Welcome

Next summer, Professor Sir Eric Thomas (Hon LLD 2004) will step down as Vice-Chancellor after 14 years of service. So it seems fitting that, in this edition of Nonesuch, we look at what it means to leave a legacy, both as individuals and as a university.

Our University is continually redefining its legacy: in its scholarship, its research and its impact on the city. And we, as Bristol alumni, are all part of that legacy too.

I would like to thank all of you who responded to our survey about the qualities we should seek in our future Vice-Chancellor and President. Your insights have been very valuable, and the result of the appointment process will be shared with you as soon as possible. If you are interested in representing the alumni community on one of the University’s decision-making bodies, you can find details of upcoming elections inside (p29).

I was delighted to see so many of you at our Best of Bristol Alumni Weekend in July. Do put next year’s dates in your diary now (Friday 10 to Sunday 12 July 2015) or, if you are living overseas, I hope you are able to join us at one of the international events that we’ve planned for 2014/15 (p29).

Bill Ray
(BSc 1975)
Chairman of Convocation and the Alumni Association

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Find out more at
bristol.ac.uk/nonesuch

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Ready. SET. Squared.

Enterprise

A University business incubator, SETsquared, has been ranked the best in Europe, and second best in the world by University Business Incubator Index.

Over the past decade, despite one of the deepest recessions since the First World War, SETsquared has accelerated the growth of high-tech start-up companies, providing world-leading mentoring and networking opportunities, as well as access to investors around the globe.

The enterprise hub, based in Bristol’s Engine Shed, has worked with more than 1,000 high-tech start-ups and attracted access to investors around the globe.

Networks, including investors, companies, and government, have been established to provide a support system for companies.

SETsquared has accelerated the growth of high-tech start-up companies, providing world-leading mentoring and networking opportunities, as well as access to investors around the globe.

Swimming off autoimmune diseases

In a breakthrough that could improve the lives of millions worldwide, Bristol scientists have discovered how to ‘switch off’ autoimmune diseases like multiple sclerosis and Type 1 diabetes.

Autoimmune diseases trick the body into thinking healthy tissue is infected. By specifically targeting the cells at fault, this approach removes the need for immunosuppressive drugs that typically incur unacceptable side effects.

Funded by the Wellcome Trust, the study has received worldwide media coverage, and the treatment is now undergoing clinical development through biotechnology company Apiploes, a spin-out from the University of Bristol.

A Bristol Beacon

The former Habitat store, also known as Beacon House, is to be given a new lease of life as part of the University campus.

The Grade II-listed building on the corner of Queen’s Avenue and Clifton Triangle will become a central study hub for students. Current plans for the space include the provision of 350 individual study seats, group areas, a café and a bookshop.

Acquiring Beacon House is the latest in a series of University investments in teaching and research facilities to improve the experience of Bristol students.

In numbers

54 days at sea

Sadly, after encountering unforeseen and treacherous weather conditions at sea, Elsa Hammond (PhD 2012-) was forced to divert from her mission to break the solo women’s record for rowing 2,400 miles across the Pacific Ocean.

1,000 nautical miles

8,000 calories a day

864 hours of rowing

3 broken oars

Tough act to follow

 матthew warchus

Matthew Warchus (BA 1988, Hon DLitt 2010) is to replace Kevin Spacey as Artistic Director of The Old Vic, one of the oldest theatres in London.

Warchus, who is currently an Artistic Associate at The Old Vic, has directed more than 70 hit shows and plays in London and on Broadway, including Mamma Mia and Alan Ayckbourn’s trilogy, The Norman Conquests, which won a Tony award in 2009. Warchus also won the Queen Palm award at the 2014 Cannes Film Festival for Pride, his film about lesbian and gay activists during the 1980s miners’ strike.

Switching off autoimmune diseases

Medicine

In a breakthrough that could improve the lives of millions worldwide, Bristol scientists have discovered how to ‘switch off’ autoimmune diseases like multiple sclerosis and Type 1 diabetes.

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A Royal Fellow

Science

Alumni and staff have been elected to the world’s most eminent scientific academy.

Professor Michael Benton (pictured) from the School of Earth Sciences, and alumnus Dr Andrew Mackenzie (PhD 1981), Chief Executive Officer at SHP Billiton Ltd, have both been elected Fellows of the Royal Society. They join a global fellowship of 1,400 outstanding individuals representing science, engineering and medicine, 40 of whom are current Bristol staff and professors. Past Fellows and Foreign Members include Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin and Albert Einstein.
1 Sliding down Park Street // Alumni

In May, British artist Luke Jerram transformed Park Street into a giant water slide. Bristol’s mayor, George Ferguson (BA 1968, BArch 1971, Hon MA 1999), gave the idea his full backing as part of his Make Sundays Special initiative, just one idea that helped put him in the running for the title of the World’s Best Mayor 2014. In the same month, one of the key campaigners in the Mayor for Bristol campaign, Jaya Chakrabarti (BSc 1993), received an MBE in the Queen’s Birthday Honours list.

2 French honour // Alumni

Annie Blumfield (MA 1971), former Warden of Clifton Hill House and teacher in the Department of French, has been made Chevalier dans l’Ordre National de la Légion d’Honneur, the highest decoration in France.

3 Misting up the future // Engineering

Bristol’s Department of Computer Science has developed interactive computer screens made from mist. MisTable projects a screen onto a curtain of fog and allows users to interact with a computer in a completely new way.

4 Full speed ahead // Technology

Bristol researchers have developed technology that can transmit data 50 times faster than the average Wi-Fi and 4G connection. The discovery will pave the way for 5G and improved download speeds.

5 Manning the books // Alumni

Author David Nicholls (BA 1988) shot to fame in 2009 with his bestselling novel, One Day. His latest book, Us, was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize 2014, and tells of a man’s plot to win back the love of his wife and repair his troubled relationship with his son.

6 Graduation hat trick // Alumni

Richard Lewis (BSc 2014) made Bristol history when he graduated wearing the same gown and silk hood worn by two generations of his family before him, including his father, Peter Lewis (BSc 1963), his grandfather, Michael Lewis (BSc 1945), and his great uncle, Leslie Dobbs (BSc 1933).

7 Jumping for joy // Alumni

Current student Jazmin Sawyers (LLB 2013-) won a silver medal in the women’s long jump this summer at the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games.

In brief

Sonardyne, a leading subsea technology manufacturer established by John Partridge (BEng 1962) was awarded the Queen’s Prize for Enterprise in Innovation this year.

Nazir Razak (BSc 1988) has become CIMB Group Chairman and joined the board of directors for Khazanah Nasional Berhad, the government of Malaysia’s strategic investment fund. Another Bristol alumnus, Tengku Aziz (BSc 1996), has succeeded Razak as CIMB’s new Chief Executive Officer.

Jane Leslie (BA 2004), aged 65, has become a world champion triathlete after winning the 65 to 69-year-old category at the World Triathlon Grand Final in Edmonton, Canada. Leslie completed a 1,500m swim, 40km cycle and 10km run in 2 hours 47 minutes and 21 seconds.

Nizar Ibrahim (BSc 2006) was named one of National Geographic’s Emerging Explorers in 2014.
Bristol in the news
bristol.ac.uk/news

News

Leading Bristol
Vice-Chancellor

Thanks to all of you who shared your thoughts on the future of the University.

Following the announcement that Professor Sir Eric Thomas (Hon LLD 2004) will step down from his role as Vice-Chancellor next year, Bristol asked alumni, staff and students what they thought made the University special, what challenges and opportunities it faces, and what qualities it should seek in its future leader.

You can now read your feedback online at bristol.ac.uk/alumni/vcreport. Your insights will guide the University’s Appointment Panel during the shortlisting and interview processes this autumn, as it seeks to find the right person to lead Bristol from August 2015.

Smoke signals
Students

A PhD student’s research into the impact of tobacco packaging has made a global impact, and is informing policy debate around the world.

Cigarette smoking is the biggest killer in the UK. But to date, much of the debate around tobacco packaging hasn’t been based on objective behavioural measures. Olivia Maynard’s (BSc 2010, PhD 2010-12) study into the behavioural impact of plain packaging was the first of its kind to do so.

Maynard used eye-tracking technology to monitor the eye movements of adults and adolescents looking at both branded and plain cigarette packs. Her findings showed that in the case of plain packaging, non-smokers were more drawn to the health warnings than to the branding, suggesting plain packaging could be an effective means of tobacco control.

Maynard’s research won an Outstanding Early Career Impact award from the Economic and Social Research Council and has already informed policy debate in the UK, Australia and other countries worldwide.

Defying gravity
Engineering

Bristol researchers have created gravity-defying tweezers, enabling scientists to use ultrasound waves to suspend and sculpt cells in mid-air.

The bioengineering of tissue and cartilage will no longer require a petri dish, thanks to pioneering ‘tweezers’ developed by Bristol’s Department of Mechanical Engineering. The tweezers will allow scientists to levitate tissue in a nutrient-rich fluid, enabling the cells to grow better and faster than before.

Green light for Bristol
Environment

In 2008, Bristol was named the UK’s first Cycling City. In 2015, it will be the first UK city to hold the title of European Green Capital.

Many staff were involved in the city’s bid for the award, including members of the Cabot Institute and those involved with the University’s Education for Sustainable Development programme. Planning is well under way for a year-long programme of public events, from city-wide challenges to educational activities. Look out for more details soon.

A living legacy
Humans are hard-wired to care about what we leave behind. We want our lives, and our experiences, to benefit future generations. But what does it mean to leave a legacy – as an individual, or as a university?
Professor Sir Eric Thomas
Vice-Chancellor

The 21st century will be known for the rise and rise of the virtual world — where learning, working and socialising can all take place in front of a computer screen. But, of course, the virtual world has not yet supplanted the physical world. If anything, it has reinforced the vital importance of personal interaction and of place.

Across the globe, universities continue to expand their physical campuses, while online-only higher education courses have not grown at anything like the rate predicted. Even the trend for creating ‘satellite campuses’ seems to be slowing markedly now.

We all care, and delight in, personal interaction, and we all become fond of places. For Bristol alumni, the University campus and its buildings — along with the glorious city itself — are inextricably bound up with their memories of learning and discovery as students.

Few of us can picture Bristol without the many glorious University buildings bequeathed by the Wills family, whose generosity and vision continue to shape our institution today. The Wills Memorial Building (commissioned to last at least 500 years), the gift of the honours, Royal Fort House, the creation of the H H Wills Physics Laboratory, Wills Hall and Manor Hall — more than 100 years later, thousands of students continue to enjoy these inspiring spaces.

The Wills family’s legacy is powerful indeed.

Our challenge today is to ensure all our historic buildings remain fit for the future, and that new study spaces preserve and enhance the character of our University. We’ve invested hundreds of millions of pounds in capital projects in recent decades, and will continue to do so to ensure that the physical legacy of Bristol University endures.

Bill Ray
Chancellor of Convocation and the Alumni Association

As alumni, we’re living examples of the impact our University has on people, on business, and on society. Many of the qualities we learn and develop as students — enquiring, challenging, leadership, risk-taking — are exactly the traits that help organisations, communities and cultures thrive and adapt over time.

University offers us a chance to explore, and ask questions of, the world around us, unrestricted by many of the responsibilities that come later in life. As such, our student years are often some of our most formative, and continue to inform both our professional and personal lives long after we graduate.

For more than 100 years, Bristol alumni have been leaders, inventors, and innovators. So many names spring to mind — among them, Jasmine Whithread (BA 1996, Hon LLD 2014), ECI’s of Save the Children International, Dr Joseph Muscat (PhD 2007), Prime Minister of Malta, Anne McClain (MSC 2005), NASA astronaut.

The currency of our degrees has held fast to the physical one. We’re developing secure communication networks for consumers, corporations and government; precision sensors for security, biomedical technology and environmental monitoring; and quantum computers that could eventually outperform even the most powerful computers we have today. That legacy is crucial in inspiring young talented minds to come to Bristol to learn, research and ultimately create the technologies that will shape the future.

When I arrived at Bristol as a Research Fellow in 2006, I was fortunate to work with two living legacies, Emeritus Professor Bob Evans FRS (PhD 1970) and Professor John Kitchin FRS, who is recognised worldwide as the birthplace of quantum information theories. Their support and guidance helped me to build the Centre for Quantum Photonics (CQP) into the world-leading research group it is today.

The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, through the Recognising Inspirational Scientists and Engineers programme has allowed me to pass on this legacy to the next generation; my rising star is former CQP PhD student, Peter Shadbolt.

We’re developing secure communication networks for consumers, corporations and government; precision sensors for security, biomedical technology and environmental monitoring; and quantum computers that could eventually outperform even the most powerful computers we have today. The impact of these systems will be profound and far-reaching, and will revolutionise the way we use technology. That will be the legacy of our generation.
Greg Doran (BA 1980, Hon DLitt 2011)

As a country boy from Lancashire, I really fell for Bristol. I enjoyed my introduction to the Drama Department at the University of Bristol. I was impressed with the quality of the teachers and the breadth of the courses offered. I decided to apply for a place at the RSC and spend time with the company.

Greg Doran © Ellie Kurttz RSC

I've always enjoyed working with Greg in rehearsal, and am often struck by how interested he is in what everyone has to say. He's very easy with people, and doesn't ever stand on ceremony. He has what all good directors have – certainty and confidence in what he wants to do, but also a great openness to what actors bring to rehearsal. He also has a great way of making people feel relaxed, while still ensuring everyone is really focused on the work. His knowledge of the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries is formidable, and his love of the plays is palpable. That's a very potent combination.

I first got to know Greg properly in his second year. He designed the set for my production of Steve Gooch's Female Transport, and acted in two productions I took to the Edinburgh Festival later that year – the anonymous Elizabethan domestic tragedy, Aeden of Farentham, and a new, full-length adaptation of Tom Stoppard's Albert's Bridge, in which he played the lead role.

For many years, I went to see Greg perform in various productions. Then, when he became Chief Associate at the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) in 2002, we started working more closely together. On a number of occasions, he's invited me to act as a season advisor for the RSC and spend time with the company.

I always enjoy watching Greg in rehearsal, and am often struck by how interested he is in what everyone has to say. He's very easy with people, and doesn't ever stand on ceremony. He has what all good directors have – certainty and confidence in what he wants to do, but also a great openness to what actors bring to rehearsal. He also has a great way of making people feel relaxed, while still ensuring everyone is really focused on the work. His knowledge of the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries is formidable, and his love of the plays is palpable. That's a very potent combination.

Greg was a student who stood out not only for his academic ability, but for his artistic ability too. He could design, he could act and he could direct. He had incredible entrepreneurial spirit, and even ran his own theatre company while he was at Bristol. I was honoured to give the oration for Greg's honorary degree in 2011.

Martin's production of Female Transport, set aboard a prison ship bound for Botany Bay. I still have the famous little sketches I made on a research trip to the National Maritime Museum. The trip taught me just how enthralling the process of research could be, and how theatre could transport me into so many different worlds.

Martin has a wonderfully crisp, playful wit. He is very good at keeping my feet on the ground, and preventing me from taking life, and work, too seriously. I put on a good suggestion.

Over the years, Martin has tried out some of these plays in the relatively protected context of the Wickham Theatre. I know Matthew Warchus (BA 1988, Hon DLitt 2011) cut his teeth in Jonson's Sjanou, Jonathan Munby (BA 1998) and Jo Davies (BA 1993) also started their careers in the department; both have gone on to direct productions at the RSC, and still keep in touch with Martin too.

Martin has a wonderfully crisp, playful wit. He is very good at keeping my feet on the ground, and preventing me from taking life, and work, too seriously. I put on a good suggestion.

Martin too.

Martin has dared risk doing them. Martin's often suggested plays I should look at. Last year, I asked Martin to take part in a scholars' pitch with the Shakespeare Institute and the RSC. We asked four academics to suggest four plays that are rarely (if ever) performed, but which deserve to be so. I drew the line at Middelton, Vandyke Theatre (now the Wickham Theatre) for Martin's production of Female Transport, set aboard a prison ship bound for Botany Bay. I still have the famous little sketches I made on a research trip to the National Maritime Museum. The trip taught me just how enthralling the process of research could be, and how theatre could transport me into so many different worlds.

I'm delighted to have not only kept in touch with Martin, but to have been able to ask his advice on many occasions. He's deeply knowledgeable about the Jacobean period. I've been a champion of this repertoire at the RSC, and Martin's often suggested plays I should look at.

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When he directed Ben Jonson's Sjanou, few of the cast were familiar with the story of Ancient Rome. Greg started rehearsals by drawing on examples from the BBC TV series, I, Claudius. It was a brilliant way of bringing the story to life, and giving the cast a sense of shape and narrative, before starting work on the text.

I was thrilled when he was appointed as the RSC's Artistic Director. As well as being a brilliant director, Greg's extremely well-read, and intellectually curious. He's always thinking about how to get the best knowledge into the RSC, and looking to find something new – a play that's not been done before, or a season of plays with an original theme.

Greg and I talk often. I certainly tend to know what Greg's doing. But I don't always know what he's going to do…

Greg Doran © Ellie Kurttz RSC

Feature

As Artistic Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, Greg Doran still seeks the opinions and advice of his former drama tutor, Professor Martin White. Here, they reflect on their creative collaborations, past and present.
The University of Bristol Students’ Union has a fantastic range of clothing, accessories and gifts online. With VAT-free offers on international purchases, you can wear your Bristol colours with pride whenever you are in the world. View the collection now at ubushop.co.uk

1. Fairtrade unisex sweatshirt £24, available in plum or green, sizes (male and female) XS, S, M, L, XL
2. Bristol University Avon satchel £30, 100% British leather, available in a range of colours
3. Bristol University Chelsea satchel £17.00, 100% British leather, available in black and brown, various sizes
4. USA hoodie £24, available in ash grey, navy, lipstick pink, bottle green and burgundy; sizes (male and female) S, M, L, XL
5. Crested leather wallet £25, available in black and brown
6. Bristol faculty tie £25.99, silk, available in all faculty colours
7. USA hoodie £24, available in ash grey, navy, lipstick pink, bottle green and burgundy; sizes (male and female) S, M, L, XL
8. Crested leather wallet £25, available in black and brown
9. Bristol University Chelsea satchel £17.00, 100% British leather, available in a range of colours
10. Bristol Faculty tie £25.99, silk, available in all faculty colours
11. Bristol University Avon satchel £30, 100% British leather, available in a range of colours

11" £105, 13" £115, 15" £130, 100% British leather, available in black and brown, sizes (male and female) XS, S, M, L, XL

10  Bristol logo ballpoint pen £14.99
9  Crested cufflinks £19.99
8  Crested tie slide £14.99
7  USA hoodie £24, available in ash grey, navy, lipstick pink, bottle green and burgundy; sizes (male and female) S, M, L, XL
6  Crested leather wallet £25, available in black and brown
5  Crested leather wallet £25, available in black and brown
4  Crested leather wallet £25, available in black and brown
3  Crested leather wallet £25, available in black and brown
2  Crested leather wallet £25, available in black and brown
1  Crested leather wallet £25, available in black and brown

PB: We had, and still have, a Monty Python-style sense of humour.
LB: Not to mention The Goons. I still have your LP of Bridge on the River Wye somewhere…

PB: The secret of our friendship is that we’ve never lived in the same house – nor, since we left Bristol, in the same country. We would have drawn each other mad.
LB: You were messy. I was neat, tidy and organised. My flatmates and I cooked real food every night and a roast on Sunday (emulating our mums as best we could). Our girlfriends called us ‘the cooks’.

PB: We had lots of fun. We even managed to enjoy Student Council. We were elected without the backing of any political grouping, on a joint ‘cut the crap’ ticket.
LB: Paul was my best man when I got married, and has visited us in Spain and Beijing. I’ve visited Paul and his wife, Janet, twice in South Africa. In Cape Town, a waiter assumed Janet and I were an item and Paul was our tour guide.
PB: Janet is glamorous and black. In Cape Town, tour guides tend to be mixed race. The waiter put two and two together, and got it.
LB: Janet and I laughed until we cried. Paul was not amused.
PB: I had the last laugh. Janet and I got into the Daimler; Laurie got into a Toyota.

LB: We don’t give each other advice. I don’t know anything about financing aircraft. Laurie’s forgotten most of his law and I’m not sure he’s ever voted in England…
PB:…or in France, even less so in China. We never get together, it’s just like old times. We’re now in our 60s but revert to Goon-like humour and laughing at each other as if we were still ‘green around the gills’ first-year students.
PB: He gives the impression of effortless success…
LB:…have you been drinking?
PB: He is, in fact, a consummate, international businessman and a very hard and focused worker. We began as The Likely Lads; now it’s more Our Feet in the Grave. But it’s a friendship I value hugely…
LB:…as do I, you loveable old rogue! Bristol was the best time of our lives. We had none of the responsibilities later life brings. We only had to get our degrees which, somehow, we managed while also having a lot of fun together on the way!

Feature
Lord Bootseng, former British High Commissioner to the Republic of South Africa, met Laurence Barron, CEO and Chairman of Airbus Group China, on the first day of Freshers’ Week, 1970. More than 40 years later, they share the secrets of their enduring friendship.

Lord Paul Bootseng (LLB 1973, Hon LLB 2007) (PB) and Laurence Barron (LLB 1973) (LB)
The Brunel connection

To mark the 150th anniversary of Brunel’s Clifton Suspension Bridge in November, Nonesuch pays tribute to the designer of one of Bristol’s most famous landmarks.
The Brunel connection

By Hilary Brown

The Clifton Suspension Bridge is as synonymous with Bristol as the Wills Memorial Building is with the University— it’s hard to think of one without the other. Little wonder, then, that the city has claimed Isambard Kingdom Brunel as one of its own.

Although the pioneering Victorian engineer and industrialist never lived in Bristol, he began his extraordinary career in the city and left a lasting physical mark on its landscape—not only with the bridge, but also with the ss Great Britain (the first iron steamer to cross the Atlantic and, at the time, in 1843, the largest ship ever built). Temple Meads Station (Brunel was chief engineer on the Great Western Railway line between Bristol and London), and improvements to the docks.

The National Brunel Archive is housed in the Brunel Institute at the Great Western Dockyard, site of the ss Great Britain, and comprises the University’s Brunel Collection, along with maritime material owned by the ss Great Britain Trust and the papers of the Clifton Suspension Bridge Trust. Widely consulted by scholars from around the world, it provides unparalleled insights into Britain’s engineering heritage.

The foundations of the Brunel Collection, a treasury of original diaries, letters, notebooks and sketches, was left to the University by Lady Celia Noble, the granddaughter of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, in 1950. It has been added to since with the support of donors, grant givers and other charitable trusts, and is catalogued by the University of Bristol Library Special Collections. The archive catalogue can be found at http://oac.lib.bris.ac.uk/DServe.

The Brunel Institute is one of the University’s research centres, and is named after the British engineer, architect and social reformer, Benjamin Isham, who lived in Brunel’s time and was a prominent supporter of his work.

Brunel was an inspiration, it definitely runs in the family.

Family footsteps

Brunel’s engineering genius survives in his descendant Morwenna Wilson (MEng 2005), above, who has been charged with leading a team of architects and engineers renovating the area around King’s Cross Station. The task is to bring back to life the old Victorian structures around the station that were built by Brunel’s contemporaries, George Turnbull and Lewis Cubitt, in 1851-52.

In an interview with The Times, Wilson said of her ancestor: ‘He was an inspiration. It definitely runs in the family. My grandfather was also an engineer.’

Since graduating from Bristol, Wilson’s career has gone from strength to strength. In 2008, while working at Arup, she won the H&V News Graduate of the Year Award organised by the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers/ASHRAE Group, with her presentations on delivering and maintaining sustainable buildings. She now works for property developer Argent, a joint partner with London & Continental Railways in the King’s Cross Central Limited Partnership.

Running the chains

The Clifton Suspension Bridge looms large in David Carr’s (MB ChB 1961) memories of his student days at Bristol. You wouldn’t get away with it now, but he and fellow student Brian Hobby (BDS 1961), who died in 1997, made a habit of racing each other over the chains from Burwalls, then a hall of residence on the western side of the bridge.

Starting at pavement level, one on the far side and one on the near side, they would run up the chain into the first tower, turn around and come out on the gorge section first foot, until the angle of the chain was shallow enough to stand up on. Then it was a case of ‘running like crazy’ down the length of chain, repeating the exercise via the second tower, to emerge past the tollkeeper’s booth and to the pub.

Dr Carr (pictured above in his student days) claims to have won the race on most occasions during the three years the pair lived in Burwalls (although we only have his word for it). ‘We only ever ran the chains in the evening,’ he adds, ‘never on the way to lectures and never, ever on the way back from the pub. We’re not daft, you know.’

In numbers

81 wrought-iron rods suspend the bridge deck

26m height of towers

11,000+ motor vehicles cross the bridge every day

The bridge thus far

The Clifton Suspension Bridge was the 24-year-old Brunel’s first major commission, secured after he won a competition to design a new crossing over the River Avon. Construction began in 1831 but the project was dogged with political and financial difficulties and by 1843, with only the towers completed, the project was abandoned.

Brunel died aged only 53 years in 1859 but the bridge was completed as his memorial and finally opened in 1864. Designed for light horse-drawn traffic, it still meets the demands of 21st-century commuter traffic.
John-Paul Flintoff (BA 1990)

I always knew I wanted to study English, and immediately loved Bristol when I visited. The city had a unique charm, and the professor who interviewed me seemed to be writing the essay as a hat.

I felt incredibly blessed to be a student at Bristol. I’d been to a rough school, where you kept your back to the wall and looked out for nuisances at all times. Suddenly, I was surrounded by people who were actually interested in studying.

Harriet was on my course but, surprisingly, didn’t seem to notice me for two years. We only met because Jane Lamson (née Callen) (BA 1990) and Fiona Jantet (née Henderson) (BA 1990) invited me to Harriet’s surprise 21st birthday party. Jane and Fiona were perfectly open about the fact that they really wanted John Yates (BA 1990). He wasn’t available. I expect he’s still kicking himself.

After Harriet and I graduated, we both decided to study for an MA. Harriet specialised in medieval literature; I studied Shakespeare and his influence. During the year, I expressed my wish to become an academic and to one of my tutors, Moira Lunnon (née Cullen) (BA 1990), he wasn’t available. I drew a cartoon conveying this happy news and faxed it to my parents. We married in December, at a tea dance in a London hotel, less than a month before my 30th birthday.

I’m currently working on a historical novel, What If The Queen Should Die? Years ago, a friend asked me which king or queen Shakespeare would have written about if he’d lived to hear their life story. I suggested Queen Anne: she betrayed her father, who cursed her, and she lost 17 children.

Together, Harriet and I are also writing a book about family, that’s due to be published next year. It’s a creative workbook to help people better understand who they are, where they come from, and what they will leave behind.

Harriet and I have always worked closely together, and often ask each other to read things we’ve written. That doesn’t mean it’s always easy: Harriet can be brutally honest. But my toughest critic is — and has always been — my greatest supporter too.

Harriet Green (BA 1990)

My brother was at boarding school in Bristol when I visited. The city had a distinct unimpressed and packed me off to London the next day to get a job. Thankfully, it paid off.

I vividly remember my interview in the Department of English on Woodland Road with Myra Stokes and Tom Mason, both tutors I came to admire very much. If they hadn’t let me in, I’ve no idea what I would have done. I’d certainly never have met John-Paul (JP).

I adored the course but I wasn’t as conscientious as I should have been, particularly in the first year when we were made to learn Anglo-Saxon. It was as painful as studying Russian all over again. But I made great and lasting friends in the department. I also smoked too much and stole many cigarettes from John-Jo Moody (BA 1990).

I vaguely remember JP from the first year. I’m ashamed to admit I thought he looked a bit gauche. Our first date was at Pizza Provencale. We split the bill, and we still have the wine bottle.

I always wanted to be a journalist and applied for a journalism postgraduate programme in my final year. I got in. JP didn’t. I graduated during an awful recession and took the first job I was offered, on Media Week, a trade magazine for the advertising industry.

I moved to Campaign just as the economy was reviving up again. Campaign was nicknamed ‘Champagne’ for a very good reason; I ate at The Ivy most weeks. I then worked briefly at the Daily Telegraph before joining Harper and Queen as Deputy Editor. I was part of the team that reinvented the magazine as a global fashion brand, Harper’s Bazaar.

Now, I’m Editor of the Family section of The Guardian. Family is a standalone section of the Saturday paper that has a passionate following among readers.

JP and I have spent more than half our lives together, so working together isn’t difficult. He’s my best friend and has been since the moment we got together in June 1989. He’s also extremely good at washing up.

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As many of the babies born into the University’s Children of the 90s project branch out into adulthood, the future looks rosy for one of the largest long-term health population studies in the world. And with almost 26,000 participants, it’s still growing.

By Hilary Brown

Health, development and behaviour differ markedly between individuals, but how much of this variation is down to our genes, and how much is influenced by our environment? Teasing out the complex relationships between genes and environmental factors, and how they interact over time to affect health and development, is extremely difficult and requires huge amounts of data, collected over many years, for researchers to study.

Enter the Children of the 90s project, also known as the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC).

First steps
Jean Golding, OBE (Hon LLD 2013), Emeritus Professor of Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology, founded ALSPAC in 1990. It was not the first long-term population study in the UK, but Golding believed that existing studies were too narrowly defined by participants’ birth dates, and that many factors influencing health and development were linked to mothers’ behaviour and lifestyle during pregnancy, if not earlier. ALSPAC broke new ground by recruiting pregnant women so that researchers could gather information on the babies’ parents and grandparents that might affect the children’s lives even before they were born.

Great leap forward
Another distinctive feature of the study was the breadth of the data collected. Genetics was in its infancy in the early 90s (Golding recalls funders’ eyes ‘glazing over’ at the very mention of the word), but, encouraged by leading clinical geneticist Professor Marcus Pembrey, the ALSPAC team was determined to give the study a genetic component.

‘Received wisdom among scientists at that time was that research should focus on a specific outcome, say, asthma, dyslexia or depression,’ says Golding. ‘Our approach was more holistic; we wanted to look at how family background, behaviours and genes work together to affect children’s overall development, and whether — and why — they remain healthy or become ill.’

And so ALSPAC became the first longitudinal study to collect biological samples from participants, including urine, hair, blood and DNA. This data was to be analysed alongside detailed records of characteristics such as diet, lifestyle, socioeconomic status and emotional health.

The long haul
Golding’s team was committed to maintaining the project’s momentum by continually collecting information. And it succeeded. More than 14,000 pregnant women in Bristol and the surrounding area signed up to the project in 1991 and 1992, many of whom still participate, along with 8,000 children, 3,000 dads, 200 ‘children of the children’ and 550 siblings.

Researchers are now in the process of recruiting the parents of the original mothers and fathers. If enough grandparents participate, ALSPAC will be in the unique position of being able to provide genetic information for up to four generations of the same family. And as its participants are its most valuable asset, ALSPAC is also involving some of its enthusiastic contributors in decisions about how the study might evolve in the future.

Future investment
Today ALSPAC, headed by Professor George Davey Smith, a dedicated team member for the past ten years, and newcomer Professor Paul Burton, is in rude health. Its unrivalled bank of data and repository of biosamples have made it a world-leading research platform for scientists around the world.

The project is maturing in a world characterised by rapid advances in biotechnology. Researchers using the study have a key focus on the emerging field of epigenetics – the interaction between genes and the environment during development, whereby external factors turn genes on or off. Scientists are beginning to use epigenetic information to predict disease and target treatment, as well as develop new medicines, with some of the most exciting work in this area being carried out at the University’s
He has arrived in the year that has seen the science, thanks to the work of Golding, in a project widely seen as an exemplar of primary care records and to analyse data align ALSPAC data with information from anonymisation now enable researchers to Cutting-edge information systems and also directed by Davey Smith.

MRC Integrative Epidemiology Unit, also directed by Davey Smith. ALSPAC is also benefitting from increasingly sophisticated use of data. Cutting-edge information systems and anonymisation now enable researchers to align ALSPAC data with information from primary care records and to analyse data alongside that of other cohort studies. Burton feels privileged to be involved in a project widely seen as an exemplar of the best in contemporary health and social science, thanks to the work of Golding. Davey Smith and, of course, the participants. He has arrived in the year that has seen the publication of the 1,000th academic paper based on ALSPAC data — by any standards a prodigious rate of return on the funding invested in it, he says. He’s not the only one to think so: the project recently received almost £8 million from the Medical Research Council and the Wellcome Trust to continue its work until March 2019. As Golding attests: ‘No other study has anything like the same amount of detail and potential to answer questions, and it will get more and more valuable as time goes on.’ ALSPAC’s ‘bank of life’ is set to pay dividends for generations to come. bristol.ac.uk/alspac

Bristol student Stephen Hardman (BSc 2014, Medicine 2014-) and alumna Kim Mather (LLB 2013), two of the original Children of the 90s will help make me a better doctor. I’m lucky enough not to have been there to lie in a brain scanner for several hours, though to be on the receiving end of a blood test or to have hypoxic-ischaemic brain injuries, where the brain is deprived of oxygen, for example in strokes. Whatever I do, I know what it’s like for hypoxic-ischaemic brain injuries, where the brain was a smoker when we were still in the womb. ALSPAC has helped lay the foundations for research in this field. I intend to stick with the study. My brothers and sister are taking part, and my daughter has always had what I wanted – the right sense of belonging to the community. Bristol gave me the mindset that you’re never too old to keep learning. I’ve certainly learnt a lot from Oliver — that it’s important to stay open-minded; that there’s always a workaround; to have the awe of David’s ability to break down a complex idea, situation or project, and matters is whether we get on, whether our conversations move things along, and whether each of us is making the other’s business life more interesting. Bristol gave me the mindset that you’re never too old to keep learning. I’ve certainly learnt a lot from Oliver — that it’s important to stay open-minded; that there’s always a workaround; to have the courage to just talk to people; and to stick to your vision. If it feels right, it probably is right. Only the best start-ups survive, and luck always plays a role. But, whatever happens, as I tell my wife Edith (née Monfries) and compete together, on a live project, on the quality of our conversations move things along, and whether each of us is making the other’s business life more interesting. Bristol gave me the mindset that you’re never too old to keep learning. I’ve certainly learnt a lot from Oliver — that it’s important to stay open-minded; that there’s always a workaround; to have the courage to just talk to people; and to stick to your vision. If it feels right, it probably is right. Only the best start-ups survive, and luck always plays a role. But, whatever happens, as I tell my wife Edith (née Monfries)
In November 2012, Professor Nicholas Saunders and his archaeological team were working on the border between Jordan and Saudi Arabia. They were talking to the area’s Sheikh—a crucial thing to do in order to negotiate the security situation there—who was showing them around. ‘He told us that half of his family were in Saudi but he couldn’t visit them because of the boundaries,’ says Saunders. ‘Then he turned to us and said, half-joking, “You know, it’s all your fault”. We asked him what he meant, and he said, “Sykes-Picot”.’

Two years later, the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement—in which Great Britain and France secretly arranged to divide parts of the Middle East into spheres of influence after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire—has emerged from the history books into the light of media scrutiny and debate, as the civil war in Syria and the rise of ISIS continue to destabilise the region.

The details of Sykes-Picot and its ramifications are far too involved to explain here—and that’s precisely the point. The legacy of a conflict can be complex and far-reaching, and modern conflict is especially likely to leave behind a troublesome aftermath. Saunders is one of the pioneers of an interdisciplinary approach to the archaeology of modern conflict zones, an approach that brings new perspectives—anthropological, geographical, environmental, and heritage—to the battlefield, and traces the long-term effects of warfare.

According to GARP

When Saunders and his team first arrived in Jordan in 2006, it was to conduct a study of abandoned station buildings on the Hejaz Railway, a line built in the 1900s to facilitate the Hajj (the Muslim pilgrimage) from Damascus to Mecca, although the railway stopped in Medina. But within an hour of beginning, everything changed. ‘We found an Ottoman army camp that nobody knew about except the local Bedouin,’ says Saunders, ‘and a whole militarised landscape flanking the railway, right down to the Saudi border.’

It quickly became evident that their project had to develop into something much more complex and novel: the archaeology of guerrilla warfare, as waged against the Ottoman Empire by the legendary TE Lawrence and his Bedouin comrades-in-arms. It was christened the Great Arab Revolt Project (GARP), a ten-year study with direct relevance to the situation in the region today.

‘The Ottoman army transformed the landscape to counteract these unpredictable attacks on the railway,’ says Saunders. ‘Lawrence and the Arab irregulars would strike all over the place, then disappear back into the desert. It was the beginning of modern guerrilla warfare.’

Fittingly for a study of unconventional warfare, GARP’s funding was organised outside the ‘normal’ channels, by using a volunteer model: people with relevant skills and experience paid a fee to take part every...

The dust has barely settled on the major conflicts of the last one hundred years—in some cases, it’s still swirling fiercely. In the first of two features on the legacy of the world wars, we focus on a Bristol researcher contributing to a more complete picture of the First World War with a ten-year archaeological study of a region on one of its less familiar fronts: the Middle East.
Feature

‘WE CAPTURE AS MANY NUANCES AND LEGACIES AS POSSIBLE’

year, a portion of which funded the hiring of professionals to the team. ‘That paid huge dividends,’ says Saunders: ‘we got to know local people, and they would show and tell us things, whereas if you come in with a big grant for a short time, they look at you as a cash cow.’

Their discoveries included Ottoman army camps and Arab rebel campsites, landing strips used by the British Royal Flying Corps, and trenchworks at various points along the route of the railway. Every year they found more, and each new discovery helped to fill in the picture of the Great Arab Revolt, and of the region’s wider history, including the origins of the state of Jordan.

Digging deeper

The team’s successes in Jordan illustrate the benefits of taking a multidisciplinary approach to modern conflict. ‘You could arguably go to Waterloo, dig it all up, and say “Now we know all about what happened at Waterloo,”’ says Saunders. ‘But in most First World War battle zones, there are years of accumulated debris to make sense of.’

Thanks to the advent of industrialised warfare, some of this debris is as deadly as it was a century ago. ‘There are still roughly 400 million unexploded First World War artillery shells on what was the Western Front, and millions of unexploded hand grenades and volatile gas canisters, still going off now and then, sometimes killing people,’ he says. ‘To get some intellectual purchase on that, you have to understand the de-mining policy after the war, and the arguments in France and Belgium between the government and the farmers who wanted their land back. That’s why we try to capture as many pieces of information, nuances and legacies as possible.’

Saunders cites a particularly resonant example of this kind of legacy in his study of trees in Great War landscapes. In the town of Verdun, where a particularly nasty war of attrition between the Germans and the French involved heavy deployment of mustard gas, the resultant chemicals leached into the soil. ‘Over the decades, this poison seeped into tree roots,’ says Saunders. ‘The trees were cut down and made into wine casks, then the wine became tainted and people who drank the wine became ill. Tracing that trajectory as a modern, unexpected legacy of the First World War requires much more than digging up a battlefield.’

On the horizon

GARP’s ten-year span ends in 2016, but Saunders and his team will follow Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice about whether a return to Jordan is prudent. Meanwhile, he is planning a new project in the Isonzo Valley, an area of former Austria-Hungary that was the setting for at least a dozen battles in the First World War. ‘It’s a well-preserved landscape,’ he explains, ‘and a microcosm of the way that Europe transformed after 1918, with the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the eventual rise of the European Union. There’s a lot to discover there.’

John Winterburn, a Bristol PhD student and GARP’s Landscape Archaeologist, researched the location of a camp used by TE Lawrence, described in his book Seven Pillars of Wisdom as ‘behind the toothed hill’. When another researcher showed him a 1918 photograph (above) of several Rolls Royce armoured cars, it confirmed his theory about the camp’s whereabouts.

Winterburn and the GARP team found and excavated the site, which was littered with fragments of glass, pots and British rum jars, along with metal objects such as shell cases and spark plugs.

The discovery made headlines as ‘Lawrence’s Lost Camp’, although Winterburn believes that it was probably only used for around 10 days.

Lost and found

Lost and found

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Nick Schumacker (PhD 2013-) is developing a novel surgical technique that will help thousands of people affected by heart disease.

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