

# HORIZON

from Staffordshire University

## Press start

From Fortnite to Forza, Staffordshire graduates are shaping the future of gaming

## Searching for the truth

The world-renowned archaeologist honouring the victims of war-time atrocities across Europe

## Life through his lens

Royal occasions and political giants are being captured by an up-and-coming photographer

2020



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TURING**  
FACE TO FACE  
WITH THE  
FUTURE OF  
ARTIFICIAL  
INTELLIGENCE



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# HORIZON

03 – 2020

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Carl Strathearn and robot 'Euclid'

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# Our vision for 2030



Staffordshire University's 2030 Strategy places digital technologies and teaching methods at the very heart of campus life. We are investing in new courses across cutting-edge fields such as AI, robotics, cyber security, esports and more – and each is designed to

prepare our graduates for the workplaces of the future.

In line with our University's connected curriculum, we recognise that – in addition to core disciplines – our students need to develop multi-disciplinary knowledge and skill sets that will give them a competitive edge in their chosen careers.

This connected approach to higher education reflects our commitment to empowering creative and innovative individuals who are ready to become the industry leaders of tomorrow. Staffordshire University graduates are already helping to shape our collective future in every corner of the planet and, as Vice-Chancellor, I couldn't be prouder.

I also take enormous pride in the fact that Staffordshire University has become one of only 26 UK universities to achieve TEF Gold. Our brilliant and friendly staff are dedicated to the delivery of a first-class teaching experience and improved student outcomes, and this accolade is testament to their hard work. It also offers an excellent foundation for our 2030 Strategy.

As we embark on the International Year of the Nurse

and the Midwife, our commitment to state-of-the-art technologies and facilities continues to inform our courses within Health and Social Care – an area of study that is ingrained within Staffordshire University's DNA.

Our dedicated academics are using tools such as virtual patients and simulation equipment to ensure that Staffordshire University students can practise in a safe environment, while honing their ability to support the broad range of individuals and communities whose welfare depends on well-trained and compassionate healthcare professionals.

Continuing with the theme of technology, I am delighted to celebrate the official launch of Staffordshire University's Digital Institute London, which places our students in the heart of Europe's tech capital and connects them to leading employers.

Spectacular spaces like Digital Institute London, as well as our brand new Smart Zone and upcoming Catalyst development in Staffordshire, will enable us to connect future learning possibilities and embrace the endless opportunities offered by emerging technologies.

Today, Staffordshire University graduates are working with some of the world's biggest digital design, branding and coding companies, and I'm excited to share news of their achievements with our talented alumni, friends and key stakeholders.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Horizon*.

**Professor Liz Barnes CBE**  
**Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive**  
**Staffordshire University**

WELCOME

## Events on campus in 2020

Throughout the year the University hosts a wide range of public events including lectures, workshops, film screenings, open days, degree shows and exhibitions. They also include our popular "Profs in the Pav" series of talks from leading academics, in the informal surroundings of the Beacon Building's Pavilion fusion eatery.

Most events are free to attend, but some require advance booking. To see what's coming up, visit [staffs.ac.uk/events](https://staffs.ac.uk/events) or contact [comms@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:comms@staffs.ac.uk) for more information.

*Wednesday, 25 February, 5:30pm*

### 'BREAKING BOUNDARIES'

Public Lecture By Ade Adepitan MBE.

*Science Centre Lecture Theatre, Leek Road*

*Monday 3 March, 5:30pm*

### PROFS IN THE PAV – 'GLOBAL IMPACT' SERIES

'The Olympics impact and the importance of place brand' by Professor Vish Maheshwari.

*Pavilion Fusion Café, College Road*

*Monday 9 March, 5:30pm*

### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY LECTURE

'Seven hats of Carol Shanahan' by Carol Shanahan.

*Science Centre Lecture Theatre, Leek Road*

*Thursday, 19 March, 5:30pm*

### CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE HEALTH TALKS

'Practice makes perfect: using simulation to improve patient safety' by Emily Browne, Teaching Excellence Fellow.

*Centre of Excellence in Healthcare Education,  
Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, Mytton Oak Road,  
Shrewsbury, SY3 8XQ*

*Thursday, 26 March, 5:30pm*

### 'THE SIGN OF THE FOUR: UNCOVERING CLUES WITHIN THE DNA'

Inaugural Professorial Lecture by Professor Graham Williams, Professor of Forensic Biology.

*Science Centre Lecture Theatre, Leek Road*

*Monday, 6 April, 5:30pm*

### PROFS IN THE PAV – 'GLOBAL IMPACT' SERIES

'Crafting the Future: Reimagining North Staffordshire's Ceramic Heritage' by Professor Neil Brownsword.

*Pavilion Fusion Café, College Road*



*The Battle of Staffs*

*Saturday, 23 May*

### BATTLE OF STAFFS

Featuring Staffordshire University's current sports teams battling it out against alumni teams. Another great day on the sport fields and in the sports hall for players old and new as our #StaffsAlumni come back to campus and reunite with their teammates.

*Sports field, sports hall and Ember Lounge*

*Wednesday, 4 June, 1:30pm arrival with a  
2:30pm start (Shotgun start)*

### STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY CHARITY GOLF OPEN

Spend the day in the company of students, staff, alumni, and partners with proceeds raised on the day being donated to Staffordshire University's Horizon Fund.

*Leek Golf Club, Big Birchall, Leek, Staffordshire, ST13 5RE*

## WRITE TO HORIZON

*We are always delighted to receive your letters, emails and messages on social media. If you would like to connect with us to comment on the magazine, share anecdotes or suggest future articles, please get in touch.*

Please contact us by email at [graduate.relations@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:graduate.relations@staffs.ac.uk) or write to **Horizon magazine, Graduate Relations, Staffordshire University, College Road, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 2DE.**

If you're happy for your message to be published in a future issue of *Horizon*, please mark it "for publication". Letters may be edited for length.

## CONNECT WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The University has a wide-ranging presence on social media. As well as our official accounts there are special-interest groups covering everything from the Careers Network and International Students to individual subjects such as Engineering, Games Design and Business.

See [staffs.ac.uk/socialmedia](https://staffs.ac.uk/socialmedia) for the complete list. They're a great way to keep up with us and network with fellow Staffordshire graduates.



Find us on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, LinkedIn and other social media channels.

# Horizon Fund

## RAISING FUNDS, TRANSFORMING LIVES

**S**taffordshire University strongly believes in investing in its students, raising aspirations, improving life opportunities and widening participation in higher education.

This sits in tandem with the University's objectives of fuelling economic development, conducting important research and creating highly qualified, skilled, confident and empowered Staffordshire graduates ready to take up demanding employment positions throughout the world.

The Horizon Fund allows the University to offer Opportunity Awards, Scholarships and Bursaries which enables students to seize the day and strive to do more than they ever thought possible. This fund provides life-changing awards to enhance the student experience and create opportunities above and beyond their study programme.

As a result, more than 500 students since 2013, have so far received bursaries, scholarships or opportunity awards ranging in value from £20 to £2,000.

**Thank you!**

*These awards are only made possible through our kind and generous donors made up of alumni, students, staff and wider University family. We want to thank them for their support in changing students' lives.*

**THREE EXAMPLES OF THE HORIZON FUND IN ACTION**



**CALGARY**

As a BSc student, Szilvia received funding to enable her to attend the Congress of the International Society of Biomechanics in Calgary, Canada. She is now studying a PhD in Biomechanics and is co-author of a footwear study carried out at Staffordshire University, which will be presented at the conference by her lecturer, Dr Robert Needham.

She says: "It gave me the opportunity to meet researchers and build my network in the biomechanics research sector. To be able to attend this seminar and to be around all these amazing people meant everything to me."



**CHANNEL ISLANDS**

Film, TV and Radio studies students Chris and Kalvin visited Guernsey and Jersey as part of their radio documentary assignment based on the Nazi occupation of the Channel Islands during World War II.

They say: "Any worries about travel costs were put out of our minds and we were able to concentrate fully on our work and creativity."

*Award win: See Page 48*

**USA**

Daniel is a student on the BSc (Hons) Sports Strength and Conditioning programme at Staffordshire University. He recently completed a 7-week internship working as an assistant strength and conditioning coach in the US. His opportunity award contributed towards his travel and accommodation costs, while he worked full-time with the men's and women's basketball teams and the women's volleyball team at the University of Colorado.

He says: "It was a really good experience, giving me an amazing opportunity to implement all the science-based and classroom learning I have undertaken, by working extensively with athletes.

I've gained a huge amount of work experience – roughly 50 hours per week, as well as making contacts and securing a good reference."



## HOW TO DONATE

# Could you become a #HorizonFundHero?

Are you a Staffordshire graduate who would love to find a small way to support future graduates? Here are some of the ways you can – please contact our **Development and Alumni Relations Team** on **01782 294942** or email **developmentoffice@staffs.ac.uk** to find out more.

## Give the gift of time

- Give a student talk or guest lecture about your industry or career journey
- Share some top tips in a blog or video
- Become a judge or get involved in our GradEx event

## Create opportunities

- Offer scholarships, sponsorships or opportunity funds to inspire others
- Donate anything from £5 to well, the sky's the limit – no amount is too big or too small, whether a one-off donation or a regular giving scheme. You decide!
- Offer a work placement, internship or other employment opportunity
- Set a live brief for our hard-working students to meet – whether that's a research project, a logo design, an event to plan or a business problem to solve

## Donate a regular monthly amount or make a one-off donation

- Donate by completing the online form at **[www.staffs.ac.uk/giving](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/giving)**
- **Direct Debit** – monthly support
- **Standing Order** – you manage your monthly contribution
- **Cheques** – by post to Staffordshire University Development and Alumni Relations Team, Flaxman Building, College Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 2DE
- **Virgin Money Giving** – search for Staffs Uni and nominate us to receive funds from your fundraising challenges, ideas or events
- **Legacy funding** – leave a gift in your will as a lasting legacy



Visit **[staffs.ac.uk/giving](http://staffs.ac.uk/giving)** for information on becoming a donor, sponsor or other supporter

*Staffordshire University research teams are leading the field in research into robotic technology and artificial intelligence. Horizon magazine has one eye on the future.*

# Rethinking robotics

**F**ifty years after Alan Turing laid the foundations for modern-day computing, Staffordshire University students are continuing to push the boundaries of artificial intelligence and robotic research.

Bletchley Park codebreaker Turing was recently announced as the face of the new £50 note for helping to crack the Enigma during World War II and pioneering computer technology.

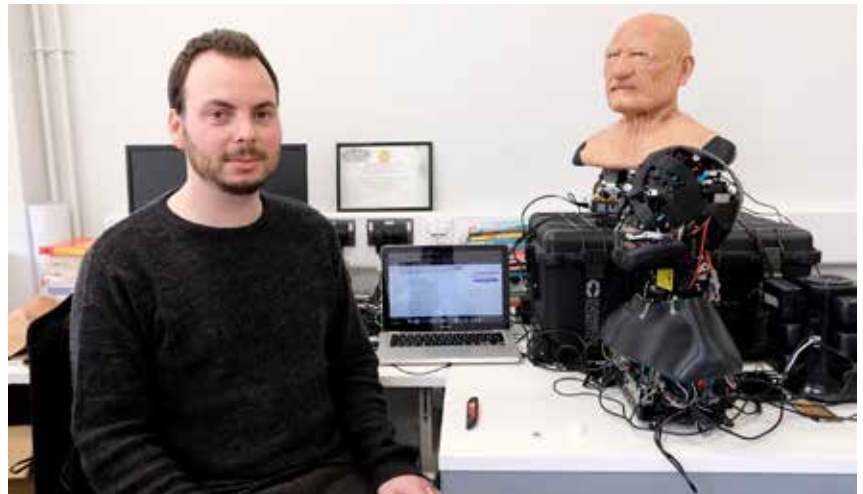
The Turing Test was developed by the mathematician in 1950 to determine whether machines are capable of displaying artificial intelligence indistinguishable by a human.

His work still inspires many people working in science today. Among these is Carl Strathearn, PhD Candidate in Robotics and AI and Assistant Lecturer at Staffordshire University, who is working with supervisor Professor Eunice Minhua Ma, Dean of Computing and Digital Technologies and expert judge in the annual Loebner Turing prize, on a 'Multimodal Turing Test' to judge an android machine's appearance, movement and voice.

Carl has created two robots, a younger model called 'Baudi', named after the French Philosopher Jean Baudrillard, who researched simulation and perception, while the second robot is older and called 'Euclid', the father of geometry.

Baudi implements a robotic eye system Carl developed in the first year of his PhD, which uses a novel gelatine elastomer that can 'dilate' under electric current. The eyes also have a photo resistor in the right eye and a camera in the left which allows the eyes to dilate to both light and emotion.

In contrast, Euclid has the traditional glass eyes used in robotics and animatronics. Part of this test is to examine the significance of eye dilation for enhancing emotion, likability, functionality and



appearance. Carl bought the skins from a freelance FX artist, which he then adapted for the robots and added eyebrows and other facial details.

During his first degree Carl created an AI system with Genuine People Personality, modelled on his favourite robot – Marvin from The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy. Marvin is grumpy and depressed most of the time and Carl wanted to create a working version of this. In the final year of his degree he built a small robot that could talk and look at people in the eye using a camera sensor and was invited to take the robot to London and present it at the D&AD awards and it went down a storm.

"I think for the first time people interacted with an AI system that did not really want to be interacted with," Carl says. "People have this preconception of AI as being this obedient 'yes, sir, no, sir' program, and to actually have a robot verbally tell you to 'go do one because you are

*Above: Carl Strathearn, PhD Candidate in Robotics and AI and Assistant Lecturer at Staffordshire University with Euclid and Baudi (below)*

*Opposite page: The different facial expressions of Euclid*



*Continued over the page*





## MILESTONES IN ROBOTICS AND AI

### 1950: TURING TEST

Computer scientist Alan Turing proposes a test for machine intelligence. If a machine can trick humans into thinking it is human, then it has intelligence.

### 1955: AI IS BORN

The term 'artificial intelligence' is coined by computer scientist John McCarthy to describe 'the science and engineering of making intelligent machines'.

### 1997: DEEP BLUE

Deep Blue, a chess-playing computer created by IBM, defeats world chess champion, Garry Kasparov.

### 2011: APPLE'S SIRI

Apple integrates Siri, an intelligent virtual assistant with a voice interface, into the iPhone 4S.

### 2014: EUGENE

Eugene Goostman, pictured below, a chatbot, passes the Turing Test with a third of judges believing Eugene is human.



boring me' is certainly something to see!" Carl is calling his latest project Embodied Artificial Intelligence (EAI). The test is a measure of how well artificial intelligence is integrated with a robotic body in order to express personality.

"In 1950 Turing asked, 'Can machines think?', and came up with a test that researchers still turn to as a way of judging whether a computer could be considered truly intelligent in the same way as humans.

"But, coming from an age where autonomous robots were only just in their infancy, the Turing Test was only designed to assess artificial brains, not a complete artificial person. Now that we have increasingly realistic looking androids, we need a 21st-century version of the test."

The Multimodal Turing Test updates Turing's 1950s original to cover all aspects of humanoid robotics – focussing on AI, appearance, kinetics and voice-programming – and provides a framework to advance the realism of AI and robotics.

"Most people can tell what is a human and what is a robot just by looking at them but this new method sections off different elements of the robot/human, for example, an eye or a mouth, making this more difficult. "As with the Turing Test, if 33% of participants can't tell the difference between the robot and a human, then it passes."

Turing argued that if a computer program could deceive a third of the humans taking part into believing it was sentient in real-world conditions, then it is effectively indistinguishable from the human mind. In brief, it can think.

Five years ago researchers in Russia invented a 'chatbot' computer program called Eugene Goostman, which acts like a 13-year-old who has English as a second language.

A chatbot is a computer program designed to simulate conversation over the internet. They're commonly used in consumer websites where users can receive answers to basic questions through pop-up 'chat' windows.

Eugene took the Turing Test at the Royal Society in London, where it convinced 33 per cent of test judges that it was a teenage boy. This was hailed as the first computer to successfully pass the iconic Turing Test.

"Turing was never concerned with robots, emotion or appearance," says Carl.

"He was only interested in the functionality of the human mind and brain and replicating it using programs and machines. Turing's original test used typewriters instead of computers and a hand written script in place of a computer program, this method could also pass the Turing Test.

"The Eugene Goostman chatbot passed the Turing Test as it was able to simulate a child, with poor English, grammar and knowledge. I argue that it was not the intellectual capacity of the system that was successful in passing the test but the design of the character. This is what I am interested in as the simulated personality, age, gender, background of the chatbot system has a significant impact on how we perceive the intellectual capabilities of the system."

The Multimodal Turing Test is the evaluation procedure for Carl's robots. Although he expects them to fail, the data gained will give him an idea of what level the robots are at regarding Turing's pass mark of 33%. At the end of this research the schematics, CAD files and methods will be released to the public to make their own variations of the robots and see if they can advance them further.

"The Turing Test still gives us a benchmark to judge progress," says Carl.

"Many scholars think creating a humanoid robot that is indistinguishable from a real human is the ultimate goal of robotics.

"Yet there's currently no standard way of



evaluating how lifelike androids are, so it's impossible to benchmark this development.

"Like Turing, we're not arguing that a robot transforms into an organic being when it can replicate the conditions of a human. But if a robot appears, behaves and functions in a way that is indistinguishable from a human being in real-world conditions, then it can effectively be thought of as the same as a human."

Carl – who had to wait eight months for ethical approval for his research – highlights the work of Masahiro Mori, a robotics professor at the Tokyo Institute of Technology, who wrote an essay 40 years ago on people's reactions to robots that looked and acted almost human.

Prof Mori imagined a person's response to a human-like robot would quickly shift from compassion to revulsion as it approached, but failed to achieve, a lifelike appearance, a psychological process known as the Uncanny Valley.

"One of the biggest challenges for lifelike robot builders is overcoming the Uncanny Valley. This refers to a stage of development when robots become closer in appearance to humans but are actually more off-putting to people because they are not quite right," explains Carl.

"The issue is that conventional methods of assessing the problem aren't nuanced enough to determine exactly why a robot makes people uncomfortable. I compiled a vast amount of research on the Uncanny Valley which stated that artificial eyes are the biggest contributor to the emotional response, so I decided to first tackle this issue.

"I was fortunate enough to present my prototype at the SWARM17 conference in Japan which went on to win best paper in the bio-inspired robotics category."

The Multimodal Test is organised into four stages, each more difficult than the last, representing what Carl calls the 'hierarchy of human emulation'.

"First, the robot has to simply look real when still. Second, it has to move in a natural looking way. Third, it has to produce a realistic simulation of physical speech in both appearance and the way it moves.

"Finally comes the test of embodied artificial intelligence, assessing whether the robot can respond to the world by realistically expressing emotions so it can interact naturally with humans.

"If a humanoid robot can simultaneously pass all four levels of the test, then it is perceptually indistinguishable from humans. This would allow a robot builder to assess progress as they go to ensure each body part is indistinguishable from that of a human and to prevent ending up with something that falls into the Uncanny Valley.

"As with Turing's original test, our approach raises questions about what it will mean to be a person when we can no longer tell the difference between a real human and an artificial one.

"Trying to answer these questions too soon because we want to advance quicker than we actually are can lead to mistakes such as giving legal rights to a machine that is nowhere near lifelike. But, the more we develop humanoid robots, the more we learn about our values and even our emotions."



## BEACON: A UK FIRST

Say hello to Beacon, the UK's first artificially intelligent student coach – and it'll say hello back.

The AI student coach chats with Staffordshire students to make sure they're settling into University life and acts as a digital friend. Beacon has already won an award, named Best Not-For-Profit Project at the Digital Technology Leaders Awards.

The University teamed up with leading cloud services provider ANS Group to become the first in the UK to produce an AI coach using chatbot technology. Beacon is a mobile phone app which interacts with students via text or voice conversation. It provides personalised information on timetables, helps students to contact their personal tutors and join societies and answers 400 frequently asked questions about campus facilities and services.

Andrew Proctor, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Digital), says: "We're a modern university with lots of students who need 24/7 support. Beacon is a digital friend which provides a personalised student experience and help on-demand.

"This is just the beginning of Beacon's capability and impact. We believe it's the start of one of the most creative and innovative developments across higher education that will transform the university experience."

Shutterstock



# Are we addicted to our health devices?

*More and more people are turning to technology to help them get fit. But should it come with a health warning?*

**F**itness gadgets are revolutionising the way we exercise, but could they be bad for our health?

That's the question raised by Staffordshire University sport and exercise psychology lecturer Dr Andrew Wood.

Fitness trackers, smart watches and apps which encourage us to work out are big business.

The company which helped start the craze, Fitbit, is believed to have sold more than 100 million of its devices, which monitor everything from your daily steps to the

amount of calories burnt. It's so successful that Google has announced plans to buy the company for a reported \$2.1 billion.

There seems little doubt that having a hi-tech personal trainer in your pocket or on your wrist can encourage people to exercise and improve their health.

The NHS has even launched its own free couch-to-5k training app.

But sports psychologists Dr Wood and Dr Martin Turner have seen another side to the technology.

They suggest that people can 'over-

indulge' in exercise and become addicted. And, in part, that can be driven by fitness apps and trackers whose constant reminders and prompts can lead some people to push themselves too far.

"The physical and mental benefits of exercise are indisputable. But as with any exercise you can have too much of a good thing," explains Dr Wood, who works with professional athletes and is the lead psychologist for the England Blind Football Team. Problems can develop, he says, when people's self-worth becomes tied to the amount of exercise they do and they become exercise dependent.

"Say you start running because you want to get fit and be a healthy weight. You try it and

you like it, so you stick with it," he says. "After a month you notice that your clothes fit better. Colleagues and friends say how healthy you look and your running buddies comment on your improved technique and speed.

"Your times are improving. You're achieving things, beating others, and you get a rush when you run.

"But it's not enough. Five kilometres no longer gives you the same rush, so you move to ten.

"This added time means you no longer have time for a lunch break where you normally chat with colleagues.

"But who cares? People are saying that you look great, you are getting quicker, and you feel amazing. This snowballing can continue. Why not go from 10k to a half marathon?"

The danger with this situation is that your self-worth is becoming attached to exercise.

"If you quit or reduce running, then you worry that all of those nice things you are experiencing will drop away.

"Although these illogical beliefs may sound motivational they come with considerable emotional and physical exhaustion," points out Dr Wood, who is based in the School of Life Sciences and Education.

Fitness apps and trackers are what is known as 'sticky', which means they're designed to encourage users to come back for more.

And if people are exercise dependent they may be tempted to misuse them – putting themselves at risk of psychological and physical harm.

They may skip rest days to meet their targets, for instance, increasing the chance of injury.

Research by Dr Wood and his colleagues indicates that people whose self-worth depends on success or achievement are more likely to have poorer psychological well-being.

They are at greater risk of developing a dependence like exercise addiction.

"In our work as sport and exercise psychologists we often come across people who become overly consumed by an athletic identity and who form the idea that their



Dr Andrew Wood and Dr Martin Turner



**'FIVE KILOMETRES NO LONGER GIVES YOU THE SAME RUSH, SO YOU MOVE TO TEN'**



**'NOT ACHIEVING A GOAL OR MISSING A TRAINING SESSION MIGHT FEEL BAD, BUT IT ISN'T TERRIBLE'**

success as an athlete reflects their worth as a human being," he says.

"Athletes can't guarantee success, so they put themselves in a precarious position."

Dr Wood is an expert in Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT), which encourages people to think logically about their goals.

The idea is that by understanding people's deeply held illogical beliefs they can be challenged and replaced by logical alternatives.

"So 'I have to' and 'I'd be worthless if I didn't' become 'I want but I don't have to' and 'if I didn't I would be disappointed, but I wouldn't be worthless," Dr Wood explains.

The sports psychologist's work using REBT with athletes has shown that encouraging people to think logically about their goals leads to healthier motivation and increased resilience.

They are able to achieve their performance goals and feel less socially anxious.

Together with Dr Turner the research scientist has created an app called Smarter Thinking based on REBT.

"Specifically the app is underpinned by scientific theory," Dr Wood says, "allowing users to recognise, dispute and replace an irrational approach to adversity with rational alternatives which ultimately fosters resilience and mental health."

He is currently researching the effects of the Smarter Thinking App with recreational runners.

So what is Dr Wood's advice for anyone who fears they may be in danger of developing an addiction to fitness?

"If you feel you are at risk of developing an unhealthy relationship with exercise, remind yourself of the following – exercise is a choice.

"Not achieving a goal or missing a training session might feel bad, but it isn't terrible.

"Also, your fitness achievements do not define you – you're more than that.

"Detach your self-worth from your actions. Being successful at exercise doesn't make you a good person, just as being bad at it doesn't make you a bad person."



# Smart thinking

*Step into the future when you step into the Smart Zone, a new state of the art facility on the Stoke-on-Trent campus, positioning the University at the forefront of advanced technology.*



**T**here's a buzz in the air, and it's not all coming from the indoor drones flying overhead. It's more an intangible excitement about what could be achieved in the Smart Zone.

In one corner, someone is programming a robot arm while in another a fashion student is laser cutting a pattern. Open a door and you'll discover 3D printing, milling and soldering using high-tech tools.

In the Immersive Lounge, a comic arts student is animating a character, while an acting student is filming a scene with an imaginary creature for a computer game

in the Green Screen studio. A Virtual Reality Arcade is transporting people to other worlds.

Welcome to the Smart Zone, the gateway to next-generation technologies. It's a £1.3 million development in the Mellor Building on the College Road campus, a space packed with facilities and equipment.

Over two floors is a new centre for invention and innovation with workshops, engineering and maker spaces and the latest in digital technology and computing facilities. This is where ideas are brought to life, where prototypes are tested and become real,

life-changing products. It brings equipment together in one place where people can collaborate, solve problems and take designs even further.

The Smart Zone is keeping the University at the cutting edge when it comes to innovation in manufacturing, enhancing its reputation for developing advanced materials and helping to fill skills gaps in key industries in the region.

The facilities are available to anyone on campus who fancies having a go at making something, or for students carrying out projects for their degrees. But it can also be used by local industry and to help graduates start their own businesses.

Professor David Hawkins, Dean of Creative Arts and Engineering, explains: "The Smart Zone is a very significant and exciting advance in the quality and capability of the equipment we have. There's nothing else in the region like this. Other universities have similar equipment but not organised this way. We've brought everything together in one place so it's much more usable. The Smart Zone has one of the most accessible ranges of equipment anywhere in the country.

"We are very much focused on regional needs, which is unusual. The Smart Zone strategy is aligned with the regional economic development goals. We asked local industries, especially ceramics, what skills they need and provided the advanced equipment so we can train students in these key areas.

"We're working with local partners like Lucideon and My Clever Group. We also offer support for developing businesses – someone may have an idea and we can help them test and prototype it and see it through to commercial realisation.

"We want to help graduates set up companies and develop commercial concerns, sharing equity with the University. Our share of the profits would be put back into helping future students develop new products and processes and set up more companies.

"The Smart Zone is a collaborative area, where you can see what other people are doing. There will be serendipitous encounters, with people asking 'That looks interesting, what are you doing?', which wasn't happening before.

"We're going to use the synergies between areas to build a much bigger capability that's built around knowledge, people and networks just as much as around equipment.

"The Smart Zone has so much potential and we're only at the beginning."



## SMART ZONE'S ROYAL LAUNCH

*HRH The Duke of Gloucester officially launched the £1.3m Smart Zone and praised the new facilities during his visit to Staffordshire University.*

*The Duke unveiled a plaque to mark the official opening and met Students' Union representatives and student competition winners Liam Emery, Charlie Smith and Fallon Jay whose creative designs can be seen throughout The Smart Zone.*

*All pictures on this page were taken by Staffordshire University student Benjamin Wareing. Read more about Benjamin's work on Page 36.*



# Friends in high places

**JASON TARRY**  
CEO, TESCO UK  
AND IRELAND

**MARK MCKENZIE**  
GROUP SALES DIRECTOR,  
NESTLÉ UK AND IRELAND

Staffordshire University business students were fortunate to be given a masterclass from two graduates who have climbed the ranks of two of the world's most recognisable brands.

Jason Tarry, who graduated with a BA (Hons) Business Studies in 1989, joined Tesco finance division through a graduate recruitment programme in 1990 and, in a career that has taken him worldwide, was appointed as CEO for Tesco UK and ROI in 2018.

Jason was joined at the business masterclass by Mark McKenzie, who studied on the same degree and who has also risen through the ranks of

big-name retailers to become Group Sales Director for Nestlé UK and Ireland.

Despite their international travels, Jason and Mark stay in regular contact and were keen to return to Staffordshire University to pass on tips and insights to an audience of students and lecturers.

The masterclass was held in the University's Digital Kiln and covered topics including the food industry, retail, consumer behaviour, customer experience and supply chain management.

*Horizon* magazine caught up with Jason and Mark to find out what makes them tick.

## Tell us about an average day?

**Jason Tarry:** There really isn't an average day. The early part of the week will be based in the office and we'll have a number of meetings that look at the day-to-day running of the business as well as executive and board meetings to look at wider reviews. Towards the back end of the week I'll be out and about in the business. We're a national company with branches and distribution centres across the land. It's a combination of office-based then out and about.

**Mark McKenzie:** There's no typical day or week. We run on a monthly business cycle and we'll review previous months, before starting to plan the next. Every fourth week we'll have a board meeting in a different location around the business. We have 13 factories across the UK and will visit these for a couple of days. It helps reconnect with colleagues to understand their work and challenges.

### How would you describe your journeys to the senior roles you now hold?

**JT:** It wasn't a grand plan to end up being the UK and Ireland CEO for Tesco. Almost every stage of my career has been about taking opportunities as they arise at the time. I had a fantastic four years at what was Staffordshire Polytechnic and is now Staffordshire University. It broadened my horizons and prepared me for life in a way I would have never imagined and I made lifelong friends who have helped me along the way. I always wanted to emigrate to Australia after travelling and at the time Tesco were taking on graduate finance trainees. Here I am nearly 29 years later having moved across various functions nationally and internationally, always taking the opportunities as they've been presented. I've always been myself and enjoyed what I do and hope I make a bit of a difference.

**MM:** I was on a business studies course with, not unusually, lots of people who did business studies because they didn't know what they wanted to do! I felt it was a more likely degree to help me find a job. The placements we did were really important, and I spent time in retail, which felt dynamic and it's here I found my passion. I was with Marks and Spencer for nine months and stuck with retail after that. It was a diverse, exciting environment that worked for me. I just made the most of the opportunities put in front of me by pushing myself and testing myself. If you keep going and trying harder, in the end you get somewhere. It's not genius, just sheer hard work!

### How do you approach change in business?

**JT:** We talked about this with students during our presentation. The truth is change is normal. Continuous change is today's norm. The world is developing in a dynamic way as technology fuels that. Therefore, being adaptable and open to change and embracing it is important. As a senior leader you are looking for opportunities to ensure you react to change that impacts you and ideally getting ahead of it to make sure



*Jason and Mark at Staffordshire University*

you're changing your business to adapt to the world in which it needs to operate. If you don't do that you get left behind. Most people are afraid of change, so you need to take a leadership role. The most difficult moments as a leader of the business are when you've got to create change that isn't good news for some people within the organisation. The most important thing there is not to hide from it or shy away but embrace it and stand up and explain why you need to make the change and why it is important. It needs to be led in a very visible way. It's a human trait we don't enjoy, but you have to learn for it to be your norm and make it work for you.

**MM:** The first thing is do not fear it. It is a human trait. You can't deny it is coming. There are some outstanding businesses that put their head in the sand. You've got to embrace change and as leaders it's about an open mindset. History has taught us if you have a closed mindset you will fail through resistance. It might work, it might not work, but you have to think it could work. It's not about whether a business can afford to invest in that new technology, it's about whether you can afford not to.

### What keeps you awake at night?

**JT:** Very little unless it impacts colleagues in an adverse way. Business decisions, I'm fine with, speaking at big events is fine – it doesn't mean I don't get nervous – but it doesn't stop me sleeping. But having to

have a conversation with a colleague that impacts their livelihood means I don't sleep.

**MM:** When you get quite senior, the implications of what you do are significant. If I've done something which on reflection was wrong, that troubles me, partly because at that point there's nothing you can do about it. It can't be fixed until the following day.

**JT:** You feel the responsibility for decision making. It never leaves you. People look at you and are thinking 'ah, he's done well, he's got all this stuff', but what they don't see is that you're carrying a huge amount of responsibility and sometimes that can feel overwhelming, particularly if you're in a business facing a challenge. That's not to say I don't feel privileged and lucky to do what I do and while it doesn't stop me sleeping, I live with that responsibility all the time.

### Knowing what you know now, what advice would you have given yourself as a new graduate?

**MM:** Believe in yourself and back yourself. If you put your mind to what you want to achieve you will achieve it. There's a line in the book 'Good to Great' which says 'success is a matter of choice'. What this is saying is if you choose to be successful and you put the effort in, it will almost certainly happen. If you don't put in that hard work, it won't. You have to make the choice.

**JT:** Be yourself. Care about what you're doing and keep learning and developing. Treat people as you want to be treated. Make the most of your life and find something that gives you a purpose and makes you feel you're making a difference. Do all of those things and you'll be successful at it, there's no doubt about it.

### Describe yourself in one word.

**JT:** This is tough! I'd like to think people would go for 'genuine'.

**MM:** I think I'm passionate about what I do, but let's go for 'authentic'.



# PRESS START

*Gaming now stands alongside movies and music for its sheer scale and global revenue. Staffordshire University graduates and lecturers are in the thick of the action, producing the brightest designers, developers and programmers in the industry.*

**F**rom the BAFTA-winning Forza Horizon series to the Avengers action-adventure video game Staffordshire graduates have worked on some of the biggest console titles in the world.

So what gives them the edge in one of the most competitive industries around?

The last year has been particularly successful for the University's alumni, according to Associate Professor of Games Education Dr Bobbie Fletcher.

"Two VFX graduates worked on the blockbuster Avengers: Endgame and 38 games graduates worked on Red Dead Redemption 2, which was the number one selling game in the UK last year," she explains.

"And five games graduates worked on the BAFTA winning game, Forza Horizon 4, which was named as 'Best British Game 2018'.

Dr Fletcher, who is Head of the Department of Games and Visual Effects, believes the University's success is down to the close links it has forged with the gaming industry.

"We have always aligned our courses to industry and our talented graduates are now a part of some of the most influential games companies in the world, creating the iconic games now and of the future," she says.

"We encourage our alumni to return and give their time and experience to the next generation of graduates."

It's an approach that has paid off.

One of Staffordshire University's own graduates was responsible for a unique partnership with the developer behind the Fortnite phenomena – Epic Games.

James Butcher, who now works for Epic as an Unreal Engine instructor, graduated with a first-class honours degree in Computer Games Design in 2001.

He then became a Senior Lecturer and Business Development Manager at the University.

When Epic's European Territory Manager, Mike Gamble, visited he was so impressed by the students' work that he asked how the company could help.

James suggested it could sponsor a lab and use it to host events such as its Epic Developer Days, where professional studios demonstrate games they've developed using Epic's Unreal Engine tools.

As a result the University is now home to the only Epic Games sponsored Design Centre in the world.



*Dr Bobbie Fletcher, Associate Professor of Games Education*

The partnership gives students a direct link to the heart of the games industry and one of the most successful developers around.

The lab is open to students studying games design courses and is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities provided by Epic.

Resulting from the partnership, Mike Gamble also agreed to become a Visiting Professor and Honorary Doctor at Staffordshire University.

This year the 'godfather' of the UK Games Industry, Philip Oliver, who's the creator of iconic games character Dizzy and founder of Made in Creative UK, also became a visiting professor.

"The combination of these talented individuals brings business insights for developing successful games and growing a games studio," Dr Fletcher says.

The University is also part of the PlayStation First Academic Program run by Sony, which allows students access to its professional development hardware and software tools, and a member of the games industry body TIGA.

Then there's the Xbox simulator, which was donated to the department by Playground Games – the company behind the successful Forza Horizon series and one of the highest ranked developers in the world. It is used to demonstrate the driving games Staffordshire graduates have worked on and sits at the heart of the department's 'Hall of Fame' featuring a wall of framed posters showcasing some of the titles graduates have been involved with.

*Continued over the page*



**'WE ENCOURAGE OUR ALUMNI TO RETURN AND GIVE THEIR TIME AND EXPERIENCE TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF GRADUATES'**

*Right: The Staffordshire University Xbox simulator, which was donated to the department by Playground Games*

Their names are displayed on plaques below. There is no shortage of Staffordshire graduates on the credit lists for its Forza Horizon games.

More than a dozen alumni have been involved in the four titles released by the Xbox Game Studio in the past decade.

Their roles have included gameplay engineer, concept, environment and lighting artists.

Nick Duncombe, Playground's Head of Recruitment, says: "We have always been impressed by the level of skill of Staffordshire graduates and their passion coming straight from university.

"The core video game development syllabus Staffordshire teaches is excellent, but it's the course's involvement with industry which really helps set its students apart.

"Students have access to developers working on current AAA projects giving them an insight into the latest techniques used by industry.

"Students who then research, learn and implement those techniques practically into their University projects and professional portfolios make themselves very employable to video



game development studios around the world."

Despite its success the Games and Visual Effects department has no plans to stand still.

"We have just opened a new Smart Zone at the University, which houses some of the most up-to-date digital scanning equipment to create fast and accurate digital assets to put in games," Dr Fletcher points out.

"This is accompanied by virtual and mixed reality studios to create enhanced immersive



Nick Duncombe, Head of Recruitment, Playground Games



Rachel Gowers, Director of the Digital Institute London



Students at Digital Institute London

experiences for games and non-games applications.

“We continue to grow and have recognised the importance of players and player communities, especially in such a digitally connected world.

“We are proud to announce that in September 2020 we will launch a new degree – BA (Hons) Games PR and Community Management. It is the first degree of its kind in the UK.”

The University has also launched a specialist campus Digital Institute London.

Based at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in East London it offers Europe’s first esports degree, along with courses in computer games design, games PR and community management and cyber-security.

Rachel Gowers, Director of the Digital Institute London, explains: “The Digital Institute is located right at the heart of an innovation park called Here East.

“It’s home to numerous tech companies and is a great place for our students to network.

“On the floor above us is Sports Interactive, the company behind Football Manager, they have been great, popping down to talk to our students and we even have one of our alumni working there who is coming to talk to the students about his journey.”

A Digital Institute Advisory Board made up of experts from computer games design, esports and cyber security has also been established to help the University develop its London campus.

“They will help shape our curriculum, set live projects for our students and offer work placements and internships over the coming year,” Rachel adds.

“Locating a campus in London has really excited the students in Stoke too.

“They are planning collaborative projects including hosting a digital fashion show and a product design workshop with Ford Mobility.”

## GAME ON...

Staffordshire University is the largest games university in the UK with 1,500 students studying degrees in subjects including computer games design and programming, CGI and visual effects and games art.



Graduates have gone on to work across the globe as designers, 3D artists, 3D animators, level designers and technical artists.



The roll call of companies they’ve been employed by includes EA, the developer of FIFA, Ubisoft, whose games include Just Dance and Assassin’s Creed, Playground Games, creator of the Forza Horizon series and Epic Games – the company behind the Fortnite phenomena.



The UK is currently the fifth largest games market in the world with a record £5.11bn spent on gaming in the country last year.



Since June 2016 UK Tech companies have received over £5 billion in Venture Capital Funding. That’s more than France (£1.55bn), Germany (£2.15bn) and Sweden (£644m) combined.

*Forensic archaeologist Professor Caroline Sturdy Colls takes a CSI-like investigative approach to honouring the memory of victims of war-time atrocities across Europe. With her work taking her to Poland, Alderney and, closer to home in the Lake District, she explains why such research projects are so important now more than ever.*

**S**taffordshire University's Centre for Archaeology is using the latest non-invasive research technology to honour the memory of the victims of the Holocaust and Nazi persecution.

Led by world-renowned archaeologist Professor Caroline Sturdy Colls, the University team featured in a TV documentary, *Adolf Island*, which focused on Alderney, the Channel Island where hundreds died in camps during the Nazi occupation.

The crimes committed in Alderney during the Nazi occupation have been a controversial subject for many years.

There are 389 known graves from deaths during the island's occupation, however Caroline believes the number was much higher than first thought.

During her time in Alderney Caroline searched for a Nazi SS camp constructed in secrecy during the war. Her findings could turn out to be one of the largest murder cases on British soil.

Caroline is Professor of Conflict Archaeology and Genocide Investigation and Director of the

*Continued over the page*



# Searching for the truth



Centre of Archaeology at Staffordshire University specialising in Holocaust Studies. She teaches forensic archaeology, conflict archaeology and runs archaeological field schools. She has worked at Treblinka, an extermination camp located in a forest north-east of Warsaw, built and operated by Nazi Germany in occupied Poland during World War II.

Her work, searching for missing people who

died during the Holocaust and documenting the sites such as the camps where they suffered, remains 'vitaly important', even though so many years have passed since the Holocaust.

"Many families still wish to know what happened to their loved ones and it is important that the crimes perpetrated are fully documented so that an accurate historical record can be created," she explains.

"In an age of increasing revisionism and denial of history – and at a time when many survivors are passing away – it is increasingly important to locate the physical evidence relating to the Holocaust and Nazi persecution in order to provide new opportunities for education and genocide prevention. The unique methodology that I have developed enables searches for this evidence to be carried out in a way that respects the sensitivities that surround this period of history."

Caroline uses a wide range of non-invasive methods to locate, record and visualise Holocaust sites in a way that respects the sensitive nature of these important places. The exact methods used depends on many factors such as the remains being sought, the nature of the terrain being examined and the attempts by the perpetrators to hide their crimes.

Some of these methods, such as airborne LiDAR and the analysis of satellite imagery, allow Caroline to analyse and create digital terrain models which can reveal evidence from the air.

"Laser scanning and photogrammetry methods allow me to create 3D visualisations of landscapes and objects, which has the added advantage that the data generated can be used for educational purposes as well.

"The application of novel technologies is always accompanied by detailed archival research and in-field walkover surveys or reconnaissance visits, during which I search for subtle evidence or indicators on the surface, such as depressions, vegetation change or surface remains, that might indicate the presence of buried evidence."

As a result of the team's recent fieldwork in Alderney they were able to document the SS concentration camp at Sylt in considerable detail, finding the remains of the camp buildings, fence-lines and gates. This built up a detailed map and 3D visualisations of the site, to analyse how it changed

over time and what the inmates living there would have experienced as a result of its architecture.

“Our work in Alderney was coupled with a vast amount of archival research which has allowed me to trace the individual stories of the concentration camp inmates, many of whom were housed all over Europe,” explains Caroline.

“Many suffered brutal treatment in the camp and testimonies, documents, aerial photographs and other sources have allowed me to build up a detailed picture of how the camp functioned.

“Using non-invasive methods, we were also able to record one of the former cemeteries for forced and slave labourers on Longy Common. This work enabled us to document the location of individual graves which were exhumed in the 1960s and to identify what we believe to be a number of unmarked graves, including mass graves in and around the outside of the former cemetery area. This research has again been accompanied by detailed archival research which has allowed me to determine the names of more than 50 missing persons whose bodies have never been found.

“This builds on almost 10 years’ worth of research about the Nazi occupation of the island which will be published in a new book next year. We have located and recorded the locations of camps, potential graves and graffiti left by forced and slave labourers across the island.”

Caroline and Staffordshire University’s Centre of Archaeology worked with Another Space, which produces and manages the Lake District Holocaust Project.

The team carried out a two-week survey and excavation at the Calgarth Estate in the Lake District in an attempt to locate hostels where 300 child Holocaust survivors lived in 1945 after their arrival in Britain.

The Calgarth Estate became a place of sanctuary for the child survivors after they were liberated from a camp in the Czech Republic. It was thought the fresh air of the Lake District would aid their recovery after surviving the Holocaust. Many of their parents perished in places like Treblinka.

Each of the six hostels on the Calgarth Estate housed 50 people in small rooms and each room had a bed, chest of drawers and bedroom furniture. For the children who arrived in August 1945, and who had experienced the



*The TV documentary Adolf Island was filmed on Alderney*

horrors of concentration camps, the rooms and the hostels would have been considered luxurious. The site was demolished in 1954.

“The Lake District Holocaust Project yielded many interesting results,” adds Caroline.

“Our aim was to try and confirm the locations of the buildings that the Jewish children lived in and we were able to do this.

“Using non-invasive methods and then excavation, we located and then uncovered the remains of one of the buildings on the school rugby field. This led us to learn more about how the buildings were constructed and demolished. It also led to the discovery of a large number of artefacts, some that we can date to the 1940s. This included children’s toys, food wrappers, a belt buckle, a small pen knife and various domestic items.”

Caroline and the Centre of Archaeology will participate in a wide range of projects in 2020 and will carry out new research work in Cyprus and Ukraine, applying novel non-invasive technologies in order to document both the recent and distant past.

“I will be completing a book, *Finding Treblinka*, which focuses on more than a decade of research at the Treblinka extermination and labour camps, and working on an exhibition project with the Lake District Holocaust Project team based on the fieldwork we undertook in 2019,” she adds.

“My team are very excited to be launching a new Masters course in 2020 as well – an MSc/MA Forensic Archaeology and Genocide Investigation. This will be a practice-based course which will offer students the chance to learn about and participate in world-leading research.”

## WORKING WITH POLICE FORCES ACROSS THE WORLD

*Staffordshire University’s Centre of Archaeology offers a wide range of forensic archaeological services to police forces and private clients across the world.*

*Staff from the Centre have experience in a number of high-profile cases and can be deployed at short notice to assist in search, recovery and laboratory-based examinations.*

*The forensic archaeologist will support and advise on search strategies, identify appropriate methods and resources, and work closely with crime scene personnel in order to maximise evidence in a methodical, cost-effective and rapid manner.*

*In addition, the skills of the forensic archaeologist also have an important emerging role in formal exhumations and the review of cold cases.*

*Professor Caroline Sturdy Colls is a full panel member of the UK Forensic Archaeology Expert Panel which is recognised by the UK Home Office.*

# COMIC BOOK HERO

*Writer Kieron Gillen, a superhero to many in the world of comic books, reveals his inspirations and aspirations – and why he wants to set a story in a Stafford chippy.*

**K**ieron Gillen was 10 when he wrote his first comic book. It was briefly a hit among his friends, before teachers at his Stafford primary school declared it 'evil' and confiscated it.

Fast forward 30-odd years and Kieron has had rather more success in the field. He was recently awarded an honorary doctorate by Staffordshire University for his outstanding achievement in cartoon and comic arts and for creating award winning publications – notably *Phonogram* and *The Wicked + The Divine* – and working on *X-Men*, *Thor*, *Iron Man*, *Young Avengers* and *Star Wars* for Marvel.

It all began back at St Austin's Catholic Primary School, where the enterprising pupil charged his friends around 20p a time to read the *Transformers* comic he'd written and drawn.

Kieron, who grew up in Doxey and Rickerscote, remembers: "I'd made £1.73 before the teachers noticed that one of the robots had an inverted pentagram on its chest. I had no idea what it was, but they considered it evil. They confiscated the comic and gave the money to charity."

Reading the *Beano* and *Dandy* was replaced by playing computer games as a teenager. He paid his way through a biology degree at Bath University by writing for *Amiga Power*, then landed a job as a staff writer for *PC Gamer*.

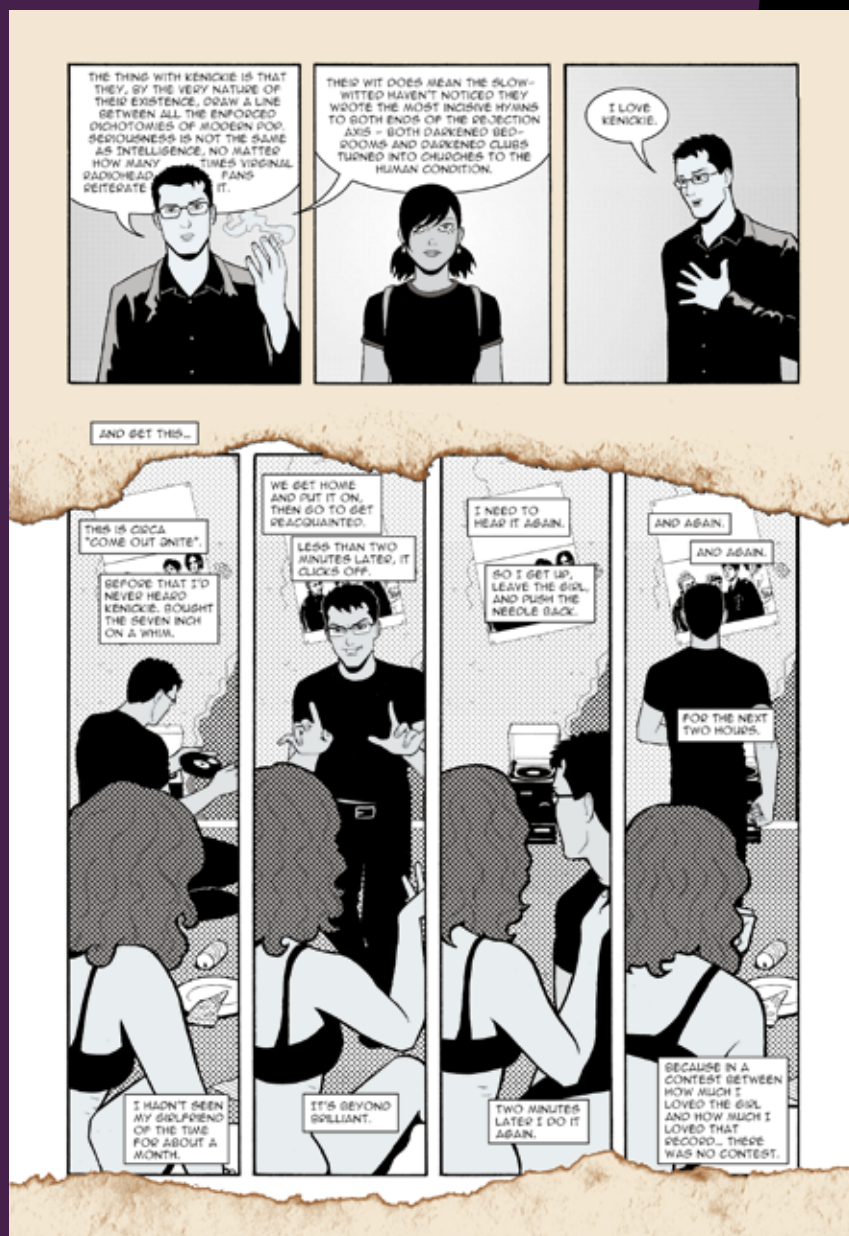
Comics pulled him back when he discovered Alan Moore's *Watchmen* aged 21.

"Then at 25, around 2000, I discovered Warren Ellis and his books *The Authority*, *Planetary* and *Transmetropolitan*," remembers Kieron. "I went from buying one or two comics a year to going into a comic shop every week for the next issue. I had all the passion of a late convert."

"Ellis ran an early comics website. I went on the forum and found people talking about this whole new world, about the American underground scene and Japanese manga. It was really exciting."

"Six months later I went to my first comic con in Bristol. I wrote my first comic script that night after coming home, quite late and not entirely sober. It was a story called *Hit*, a car crash in slow motion. It was formless and five pages but I turned it into a zine."

For several years Kieron earned a living writing about gaming in the daytime while pursuing his passion for comics in the evening. The roles

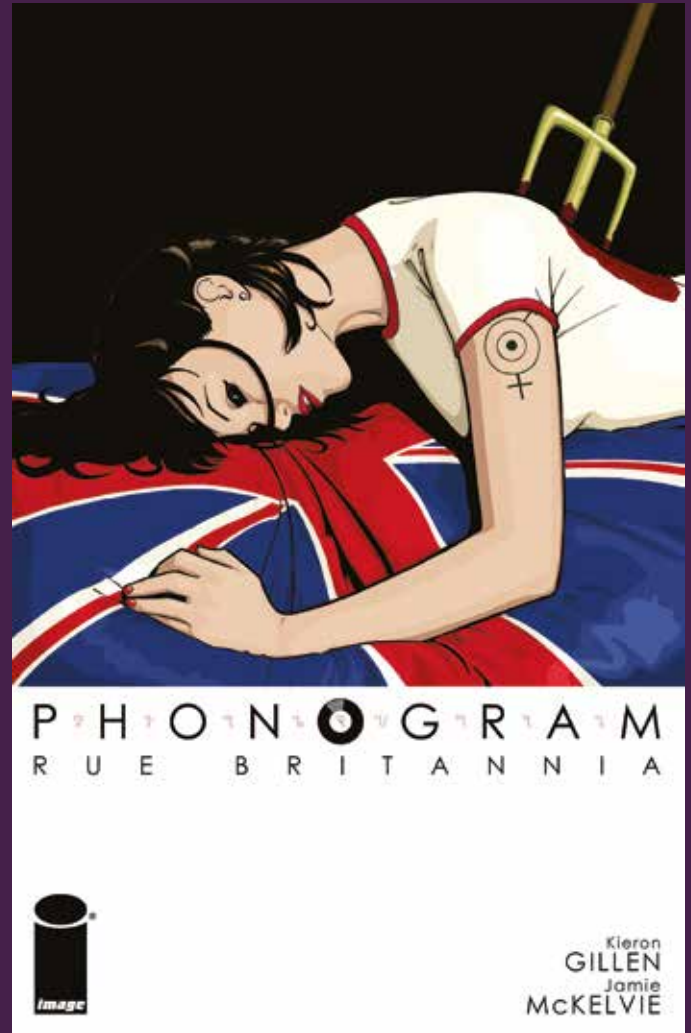


gradually reversed until comics took over. Kieron says: "After *Hit* I wanted to do something bigger and more connected. That became *Phonogram* around 2002 when I met Jamie McElvie and persuaded him to draw it. It was my first real comic, though not until we took it to Image in 2006."

"I made very little money on *Phonogram*. The deal was that Jamie got paid first up to a limit, which we didn't hit for a long time. Issue three made

*Continued over the page*

*Kieron's work in Phonogram*



**'YOU DON'T GO INTO COMICS TO BECOME RICH, YOU GO INTO IT BECAUSE YOU LOVE THE MEDIUM'**

me £500. It sold OK – for a black and white book about Britpop it sold very well – and was critically acclaimed, and without that I wouldn't have been spotted by Marvel. It was the calling card I needed.

"You don't go into comics to become rich, you go into it because you love the medium. I didn't start getting decent wages until I started working for Marvel in 2008.

"Earlier that year we went to a comic con in Ireland which went badly. We thought we were invited as guests but they charged us £300 for the table and we sold nothing. I slept on the floor in a friend's hotel room and remember waking up with dust on my tongue, thinking 'I'm too old for this!'"

*Phonogram* features a mage who uses Britpop

to power his magic – does Kieron have favourite Britpop artists?

"Two bands I will defend unreservedly are Elastica and Pulp, as they are incandescently brilliant. Pulp are so smart and funny and they don't really make them like Jarvis Cocker.

"Phonogram was very personal and weird and if I only produced one book, I would be happy for it to be that. It's not perfect but it's ours."

Kieron and Jamie produced *The Wicked + The Divine* next, which won Best Comic at the 2014 British Comic Awards and has been translated into 10 languages. It follows teenager Laura as she meets the Pantheon, 12 reincarnated deities masquerading as pop stars.

Kieron described it as “a superhero comic for anyone who loves Bowie as much as Batman”. He also admits that its themes of life and death were sparked by his father’s diagnosis with terminal cancer.

The final collection of *The Wicked + The Divine* was released in October 2019 and marks the end of Kieron and Jamie’s working relationship.

Kieron explains: “Jamie wants to write and draw his own stuff which is understandable. I’m not very good at drawing and lack patience. I describe myself as a parasite, living off the artist’s talent!

“I’m now working on *Die* with Stephanie Hans, who I met at Marvel doing *Loki: Journey into Mystery*. I call *Die* ‘Goth Jumanji’. A group of ‘90s kids are sucked into a fantasy game. They get out, mentally scarred, but are dragged back in as adults.

“It’s set in Stafford. I want to write a scene at the Windmill chippy, such an iconic part of my teenage years. My family still live there. Mum was so proud when I received my honorary doctorate from Staffordshire University. It was such an incredible honour, especially as I’m the son of a builder and the first kid in my family to go to university.”

Kieron lives in London with his wife Chrissy Williams, a poet and editor of his books.

“Chrissy would define her job as trying to get what I think is on the page out of my head,” explains Kieron. “She can push me harder than anyone else. Though when we started working together, we said let’s not talk about books in the bedroom because otherwise it takes over your whole life.”

How does Kieron see the future of comics?

“It’s been called a dying medium for 70 years!” he smiles. “It’s still pretty solid and isn’t going away. In 2003 there were one or two comic cons in the UK, now you can go to one every weekend. The success of Marvel films has a lot to do with that.

“Young adult books are huge. Raina Telgemeier’s *Smile* is the number one selling book, full stop, in America. She’s done a guide on how to write a comic book, so that’s a whole new generation of creators I can’t wait to see.

“Stafford now has a great comic shop, Too Fat Goblinz. There are lots of web comics but print is still big. I hope comics’ future is even bigger than it is at present.”





# Learning from life on the front line



*The International Year of the Nurse and Midwife is the ideal time to celebrate the University's nursing training – and promote its cutting-edge simulation exercises.*

**F**lying in a Hercules in a war zone, with turbulence preventing landing, is not the ideal time for a patient to go into a cardiac arrest. But when it happened to her in Afghanistan, Emily Browne knew what to do because she'd practised just this scenario.

She had simulated resuscitating a patient mid-flight so, when the worst came to the worst, she wasn't fazed.

Now she admits to being inspired by simulation ideas from the military to make Staffordshire University students more confident and capable.

Recent simulation exercises have involved paramedic and nursing students working with clinicians and firefighters to treat 'patients' and manikins in real-life situations. A new immersive simulation suite, which projects scenes on to the walls and adds in sounds and smells, is also used to replicate real life scenarios.

Emily trained as a nurse at Staffordshire University before returning to teach there and is now the senior lecturer for patient safety and

simulation. Her own experience of simulation training came through spending seven years with the RAF Reserves. In 2013 she was posted to Camp Bastion in Afghanistan with 4626 Squadron of the Royal Auxiliary Airforce, tasked with aeromedical evacuation.

For four months, working in blistering heat and sandstorms and with mortar bombs going off in the distance, she treated burns, gunshot wounds and blast injuries from improvised explosive devices.

Her first experience of simulation came before she arrived at Camp Bastion. It took place in a hangar in Yorkshire laid out exactly like the camp hospital.

Emily explains: "I had a full week immersed in that environment so when I got to Afghanistan, I knew immediately where patients would arrive and where all the equipment and operating theatre were.

"Simulation is one of the best ways to learn. I was doing an air transfer of a patient on a



stretcher strapped to the floor of a Hercules when they went into cardiac arrest. We'd hit turbulence and were circling the airstrip – we couldn't land because of the conditions.

"It didn't seem such a frightening prospect as it might because I'd practised resuscitation in flight, and it worked – the patient lived."

Now advanced simulation techniques are putting Staffordshire University at the cutting edge of nursing training.

A major difference in the simulation days Emily organises is that real clinicians are drafted into the clinical simulation suites to make for an even more realistic hospital environment.

The first exercise involved 16 patients in Stoke-on-Trent, treated by three student paramedic crews. They were in houses and on the street with a variety of ailments and emergencies. One was pregnant with a bleed, another had overdosed and there were cardiac arrests, a confused elderly patient and a road traffic accident to deal with.

The second exercise involved a house fire, with real firefighters rescuing two adult and two child casualties. They were treated at the scene and taken to 'hospital' – the Stafford simulation suite turned into an A&E department and ward – for treatment by paramedic, nursing and ODP (Operating Department Practitioner) students.

One student nurse said afterwards: "I shy away from role play scenarios as they feel too false and make me uncomfortable in front of others. During the simulations it felt real enough for me to not

experience that awkwardness. I have learnt more clinical skills during the simulation than I have in the theory and placement aspects of the degree, which has given me a lot more confidence."

Emily says: "An important reason why the students feel fully immersed, and how we differ from other training centres, is that they work with real clinicians. We use our practice partners so the doctors are actual doctors, not their lecturers pretending to be a consultant.

"The students gain confidence in a safe environment. They can do things they worry about, because they can't hurt anyone. In the debrief we tell them that what they did wasn't necessarily wrong, but it might not be fully informed yet and we suggest other things they could have done."

The simulation exercises used actors as casualties with realistic moulage (or make-up) injuries, who could give feedback about how they were made to feel during treatment. They also used high-tech manikins, who can blink, have a pulse and even talk.

Emily says: "Someone in another room wears a head set with a mouthpiece and talks as if they're the patient, reacting to what's happening.

"You can feel their pulse, you can put needles in to take blood, you can put pretend fluids and bloods into them, you can maintain an airway and catheterise them. If you take the manikin's blood pressure, their observations appear on the screen. It's as real as we can get."

Another way of simulating real life happens at

*Continued over the page*

'I'D PRACTISED RESUSCITATION IN FLIGHT, AND IT WORKED – THE PATIENT LIVED'



# 2020 INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE NURSE AND MIDWIFE

Nursing takes a well-deserved turn in the spotlight this year, as the World Health Organisation has decreed 2020 as the first-ever International Year of the Nurse and Midwife.

The aim is to showcase the professions and their crucial role in the health of people around the world. At Staffordshire, where nursing is in the University's DNA, it's a chance to promote its degrees and to create six new PhDs.

Dr Ann Ewens, Dean of the School of Health and Social Care, says: "I feel very strongly about using the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife as our main platform for 2020 to really get a positive message out there about nursing.

"There are so many headlines about staff shortages, giving an image of nurses as downtrodden and underpaid. But it's a fabulous, well-paid and worthwhile career with great prospects.

## 'IT'S A PRIVILEGE TO WORK WITH PATIENTS, OFTEN AT THE MOST VULNERABLE TIMES OF THEIR LIVES'

It's a privilege to work with patients, often at the most vulnerable times of their lives. I know I'm biased, but I think it's beyond the best job in the world.

"Nursing training belongs in higher education. They are working in such a diverse, complex and fast-paced environment, it's no wonder they need to be graduates or postgraduates.

"I want to create and support six new PhDs to research patient safety

and look into exactly how registered nurses save lives. I'm hoping they will be two of my colleagues from the school of nursing, two visiting fellows and two new graduates.

"We'll be using our relationship with the University of Alabama USA, a great academic medical centre. We're working with them on the patient safety agenda. They'll help us support our PhDs as they have more supervisory teams at doctorate level, and I'd like to encourage the exchange of students.

"I'd also like to promote men in nursing – it's very important that we have an inclusive agenda.

"So far we are planning to do this in two areas. We're involving the Director of Nursing in the Shropshire Community Trust and one of our visiting professors, both male nurses, to explore ways of encouraging men into nursing in Shropshire. At Staffordshire University we are also working with University Hospitals North Midlands and Keele University to encourage more males from the Stoke-on-Trent area into nursing, using social media and video stories and by going into schools and colleges."

the new immersive room at the Stafford Centre of Excellence in Healthcare Education.

Emily explains: "We use sounds, smells and images to immerse students into the experience.

For example, we project images of a roadside on to the walls so paramedics can be working on a traffic accident with the sound of cars driving past and the smell of burning.

"Student district nurses can experience going into a patient's home. We project images of a living room and have distracting noises like dogs barking and babies crying because in real life



Emily Browne:  
'Simulation allows a better level of learning'

you don't treat patients in a silent, clinical room.

"Simulation allows a better level of learning. If you physically do something, it stays with you much longer than being told about it in a lecture hall. You have that muscle memory. It also takes away the fear and panic and makes you a more confident and capable practitioner.

"I want to embed simulation into everything we do so I'm pioneering the use of it at Staffordshire. I'm very passionate about spreading the word about simulation through the School and the wider University – it could apply to other subjects.

"We're bringing simulation into social work and welfare courses, which have historically been very academic. A new programme involves exercises like taking a call from someone who is distressed. It tests what you can do rather than what you think you can do.

"There were no simulations when I was a student. What a nurse is expected to do now compared to 15 or even just five years ago is vastly different. Listening to a chest with a stethoscope used to be a doctor's job but now nurses are expected to do it, and to cannulate a patient, at the end of their training. We need to prepare students for that and provide the NHS with staff who have the tools to deal with the situations they're faced with."

# Taking the fight to a global killer

*Mosquitoes are among the most dangerous threats to the human race, but Staffordshire University scientists are fighting back with ground-breaking research.*

**T**he phrase 'small but deadly' could have been invented for the mosquito. The insects may be tiny but they kill more people than any other creature – more than one million a year.

They transmit fatal diseases, most notably malaria from which a child is said to die every 30 seconds. Latest World Health Organisation figures report 219 million cases of malaria last year and 435,000 deaths.

As mosquitoes also carry yellow fever, West Nile virus, dengue fever, encephalitis and Zika, research into how to stop them is vital. It's a fight in which scientists at Staffordshire University are playing a small but important part.

Their research involves such topics as which smells

mosquitoes like best and how to make them glow in the dark.

Biology lecturer Dr Richard Halfpenny lays out the battle: "Mosquitoes are responsible for more human death and suffering than any other organism on the planet. That's an on-going challenge, despite all our advances. As fast as we develop a means of controlling mosquitos, they evolve past our interventions.

*Continued over the page*

Shutterstock

## 7 THINGS YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT MOSQUITOES

They've been around for 210 million years. Alexander the Great is believed to have died from malaria in 323 BC. The word mosquito originated in the 16th century and is Spanish for 'little fly'.

Only female mosquitoes bite, as they need the protein in blood to help their eggs develop. Even then, few of the 3,000 mosquito species specialise in biting humans.

They don't bite as such, they pierce our skin with a long serrated proboscis. One tube draws blood while a second pumps in saliva. It's the saliva most people have minor allergic reactions to.



Mosquitoes in a laboratory net (above) and Dr Richard Halfpenny (below)



“We can't take a step back. It's a constant arms race and the more we know about mosquitoes, the more we can exploit that in the fight to control them.”

For Dr Halfpenny keeping data on mosquitoes begins at a basic, local level in the back garden of his Stoke-on-Trent home. Each year he records the first laying of eggs of the species called *Culex torrentium* – and then painstakingly counts every one.

He smiles: “It's incredibly glamorous! I put out a bucket filled with rain water and a handful of hay. For the last six years I've seen the first eggs laid in the second week of May. In July they laid 15,000 eggs, which I picked up with blotting paper and counted by hand.”

Dr Halfpenny graduated in biology from Staffordshire University and returned for a PhD on

mosquito ecology and behaviour, continuing a field of research begun by department head Dr Angela Priestman.

He tackled how to discriminate between two types of mosquitoes - *Culex torrentium* and *Culex pipiens*, which look identical but behave differently. He developed a computerised technique to analyse the shapes made from the intersections of the veins on their wings.

He explains: “We adapted a piece of computer code and got it down to 84 per cent accuracy in identifying which species was which. It's all about gathering intelligence on the mosquito's genetic make-up.”

An on-going question is: Why do some people get bitten more than others? Suggestions have included blood type, having fair skin, being sweaty and eating garlic, but it's more likely to be variations in our skin microbiota. That's the one million bacteria living in each square cm of our skin, which give off a smell. Certain odour combinations are more attractive to mosquitoes than others.

Part of Dr Halfpenny's research is into which of the chemicals in these compounds are the most attractive.

He explains: “If we can make the most attractive smell, we can draw large numbers of mosquitoes into traps where they eat something that's toxic to them. It could be done quite cheaply, such as spraying a piece of paper with a certain chemical and pasting it to a telegraph pole.

“We have been using a new piece of equipment for our lab, an electroantennographic detector. We put a mosquito's antennae into an electrical circuit along with an incredibly fine voltage detector. We run a chemical compound through a gas chromatography machine to separate all the components, then we see if the sensitive antennae react to the smell.

“We've developed this capability and it will form the basis of work going forward. It's powerful stuff and really exciting. We presented it at Ento 19, the biggest conference for this sort of work at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine,

Females can drink up to three times their weight in blood. They lay up to 300 eggs at a time, in clusters called rafts on the surface of stagnant water. They hatch into larvae called wigglers.

Mosquitoes have six legs and fly quite slowly at speeds of around 1.5 mph. Females can beat their wings up to 500 times a second, creating a noise which males use to find a mate.

You can find mosquitoes everywhere in the world apart from Antarctica. They are cold-blooded and prefer temperatures of over 26 degrees. At less than 10 degrees they die off or sometimes hibernate.

Males only live for around 10 days while females usually live for eight weeks, laying eggs every three days.

and it was very well received.” Genetically modifying the mosquito, by injecting them with self-limiting DNA, is another Staffordshire area of research.

Dr Halfpenny says: “One of my undergraduates is doing a project on demonstrating the capability to genetically modify mosquitoes, which is new for our lab.

“We can inject DNA material so the mosquito produces a green fluorescent protein and glows in the dark. It’s a proof of concept – if we can make them glow green, we can inject them with DNA which limits their life.”

Should we be worried about mosquitoes in the UK?

Dr Halfpenny says: “We have 34 different species of mosquitoes in Britain. They bite but don’t spread disease, as a virus or parasite has to live long enough for the mosquito to pass on. We don’t have massive numbers of mosquitoes here that come into contact with people. We have good windows and sleep upstairs, above where they like to fly, and we don’t sleep next to livestock.

“Mosquitoes are mostly a problem in tropical areas but they are moving further north. *Aedes albopictus*, also known as the tiger mosquito, transmits diseases like yellow fever and the Zika virus and has been seen in Kent in the last couple of years. The stowaways are transported in lorries and caravans.

“They need a critical mass to maintain a foothold and they don’t have that yet. But we have to be vigilant – they can probably tolerate mild winters in the South East and it’s only going to get worse as global warming continues.”

Dr Halfpenny concludes: “My colleagues internationally, with whom we collaborate, put their lives at risk to carry out their vital research.

“I can study mosquitoes without fear and my aim is to enthuse students to carry on the research into one of the biggest challenges we face as humans.”



*Culex* larvae (above) and eggs (below)



## On Her Majesty's Service

The Biological Science department is recognised by the Ministry of Defence as a centre of excellence and helps identify mosquitoes, spiders, bugs and other insects from anywhere around the world. The work is carried out by a small group called ASIST – the Advisory and Specimen and Identification Service Team. Income generated is used to support research on insects.

Dr Halfpenny says: “They can send us dead beasties from anywhere – we’ve had mosquitoes, spiders, beetles and scorpions. We then have either 72 hours or, if it’s an emergency, 24 hours to identify it and give advice.

“They arrive in all manner of receptacles – sometimes they have to be creative. They’ve sent mosquitoes in disposable contact lens cases or in old film canisters. Sometimes they’re wrapped in toilet roll.

“We can then tell them it’s harmless or that it can pose a risk to humans. For example, if a species of mosquito means there’s a high risk of malaria, then protect your soldiers with bed nets and clothes impregnated with insecticide and get rid of standing water. We were involved in helping the MoD respond to a shipment containing a potentially invasive wood-boring beetle.

“We also provide training for Army, Navy and Air Force environmental health officers. These are the people responsible for the wellbeing of people serving on bases around the world, as well as assisting with disaster relief and humanitarian aid projects.”



# LIFE THROUGH HIS

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# LENS

*At just 21, Benjamin Wareing's portfolio already includes photographs of royal weddings and political conferences that have been used countless times in the national and international press. He talks to Horizon magazine about how he juggles his growing career in such a fast-paced industry with his full-time studies.*

**T**rying to keep on top of the demands of a degree while holding down a job can be challenging at the best of times. But when that job involves rushing around the country, photographing famous faces and seeing your work appear in national newspapers it sounds nigh on impossible.

But for full-time Staffordshire University student Benjamin Wareing that's exactly what life looks like. Now in his third year of a BA in Journalism, he was first drawn into the industry five years ago when he started working with a local news website before being approached by an international network. "Luckily with my course, our hours are fairly flexible and easy to work with, so being able to dash out to photograph an event on the other side of the country has been do-able," he explains. "If you have the drive and commitment to make something work, you can make it work – though you may have to compromise with a shorter night's sleep and increasing your workload."

As a master of forward-planning, Benjamin is able to work out what events are worth photographing many months ahead. However, due to its very nature, news is unpredictable so he often has to react at the last minute. "For the last minute events, I weigh up the pros and cons of potentially missing certain lectures or classes, but always ensure to chase up work with lecturers and course mates."

Benjamin developed a love of photography

while still at school – as someone who was already into the arts, it provided another outlet for his creativity. "I started photography after being told about it by my GCSE art teacher. At that time I was heavily into creative arts and photography was a new and different medium for me. Using a basic point-and-shoot camera, I taught myself the basics by snapping swans at the local lake and attempting street photography.



Benjamin Wareing

"I remember being granted access to the Conservative Party Conference in 2016, being able to photograph then-Prime Minister Theresa May's first major conference speech. At the time I was the youngest press photographer in history to photograph the Prime Minister in a professional capacity. I still had that point-and-shoot camera, and I felt insanely out of my depth, but being able to do that changed my life and direction going forward. I've learned what feels like decades' worth of tips and tricks and made some incredible connections."

His first big break came when he was approached to photograph the first ever Mayoral Campaign for the newly created position in Greater Manchester in 2017. "Following devolved powers being granted by Westminster, the Manchester region was set to receive its first ever metro mayor," explains Benjamin. "It was a monumental and historic moment and one of the most powerful roles

*Continued over the page*



outside of the Westminster bubble, so to be approached by a leading candidate to photograph their campaign was mind-blowing and humbling.

“For about half a year I followed the campaign, documenting every hustings, debate and event – including a marathon – and finishing up at the results read-out. It was my first seriously-paid role despite juggling full-time studies at college. I had to sacrifice a lot of time from college, missing classes and some exams, but that sacrifice allowed me to reach where I’m at today. So for me, it was worth it in the end, despite the headache and confusion at first.”

In the fast-paced world of news, the role of a press photographer differs enormously from that of wedding or portrait photography and requires a very particular set of skills – one of those being patience to wait for hours for the perfect shot. “Press photography is worlds apart from other types of photography. I’ve dabbled in weddings, and done a fair few portraits, and the pace of news is unlike anything else. With press photography you have a strange mix of waiting around for hours on end – the longest I’ve waited, stood in the same

## ‘IF YOU HAVE THE COMMITMENT TO MAKE SOMETHING WORK, YOU CAN MAKE IT WORK’

place, is 30 hours – often for a few seconds window of shooting.

“The build-up can be stressful and long, especially in the run-up to a once-in-a-lifetime event such as a royal wedding, where it pays to triple-check your equipment and plan out your itinerary, though most laid out plans change or don’t actually happen once you’re ‘on the ground’.

“Then after the event you’ll have a hard rush to publish between 10-20 high quality photos, edited, captioned and with full metadata, as quickly as possible. I aim to ‘wire out’ my photographs within half an hour of taking them with an absolute deadline of 7.30pm that day. Any later and I miss the news cut-off and can only wire out as editorial or archive footage.

“Being a press photographer requires patience in bucket-loads, flexibility in your hours and the commitment to travel across the country at the last minute or with

little-to-no sleep. You need confidence in your skills and need to learn how to hold your nerve in front of the world’s most powerful or famous people; and a deep and genuine excitement for the prospect of documenting history.”

But just as the industry is ever changing, Benjamin has witnessed lots of changes to how events are covered – most notably with the birth of social media.

“Lots of things have changed within photography over the last few years and even today the landscape feels like it’s flying ahead and in different pathways at breakneck speed. Ten years ago, Facebook and Twitter were in their infancy and wholly detached from the world of photography. Today, if you’re not utilising social media, you’re not maximising your potential.

“The benefits of social media for photography are indescribable,” he adds. “For me, it opened up my work to thousands of new viewers in more than 150



countries. It also allows for instant feedback – what your photo did well and where you could do better. In the past, it could take days or weeks to receive similar feedback, audience and opportunity.”

So with the cameras in our phones becoming more and more high tech, does that mean anyone can be a photographer? “Cameras in phones are an incredible step forward in making photography accessible to more people. While phone cameras will never match professional DSLRs, it can act as a gateway into interest in a more professional form of photography.”

It’s easy to see why Benjamin is so passionate about this industry – after all, it’s a job that throws up a new challenge each and every day. “There’s a whole bunch of things I absolutely love about what I do – I love meeting so many new people from literally all walks of life and I’ve made some great friends from across America, Australia, South Africa and the Middle East and they all offer advice, support and perspective. I’ve also met so many incredible and kind photographers who have given their time, effort and compassion to support me.

“Most of all, I just love the pace of it,”

he enthuses. “It’s a high stress, high reward job that sends the adrenaline skyrocketing during the event and soaring when you’re editing and you spot that one golden frame. The rush is unparalleled.”

What would be his dream assignment? “This is something I’ve thought long and hard about for the past two years or so while studying at Staffordshire University, but my answer is still as broad as it was back then – I’d just love to work with the Press Association photographing anything! Their photographers are assigned a wide range of events and tasks to snap, from exclusives with the royal family and leading politicians to wonderful photographic assignments embedded with oppressed communities. I’d love to wake up every day, even if it’s at 4am, and just love every day of what I do and make my audiences stop and think.”

Benjamin’s career highlight was photographing the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, being on assignment for more than 48 hours and travelling across the country twice in two days on his own. “It will be one of those experiences that I can’t wait to tell my grandchildren in the future. It was the

hardest thing I’ve ever done, and by far the most stressful, but also the best experience of my life. I’m incredibly proud of being one of the youngest press photographers in history for the type of work I do.”

For anyone looking at starting a career in the industry, Benjamin shares this advice: “It’s a cliché but the key is to just keep going. At times it can be brutal, the rewards limited and at the beginning you’ll question why you’re doing what you’re doing. But every event, every photograph, every minute spent editing and every missed opportunity teaches you and builds you to be more well prepared and ready for what the future throws at you. Never give up, always keep moving forward, and you’ll achieve more than you ever thought possible, no matter what your dreams are. And always remember to put memory cards into your camera before big once-in-a-lifetime events, and triple-check, because you’ll really be kicking yourself when you miss those shots.

“The first few years can be hard emotionally, physically and financially – it’s just a case of persevering despite the odds.”



Honorary graduates: Deb McAndrew, Fred Hughes, Carol Shanahan (front row) with Martin Tideswell and Kevin Shanahan (back)

# Collaborating for common causes

*“Our awards ceremonies are made all the more special by the awarding of honorary degrees to inspirational people who share in the University’s values and who help us to drive up education and skills. We are delighted to be connected with people who play a crucial role in talking up our City, our region and its people and who deserve the honour for the tremendous work they do.”*

**Professor Liz Barnes CBE, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive  
Staffordshire University**

**S**taffordshire University’s honorary doctorates are an important part of the Connected University community. Moving forwards and in keeping with Staffordshire’s responsibilities as a Civic University, the University will be working collaboratively with these important influencers to affect positive change and find solutions to some of the area’s most pressing issues. Here, we ask some of the University’s honorary graduates to share their thoughts.

**DEB McANDREW, PLAYWRIGHT AND DIRECTOR OF THE CLAYBODY THEATRE.**

**What, for you, are the big issues in North Staffordshire? How can we bring about improvements in our region?**

“The single biggest issue facing our city is the same everywhere – the environment.

“By this I don’t just mean global climate change but very local issues such as air quality and contaminated land.

“I believe that the city’s heritage and experience places it in a unique position to lead the way nationally (and internationally) on tackling the environmental challenges we face.

“I also believe that this is a route to regeneration, economic prosperity and better health for all citizens.

“Tackling this issue demands joined-up thinking and imagination on the part of all the different sectors in the city.

“The local authority needs to fully engage with business leaders, environmental agencies, energy companies, creative industries, community groups, universities, and local media – to focus on a dynamic and visionary green strategy for the city.

“The arts and cultural sectors have a lot to contribute to this. We are the communicators and, if it is to succeed, this action needs framing in a coherent and exciting story that will inform and inspire people within the city and beyond.

“For instance, Claybody Theatre is recording a podcast version of my play, *Dirty Laundry*, which has environmental themes. The audio drama will be shared online in the spring and accompanied by two live-streamed discussions on the environmental challenges we face, featuring a Youth Panel and a Business Panel.”

**GARETH HIGGINS MBE, GROUP  
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF KMF  
PRECISION SHEET METAL.**

“Stoke-on-Trent is suffering from a lack of external investment. A major infrastructure project such as a large-scale music venue or exhibition centre would kick start the local economy. It also has a lack of identity, which is difficult to explain to people who don’t understand our quirkiness and pride in our city.

“We need a strong and coherent strategy for the future of the city which should aim to raise the aspirations of our young people and we should be able to meet their ambitions.

“Stoke-on-Trent has a rich industrial heritage that should not be disregarded, but we need to plan and build for the future.

“People within our city are hardworking, friendly, caring and loyal. These attributes need to be harnessed, developed and supported.”

“Think big and use the strength of the local business community and our University to push the boundaries and to talk up everything that is good about Stoke-on-Trent and invest in a game changer.

“We need to build an efficient and dynamic infrastructure for a modern-day society.

“Transport has an important part to play, alongside being ready for a digital future.

“We need to invest to attract businesses and entrepreneurs and ensure they have the opportunity to thrive and ensure that skilled and talented people want to live and work in our city, which will in turn improve housing, infrastructure, schools, hospitals and investment in our local communities.

“We need to ensure our youngsters are work ready. They must have a good well-rounded education – their communication and personal skills are equally as important as their academic skills.

“We need to ensure that our schools and colleges are well funded and have high aspirations for our youngsters.”

**CAROL SHANAHAN, CO-FOUNDER,  
SYNECTICS SOLUTIONS LIMITED AND  
CO-OWNER, PORT VALE FOOTBALL CLUB.**

“The biggest challenge we face currently is

how we approach change. Society in general, but Stoke-on-Trent in particular, had been so stable for so long that when the industrial change came with the pits and potteries closing there was no ‘Plan B’.

“Recovering from the shockwaves of the change that was forced upon the city wasn’t easy. For a long time the city lived in that hurt as it reflected and regrouped.

“There is now a sense of the ‘shoots of Spring’ beginning to appear and a new energy to the city is emerging. Some would suggest that the self-appraisal created by the City of Culture bid brought to the surface what we have and can be as opposed to what was lost, living in the past.

“To build on this we now need a clear vision, encompassing all the resource, both physical and geographical, that we have in the city and taking that into the future. It will require strong leadership to take us there whilst taking the Stoke-on-Trent community on that journey.

“There’s a lot of good in Stoke-on-Trent, oatcakes and Port Vale for a start! We are fractured, not broken and the healing process is well underway.”

**AUTHOR AND LOCAL HISTORIAN,  
FRED HUGHES.**

“There is a common feeling that the city is tied to an archaic past, with old-fashioned ideas of prosperity. Impatience for change is palpable.

“Strong leadership is one ingredient that is essential for co-operative enterprise building, particularly in local government and constituency representation in Parliament.

“Research development of new ceramics,

advocated by people like Tony Kinsella, CEO of Lucideon is exceptional in developing an industry through technology. The streaming of the Biennial at Spode is indicative of this.

“The hard truth is we have not replaced the industries we were built on – art is art – we love it. But industry is industry, it’s what created us – and it’s gone. Gone with it are the old town centre economies that were built around the workplace, but this is what many of us still cling to.

“One solution for strong leaders is to initiate investment that has created the Northern Powerhouse Project, the Midlands Engine.”

**MARTIN TIDESWELL, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF  
THE SENTINEL, STOKE-ON-TRENT LIVE,  
THE STAFFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER AND  
POST & TIMES SERIES.**

“A significant challenge we face involves education and subsequent employment opportunities.

“Right now there are very real, immediate challenges around support for children and young people here in Stoke-on-Trent.

“A number of agencies and organisations – including Staffordshire University, The Sentinel/StokeonTrentLive, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, the local NHS and charities such as The Hubb Foundation are working to provide opportunities for children and young people, to raise literacy levels and the general aspirations of youngsters here in North Staffordshire.

“We need to do more to give children life opportunities, support them with academic attainment, show them role models and empower them to reach their potential.

“At the same time, new and better-skilled job opportunities are required here in Stoke-on-Trent to stimulate the economy, boost retail and attract people to want to live and work here.”

*Future editions of Horizon magazine will feature updates on the Civic University Agreement, which Staffordshire has pledged to commit to. Find out more about this on Page 42.*

**‘PEOPLE  
WITHIN OUR  
CITY ARE  
FRIENDLY,  
CARING  
AND LOYAL,  
THESE  
ATTRIBUTES  
NEED TO BE  
HARNESSED,  
DEVELOPED  
AND  
SUPPORTED’**

# Consider it our civic duty

*Staffordshire University joins UK's leading institutions to support regional economies and tackle social challenges.*



**S**taffordshire University has reaffirmed its commitment to the city, county and region, pledging to play a leading role in improving the regional economy and enhancing quality of life in the local communities.

Staffordshire University joins 30 other institutions in committing to produce a 'Civic University Agreement' in partnership with local government and other major institutions.

The new agreement is a key recommendation in a report published by the Civic University Commission set up by the UPP Foundation and chaired by the former Head of the Civil Service, Lord Kerslake.

The report sets out how universities like Staffordshire have the capability, opportunity and responsibility to support the places where they are based, through working in partnerships to solve some of the most pressing social and economic challenges.

Staffordshire University is strongly committed to helping local businesses adapt to technological change; supporting the development of higher level skills in industry and business; improving

**'THE DEEP ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHANGES IN BRITAIN TODAY HAVE MADE THE CIVIC ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES EVEN MORE VITAL'**

the health and wellbeing of local people; improving education for school pupils and adult learners; and training and developing new civic leaders in every field of public life.

Professor Liz Barnes, Vice-Chancellor of Staffordshire University, said: "As a Connected University our role at the heart of our communities, supporting quality of life and economic growth, is fundamental to our institution and the wider region. Our civic contribution builds on the value we give to students, supporting Staffordshire to be a great place to live, work and study."

Lord Kerslake said: "The deep economic and social changes that are happening in Britain today have, alongside Brexit, made the civic role of universities even more vital to the places they are located in.

"We are now entering a new industrial revolution when it will be crucial that knowledge is accessible in as many communities as possible."

Richard Brabner, director of the UPP Foundation, said: "Universities have the ability to make a real difference to the places they are located in through reinvigorating their civic role. But this is not just a responsibility, it's also an opportunity.

"We know that many universities want to build engagement with the community around them. It's excellent news that such an impressive list of institutions has already signed up and the UPP Foundation strongly endorses the report's findings."

**The Civic University Agreement signed by 30 universities includes four key points:**

- 1** Understanding local populations and asking them what they want. ◇
- 2** Universities understanding what they are able to offer. ◇
- 3** Working with other local anchor institutions, businesses and community organisations to agree short, medium and long-term opportunities and where problems lie for communities. Linking with local authorities and other local plans, such as the local industrial strategy is particularly important. ◇
- 4** Having a clear set of shared priorities for civic engagement.

# Three Voices

*Staffordshire University is proud of its alumni and keen to talk about what they go on to achieve after completing their studies. Here, we profile three graduates who are doing great things in a variety of sectors and industries.*

# 1.

**Helen Aldous** is a tattooist who specialises in creating hyper-realistic and permanent nipple tattoos for people who have lost their own after breast cancer surgery. She also creates decorative mastectomy tattoos and works with transgender clients to ensure they feel at home in their bodies after top surgery. She graduated from Staffordshire University with a BA (Hons) Graphic Design in the early 1990s. She lives in Holmfirth, West Yorkshire. You can view examples of Helen's work at [www.3DNippleTattoos.co.uk](http://www.3DNippleTattoos.co.uk)

**What drives you every day?** I love my job because no two days are the same. It's always a challenge and keeps me on my toes. My passion is getting the word out to more people who have gone through breast cancer as to what can be done to positively change how they feel about their body after breast cancer surgery or top surgery.

**What does success mean to you?** Success means being able to use my design skills to have a positive impact on people's lives when they have been through a lot. I worked in various advertising and design roles over the years but didn't feel the work I did there necessarily had a positive impact. I feel that doing this work enables me to use my creative skills to add something positive to the world.

**What do you do to relax?** I live in the country and my main love is to get out walking in nature, whatever the weather. I've also been learning the trombone in my local brass band, a great Yorkshire tradition. I've always wanted to be able to play a musical instrument so this is my new challenge. It's hard!

**What's your career highlight?** In a past career I did design work for the European Space Agency and got to look round the space facility in The Netherlands which was amazing as I've been space obsessed since being tiny. However, that doesn't compare

with what is my highlight now. Getting emails or cards from clients saying they now feel happy with their bodies again and feel confident. That a small tattoo has changed their lives for the better. They may have got undressed in a communal changing room or in front of their partner for the first time in years. That's absolutely brilliant and makes my day.

**Who inspires you?** It may sound cheesy but it's the people I work with. The ladies who have been through breast cancer treatment. The transgender people who have had to make a huge leap to be themselves. I'm inspired by the dignity with which people have dealt with things in their lives. As a tattooist I have been greatly inspired by Vinnie Myers. He started tattooing 3D nipple tattoos for people after breast cancer in America 20 years or so ago. He first showed that nipple tattoos can and should be realistic, permanent and shouldn't fade away unlike cosmetic nipple tattoos. He improved the quality of what was available for breast cancer survivors.

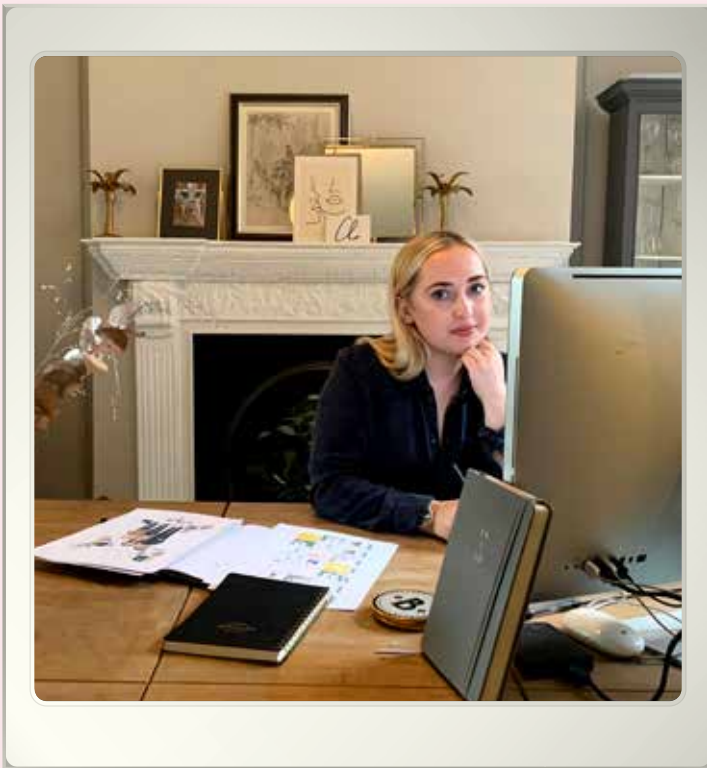
**What would you tell your 18-year-old self?** Relax and enjoy yourself a bit more. Don't be so serious and worried about what others think and have a bit more confidence. Life is fun. Relax and enjoy it.

**What advice would you give to a new graduate?**

Be flexible. Be open to all opportunities. Don't have a fixed and rigid idea of what your career will entail or where it will go. I never thought this would be the job I would be doing but I went with the flow and this is where I ended up and I love it.

**What's the biggest lesson you've learnt since leaving university?** Be yourself. When you're young you think you have to put on a front and try to be the person others want you to be. When you can find confidence to be yourself, even if that self is a little bit quirky, people will appreciate that, if it's the right fit for them. Don't try to be someone you are not.





# 2.

After graduating in 2015 with a first class honours degree in Surface Pattern and Textile Design **Alix Webb** went on to create everything from greetings cards to stationery for Hallmark and Wilko.

She is now a freelance print designer working with high street retailers and suppliers.

She also runs two small paper goods businesses called Minii Vanilla and Minii & Maxii.

**What drives you every day?** I'm lucky enough to work from home and what drives me is the flexibility and creativity my role provides.

I can pick my own projects, work for amazing clients and let 'work' work around my life.

I'm also driven by my goals of living a calm, balanced life and staying creative, happy and healthy.

**What does success mean to you?** Until recently it meant a well-paid job working for a big brand.

But that changed when I began suffering with my mental health. Anxiety and depression forced me to re-evaluate what success looks like.

Today it has a different meaning. Who I am, what I believe and my talents are not discredited by my mental health. I'm still ambitious, driven and focused.

However a successful week is about balance now – not working 60 hours and spending hours commuting.

In terms of work it's about being creative, being selective when it comes to projects and always maintaining a sense of balance and control.

**What do you do to relax?** I never used to value downtime, time off, annual leave or weekends. Until recently I was always on the go.

Now I relax by going offline, getting out in the countryside with my dog or going horse riding.

**What's your career highlight?** I've had a few 'wow' moments. My first would be the recognition I received for my Christmas ranges for Wilko from the owner, CEO and other directors.

I'd spent months designing and developing hundreds of products with the buying team that we

## 'I'M DRIVEN BY LIVING A CALM, BALANCED LIFE AND STAYING CREATIVE'

really believed would differentiate Wilko. To see the directors as happy as they were felt like all my years of studying, learning and curating my skill set had been rewarded.

My second would be travelling to Hong Kong and China to develop the collection of products I'd designed.

Flying out business class, representing the company abroad and seeing my vision as a designer come to life was a real experience and learning curve.

I met so many interesting people who I've built connections with and learnt from.

**Who inspires you?** I'd definitely say my mum. Her work ethic, relentless desire to improve her life and her children's lives and passion for her field of expertise are inspirational.

She had three children very young and brought them up on her own, with help from a supportive family, while spending six years studying for an Open University degree.

Her work ethic has definitely been passed on to me. I've learnt valuable lessons about relationship building, working hard and always striving to achieve more.

**What would you tell your 18-year-old self?** I would tell myself to think about my mental health and to get in the habit of taking downtime.

I've always worked myself way too hard to the point of burnout – only now do I see how harmful that is.

**What advice would you give to a new graduate?**

It's important to connect. You have to be personable and be able to build and maintain relationships and communicate effectively.

Learn what other people do, how things work and always ask 'why and how'.

You're new in the industry and you won't know all the answers.

Always be kind, the industry is small and you never know where you are going to meet people again.

Be honest about your experiences, what you hope to achieve and what you want to learn.

Ask for feedback – it is part and parcel of any job. It may be uncomfortable to hear but getting feedback from your peers, professionals and colleagues will help you grow.

**What's the biggest lesson you've learnt since leaving university?** Be yourself. You are your unique selling point.

**What drives you every day?** My self-confidence makes me a classic go-getter. If you believe that every day is a gift and an adventure you will live it to the full.

The thought that I can make a positive difference to a person's life is always my daily aim.

Even if I am just out shopping and at the checkout I smile, am cheerful and kind to the people around me.

You have to make the world a better place because we are only here for a blink of an eye so we need to make it count.

**What does success mean to you?** Success to me is the result of persevering for as long as possible to reach a goal, even if you only reach half way. The fact that you tried is an achievement in itself.

**What do you do to relax?** I write! This is my new downtime and even though it is a breakaway from my everyday duties it is productive.

I can completely zone out from politics and write about the way that the world works and how people can make the most of their lives.

I am currently writing my first book and hope to get it published in 2020. I already have plans for several more.

**What's your career highlight?** Being elected as a city councillor twice in successive elections is the greatest honour and affirmation from my community.

But becoming a distinguished alumna for Staffordshire has to be my career highlight. It isn't something that I ever aimed for so it feels like a gift that I earned without asking.

During my time as a student I never felt like I would be something special or top of the class. I just got on with what I was asked to do, enjoyed my course and kept moving forward towards my goal of graduating.

My only desire was to fight for those who couldn't defend themselves.

**Who inspires you?** There isn't one individual who I can attribute my aspirations to.

I take inspiration from the people that I meet and how they overcome barriers. So, one day a little piece of inspiration could come from a constituent who is 99 years old and still living independently.

I love that kind of example, you can't buy it, it is a gift.

I admire different qualities in different people. We all have something to teach and we all have plenty to learn.

**What would you tell your 18-year-old self?** You have no idea what you will achieve! You are smart enough, just sit still, listen and learn.

You don't need to go to every party, studies are more valuable than you think.

You will graduate and you can do this! Now get off your phone and pick up your pen, you have work to do.

**What advice would you give to a new graduate?**

Be bold, be original, just be you. University prepares you for work and life. You have the tools, now it is time to use them. Go out into the world with your eyes and arms open.

Take every opportunity to knock on doors because your destiny lies behind all of them.

There isn't a straight path to success. You have to navigate your way through tough challenges to reach a comfortable position. Never doubt yourself or your ability. You are an expert in your area so be armed with self confidence and take centre stage.

**What's the biggest lesson you've learnt since leaving university?** People won't always appreciate you or respect what you do and know. That doesn't matter. Keep doing what you know is right and you can't go wrong.

I have faced a lot of adversity in my working life and in public office but I continue to make big strides in the right direction and gradually what others think becomes less important to me.

As long as I am serving people to my best ability and they are getting the results that they need that's what counts.

3

Passionate about her local area and making positive changes to people's lives, **Candida Chetwynd** is Labour Councillor for the Stoke-on-Trent wards of Ford Green, Smallthorne and Norton Heights. She graduated from Staffordshire University in 2009 with a BA (Hons) Advice Studies.





## WE WANT OUR UNDERGRADUATES TO BE THE CHANGE

Staffordshire University is renowned for staying ahead of the game when it comes to technology and industry. But at the heart of our institution is our undergraduate community, so it's important we get the market offer just right.

Undergraduate marketing in recent years has focused around the strapline 'Connections can take you anywhere', a line that resonates well with our networking opportunities and digital capabilities. As time goes by and the world evolves, so does our undergraduate audience.

### OUR CHALLENGE

Looking forward to welcoming our 2021/2022 cohort, we needed to understand the wants and needs of an entirely new culture, a generation that isn't going to university because it's just 'the next step on the career ladder'. We're now looking at a generation that is venturing into higher education because they want to make a difference.

After various focus groups, design meetings and concept pieces, the marketing team developed a brand-new campaign look and feel, the lead theme simply reading: Be the Change.

Built around the unique learning experience that Staffordshire University provides all students, we now offer them more than just a degree, we offer our students the chance to make an impact on the world in their future careers.

# BE THE CHANGE

CONNECT WITH A CAREER TO CHANGE THE WORLD



## BEING THE CHANGE

Although an aspirational sell looks and feels impressive, as a Top 40 UK University (Guardian League Tables 2020), we can't just talk the talk, we need to walk the walk.

Our unique learning experience is built around the tangible offering that we are becoming renowned for, split into four key areas: innovative, professional, global vision and change-makers. With new facilities being built every year, globally regarded research being carried out, and huge growth in our international population and distance learning opportunities – we are leading by example when it comes to being the change.

## INNOVATIVE

Innovation is what we do. We drive new ideas and initiatives and are constantly adapting to new and evolving industry models.

## PROFESSIONAL

We enable students to graduate in possession of a complete professional profile based on our values, competences and attitudes, and we continue to provide opportunities to showcase and develop these attitudes.

## GLOBAL VISION

Our students discover the world without leaving the campus. We have students from all over the world, and our physical, as well as digital reach, is extending every day.

## CHANGE-MAKERS

Our attitude as a community makes us stand out from the crowd and gives us the opportunity to make a difference in the world. Plus, we make an impact with our research.

# OUR RESULT

Staffordshire University now has the brand-new look and feel we set out to create – built around the solid grounding of the tangible unique learning experience, and backed up by student input and demographical interests.

We are now offering students the chance to get more than just a degree and connections to industry, we are offering students the chance to be the change – for themselves, the world, and the future.

## A CHANGE IN YOURSELF

Prospective students are about to embark on a higher education journey like no other, and with Staffordshire University's unique learning experience, they can turn an opportunity to change into a career in the industries of the future.

## CHANGE THE WORLD

At Staffordshire University we combine work experience opportunities with connections that can take you anywhere, giving students the chance to make a difference to the global community.

## CHANGE THE FUTURE

Whatever students want to study and whatever they want to be, with us they will look beyond today and focus on making a change to the future. Whether it be renewable energies, creating masterpieces, or scientific research, they will have the strength of Staffordshire University behind them every step of the way.

## BE THE CHANGE

The success of our new undergraduate marketing rests on the prospective students realising their own potential. At Staffordshire University, our door is always open for change. Keep an eye out for the new campaign, which should be hitting the market in spring 2020, and don't forget – there are postgraduate opportunities available across all our subject areas too, so whatever level of education you're at, you have the power to be the change.



## Links between Potteries and Cornwall are celebrated

A Staffordshire University professor has been awarded a new international ceramic prize which will result in a new installation in Cornwall.

Professor Neil Brownsword is one of two recipients of the first Whitegold International Ceramic Prize for a proposal which aims

to explore the connections between the histories of St Austell and Stoke-on-Trent, intertwined through the traditions of china clay production and ceramics.

Professor Brownsword aims to reconnect audiences to the physicality of raw materials, their geological origins and cultural contexts.

Staffordshire University students earned industry recognition for a moving documentary inspired by the Nazi Occupation of the Channel Islands.

Chris Steers and Kelvin Andrews, both studying BA (Hons) Film, Television and Radio, won silver in the Best Speech Category at the Student Radio Awards.

For five years the Channel Islands became the only part of the British Isles to be occupied by the Germans during World War 2 and *Love, Art and Radio Resistance* tells the tale of two women who launched a fearless yet silent campaign to undermine the regime.

Chris, who manages student radio station OMG, explained: "The inspiration for the documentary came from my family's connection to the Channel Islands. My Great Great Uncle Harry used to be the lighthouse keeper at La Corbière on Jersey after the war and he used to park his car in a German bunker outside the keeper's cottage.

"I spoke with Kelvin about the history of the Channel Islands, in particular the Nazi Occupation, which was a time when people were not allowed to express themselves. Previously Kelvin was unaware about the Occupation, as are most people it seems, so we wanted to tell that story."

The pair's research initially focused on the use of radio as a resistance tool during the Occupation which drew them towards

## Students' powerful WW2 documentary makes waves at radio awards

two French ladies who had retired on Jersey just before the war, Lucy Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe.

Kelvin said: "Lucy and Suzanne were both Jewish and lesbian but amazingly decided to stay on Jersey during the Occupation. They were part of the Parisienne surrealist art movement during the 1920s and this intensely progressive way of looking at the world was the very antithesis of the Nazi ideal.

"They transcribed BBC radio broadcasts from a hidden set and placed disruptive messages and art in the pockets of German troops. We were tremendously inspired by their story and this drove the documentary."

The Student Radio Awards brings together the entire industry to celebrate the best in student radio across the UK. Chris also won one of the biggest accolades of the night which recognises unique radio creativity among all the entries – the Kevin Greening Award for Creativity.

*Kelvin Andrews and Chris Steers at the Student Radio Awards*



News

The latest updates from Staffordshire University



## Award-winning producer receives honorary degree

An Emmy and BAFTA award-winning producer has received Staffordshire University's highest honour.

Originally from Hartshill, Olwyn Silvester's credits include landmark documentaries with Sir David Attenborough, the highly-regarded *Trial and Error* on Channel 4, and multiple

series for the BBC, National Geographic, History, Discovery and other channels.

Olwyn, who started her broadcasting career at BBC Radio Stoke, was presented with the Award of Honorary Doctor of the University at the King's Hall in Stoke, the venue where her parents met more than 60 years ago.



## Staffs students shine at top design competition

Students from across the BA (Hons) Graphic Design and BA (Hons) Illustration courses enjoyed huge success at the Brief Cases Solutions Awards – an initiative which aims to bridge the gap between academic study and commercial reality.

Judged by a panel of industry experts, the competition challenged students to create new designs in response to the brief 'History and Future of Print'.

Illustration students Mai Duay, Molly Simpson and Rosie Woolliscroft plus Graphic Design student Becky Sidwell all won Gold awards in recognition of their work.

Meanwhile Jay Kingston, studying Illustration, won the People's Choice award for his project 'The Printed Deck', an educational and entertaining way to

highlight the rich history of playing cards. The 54 playing cards feature an intricate black and white design and are offered without colour to encourage colouring in and doodling by the user.

Mai Duay then went on to win the top prize of the night and was chosen from high-quality entries across the country as Overall Winner of the competition. Her project 'Let's explore: Woodblock' is part of a series of activity books designed to educate children about the history of print in a fun and creative way. Each book comes with extra materials including stamp blocks and ink to encourage children to get hands on with arts and crafts.

The students collected their prizes at a special ceremony at Café de Paris in London and had the opportunity to network with industry professionals.

**MORE  
AWARDS  
FOR  
STAFFS  
STARS**

## Shortlisted for 'University of the Year' honour

Staffordshire University is celebrating its highest ever position in *The Times* and *The Sunday Times Good University Guide*, as well as a shortlisting for 'University of the Year'.

The University has climbed four places from 2018 (up to 53rd), and is one of five higher education institutions to be shortlisted for the prestigious title of 'University of the Year 2020'.

Staffordshire University placed 18th for teaching quality and 31st in the guide's social inclusion rankings, which measure institutions according to percentages of students recruited from disadvantaged areas, as well as numbers of mature students and students with disabilities.

Alastair McCall, Editor of *The Sunday Times Good University Guide*, said: "Staffordshire is now established among the leading modern universities in the country, as successive rises in our rankings have propelled it to the fringes of our top 50 overall, and a highly deserved shortlisting for our University of the Year award."

## FUNDING TO HELP MICROBUSINESSES USE TECH TO GROW

Staffordshire Business School has been awarded funding to support 50 microbusinesses to engage with technology to boost their productivity.

Staffordshire Business School is part of a consortium of business schools accredited by the Small Business Charter for their expertise in supporting small businesses and entrepreneurs who will deliver the programme. The Leading to Grow Programme will be offered at no cost to microbusinesses across Staffordshire.

Businesses that employ up to nine people will be able to apply to take part in workshops around how to use existing technologies to improve efficiency and profitability.

The funding has been made available through the government's £8 million Business Basics Programme run by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and Innovate UK.

Hazel Squire, Head of Department at Staffordshire Business School, said: "As a digital University, this learning is an essential part of our offer to students and we're delighted to be able to run The Leading to Grow Programme for small businesses in our region who may not have had access to this level of training and expertise."

The government is targeting microbusinesses due to their potential and readiness to scale-up, and this is the first time that such a programme has been coordinated across the country.

To register interest email Eloise White at Staffordshire Business School on Eloise. [White@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:White@staffs.ac.uk)

**THE UK'S  
1.1M  
MICROBUSINESSES  
EMPLOY OVER  
4M PEOPLE  
AND CONTRIBUTE  
£533BN  
TO THE UK  
ECONOMY**

## University appoints contractor to build £40m Catalyst building



Staffordshire University has appointed VINCI Construction UK as the main contractor for its £40m Catalyst building – a flagship regional hub for apprenticeships and digital skills.

Located in the heart of the UK at the University's Stoke-on-Trent campus, Catalyst will act as both a physical and virtual hub, connecting employers, students and apprentices.

The project team consists of Mace as project and cost managers, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios as lead designer and architect, Max Fordham as mechanical and electrical engineers, and Momentum as structural and civil engineers. VINCI will commence construction works on the site of Staffordshire University's recently demolished

Brindley building in spring 2020. Professor Martin Jones, Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Staffordshire University, said: "We look forward to working with VINCI and our other development partners to bring Catalyst to life, offering a state-of-the-art hub that will serve our communities and help us to realise our Connected University vision."

Due to open in September 2021, Catalyst features a striking yet functional design. Supported by an angular brick frame, the flexible, open-plan space comprises a glass frontage at ground level and a distinctive design on the upper storeys. The apprenticeships and digital skills hub will feature a new library, social learning spaces and a restaurant and café.



# IT'S TIME

TO REALISE  
MY POTENTIAL

#TIMEFORPOSTGRAD

Our next Postgraduate Events are on **4 March, 20 May and 5 August 2020**, 4-7pm, Stoke-on-Trent campus.  
For more information visit [www.staffs.ac.uk/postgraduate](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/postgraduate)

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