partners. He is looking forward to the publication later this year of his new research in *A Travel Guide to the Middle Ages*, encompassing everything from the marvels of medieval Ethiopia, to silk routes and walking tours of Istanbul and Jerusalem.



THE FALL OF THE AFGHAN REPUBLIC

DR JASMINE BHATIA

It is impossible to forget the scenes of chaos at Kabul airport on 15 August 2021, when Afghanistan's President, Ashraf Ghani, fled the country and the Taliban seized control. A 20-year international mission to rebuild Afghanistan was over. New research at Birkbeck seeks to discover the reasons for the collapse of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, drawing lessons from what happened.

The speed at which the Taliban retook control of Afghanistan in 2021, two decades after being removed from power by a US-led military coalition, stunned the world.

To uncover the short- and long-term reasons for the collapse of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and contribute to a valuable historical record, Dr Jasmine Bhatia, Lecturer in Politics at Birkbeck and Dr Florian Weigand, Postdoctoral Fellow at LSE, are conducting interviews with senior officials in government and international organisations, as well as academics and journalists.

Jasmine explains, "Documenting these memories and perspectives has historical value for policy makers as well as current and future researchers. The interviews have taken on a life of their own, with interviewees sharing wide-ranging opinions on the factors that led to the collapse, and the way it happened."

So far, officials agree that the fall of the Afghan Republic was a catastrophic defeat, resulting in a complete takeover by Taliban forces. This in turn has led to political isolation, the rolling back of human rights and a prolonged economic crisis for Afghanistan. Many respondents have been very critical of the peace deal the United States struck with the Taliban in 2020 that led to the withdrawal of US and Allied Forces from Afghanistan in 2021. Some are more critical of Afghanistan's former President Ashraf Ghani and his senior advisors, not only because they fled, but also given their inability to devise an effective strategy to combat the Taliban over the years they were in power.

The United States put a staggering \$2 trillion into rebuilding the state and supporting the Afghan military over the 20-year period. It is therefore important to delve into the extent to which the collapse was rooted in long-term issues with corruption, elite infighting, ethnic tensions and poorly designed constitutional arrangements in the Republic, as well as short-term decisions over the last couple of years.

Jasmine hopes this research can create a robust, publicly accessible record of this period in Afghanistan that can feed into policy discussions and help us extricate vital lessons and avoid similar mistakes in the future.

1823

1823 - Dr George Birkbeck founds the London Mechanics' Institute for working Londoners. The first meeting was held in The Crown and Anchor pub on the Strand.



1880

1884 - Birkbeck moves to the Breams Building, Fetter Lane, City of London.



1900

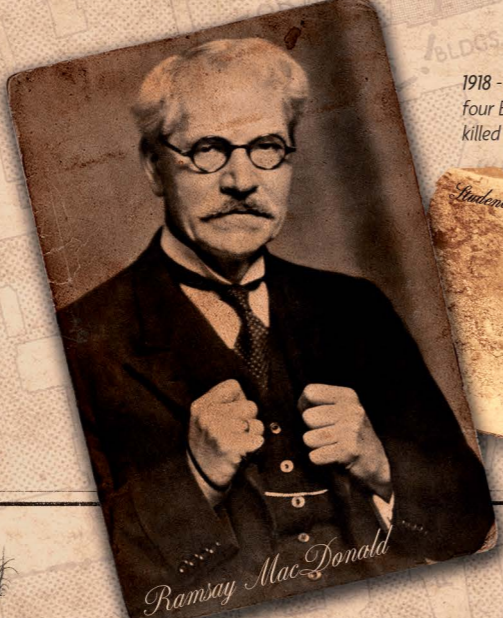
1905 - First edition of student magazine "The Loadstone" is published.

1907 - The Birkbeck Literary and Scientific Institution is renamed Birkbeck College.



1910

1886 - Ramsay MacDonald, the UK's first Labour Prime Minister, studies at Birkbeck.



1920 - Birkbeck becomes part of the University of London.

1920

1915 - T.S. Eliot, Nobel Prize-winning writer, teaches English at Birkbeck.

1912 - Black nationalist and pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey attends classes at Birkbeck.



1940-1941 - Birkbeck is the only London university to stay open during the Blitz.



1951 - Rosalind Franklin, Birkbeck biophysicist, paves the way for the discovery of the DNA structure.



1965 - Sir Roger Penrose is a researcher at Birkbeck when he publishes his seminal paper for which he will receive the Nobel Prize for Physics in 2020.

1950 - Pablo Picasso draws a unique mural above the lab of JD Bernal, pioneering crystallographer at Birkbeck.



2000

2012 - The Birkbeck 'BabyLab' detects signs of autism in babies as young as six months old.



2020

2021 - Birkbeck acquires the University of London Student's Union building on Malet Street, increasing the College's space by 25%.



2023

2023 - Birkbeck celebrates its 200th anniversary and looks forward to the College's next century.



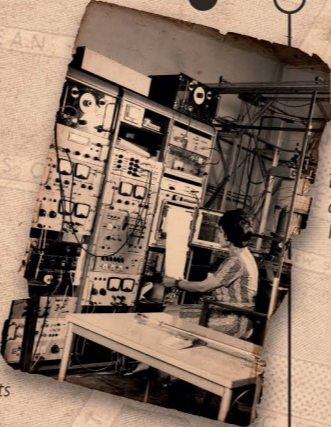
2017 - Birkbeck launches an award-winning scholarship programme creating access to study for forced migrants.

2022 - The Wohl Wolfson ToddlerLab is officially opened, facilitating world-leading research in neurodevelopmental conditions.



1950

1950 - Britain's third computer is developed at Birkbeck by Professor Andrew D Booth.



1953 - Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, opens Birkbeck's new Malet Street building in Bloomsbury.



1921 - Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan is appointed the College's first Professor of Botany.



1830 - The Institute becomes one of the first colleges in Britain to admit female students, nearly 40 years before the universities of Oxford or Cambridge.



STUDENT-CENTRIC TEACHING IN OUR THIRD CENTURY

Providing access to education has been at the heart of Birkbeck's mission since it was founded. Throughout our history, the College has innovated and adapted to meet the changing needs of the communities we support. As we enter our third century, we have published an ambitious strategy to boldly move Birkbeck forward, to transform our student offering and build on our world-leading research.

For many years, our students have emphasised that the space they are taught in matters; the learning environment affects their productivity, increases motivation and drives positive outcomes. It became clear during the pandemic what an important role Birkbeck played for our students beyond being a place of learning or just somewhere they could complete a degree. For many, Birkbeck was a place of sanctuary and opportunity, both physically and emotionally.

Over 40% of Birkbeck's students are on household incomes of under £25,000 and nearly 80% work while they study. During the pandemic, many faced furlough or redundancy and often lacked the space or facilities to study from home. Our research showed that a staggering 60% were learning on their phones during the first lockdown as they didn't have access to a computer and had relied heavily on the library and computer facilities on campus.

Coming to Birkbeck two or three times a week is precious time for students — to focus on their ambitions, away

from their daily role as employees, parents or carers. Time on campus does not just aid their learning, it enhances their wellbeing and self-worth.

As we aspire to achieve more for our students, we remain committed to maintaining our in-person teaching. Bringing together our diverse students creates a rich learning environment where they learn from their peers, as well as their lecturers, in a way that is not replicable in a purely virtual environment. Our new building, Birkbeck Central, drives forward our long-held strategic aim to educate all our students in Birkbeck buildings, creating a stronger Birkbeck experience in the intellectual heart of London.

However, we are acutely aware that many of our students are time-poor and require greater flexibility to participate in-person on campus or in real-time online. How students want to study is shifting and there are new ways for us to ensure they are successful in their studies. We are investing in new technology across our whole site to allow students to attend on-campus events while others simultaneously take part remotely. This will also facilitate state-of-the-art video conferencing and allow students to view teaching materials at their convenience.

We are excited for what the future of student centric teaching at Birkbeck looks like and we are proud to be delivering the high-quality learning experience our students deserve.

ON A MISSION TO IMPROVE LIVES

DR RACHEL GLENNERSTER CMG

Dr Rachel Glennerster CMG (PhD Economics, 2004) is an Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Chicago, having previously served as Chief Economist at the Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) in the UK. Throughout her career, Rachel has sought to reduce poverty worldwide by ensuring policy is informed by rigorous scientific evidence.

Improving the lives of people in developing countries has been the focus of Rachel's life work. "There is nothing more important," Rachel affirms. "Everything else pales into insignificance when you spend time in low- and middle-income countries and see the challenges people are facing."

In Egypt, aged 18, she was "fascinated by how different and yet how similar people's lives were. People had similar motivations, such as caring for children, having enough to eat and being in good health, but were operating under very different constraints."

After studying PPE at Oxford, Rachel completed a Master's in Economics at Birkbeck and then returned to pursue a PhD. "While working as a policy economist in the Treasury and International Monetary Fund (IMF), I was an intermediary between the policy world and the academic world. I had to develop my skill set in both disciplines and Birkbeck enabled me to do that, while juggling a career and being a mother."

From 2004 to 2017, Rachel played a crucial role in developing the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), an economics research centre at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). She pioneered the use of randomised trials to test and compare the outcomes of new economic policies and cites it as one of her proudest career achievements.

In 2018, Rachel returned to the UK Civil Service as a Chief Economist. "I loved mentoring economists and working in an environment focused on evidence-based decision-making." Rachel provided advice to ministers and senior officials on the most effective ways to address international development challenges, and advised on Covid-19 vaccine policy, drawing on economic analysis of the best ways to spur vaccine innovation and scale up production.



"WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO PEOPLE EVERYWHERE IN THE WORLD"

Now, having moved fully into academia as an Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Chicago, Rachel is looking into women's empowerment initiatives. She is studying the long-term impact of a programme in Bangladesh that sent money to families with adolescent daughters to offset the financial pressures on families to marry their daughters while they are still children. "I've morphed into an academic over time as I started to do my own research", Rachel says. "My time at Birkbeck persuaded me that I could make that switch and enjoy it."

When asked what motivates her, Rachel states, "I believe we have a responsibility to people everywhere in the world. Richer countries are not even close to doing enough. I can never understand the argument of fixing poverty in our own country first. People are worse off in other countries so that's where we should spend our energy!"

MAKING THE UK MORE RESILIENT TO CLIMATE CHANGE

PROFESSOR LYNNE FROSTICK OBE

Professor Lynne Frostick, one of the UK's leading experts in flooding and coastal erosion and advocate for women in science, began her career as a lecturer in geology at Birkbeck in 1974. In 2020, Lynne was central to the team who developed the Environment Agency's flood and coastal risk strategy and recently received a CBE for her contribution.

At school, Lynne recalls being advised by her teachers to "do a girl's subject like botany, because women don't do geology." Determined to follow her passion, she went on to study geology at university as the only woman on the course.

After a distinguished academic career in geoscience, Lynne was appointed as the Environment Agency Board Lead for flood risk, a role that included the development of the country's new long-term flood and coastal erosion risk management strategy: "At present, one in six people in England are at risk from flooding. Getting people to have the lightbulb moment that we need to do things differently is key.

"The primary actions of the new strategy include developing an up-to-date assessment of present and future flood risk, working with national infrastructure providers to ensure resilience to future flooding and coastal change, and developing new training materials on flood risk and development planning with the Town and Country Planning Association."

Birkbeck, Lynne recognizes, helped make her career in academia possible: "I'm so grateful to the College for hiring me as a lecturer. It was my first teaching role and at the time there weren't many jobs, or women, working in science, let alone geoscience. Fortunately, it is like chalk and cheese comparing then to now. I think the problem of women not opting for science careers often lies in perceptions developed at school age about subjects for girls and boys being different."

Lynne chaired the government committee responsible for encouraging more women to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM): "Making change involved small steps, such as encouraging initiatives like the Athena Swan Charter framework that aims to transform gender equality within higher education and research. Raising the numbers and profile of women in STEM leadership positions is hugely important because science, like everything, is best when you've got a variety of ideas and perspectives."

Lynne often reflects on the impact of her teaching experience at Birkbeck, when aged just 24, she was standing in a room full of Birkbeck students mostly older than her: "It was a challenge, but it forced me to become confident quickly! Birkbeck students are different. They are very vocal and they're eager to learn and advance themselves. It's such a valuable institution with a real community feel." She adds, with a smile, "I also met my husband at Birkbeck, who was also a lecturer in the Geography Department. So Birkbeck gave me everything, including my family!"

"SCIENCE, LIKE EVERYTHING, IS BEST WHEN YOU'VE GOT A VARIETY OF IDEAS AND PERSPECTIVES"

TACKLING ONLINE COVID SCEPTICISM

DR ROBERT TOPINKA

Despite widespread compliance with lockdown measures and high vaccine uptake in the UK, the public health response to Covid-19 also sparked resistance, with many online communities rejecting mainstream consensus. New research from Birkbeck suggests a more effective approach to countering false information about Covid-19, having found that current efforts can unintentionally spread misinformation further.

Dr Robert Topinka, Senior Lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies, describes the Covid-19 pandemic as having shifted the thinking of a large and highly engaged online audience: "Covid scepticism has become a focal point for influencers and audiences who see themselves on a journey of personal discovery toward better physical and mental health," Robert explains. "This pursuit begins with rejecting public health advice. For these audiences, the coordinated public health response to Covid-19 is a prime example of people setting aside their own opinions and conforming to mainstream thinking."

Post-pandemic, Covid scepticism continues to persist and grow online. Robert is concerned about the impact this is having on society, public health and political polarisation. He is interested in why audiences connect with Covid scepticism and how right-wing extremists try to draw in Covid sceptics: "The fight against 'misinformation' must begin by engaging with everyday people and their digital lives. Obscure and extremist ideas thrive in our current media environment. Never have so few private corporations exerted such consolidated control over television, radio and print.

"Yet despite this consolidation, TikTokers, YouTubers and podcasters can attract audiences in the millions almost entirely outside of mainstream awareness. Covid sceptics view the 'misinformation' label as a badge of honour, and if they're banned from social media platforms, or if fact-checkers debunk their claims, they use the attention to build an audience for reactionary, anti-science content on alternative platforms. Solutions such as simply banning users from social media platforms or correcting false claims are not enough. We now need to be asking why people connect with misinformation on such an emotional level."

As part of his research, Robert is scrutinising social media data and tracking key terms on message boards: "A great deal of our news is filtered through social media. One of the issues with this is that social platforms make money from advertising, so they want to show advertisers active user engagement. As a result, platforms prioritise engagement over other concerns, and emotionally charged or controversial content attracts the most engagement. This is concerning as this dialogue isn't typically how we communicate in-person, and can lead to more extreme, embellished content leading the conversation on different issues."

Robert is determined to help address and offer a better explanation of these pressing issues. He has planned a workshop series with local communities across the UK to discuss misinformation, how it affects people in their everyday lives and how organisations can help communities deal with it.

"THE FIGHT AGAINST 'MISINFORMATION' MUST BEGIN BY ENGAGING WITH EVERYDAY PEOPLE AND THEIR DIGITAL LIVES"



SUPPORTING PARKINSON'S PATIENTS WORLDWIDE

PROFESSOR GEORGE ROUSSOS

Professor George Roussos, Department of Computer Science, is a pioneer in the world of computing systems. Supported by funding from The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research, he is leading cutting-edge research into the use of technology to develop the treatment and management of Parkinson's disease.

Around 10 million people worldwide have Parkinson's disease, a neurological condition that causes parts of the brain to become progressively damaged over many years, with symptoms including tremors throughout the body and slow movement. For the last few years, Professor of Pervasive Computing George Roussos and his team at Birkbeck have been closely monitoring these core symptoms using digital health technology, with the aim of improving the management of the condition in patients.

George and the team have developed a new smartphone app called cloudUPDRS, which records patients' symptoms by measuring and analysing data about their tremors, gait and tapping performance on a touchscreen device. The app allows the collection of objective data about symptoms, which is then processed into digital biomarkers by PDKit, an open-source analytics toolkit also developed by the team. These biomarkers can be used by healthcare professionals to assess disease progression and suggest changes to treatment. Further down the line, the team hope to develop a healthcare app that is more focused on detecting changes in the disease within a shorter timeframe.

For George, understanding the person behind the condition is as important as the technology itself: "Some of the biggest lessons have come through interactions with the patients. It's helped us to adapt the technology to fit with their lived experiences rather than requiring them to change everyday habits to cater to the clinical protocol. But it's also just been eye-opening to understand more about the impact that Parkinson's has on people's lives. As a computer scientist, you're often hidden behind the screen, so it can be easy to forget that you are dealing with real people. It's been a moving and rewarding part of the process."

Yet, this strand of research has been touching the lives of people for some time. George says, "I've had an interest in the healthcare applications of computer science for a while. Previously, my team and I looked at long-term healthcare support for people with adult congenital heart disease and cervical cancer patients. But this specific project came out of a request by a group of clinicians that came to us and said we think this might be a useful thing to do for Parkinson's."

"At the time, clinical studies employed complicated biomedical equipment to measure tremors and other symptoms. The equipment costs about £20,000 but the software and the hardware could only be used in the lab. The point of what we're doing is that we could replace all of that with a £100 smartphone and patients can do it themselves at home. The first study we did was to demonstrate that we could get good enough data and do the required calculations with a phone."

One of the challenges of using digital health technology to improve understanding of Parkinson's is that the disease presents itself very differently from individual to individual. It is therefore difficult to make the technology and data it captures universally recognised and accepted. George has addressed this by joining forces with several organisations to try to establish more widely agreed measures. These include non-profit organisations like The Michael J. Fox Foundation, who approached him in 2016 and funded the development of PDKit, and the Critical Path Institute, which specialises in the development process for medical products.

International collaboration is critical to George's research and importantly, ensuring that a comparatively small organisation like Birkbeck can maintain a global presence in digital healthcare: "The key ingredient is establishing partnerships with clinical and pharmaceutical collaborators. These partnerships have helped us on the journey toward making a real impact, by supporting the licensing of the app and the analytics software, and the delivery of several clinical trials internationally. We are also now working with Luca Healthcare who are interested in commercialising and scaling the app for deployment in China."



EDUCATION AND RADICALISM

AN ABRIDGED PIECE FROM BIRKBECK: 200 YEARS OF RADICAL LEARNING FOR WORKING PEOPLE

Edith 'Biddy' Lanchester was a socialist, feminist and suffragette who attended Birkbeck at a time when the education of women was still highly controversial. Her story is testament to the necessity of the women's liberation movement that she was part of, demonstrating the treatment faced by women who refused to follow convention in the 19th century.

In 1830, despite concerns from Birkbeck's governing body that allowing female membership was "inviting its downfall", the College became one of the first, if not the first, institution in the UK to admit women. By the 1890s, Birkbeck was a hub for the "New Woman": radical young women asserting their independence and challenging social hierarchies.

One such woman was Edith 'Biddy' Lanchester, a self-styled New Woman who took classes in botany and zoology at Birkbeck. Although born into a wealthy middle-class family, she insisted on making her own way in the world. At the College, Edith gained skills in science, but also in more practical classes for typewriting and shorthand, which helped her earn a living by drawing diagrams for lecturers.

She was also a clerk for the Cardiff Gold Mining Company and secretary to Eleanor Marx, the English-born youngest daughter of Karl Marx. Edith was socially and politically radical. She was a vegetarian who wore her hair cropped short, described by the Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper as an independent spirit. She was involved with the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), Britain's first socialist party, and even stood as a candidate for West Lambeth.

By 1895, she was 24 years old and in love. She met James Sullivan, a working-class clerk and active member of the SDF, at her shorthand classes at Birkbeck. But vehemently opposed to marriage, believing it was an institution that robbed women of their independence, Edith wanted to build a life with him by cohabiting rather than marrying. She told her mother that if she married, she would "lose all my self-respect." Her announcement was met with horror and incredulity.

The day before she was to move in with James, her father, three brothers and a psychiatrist burst into her Battersea home, accusing her of committing 'social suicide' and being 'not of sound mind'. She was tied up, dragged into the street and then admitted to an insane asylum in London. The supposed cause of her insanity was recorded as 'over-education'.

Upon her release, Edith immediately returned to her activism for workers' rights and the rights of women, and never spoke to her family again. The story incited a media frenzy and provoked extensive discussion on the social status of the New Woman, and the dangers of female education.

"THE CAUSE OF HER INSANITY WAS RECORDED AS 'OVER-EDUCATION'"

You can find out more about the rich 200-year history of Birkbeck and its vibrant characters in Professor Joanna Bourke's new book, *Birkbeck: 200 Years of Radical Learning for Working People*.

A PLACE IN LONDON'S HISTORY

DR JEFF PORTER

In 2005, Dr Jeff Porter was working as a tube driver and studying a Master's in Contemporary History at Birkbeck, when his train was caught in the blast of the Edgware Road attack during the London 7/7 bombings. Having lived through one of London's major historical events, Jeff continued to work and study, going on to complete a PhD in Modern and Medieval History in 2015.

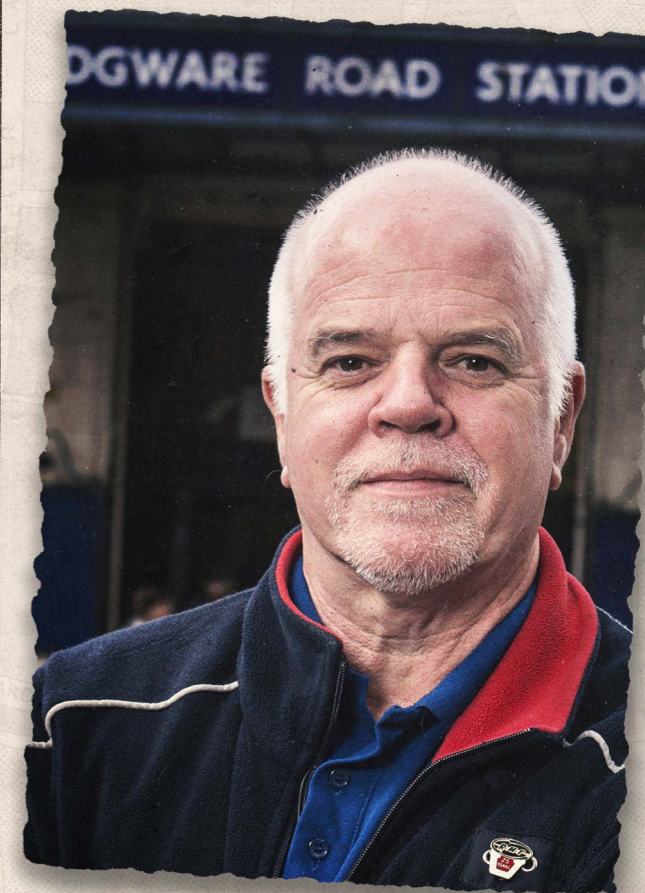
When Jeff drove his train out of Barking Station on the morning of 7 July 2005, it was "an absolutely ordinary day. London had just won the Olympic bid and every newspaper had the Olympic rings across the cover." However, the jubilant mood in the Capital was soon overshadowed by the tragic events that unfolded that day, now known as the 7/7 London Bombings.

At the time, Jeff was studying for his Master's alongside his work as a tube driver and found that the solitary nature of his job gave him important time to reflect on his research. Having attended a school in East London with limited opportunities for students from working-class backgrounds, Jeff decided to instead nurture his academic potential as an adult learner through evening classes. He completed an undergraduate degree before joining Birkbeck to explore his passion for history further: "Not everyone is ready for higher education in their teenage years... learning is a lifelong project."

When the train next to Jeff was targeted in the bombings, he found himself suddenly at the centre of one of the biggest terror attacks London has faced in recent history. After witnessing the explosion's "orange ball of flame" ripping through the train carriages, Jeff helped safely evacuate his passengers from the scene. Amidst the chaos, "it still wasn't clear what had happened — we were acting on instinct. You can't really prepare for something like that." After leaving the underground, his hair still blackened from the soot in the tunnels, Jeff was able to return home and see his family.

Jeff's decision to continue his studies at PhD level was inspired by a conversation with his supervisor at Birkbeck's college bar, The George. Jeff was able to focus on his studies around World War II and produced new research about post-war restitution for Jewish and German communities. "You should always be ready for education and learning experiences," he explains. "My supervisor gave me the confidence to see the potential in my work and find new angles for research."

Jeff chooses to support Birkbeck and ensure that future generations of students can continue to benefit from its unique and accessible learning environment: "Birkbeck felt like a different world where I could immerse myself in a completely different life. Education isn't just about career pathways, it allows you to develop your critical thinking in all areas of your life. I left school at 16 with no qualifications and here I am now, Dr Jeff! That's what Birkbeck does."



To find out more about joining our community of donors and to see the difference supporters like Jeff are making on the lives of students and researchers at Birkbeck, visit:

campaign.bbk.ac.uk/impact



TURNING MANAGERS INTO GREAT COACHES

FARLEY THOMAS

After 20 years in financial services, Farley Thomas (MA Applied Linguistics, 2014) left the industry to start Manageable, a new business focused on applying the mechanisms of language learning to training managers to become better coaches.

Farley recalls “dragging hoovers around offices” while helping his mum on cleaning jobs aged 14. “We grew up in a council house after emigrating from India in the eighties,” he explains. “So I always worked throughout my school years and it probably did distract me. I got itchy feet and left education early to work as an accounts clerk.” But soon feeling he had missed out, Farley saved up to finish his A-Levels at night school before applying to the University of Manchester.

Having grown up bilingual, speaking Tamil and English, he was interested in language acquisition and opted to study linguistics. “I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do after graduating, but someone took a chance on me in financial services, and I ended up spending 20 years there!” After a decade in global roles for HSBC, Farley started to realise he needed a new challenge altogether.

Taking on a Master’s in Applied Linguistics at Birkbeck proved a turning point: “You can’t help but be inspired by the students, from all walks of life, eager to learn and prove it’s never too late.” While writing his thesis, Farley began to formulate links between learning language, using it as a change agent and how this interplayed with executive coaching — an area he felt passionately about, having been involved in coaching throughout his career. After Birkbeck and further study, Farley went on to set up an advisory service for coaching top-level executives and CEOs.

Gallup’s State of the Global Workplace 2022 Report estimates that just 9% of employees in the UK feel engaged with their job, and research indicates that managers play a major role in building employee engagement, wellbeing and motivation. A lot of evidence shows that the best-performing teams are led by managers with a coaching style. During the pandemic, Farley realised that “by doing this on my own I wasn’t solving the issue that many managers, through no fault of their own, are often not equipped to do a brilliant job. So why don’t I create something, using technology and a community of expert coaches, that helps managers coach their teams. I wanted to build a business that could give everyone the gift of a great manager.”

Farley and the steadily growing team at Manageable designed the platform’s learning experience based on how humans learn language: “I see coaching as a language. If you don’t learn, test and practise, you won’t be able to speak it fluently.”

Manageable is now piloting a partnership to offer free coaching to Birkbeck alumni. “We want to prioritise supporting under-represented groups, but we also want to support people who might be pivoting in their career. So who better than a diverse, ambitious community, already in the workforce and engaged with learning? It couldn’t be anywhere else.”

If you are interested in learning more about the coaching available through this pilot project with Manageable, contact us at alumni@bbk.ac.uk



CREATING PATHWAYS FOR SUCCESS

BASTÔN AND SADHNA

Birkbeck alumni Bastôn De'Medici-Jaguar (LLB Law, 2022) and Sadhna Patel (LLM Law, 2013) met on the College’s Mentoring Pathways programme. Their story and relationship demonstrate the power of mentoring, sharing expertise and bringing lifelong learners together.

Before starting his law degree, Bastôn had been ‘a man of the cloth’ for 12 years alongside working in early-childhood education. He chose Birkbeck to pursue his long-held dream of becoming a barrister because unlike traditional students, he had not completed his formal education and it had been over a decade since he left school. “I wasn’t made to feel less capable because of this,” he insists. “In fact, my untraditional status was encouraged at Birkbeck. The focus is not just on our intellectual ability; we are also urged to bring who we are as individuals to inform our discussions and pursuits, giving authenticity to our journeys. For me, Birkbeck represents the realisation of equality of opportunities for all.”

In Bastôn’s final year, he joined the College’s Mentoring Pathways programme and was paired with Sadhna. His attention was initially drawn to the programme because the mentors are industry experts: “This was important to me as I knew I wanted to be a barrister, but I had no idea how I would achieve that, and I had spent a great deal of time wondering if I could make it.”

“Being part of this mentorship experience taught me so much, most of all about myself. The synchronicity I felt with my mentor” — someone who had been through the Birkbeck experience of studying in the evenings and returning to education later in life — “was more than anything I could have expected.”

Through their mentoring partnership, Sadhna helped Bastôn craft a new approach to reaching his goals. He has since graduated with a first-class honours degree and is on his way to becoming a barrister at BPP as an ‘Excellence Scholar’.

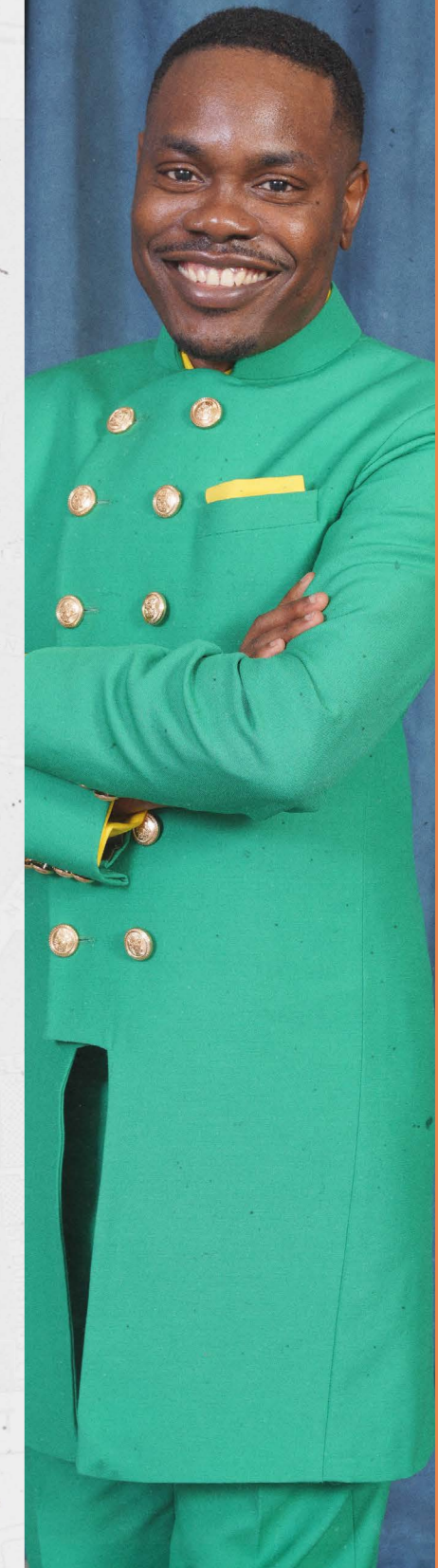
Sadhna, who completed her LLB and LLM at Birkbeck, has mentored students on the programme for five consecutive years. “Volunteering to help students realise their potential is such a rewarding way to reconnect with the Birkbeck community and pay forward what the College gave to me,” she says. “Shared experiences have helped me develop positive mentoring relationships with students from all backgrounds, and Bastôn was no exception! It has been such a pleasure to work with him, support his development and now see him thrive in his next steps.”

Every year, hundreds of alumni give their time, talents and expertise to support Birkbeck students to succeed. They play a vital role in building their confidence, skills and professional networks, to help students thrive during their studies and fulfil their career ambitions.

If you benefitted from pastoral or financial support during your time at Birkbeck, we’d love to hear from you. Please get in touch at alumni@bbk.ac.uk



“I WANTED TO BUILD A BUSINESS THAT COULD GIVE EVERYONE THE GIFT OF A GREAT MANAGER”



FIGHTING FOOD POVERTY IN MALAWI

ALEX GERARD

After a diverse career involving shark conservation, primate rehabilitation, arts management and more, Alex Gerard (MSc Environmental Management, 2013) is now working with Malawian agricultural charity Tiyeni to support their mission of eradicating food poverty across Africa.

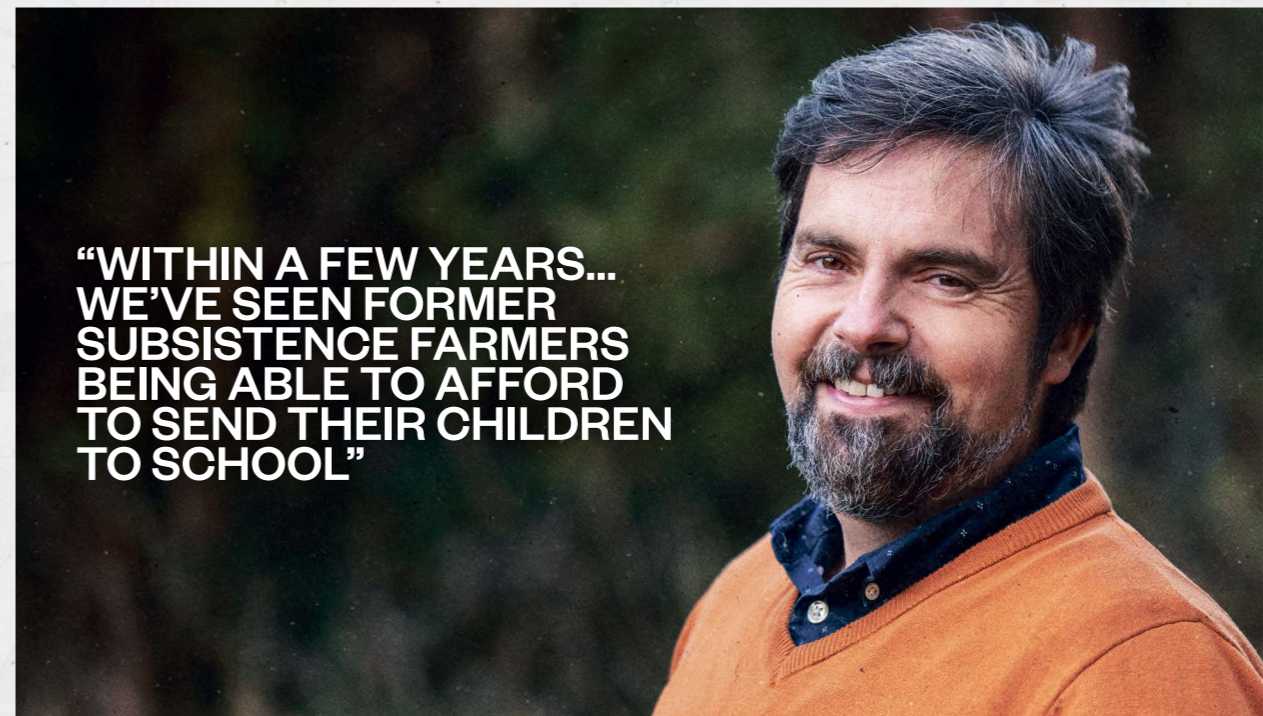
Tiyeni, which means 'let's go' in Chichewa, the most widely known language in Malawi, is an agricultural charity that trains farmers in 'zero-tech' Deep Bed Farming methods that improve soil quality, and thereby crop yield and crop quality. Alex joined Tiyeni as Executive Director in January 2022 and is "in love with" his day-to-day because of the passionate team he works with and the opportunity to combine his "experience in operations and strategy with the technical expertise I gained studying at Birkbeck."

Before his Birkbeck journey, Alex specialised in underwater camerawork while studying for his BA in Photography in Plymouth. He became fascinated

with marine science and ecology and then spent the next decade training as a shark behaviourist in Australia and specialising in marine husbandry for aquariums in the UK.

But it was in 2010, while site managing a primate protection education centre in Nigeria, that Alex was inspired to return to study: "I was introduced to, so many new methods of land management and habitat protection. I knew I could contribute more effectively by increasing my skills and knowledge in this area, so I went to Birkbeck."

Now Alex is applying this knowledge to advance opportunities for farmers in Malawi. "A lot of African farmland has this arid, hard top layer of soil," he explains. "Water doesn't really penetrate; it just rolls off the land. This makes farming difficult. Farmers have to pump-irrigate land and often use a lot of fertilisers to compensate for soil erosion."



Tiyeni have made it their mission to offer a different way. Their Deep Bed Farming method involves manually cracking and breaking up the hard, compacted top layer of soil, allowing water to penetrate and reactivate natural processes in the soil. They then implement a process of planting complimenting crops to help the roots system maintain the integrity of the soil all year. They move farmers off fertilisers, which are expensive and environmentally damaging, and toward mulching and other natural methods of improving growing conditions. This helps farmers capture all rainfall on their land, as it soaks into the soil and is retained into the dry season. After one year of applying this method, the average increase in crop yield is 124%.

"Our approach is to never solicit work," says Alex. "Instead, we advocate, we run national field days for local communities to come and see what we're doing. The team talk about the process and talk to other farmers who have already adopted the method. Essentially, people see the difference it makes and then, hopefully, want the training."

More than 80,000 Malawian farmers have now adopted Deep Bed Farming and are already seeing the benefits: "The impact is most apparent when you see subsistence farmers start to diversify their crop and even grow cash crops. Not only are they improving nutrition through a more balanced diet, but they are able set up businesses or sell excess produce in local markets. The knock-on effects of this are incredible.

Within a few years of applying our techniques, we've seen former subsistence farmers being able to afford to send their children to school. We've seen amazing all-female cooperatives become real powerhouses in their community. Tackling food poverty can really help break the cycle."

This method has been so successful that after three years of research, the Malawian Ministry for Agriculture recently certified Tiyeni's method as the most effective farming technique available in Malawi. Alex and his team have also been approached by several surrounding African countries about training opportunities, and were recently flown out to Nairobi, Kenya, to speak at workshops for the African Cotton Federation. "Obviously the aim is to scale up and reach more areas, but currently we have a team of 11 people on the ground in Malawi. I've been brought in to help with that operational side, look at our overall strategy and ensure we are reaching priority areas, without overstretching."

"One of the brilliant things about this job is that I'm now able to talk about what we do on a scientific level with our funders and engage the right partners who can elevate our work in the long term. My role is essentially making it as easy as possible for our team on the ground to do the real stuff and enable positive outcomes for farmers. I'm proud to be part of a team who consistently go above and beyond, working through every condition and season to reach areas we can help."

THE LAST WORD

SUSHMINA BAIDYA (MSC CHILDREN, YOUTH AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, 2022)



The World Needs More **Birkbeck**

Before coming to Birkbeck, I'd spent my entire life in Kathmandu, Nepal. It was this, combined with my career goals, that stirred my desire to see the world and directed me to London.

I found my passion for community development and youth leadership while in secondary school. I helped orchestrate a series of silent protests following proposals to add further mid-term exams, at a time when we had already seen multiple suicides due to the pressure to perform academically. When the proposals were dropped, I realised how powerful we can be when we raise our voice together.

During my BA in development studies, I started volunteering for We For Change, a youth-led non-profit. In my final year, I was elected president and ran the organisation for two years, delivering projects on environmental preservation and disaster response.

I wanted to continue learning, but postgraduate options in Nepal are limited. So, I applied for a Chevening Scholarship and chose Birkbeck. The change was noticeable immediately. In Nepal, you studied. At Birkbeck, it felt like you learned. There was so much more discussion between people from different walks of life, at different stages. It really made me think about my own beliefs and what I wanted to do with my life.

However, it wasn't easy to adapt to all the changes. Essay writing had not previously been a big part of my academic assessments, so I initially performed poorly as I struggled to adjust. Everything was new to me. A few months in, I started to have some low days.

I was missing my family, my home and the weather in Nepal. Yet Birkbeck was there for me. I accessed skills support on academic writing, research and more. I wouldn't have managed without those workshops or the support I received from the wellbeing services. When a whole organisation is structured to be flexible and to account for the daily challenges of life, it makes such a difference.

Having gained so much from Birkbeck and the support I was offered, I joined the College's team of student callers, a group who work to contact alumni and reconnect them to Birkbeck and help ensure future students can also benefit from these resources.

I was impressed and heartened to find a community of alumni committed to helping others succeed. It became clear how important this community is in making Birkbeck so special. I am proud to be among the thousands of alumni dedicated to ensuring Birkbeck continues to be special for the next two hundred years.

Sushmina has now graduated and is working for Peace First, a global not-for-profit focused on training young people to work on social issues and entrepreneurship. As Regional Manager for Asia-Oceania, she is focused on making this programme strategically successful in the region and equipping young people with the skills to make a difference on issues that matter to them.

ALUMNI OPPORTUNITIES

With the launch of the College's 200th Anniversary commemorations, we have several new opportunities to re-engage with Birkbeck and the community:

HELP SHAPE YOUR ALUMNI EXPERIENCE

Take five minutes to help shape the alumni experience at Birkbeck by completing a short anonymous survey and be in for a chance to win one of five prizes. The survey will close on 5 February. **Scan the QR code or follow this URL to take part:**

<https://alterlinepanel.questionpro.eu/t/AB3urxlZB3vYWu>



OUR LIFELONG LEARNING GUARANTEE

Birkbeck is furthering its commitment to supporting students and alumni with their learning ambitions. Our new Lifelong Learning Guarantee will provide practical support to help reduce the costs of education for those who are continuing their learning journey with Birkbeck.

Whether you are looking to reskill, retrain or learn something new, the Birkbeck Lifelong Learning Guarantee offers all graduates a discount on all future courses from short courses to PhDs, regardless of when you last studied with us.

Learning is lifelong, and Birkbeck is committed to ensuring that our students and alumni always have access to the transformative power of education. Now, whenever you need it, a Birkbeck education will always be open to you.

Visit bbk.ac.uk/lfg to learn more and take advantage of the Lifelong Learning Guarantee.

JOIN THE BIRKBECK ALUMNI NETWORK ON LINKEDIN

As the College commemorates its 200th anniversary, what better time to reconnect with other Birkbeck alumni while staying up to date with our community engagement plans? To help bring Birkbeck's alumni community closer together, we have recently launched a new group on LinkedIn.

By joining the Birkbeck Alumni Network on LinkedIn you can:

- Contribute to and stay in touch with the growing Birkbeck alumni community
- Find out about upcoming events, initiatives and volunteering opportunities
- Share relevant work and volunteering opportunities with the wider alumni network

Join today: www.linkedin.com/groups/12716841



Mr. Birtbeck



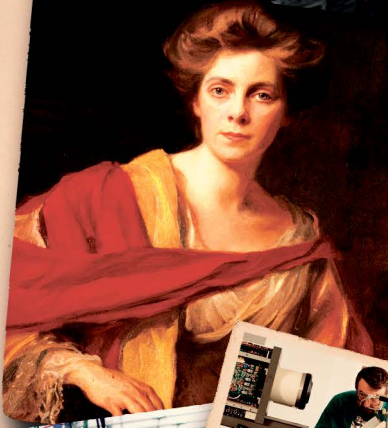
*Margaret Thatcher at Birkbeck
Open Day, 1973*



Student M.G. Farnell, 1914



*Dame Helen
Gwynne-Vaughan
1910*



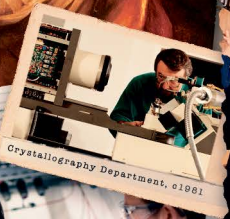
Graduation, 2019



Graduation, 2021



J.D. Bernal & students on field trip, 1986



Crystallography Department, c.1981



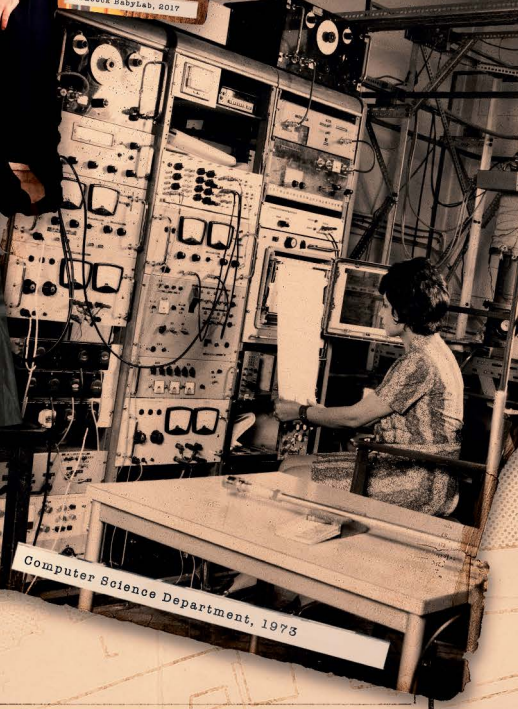
Birkbeck BabyLab, 2017



Biomedicine students in lab, 2021



*The Queen Mother
at Malet Street, 1953*



Computer Science Department, 1973

