

# Newsletter



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## Fresh ambitions

Richard A Williams, Head of College



The landscape for recruiting and selectivity has changed forever. There is intensive competition for quality students across the Russell Group and the '94 Group. In recent

weeks the College has been abuzz with potential undergraduate and postgraduate students keen to put Birmingham down as their first place UCAS nomination, in large part thanks to the sterling work done by our academic and professional admissions and marketing teams across the Schools.

Hosting these events, either Open Days or the more targeted Applicant Visit Days (AVDs), involves considerable time and effort to ensure that each and every student visitor that passes through our College doors is made to feel welcome. It takes a huge number of staff make that happen.

### Open Day

Take the two Open Days towards the end of last month. The postgraduate event, held on a weekday and amidst a torrential downpour, had a surprisingly good turnout. There was a constant flow of prospective students visiting School stands to speak with our experts and find out more about the wide portfolio of taught and research opportunities available. There were tours of the campus for those who braved the elements, as well as a series of talks ranging from careers advice, to scholarship opportunities, to housing options.

There was also a good turnout to our MSc and PhD talks, culminating in a very successful day all round for the College. Having every School deliver a talk related to their subject area no doubt helped to make this Open Day one of the best attended to date. So a big thank you to all those involved, including our current students who turned up to offer support and advice.

The Undergraduate Open Day was held the following Saturday for which over 600 people registered with an interest in applying for September 2013 entry. This was an impressive number given the short time there was to promote the day to potential applicants. Equally impressive were colleagues' commitment to the cause and their willingness to give up their Saturdays to contribute to the collective University effort on undergraduate student recruitment. Despite the rain, there was a great buzz on the day, especially in the Great Hall where most subjects across campus were represented. Colleagues in Student Recruitment are collating feedback on the way Open Days are run in the hope that we can further improve what are already proving very popular and well-managed events.

### Applicant Visit Days

Applicant Visit Days (AVDs) are now well underway across the College, and are a vitally important step in our conversion of undergraduate offer holders. From Heads of School down to student volunteers, everyone has a role to play. I thank all those who have taken part, and those who plan to do so in the remaining events throughout the year. Schools often take different approaches to the way they manage AVDs and I think there is much that Schools can learn from each other over how AVDs can be managed and to share best practice.

Showcasing the University and College in the best possible light is crucial to our conversion efforts and we all have a part to play in creating the best experience possible. If you want to get involved in a future Open Day or AVD, then contact your School admissions/marketing representative. Your support would be greatly appreciated, as we seek to inform and attract students and parents to the great things on offer here in EPS.





## Staff and awards

### New staff

#### Chemistry

- Dr Jean-Louis Duprey, Research Fellow

#### Civil Engineering

- Mr Peter Braithwaite, Senior Lecturer

#### Computer Science

- Mr Marius Bujorianu, Research Fellow

#### EECE

- Dr Maria Caserio, Research Fellow
- Mr Russell Preece, Research Associate

#### Mathematics

- Dr Andrew Treglown, Birmingham Fellow
- Dr Maria Reguera, Birmingham Fellow
- Dr Martyn Quigley, Further Mathematics Support Programme Area Coordinator for Birmingham

#### Mechanical Engineering

- Dr Shi Zhong Su, Research Fellow

#### Metallurgy and Materials

- Dr Hector Basoalto, Senior Research Fellow

#### Physics and Astronomy

- Ms Angela Romano, Research Fellow
- Mr Ben Phoenix, Research Fellow
- Ms Jacqui Whitehouse, Senior Teaching Support Administrator
- Ms Joanne Cox, Secretary to Astrophysics Group
- Ms Margaret O'Hara, Research Fellow

#### College-wide

- Mr Bryan Fryer, Operations Manager Computer Science / Chemistry (Student Experience)

### Award, grants, and appointments

Dr G A Leeke, School of Chemical Engineering, won £374,011 from the Engineering and Physical Science Research Council for the project, *EXHUME - Efficient X-sector use of Heterogeneous Materials in Manufacturing*.

Dr N Metje, School of Civil Engineering, won £240,686 from the Engineering and Physical Science Research Council for the project, *Technology Strategy Board - EPSRC Funded - Smart Leak Detection Pipes*.

Dr E Tarte, School of EECE, won £86,354 from the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory for the project, *The Spiral Peripheral Nerve Interface (SPNI): Integration and Enhancement*.

Dr D Book, School of Metallurgy and Materials, won £457,400 from the Engineering and Physical Science Research Council for the project, *Cleaning Land for Wealth - CL4W Lead University of Warwick*.

Dr S L Soo, School of Mechanical Engineering, won £107,161 from the Commission of the European Communities for the project, *Non-Framework - ECO-LASERFACT*.

Professor A Hawes, School of Computer Science, won £110,206 from Wright-Patterson for the project, *Towards Understanding Robust Individual and Collaborative Monitoring*.

Dr Y Zhao, School of Mathematics, won £180,949 from the Engineering and Physical Science Research Council for the project, *Foundation and Reweighted Algorithms for Sparsest Points of Convex Sets with Application to Data Processing*.

Professor K Bongs, School of Physics and Astronomy, won £422,306 from the Commission of the European Communities for the project, *FP7\_ITN\_QTea\_Quantum Sensor Technologies and Applications*.





## There's so much Chemistry between us!

Jon A Preece, Head of School of Chemistry



We in the School of Chemistry are a resilient bunch: in RAE2001 we were judged a top grade 5 Research School and ranked 18th nationally out of almost 50 Schools of Chemistry with 35 research active staff, and in RAE2008 we ranked 17th with only 22 research active staff. It was a remarkable achievement to maintain, indeed slightly improve our position. However it was no surprise to me, as the staff I worked with back then, and now, are not only committed and purposeful, but also work together to make sure we are much more than the sum of our parts. In the last few years we have strove to deliver not only buoyant undergraduate student numbers, but an enhanced quality of students, as well as drive up the volume of research applications and awards. Thus, this year we have our biggest year 1 cohort of students with the best A-level entry score this century, and have more than doubled our research income in the past three years. We are ranked 12th in terms of total EPSRC income and 6th on a per FTE basis compared to other Schools of Chemistry in the UK. Our recent story is quite remarkable.

The story begins with some notable research successes including EPSRC DTC in Biomedical Imaging (2008), an EPSRC Leadership Fellowship (2009), three EU projects (2008, 2009, Pikramenou and 2011) and a large award from AWM through the Science City Initiative (2008) to equip ourselves with cutting-edge state-of-the-art equipment. In the last 12 months research successes have

included Royal Society & Leverhulme personal fellowships, three of the 11 Marie-Curie fellowships awarded to the University in the last round, two EPSRC first grants, and a major contribution to an EPSRC programme grant, as well several other current EPSRC project grants, and projects with the NNL and ISIS. Bringing the story right up-to-date in the last month the School has won three more Marie Curie Research Fellowships, and ~£1m from EPSRC to buy state-of-the-art X-ray diffraction and mass spectrometry equipment, which will allow a step-change to what we do currently. EPSRC success with this particular equipment call was extremely beneficial, as the call only went out to Schools of Chemistry who had won more than £10m of EPSRC funding in the last five years. It should be noted that the University contributed a very welcome additional £0.5m to help lever these EPSRC funds.

Of course, although we are a research-led institution, the School's research renaissance is only one act in our story, and our narrative on educational issues and the wider student experience to our ~400 undergraduates and ~100 postgraduates is equally as transformative. Thus, we are proud of the fact that our students have consistently said that their overall satisfaction in the National Student Survey has been 90% or more over the last three years, and our graduates'

employability has increased dramatically as judged by the last set of national data where we leapt up the rankings in to a top 10 position. Such results do not come cheaply, and we invest a great deal of time in our students through a rigorous small group academic tutoring system in years 1 and 2. However, the School is far from complacent, and recently five of our best teaching staff have taken the groundbreaking step to move from the traditional research-based career to one in which they will drive the teaching and education agenda. This represents a major organisational and structural change for the School. However, considering the changing dynamics of both increasing student expectations and the increasingly more competitive funding environment, we are confident that this evolution will ultimately reap benefits across all of our School activities.

I hope you are getting a feeling that our story is one of change and dynamism at a great rate. This story of change (since 2008) is fuelled by University investment in staff with something like 11 academic appointments in the last five years, including – in 2012 – three University of Birmingham Research Fellows and a senior lecturer, and two more University of Birmingham Research Fellows starting in 2013.

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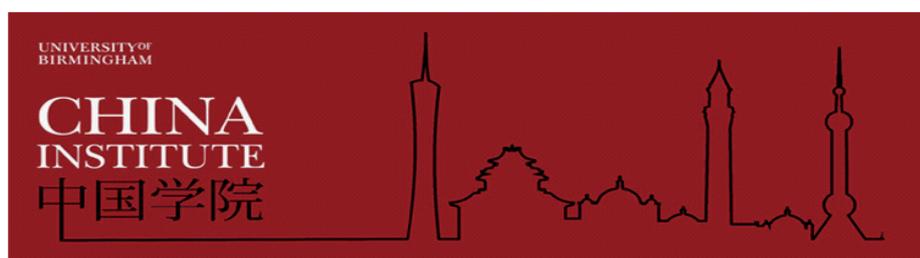


## China Institute Launch International Office

The China Institute Launch, including a Guest Lecture, *The China Automotive Industry – Today and Tomorrow*, will be held on Thursday 13 December, 4.30–7.30pm, at the Birmingham Business School.

His Excellency Mr Liu Xiaoming, the Ambassador of the Chinese Embassy of London, will attend the event and launch the China Institute together with Professor David Eastwood, Vice-Chancellor of the University.

The history of collaboration between China and the University of Birmingham dates back almost to the foundation of the University over 100 years ago and just last year the University launched its signature engagement in China the University of Birmingham Guangzhou Centre. To deepen our long-nurtured relationship, the China Institute has now



been created to reflect and facilitate the university's extensive engagement with China on our Edgbaston campus.

A series of lectures and seminars will be organised by the China Institute throughout 2012–13 the first guest lecture after the launch ceremony will be delivered by Professor Frank Zhao, the Vice President of Geely Holdings China on *The China Automotive Industry – Today and Tomorrow*.

The programme of the launch will be as follows:

- 4.30pm, arrival and tea/coffee
- 4.45–5.10pm, welcome and opening Speeches (Professor David Eastwood, Vice-Chancellor; His Excellency Mr Liu Xiaoming, the Ambassador of China, the Chinese Embassy London)
- 5.10–6.00pm, Guest lecture by Dr Frank Zhao, Vice-President of Geely Holdings China
- 6.00–7.30pm, reception and refreshments.

For further information please email Shruti Doshi at [s.doshi@bham.ac.uk](mailto:s.doshi@bham.ac.uk).

## There's so much Chemistry between us! (continued)

Jon A Preece, Head of School of Chemistry

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With these investments and changes there has been a step-change in our story, and much of what we do is collaborative across the University, whether it be teaching where we provide undergraduate and postgraduate lectures in other disciplines, collaborate with other Schools in developing innovation in teaching, or research projects with Chemical Engineering, Physics and Astronomy, Mechanical Engineering, Metallurgy and Materials, Computer Science, Schools in MDS, and Biosciences. Currently we are forging strong links with Pharmacy at both teaching and research levels, to add to our interdisciplinary

flavour, and indeed one of University of Birmingham Research Fellows is joint across Chemistry and Pharmacy. Furthermore, we continue to look to develop the impact of our science in areas as diverse as chemistry in outer space, a spin-out company developing innovative ways of making nanoscale structures on silicon with other colleagues in EPS Schools, and working with diagnostic tools manufacturer. Furthermore, we continue to expand our repertoire of industrial engagements which currently includes Dupont Teijin Films, Proctor and Gamble, BASF, AstraZeneca, Syngenta, Glysure, and Lexon.

To conclude, I leave an open invitation to all of you to contact us, if you feel that we may be able to help with our chemical expertise. Indeed feel free to pop by on a Thursday at 11am to room 209 in the Haworth building, where you will find many of us gathered for a natter and a cup of tea. As I said at the beginning, we are a resilient bunch, who know the value of working in teams and collaboration to address challenging questions. Chemistry is not only the central science, it is the essential science: though I am sure colleagues in other science disciplines might have something to say about that, but we hope to develop some more beautiful chemistry between us!



## Teaching and Quality Support

Mary Li, Operations Manager (Teaching and Quality)

As the Operations Manager for Teaching and Quality, my responsibilities include leading the team of administrative staff who support academic colleagues and students in the nine Schools.

The team which makes up the Teaching and Quality Support Function deal with a whole variety of student support needs as well as providing some administrative support to academic staff in their Schools.

The work ranges from organising induction activities and welcoming students to life on campus; ensuring the administration is dealt with as seamlessly as possible, so that they receive timetables for their lectures, lab sessions, tutorials etc; registration of modules so that their progress and marks can be recorded; dealing with various methods of assessment; and answering the numerous queries they may have about their studies, dealing with queries and questions which are not really related to their studies but about life outside of the campus, through to where the best places are to visit in Birmingham and beyond.

### Senior Team

I work closely with the four Teaching and Quality College Co-ordinators who are based in their School or cluster of Schools, and each person also has a responsibility for a cross-College remit, as seen below. The role of the College Co-ordinator is to review, identify and cascade areas of good practice where appropriate. They also provide professional advice to colleagues on University and College processes, and guidance relating to Codes of Practice.

#### **Ben Clarke: Teaching Operations College Co-ordinator**

Ben is based in the School of EECE and coordinates College-wide developments in the following areas:

- exams and assessment processes
- use of BIRMS and other IT systems

- timetabling developments
- management of coursework submission and exams processes
- attendance monitoring and Points-Based System.

#### **Laura Ewers: Quality Assurance College Co-ordinator**

Working with the Head of Quality Assurance (QA), Laura provides administrative support for the College Quality Assurance Committee and also supports QA processes across the College. Laura is based in Computer Science

#### **Anna Whitehouse: Programme and Modules College Co-ordinator**

Working with the School representatives on the College Programmes and Modules Approvals Group and the Chair of the Group (PMAG), Anna coordinates, and provides administrative advice on the module and programme specifications submitted by Schools for approval. Anna also provides administrative support to the College PMAG and liaises with staff from the Curriculum Management Team (CMT) and the University's Programme Approval Review Committee. Anna is based in Chemical Engineering

#### **Helen Vahey: International Student Support College Co-ordinator**

Based in Chemistry, Helen works with the Chair of the College International Committee, providing administrative support to the College International Committee and supporting developments in the College's international partnership agreements. Helen also provides administrative support for overseas visits taken by College staff, and international visitors.

### Outside of the College

I meet with the Operations Managers from the other four Colleges on a regular basis. These meetings provide a regular forum for raising issues and shaping developments and processes across the University, and an opportunity to collaborate and network across the Colleges and with colleagues in Corporate Services.

I also sit on a number of University groups, such as BIRMS Operations Group, Integrated Timetabling Space Management Group, PBS Practitioners Group, and Single-source Project.

### Recent Developments

We have been working on developing some E-Projects with colleagues in Computer Science and in IT Services. These are being trialled in some areas of the College:

- E-Student File is an electronic student file storage which was developed by Computer Science and is currently being piloted in Civil Engineering and EECE. We also hope that the Foundation Year student files can be trialled this year.
- SharePoint Pilot has been developed by IT Services and is a system for tracking the submission of exam question papers between question setters, module leaders and administrative staff. This is currently being trialled in the School of EECE.
- SharePoint Pilot is for Committee intranet pages and will contain committee papers, news summaries, summaries of documents for comments, actions that can be emailed to committee members, etc. This project is still being developed by IT Services so we hope to be testing this soon.

I have also been working with the International Students Advisory Service and the representatives from the other four Colleges on the University's procedure for issuing formal invitations to international visitors to support their visa applications. Full details will be available very soon.

If you are interested in finding out more about what we do and want to hear more about of the developments mentioned above, then please contact me at [m.li@bham.ac.uk](mailto:m.li@bham.ac.uk).



## Press Office

### **BP establishes initial four year £4.5million UK undergraduate scholarship fund**

The University of Birmingham is one of nine universities across the UK that has been selected by BP, one of the UK's leading graduate recruiters, to be part of its new scholarship programme for talented science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) undergraduates.

In its first year, the £450,000 BP scholarship programme will provide 90 scholarships, each worth £5,000, and will support ten scholars at each of the nine universities. As the programme is rolled out over the initial four years, it will be expanded year on year, providing a total scholarship fund of up to £4.5million.

The fund will then progress as an annual scholarship programme providing funding of up to £1.8million each year.

Read the full article here: <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/latest/2012/11/21-Nov-BP-establishes-initial-four-year-45million-UK-undergraduate-scholarship-fund.aspx>

### **Brazilian and UK scientists explore research partnerships to improve safe exploitation of oil and gas**

The safe exploitation of deep water oil heads the agenda at an international research workshop hosted by the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande de Norte (UFRN) in Natal, Brazil this week.

Oil and gas are mainstays of both the Brazilian and UK economies, providing a natural area for exchange of knowledge and expertise. Seven of the ten largest discoveries made this millennium have been made off Brazilian shores, but their location in deep water presents profound challenges for safe exploitation.

Read the full article here: <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/latest/2012/11/12Nov-Brazilian-and-UK-scientists-explore-research-partnerships-to-improve-safe-exploitation-of-oil-and-gas.aspx>

### **Scientists design new lens with dual function set to revolutionise optical devices**

Scientists at the University of Birmingham have designed a lens using metamaterials that can function as a convex or a concave lens, according to research published today (13 November 2012) in the journal Nature Communications. By fabricating gold nano-rods on the glass, this new lens can magnify or demagnify objects, just by switching the polarisation of the light source.

The lens has an aperture of 80 micrometers – roughly the size of the cross-section of human hair – and a focal length of 60 micrometers.

Read the full article here: <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/latest/2012/11/13-Nov-12-Scientists-design-new-lens-with-dual-function-set-to-revolutionise-optical-devices.aspx>

### **Murdoch Marries Blair: Anji Hunter and Adam Boulton discuss politics, the media and business**

Business leaders must learn how to use the media and influence politicians if they want to succeed, a Westminster power couple revealed.

Anji Hunter, former gate-keeper to Tony Blair, and Adam Boulton, Political Editor of Sky News, used a lecture at Birmingham Business School to lift the lid on their relationship and offer an insightful and humorous reflection on the goings-on at the very highest echelons of power.

Read the full article here: <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/latest/2012/11/16-Nov-Murdoch-Marries-Blair-Anji-Hunter-and-Adam-Boulton-discuss-politics,-the-media-and-business.aspx>

### **Hidden depths**

Anji Hunter was Tony Blair's 'office wife'. Now she's galvanising British engineering. Her lips have remained sealed about life at No 10—until now.

She's not a household name. Until she took up her current post as director of the new Queen Elizabeth Prize at the Royal Academy of Engineering, the Amazonian Hunter has been the ultimate backroom fixer. But don't be fooled by the lack of public profile. Hunter is a serious player, her husky tones and deep sexy laugh familiar to just about anyone in politics, business and the media.

Please follow this link for full article: <http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/Magazine/Interviews/article1133245.ece>

NB *The Sunday Times* is a subscription-based service.





## Green Impact Scheme—help the College go green!

College communications

The Green Impact Scheme has been launched, aiming to promote environmentally-friendly practices throughout the University. Last year, over 150 institutions across the country got involved, with over 1,000 teams taking part. “One hundred per cent of participating institutions agreed or strongly agreed that Green Impact gave them the means to engage with staff members on the sustainability agenda, so this portfolio offers an opportunity to share the routes individuals and teams have taken to make real green impacts”, cites the website.

You will likely find that you do many of the required actions already, such as turning off lights or recycling paper, but by forming a team you can make a greater impact. It doesn't involve additional work, just your commitment to continue doing what you are already doing.

To find out more, follow this link: <http://www.green-impact.org.uk>. To register your team, follow this link: <http://www.greenimpact.org.uk/birmingham/login>.

## Q&A

Dr Tim Jackson, Senior Lecturer with the School of EECE, was part of a team that secured the bronze award last year.

### How did EECE win the award?

The Green Impact Scheme comprises of a workbook of areas of activity. Progress in these areas leads to the accumulation of points which leads to getting the award. There are different workbooks for different awards e.g. bronze, silver, gold, and bonus activities too. We decided to start with the bronze level as it was our first year in the scheme. Most groups taking part were small units. We worked as a School, concentrating on the undergraduate teaching and administration in the School. This required a lot of coordination so starting at the bronze level made sense. We also entered the research labs in a separate category. We won a bronze plus award for our School-level work and a silver award for our research labs work.

### What was your role?

I was part of the group, which included Linda Baillie, Jane Hewitt, Ben Clarke, Donna Johnson, Etheline Deer and Andy Dunn. This year we hope to recruit a student rep into the group. We've been joined by Theo Arvanitis, and Dana Vasiljevic has replaced Etheline who retired earlier in the year.

### Any tips for new groups?

We found that many activities which helped us get the award were things we wanted to do anyway because they were more efficient ways of working. We divided up the tasks between the team according to our own areas of work. We maintained a shared database of all the evidence to support our case so monitoring our progress and submitting the data to the assessment team were very easy. We enjoyed working together on a new project.

## What the team did to do to get a **bronze** award...

- We have a notice board (created October 2011) dedicated to communicating environmental issues located on the main corridor leading to key offices. We highlighted the work of the programme in the Academic Staff Handbook and students' Year Handbooks given out during Induction.
- We sent emails and put up notices encouraging recycling, double-sided printing, use of draft mode in printing and as a School we switched to online submission for many course-work assignments.
- We labelled light switches with 'turn it off' notices and heating thermostats with 'turn it down' notices.
- We reviewed policies for switching off equipment not in use and for shut down of equipment in out-of-hours and holiday periods.
- We recycled unused equipment to other Schools.
- We asked for extra cycle racks to be installed and promoted their arrival throughout the School.
- Our café uses and promotes goods recommended by the Rainforest Alliance.
- We requested and received increased numbers of recycling bins for paper, cardboard, plastics and batteries.
- We promoted the Farmers' Market.
- We promoted the University's green travel initiatives by posters and emails.
- We made sure chemicals in the labs are labelled with user name and end-of-use dates and arranged disposal of unused chemicals. We aim to avoid repeat purchasing by multiple users.
- We have training protocols for lab users including energy saving e.g. efficient user of fume cupboards, use of natural lighting, and closing windows.
- We have annual maintenance programmes for relevant equipment.
- We have closed-cycle water cooling for major equipment which is serviced regularly.
- Some staff have taken an allotment at Winterbourne for growing their own vegetables.



## Top awards for Metallurgy and Materials

Alison Davenport, Reader in Corrosion Science, School of Metallurgy and Materials

The Institute of Corrosion (ICorr) announced the award of two prizes at its recent Corrosion Science Symposium at NPL. One was the Galloway Award, which was awarded to Michael Lowden (Metallurgy and Materials), for a report based on his third year research project on the Effect of Sensitisation on Atmospheric Corrosion of AlMg. His achievement is all the more remarkable since he was in competition with PhD students, but as his project supervisor, I'm not at all surprised by his success.

The other award was the TP Hoar Prize for the best paper in the Elsevier journal Corrosion Science, which was awarded for a paper on novel images of

the evolution of stress corrosion cracks from corrosion pits based on the work of Dr Tony Horner, a former PhD student in Metallurgy and Materials, and his PhD Supervisor, Dr Brian Connolly. The project was carried out in collaboration with the National Physics Laboratory (NPL).

This is a fantastic achievement as the TP Hoar award has never been won by a team from Birmingham, and it has been several years since a team from the UK has won. By a remarkable coincidence, Michael is now doing his fourth year project on a placement at Rolls Royce with Tony... certainly a winning combination!

### TP Hoar Award

The TP Hoar award is a prize for best paper published during the year in the most highly respected corrosion-related international journal (Corrosion Science has the second highest impact factor within the Metallurgy and Metallurgical Engineering category, after Acta Materialia). The TP Hoar Prize is also given to all the authors on the paper so any acknowledgements must include our co-authors from NPL.

### Galloway Award

The Galloway Award is named after Jack Galloway (1924–1966), an active member of the corrosion engineering community who was President of the British Association of Corrosion Engineers when he died. The award was established in his memory to encourage early awareness of corrosion and expertise in the field of corrosion prevention. The award, which consists of a certificate and a cheque for £250, is presented annually to an outstanding student in the field of corrosion science, technology or engineering. The winner will be invited to attend the Corrosion Science Symposium to receive the award and give a paper on their work, which will also be published in Corrosion Management.



Michael Lowden

### U21 Undergraduate Summer Schools

Applications are now invited for our 2013 Universitas 21 Undergraduate Summer Schools:

- Fudan University (Shanghai) International Summer Session
- Korea University International Summer Campus (ISC)
- University of Connecticut Social Entrepreneurship Project, in Guatemala
- University of Connecticut U21 Summer School
- Amsterdam University U21 Undergraduate Research Conference

There are bursaries available to assist students with travelling and subsistence costs. To learn about why our 2012 winners chose to apply and the benefits they took from their experiences go to the U21 intranet page to access videos, reports and photographs: <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/external/international/Universitas-21-students/U21-Summer-Schools.aspx>.

Application forms, eligibility criteria and deadline and interview dates can also be found via the above link.



## Building bridges with local community

School of Civil Engineering

The School of Civil Engineering holds numerous outreach activities throughout the year, but in early November students from CivSoc, the School's student society, got together to help a group of 7–11 year olds from local schools build a scale model suspension bridge, as part of the Newcomen Steam Conference in the Black Country Living Museum.

The conference was organised to celebrate 300 years of steam, and during the two days the children explored the history of steam development and the impact it has had on modern science and technology, as well as the issues associated with restoring and running steam engine exhibits. A number of presentations and tours were also given, including

from Richard Coackley, President of the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE).

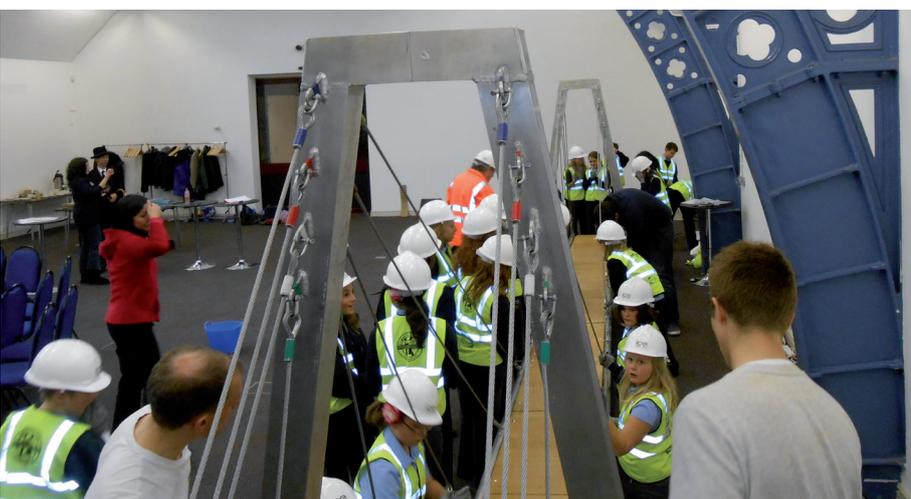
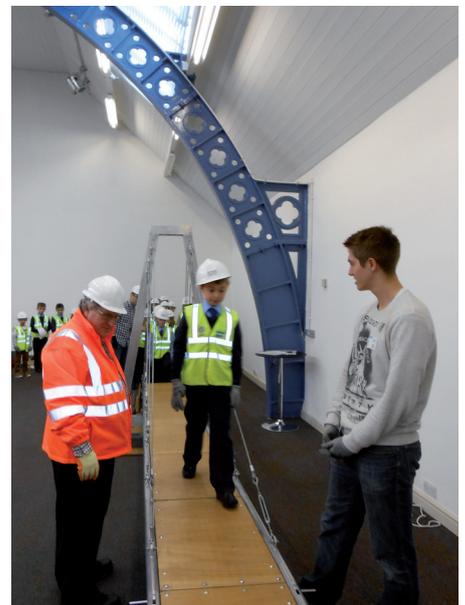
Professor Mark Sterling, Head of School of Civil Engineering, was impressed with the work ethic of his second year students. He said, "This is an excellent example of the commitment of our students—all I did was provide the contact and they arranged the rest."

Civil Engineering (MEng) students Joel Evans, Joe Solway, Ben Bennett and Alex Hall participated in the event. You can read an interview with Joel Evans, president of CivSoc, on the following page. You can read more about the conference by following this link: [www.bclm.co.uk](http://www.bclm.co.uk).

### Alumni event and fund

The School hosted an Alumni get together for the class of 1962 in late September, which included a tour of the labs and Civil Engineering department, culminating in a dinner attended by Head of School Professor Mark Sterling, and their former lecturer and subsequent Vice-Chancellor of Dundee, Professor Michael Hamlin CBE.

A number of the attendees donated to a new fund set up in their honour, the Civ Eng 1962 Class Gift, which is specifically aimed at enabling CivSoc activities such as the Newcome Steam Conference. To find out more, or to donate, please follow this link: <https://bhamalumni.org/NetCommunity/SSLPage.aspx?pid=210&frcrid=1>.





## Building bridges with local community

### School of Civil Engin

## Interview with Joel Evans, President of CivSoc

### What was your role in the conference?

The purpose of the event was to give KS2 and KS3 pupils from local schools an introduction into the world of civil engineering with a practical example of the steps that it would take to build 17m scale model cable-stayed bridge. The University of Birmingham volunteers along with volunteers from local engineering companies helped groups of 30 children to construct the bridge. However, as volunteers we tried not to tell the children what the step were, but to let them figure it out amongst themselves like real civil engineers, with the volunteers acting as sub-contractors who just did the lifting. The bridge was constructed three times throughout the day with different groups of school children.

### How did the school children benefit from the experience?

The event encouraged team building; increasing the children's confidence and enhancing their learning in a range of their main curriculum subjects. Of the children I spoke to, they told me just how much they enjoyed the activity of bridge building and that they thoroughly enjoyed the day. The ICE hope that the children will remember the time they built a scale bridge and when it comes to deciding a future career path they will choose engineering. They potentially are the next generation of engineers who will help develop out country in the future.

### What did you gain from getting involved?

The experience of building with lots of children was very tiring but rewarding to know that I made their day a lot more enjoyable. Also, I have gained satisfaction from knowing that the activity might impact on at least one child's future career path. Surprisingly I did actually learn things myself. Such as the process to construct a bridge; I witnessed how too much or too little cable tension can dramatically affect the bridges lateral movement and the height of the deck. It showed, as by the end of the day (the third time building the bridge) the bridge was certainly one of the best.

### As president of CivSoc, what does your work involve, and what does the society hope to achieve?

Being president of CivSoc is a role that requires lots of organisation but is worthwhile due to the fun and beneficial events that are staged. However, I couldn't do anything without the rest of the CivSoc committee helping and organising the various events we do. Events that CivSoc organise are mostly socials as being such a demanding course that we do need time to unwind, relax and have fun with friends and fellow students from every year group. Recently with the help of Professor Mark Sterling, CivSoc has also tried to become more of an academic society with the outreach events (such as the bridge building ICE event), site visits and more of a link with activities run by the School of Civil Engineering.

### Google PG scholarship opportunities

Google have announced two new scholarship opportunities for post-graduate students; The Google Anita Borg Memorial Scholarship, and the Google Scholarship for Students with Disabilities.

Follow the below links to learn more:

- <http://www.google.com/anitaborg/emea>
- <http://www.google.com/studentswithdisabilities-europe>

### Birmingham Popular Maths Lectures

Open to all who are interested in the study of mathematics, particularly suitable at A-level and beyond. The first lecture from Dr Chris Sangwin, *How round is your circle?* is on Wednesday 5 December at 8pm, and will be held in Lecture Room A, The Watson Building. Refreshments are served from 7.30pm.

Dr Chris Good will deliver a lecture entitled *How big is infinity?* on Wednesday 16 January 2013.

Schedule:

- 6 February 2013, *Making the Crooked Straight, Or: How to Improve Your Image*, Dr Richard Kaye
- 13 March 2013, *The Maths of Google*, Dr Richard Lissaman.



**A pioneer of innovative structural design**  
Charalampos Baniotopoulos, School of Civil Engineering

On Friday 26 October, the School of Civil Engineering hosted a pioneer of the innovative structural design, Professor Patrick Teuffel, as he delivered a lecture on his latest research into adaptive systems and smart designs, exploring the relationship between buildings and their environment.

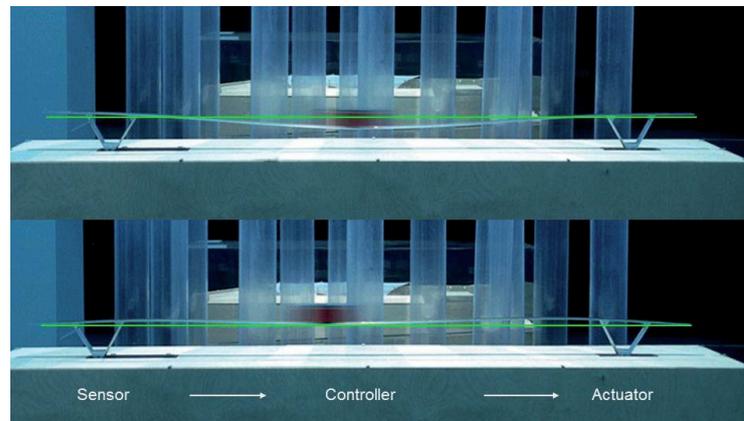
Professor Teuffel is the Chair of Innovative Structural Design, Department of the Built Environment Eindhoven University of Technology (EUT) and founder of the globally-recognised TEUFFEL ENGINEERING CONSULTANTS.

Educated as a structural engineer at the University of Stuttgart, Professor Teuffel started his career with ARUP in London. He finished his PhD about adaptive structures at the University of Stuttgart and founded his own company in Stuttgart in 2003. Since 2012 he has been Professor for Innovative Structural Design at EUT in The Netherlands, with a focus on light and adaptive structures.

The seminar, entitled *Adaptive Systems in the Built Environment*, concerned his innovative structural design activities on adaptive building systems from both a research and realisation point of view. After an introduction concerning the notions of “formfinding” and “adaptive structure”, the key issues of smart and adaptive structures in the context of innovative structural design were discussed. Critical questions for civil engineers like “why should we build smart and adaptive?”, “how can we build smart and adaptive?” and “what can we build smart and adaptive?” were tackled.

The second part of the presentation was devoted to his design activity, as he builds structures with strong structural innovation design characteristics. In particular, a plethora of utmost interesting building design projects were presented and analysed, where different design drivers, such as structural performance, energy consumption or lighting, played a key role in the process. You can find out more about his work here <http://www.patrick-teuffel.com/>.

The seminar concluded with an interesting discussion between Professor Teuffel and the audience, which was composed of research and academic staff and postgraduate students from the School.



**Captions**

{Top} Adaptive beam “Stuttgarter Träger”, photograph © ILEK, University of Stuttgart

{Bottom} Beachclub Noordwijk, photograph © Nilles

**FP7 €1.4b funding scheme**

The European Commission, within the funding scheme FP7, have €1.4 billion to spend on collaborative projects in the field of energy.

FP7 is the main way the European Commission supports research. To take part, academic staff would need to work as part of a collaborative partnership of organisations. You can choose to either coordinate a project or to enter

as a partner. Coordinating a project will usually result in a higher budget given to the University, but it also entails more preparation and work.

If you are interested in any of the calls and would like to discuss in further detail, please contact the Research Information and European Funding Support team, Xavier ([x.rodde@bham.ac.uk](mailto:x.rodde@bham.ac.uk)) or Branwen ([b.r.hide@bham.ac.uk](mailto:b.r.hide@bham.ac.uk)). For technical or administrative support please call ext. 48586.



## Looking to the stars

Chiara M. F. Mingarelli, Doctoral Researcher, School of Physics and Astronomy

I have loved science for as long as I can remember. As a child, looking up at the stars from my garden in Ottawa, Ontario, I often wondered; what could be better than studying the universe? I found the idea of black holes to be especially exciting, and decided that the best job in the world would be to study them. This sense of awe has motivated me throughout my studies and still propels me to this day. It is at the heart of the outreach activities I coordinate and participate in, it comes through in the anecdotes I tell when I teach and it can be inferred between the lines in my scientific publications, which focus on gravitational waves (GWs) from super massive black holes.

These GWs, (imagine ripples of space-time from accelerating masses) are predicted by Einstein's theory of gravity, called General Relativity. Many aspects of the theory have been exhaustively tested, but the GW prediction remains extremely challenging to verify directly. By studying the orbit of two neutron stars (super dense cores of dead stars) discovered by Hulse and Taylor (1975), Taylor and Weisberg (1982) showed that General Relativity predictions of GW emission matched observations to

within half a percent. As a result, Hulse and Taylor were both awarded the 1993 Nobel Prize, yet no one has been able to measure GWs directly. Direct measurement of gravitational radiation will open a new and otherwise inaccessible window of observation in the universe.

*“Chiara is pushing the boundaries of our understanding of the universe with her work on mapping the cosmos with gravitational waves. She is engaging the general public in science through a variety of outreach activities and with her enthusiasm for physics. I'm delighted that the Institute of Physics has recognised her broad contributions to the field.” Professor Alberto Vecchio, School of Physics and Astronomy.*

A timed array of ultra-stable pulsars, called a Pulsar Timing Array (PTA), was proposed as an elegant means of detecting GWs. Pulsars are neutron stars that have their rotational axis misaligned with their magnetic field axis, and so radio waves beamed from the poles of the neutron star appear as pulses of light as the neutron star spins, like a cosmic lighthouse. My most recent work explores the use of PTAs to detect GWs from individual Super Massive Black Hole Binaries and lays the groundwork for new and exciting physics to be extracted from them. You can read more by following this link: <http://prl.aps.org/abstract/PRL/v109/i8/e081104>.

### Outreach activities

Researching GWs has inspired me to actively pursue outreach activities with schools and the general public together with Birmingham's Gravitational Wave Outreach team (of which I am member), as well as on my own. I have been a proud STEM Ambassador since 2009, when I started doing outreach activities with the Percy Shurmer School in Ballshall Heath. After that I participated

in the BBC's Stargazing Live series, for which I was interviewed on BBC WM radio and Midlands Today (<http://www.chiaramingarelli.com/media.html>). Following this, I again joined Birmingham's GW outreach team, this time to participate in the Big Bang Fair at the NEC in March 2012.

I have given several Institute of Physics (IoP) evening lectures on how to find GWs with PTAs and have acted as a “physics busker” for many IoP events. In 2011, I was awarded an IoP School Links Scheme Grant together with Paul Fulda, Ludovico Carbone and Andreas Freise from the GW group. We have used this money to organise outreach days at the

University and visit nearby schools. So far we have had a lot of participation from local girls schools (Holy Trinity, Edgbaston High School for Girls) with encouraging results: A survey given to Holy Trinity after their outreach day last December indicated that 78% of the girls were now more likely to study physics at A-Level.

Together with Katherine Grover, Charlotte Bond and Mengyao Wang, I recently participated in Gravity Fields, a physics fair in honour of Sir Isaac Newton. There we gave demonstrations of Einstein's universe using a large piece of lycra and a heavy ball bearing to show how gravity distorts space-time. We all took turns demonstrating a crowd-pleasing game developed by our group called ‘Black Hole Pong’, which is available to download for free with many other physics games at [www.gwoptics.org](http://www.gwoptics.org). Bringing science to life for the next generation is both a joy and a necessity, and it is amazing to see children being inspired when looking to the stars.

*continues on next page*





## Looking to the stars

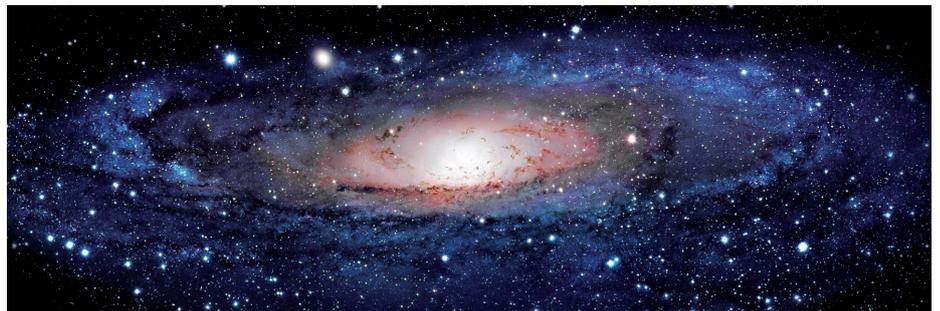
Chiara M. F. Mingarelli, Doctoral Researcher, School of Physics and Astronomy

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### Recognition

This year the IoP shortlisted me for their Very Early Career Prize for women in physics. This prize acknowledges excellence in research, leadership qualities, and a commitment to outreach. On October 17, the IoP held an event where it was announced that I was a runner-up. The quality of the research and outreach activities by the other nominees was so impressive that I very happy to be a runner-up and used the day to network with industry leaders and other researchers present.

So keep your eyes out for the GW Outreach team, as we'll be running a number of new activities this year and early in the new year with the BBC Stargazing Live 2013 team. More information can be found on my website, [www.chiaramingarelli.com](http://www.chiaramingarelli.com). If you want to get in touch to learn more or get involved, please contact me at [chiara@star.sr.bham.ac.uk](mailto:chiara@star.sr.bham.ac.uk)



### Captions

*Top: Chiara with Holy Trinity School at GW Outreach Day last December.*

*Bottom: Short-listed candidates for the Very Early Career Prize: (l-r) Clare Burke, Kate Sloyan (winner), Chiara and Hayley Smith.*

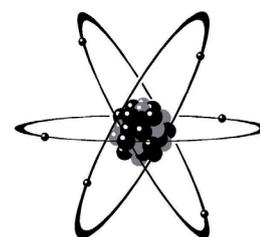
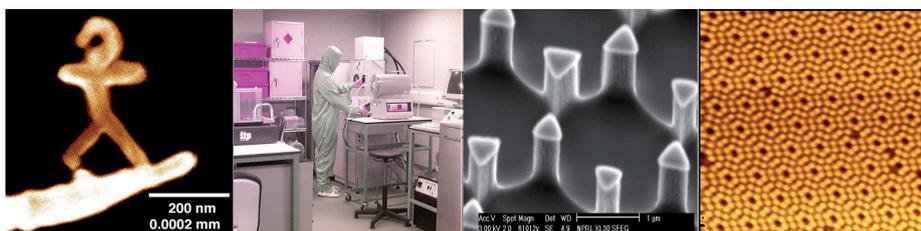
*Previous page: Chiara at the Albert Einstein Institute in Potsdam, where she recently gave a talk to the European Pulsar Timing Array collaboration about my work on an anisotropic background of gravitational waves.*



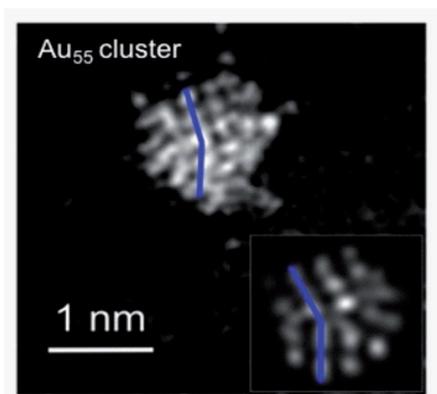


## A nanoscale twist in the tale

### Nanoscale Physics Research Laboratory



The chirality, or 'right-versus-left-handedness', of a molecule can have a critical impact on its behaviour and safety, especially in living systems. Small gold clusters are now known to be active in molecular catalysis, so the evidence that the gold-55 cluster is (or can be) chiral, published by Zhiwei Wang and Richard Palmer in *Nano Letters* (<http://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/nl303429z>), is of special interest. The discovery is (yet) another exciting result of the application of aberration-corrected STEM to size-selected clusters at the



NPRL. As with the gold-20 cluster (<http://npri.bham.ac.uk/NPRLNews/Au20.php>), the analysis of gold-55 shows one specific structure – the chiral isomer predicted by theory – manifesting itself repeatedly out of the continual flux of structures which the cluster explores over time. Slowly but relentlessly, a new paradigm of the dynamic atomic structure of nanoparticles is emerging.

For more information about NPRL activities, follow this link: <http://npri.bham.ac.uk/>.

## The European Space Agency

**Hypergravity campaign:** The European Space Agency invites proposals from teams of university students in ESA member and cooperating states for its spin your thesis programme. This enables students to carry out experiments in hypergravity using the large diameter centrifuge in the ESA's space research and technology centre in the Netherlands. The campaign will last for two weeks, with up to two teams using the equipment each week. ESA provides partial experiment costs, travel and accommodation.

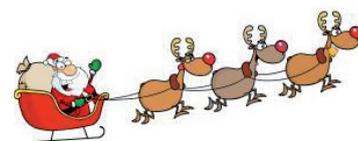
For more information, follow this link: [http://www.esa.int/SPECIALS/Education/SEMJK7YJ6H\\_0.html](http://www.esa.int/SPECIALS/Education/SEMJK7YJ6H_0.html).

Closing date: 10 December 2012

**Microgravity project:** The European Space Agency invites applications for its drop your thesis programme for student projects. This enables university students to perform experiments in microgravity, using the ZARM drop tower in Bremen, Germany, as part of a research programme or a master's or PhD thesis. The experiment will be carried out during five launches. Interested teams from ESA member and cooperating states may apply.

For more information, follow this link: [http://www.esa.int/SPECIALS/Education/SEMQQ1ERI7H\\_0.html](http://www.esa.int/SPECIALS/Education/SEMQQ1ERI7H_0.html).

Closing date: 11 February 2013





## Food premises inspection training

Jane Phillips, Teaching Fellow, School of Chemical Engineering

A two-week course was held in October for nine delegates from the Saudi Food & Drugs Authority, covering the practical aspects of inspecting food premises from 'office to office'. Titled Food Premises Inspection Training, it included a number of visits to food premises, including Allied Bakeries, Janan Meats, Highbury Poultry Farm and small catering premises in and around the University along with the kitchens supplying meals to students in the halls of residences.



Delegates were extremely satisfied with the course and particularly enjoyed the practical visits and workshops. In particular, they found that the Food Standards Agency's Safer Food Better Business pack and the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme were very useful tools in improving food hygiene standards in businesses.

Delegates received lectures and workshops on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), sampling, food complaints, pre- and post-inspection administration/action, food hygiene rating scheme and the South Wales E-coli 0157 Inquiry. To finish the course, an informal assessment took place where delegates were given a food premises inspection scenario and were

required to deliver a short presentation on what action they would take. Due to the success of the course, it is planned to be repeated next year for more delegates from the Saudi Food & Drugs Authority.

The course was delivered by the Food Safety Team, which has seven members in the School of Chemical Engineering, and included guest speakers from local authorities and industry, including: Hittess Vaghela, Luton Borough Council; Tom Whitaker, Sandwell Borough Council; and Mike Saltmarsh, Inglehurst Foods Ltd.

The team also run a Master of Science in Food Safety & Hygiene Management course, a Certificate in Higher Education in Food Safety & Food Legislation, as well as deliver the Food Control modules on the MSc Environmental Health and the Food Advance Training Partnership designed for industry, along with CPD courses for Food Inspectors.



## Nienow awarded honorary degree by Loughborough

*NB The original version of this article was first published in The Chemical Engineer, November 2012, p 67.*

ICHEME Fellow Alvin Nienow, best known for his work in fluid mixing and bioprocessing, has been awarded an honorary doctorate by Loughborough University.

Nienow began his career in 1958, after graduating from University College London (UCL) with a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering. He then spent four years in industry and teaching at West Ham College of Technology (now East London University) before returning to UCL as a lecturer in 1963. In 1968, he obtained a PhD and in 1980, a higher doctorate, a DSc.

"With no track record, no papers and no research income his appointment at UCL would be unheard of today, but clearly his professors saw potential", says Chris Rielly, head

of Loughborough's Chemical Engineering department, who formally awarded Nienow with his honorary doctorate. "They were right, as almost half a century later, he has held some 80 grants, has published over 400 refereed papers and has been cited more than 5,000 times."

Nienow stayed with UCL until 1980, when he became chair of Chemical Engineering at Birmingham. From here he became the university's Director of Biochemical Engineering in 1989 and an Emeritus Professor in 2004. He was appointed Visiting Professor at Loughborough University in 2009.

"He is highly respected as an industry consultant, running many short courses on mixing practice and helping several international chemical companies to solve their problems related to fluid mixing and bioprocessing", adds Rielly.



## Grants, awards, funds

### European Research Council Grants 2013

The European Research Council has just published the following calls:

ERC Consolidator Grant  
Deadline: 21 February 2013

You can now download the Guide for Applicants (which includes details on the application procedure, and proposal template) and the Work Programme (includes the evaluation criteria) using the links above.

Please read the guide carefully as there are some key changes to the proposal from previous years.

If you have any questions, or require further information please contact Branwen Hide ([b.r.hide@bham.ac.uk](mailto:b.r.hide@bham.ac.uk), x48642) in Research & Commercial Services, or follow this link: <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/page/ideas?callIdentifier=ERC-2013-CoG>.

### Engineering Leadership Advanced Awards

The Royal Academy of Engineering is now seeking applications for its 2013 Engineering Leadership Advanced Awards.

Each advanced award is focused upon a bursary worth £5,000 that awardees can draw down over a period of three years to fund activities which support a personal development plan. Awardees also have access to mentoring advice and guidance from a group of high flyer early career industrialists. In addition there is also the opportunity to participate in an annual training and networking event. A number of the contacts made at these events have led to permanent jobs after graduation as well as work placement opportunities.

Suitable applicants will be those who have already demonstrated outstanding aptitude with their studies in addition to a commitment to engineering. Excellent examination results on their own are not enough; the RAE expect suitable candidates to excel in other areas of endeavour including the social aspects of their undergraduate experience.

The RAE accept applications from undergraduates in the second year of a four-year MEng course (or third year of a five-year MEng course). In the past they have only been able to accept applications from UK undergraduates but thanks to generous support from Shell, this scheme is now open to undergraduates of any nationality. Undergraduates can find further details and an online application form at: [www.engineeringleadershipawards.org.uk](http://www.engineeringleadershipawards.org.uk).

### EPSRC Equipment Sharing Fund

The EPSRC Equipment Sharing scheme invites applications for funds to enable individuals and teams to use equipment at external organisations, including businesses. Up to £25,000 is available to be spent by the end of March 2013, where individual requests for support are not expected to exceed £5,000.

For more information on the scheme, please follow this (<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/ris/research-funding/index.aspx>).

Alternatively, contact Huma Mumtaz in Research and Commercial Services ([h.mumtaz@bham.ac.uk](mailto:h.mumtaz@bham.ac.uk), x45888).



## Up close and personal on an adventurous day out

Sukhjot Pooni, MSc student, School of EECE



the leg. Neither team completed this task, which taught us the importance of planning and communication.

Two team members constructed twin towers in the Crate Stack challenge, which were then ascended to dizzying heights. Each crate was about 1 foot high (30cm), so safety harnesses were required, as was the need to trust each other and work together. One team surprised themselves and us: Initially agreeing to go no higher than five crates, they ultimately reached a height of 15 crates and when it came crashing down they were left hanging in mid-air. Quite a spectacle!

members' legs as anchors to get up to the next rung of the ladder. The Giants Ladder was a fitting name for this task.

By the end of the day both groups were very close on points. The final challenge was to see who could make a water rocket travel the furthest. The winning group won by a foot, with a rocket that flew over 100m.

But ultimately this day was not about winning, but taking part, getting to know one another and learning valuable team working skills, which will be essential in our studies and future careers. It was really good fun to learn the importance of teamwork, and to overcome the challenges at the same time.

In late October, 20 students from the School of EECE went to Blackwell Court, Bromsgrove, for an annual team building event known as the MSc Adventure Day. Various challenges would follow, giving us an opportunity to get to know each other outside of the classroom.

On the day we got as close as possible to each other, but without it being intimately so! Most activities involved very close bonding with fellow team members. It wasn't academic, as in lectures, but we all learnt skills that are necessary in any work environment. Skills such as strong and effective teamwork, and the need for clear communication and advanced planning.

We were split into two teams for the four outdoor activities: Team Challenge, High All Aboard, Giants Ladder, and Crate Stack.

The Team Challenge involved a set of four small tasks. One task was to tie a figure of eight knot in a rope to which all 10 team members were attached by

High All Aboard involved four team members climbing up a 4m high pole onto a small square platform (it is probably the only time you will get to see four grown men in such a close embrace!). The highlight was when one team member climbed up the pole and did a Gangnam-style dance at the top.

Ladders were again involved in the next challenge as four team members climbed a 10m ladder, where the distance between the rungs of the ladder got progressively larger to the point where it was greater than a person's height. Teamwork was required to progress, and of course a lot of holding when using other



There are currently 40 students completing MSc's in the School of EECE, on the following programmes (each with and without industrial studies): Communications Engineering and Networks; RF Engineering; Electromagnetics and RF Sensors; Electronic and Computer Engineering; and Embedded Systems. Undergraduate and postgraduate research students go to the Priestley Centre at Coniston for three days, highlighting the School's commitment to a holistic learning experience.



## Student-led careers event

Kate Franklin, 2<sup>nd</sup> year student, School of Metallurgy and Materials

The Metallurgy and Materials building played host to the first HE STEM funded student-led careers event that the School had ever seen, in the hope of giving students a better idea of potential careers, and informing them of the next steps to maximise their potential.

Three first year students came together in May this year and developed the idea of organising an event for fellow students who were considering their job possibilities but were unsure about the career paths, related to a discipline in materials, available to them upon graduation. Kate Franklin, Tom Rolls and Dana Brintz collaborated with Careers Network team to create a proposal, and put on the event. All of which was a useful learning experience in itself. For example, many key decisions needed to be made, including the aims and objectives, and deciding the format of the event, and we took on responsibility for creating a list of relevant companies, liaising with academic staff to acquire industry contacts, working with

DARO to obtain information about the School's alumni, and sending out invitations to over 50 employers and alumni. Most of the work was undertaken during the summer vacation period and despite having the challenge of being away from campus the organisation of the event went relatively smoothly as many people were keen to take part.

On 11 October, we ran the event, attracting around 80 undergraduate and postgraduate students from across the School. The afternoon saw presentations from seven alumni, including Jaguar Land Rover, Augusta Westland, GOM UK Ltd, AMEC, TWI and Dyson. Each presentation gave students information about how Birmingham alumni had developed their careers since leaving the University, and a description of the varied graduate job roles they had worked in. There were some useful tips about how to get the most out of our time at University and prepare for employment.

The presentations were followed by a speed networking session which was attended by six employers, including Rolls Royce, Lloyd's Register, Timet, AETC Ltd, PCC Airfoils, and TWI. This allowed an opportunity to provide information about placements, internships and graduate jobs and gave students a chance to mingle with possible contacts in a relaxed manner.

Melissa Riley, Senior Project Leader from Technology Group TWI Ltd, said; "I really enjoyed the event and meeting with so many students. I hope some of them will contact TWI with regards to employment opportunities."

It proved to be a very successful event which received positive feedback from all involved. It is hoped that a similar event will go ahead next year.

Follow this link to watch a video of the event: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AeAGd16X2XU&feature=youtu.be>.

## Postcard campaign launched to support student experience

### Student services

There will be a student support postcard campaign running every few weeks over the end of this term and the beginning of next. The postcards will be distributed across and placed in appropriate locations in each of the Colleges (by Careers Network).

The idea is that the postcards will address key concerns that we know students have after they arrive at University. The postcards are being in collaboration with a national project called Advice to Sink in Slowly (<http://advicetosinkinslowly.net/catalogue/poster/user/term/year/month>), which produce posters designed by graduates for new students, in a trendy, informal style. The series of designs is aimed at addressing a few key student issues in an engaging, light-hearted manner. They will not provide lots of information or advice, just a single thought or idea, with some student quotes and relevant web links on the back.

The designs chosen will focus on the following issues:

- Time management (<http://advicetosinkinslowly.net/poster/write-down-everything>) 8 November
- Making friends (<http://advicetosinkinslowly.net/poster/how-to-make-friends-in-your-first-term>), 29 November
- Seeking support (<http://advicetosinkinslowly.net/poster/dont-keep-your-worries-to-yourself>), 10 January
- Eating well (<http://advicetosinkinslowly.net/poster/eat-breakfast>), 24 January
- Exploring outside of campus (<http://advicetosinkinslowly.net/poster/look-beyond-your-environment>), 7 February.

Email Karen Blanch, Student Experience Project Officer, to find out more, at [k.s.blanch@bham.ac.uk](mailto:k.s.blanch@bham.ac.uk).



Have you met...?

# Jodie Crompton

## Teaching Support Administrator

*School of Physics and Astronomy*

### **Describe a typical day in your life...**

Dealing with all the admin for the 600 students and ensuring they are all happy bunnies. Like a lot of jobs at UoB, summer and term-time don't have a lot in common—at times this office is packed with anxious querying students, but that's hard to picture at the moment when I haven't seen a student for ages! I'm moving to Metallurgy and Materials in a couple of weeks time, which I'm really looking forward to, although you couldn't ask for a nicer School than Physics and Astronomy.

### **What is the hardest part of your job?**

The exam period can be quite stressful even though it usually goes off without a hitch. Trying to cram all those student names into my brain is tricky; I can only do it by emptying out other things, usually my passwords and logons and other useful information.

### **How has the University changed during your time here?**

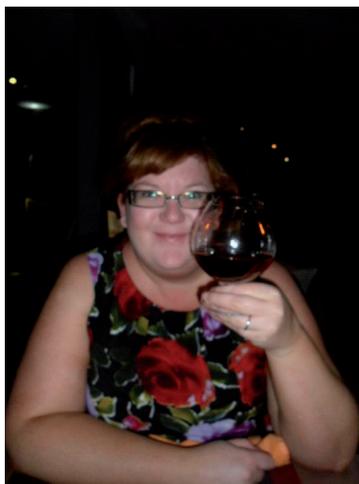
I started BC (Before Colleges) so that has been the major change. Fundamentally though the University remains the same; lots of clever people teaching lots of clever students on a very pretty campus. I started working on the switchboard in the holidays when I studied here, and more recently I worked at Priorsfield which is now the setting for the EISU. I'd never work anywhere but UoB if I could help it.

### **If you had five minutes with the Head of College, what would you say?**

Is this a trick question?! I'd say that maintaining standards involves maintaining staff levels. Then I'd comment on how nice his tie was.

### **How do you relax after a hard day at the office?**

I read a lot, some decent stuff, some slightly rubbish aimed at teenagers post-apocalyptic future fiction, which I'm trying to limit. I'm well-known to the campus Waterstones!



I just signed up for a creative writing class which I'm really looking forward to.

### **What is your greatest fear?**

The sea. I know I should say failure or something more profound, but really it's just awful sea-creatures. Giant squid, sharks, huge octopus, sea snakes, jellyfish and piranhas. The sea is just teeming with stuff that'll kill you. I'll never be a deep sea diver. On the first

day of my honeymoon I saw a fisherman on the beach pull a stingray from the surf and from that moment the gorgeous turquoise Caribbean Sea was lost to me.

### **What is your greatest extravagance?**

My husband is horrified by how much I spend on perfume, but I love it; Ormonde Jayne, Christopher Brosius, little nichy American companies. This payday, I'm wondering if I can hide away some Serge Lutens rose perfume.

### **On what occasion do you lie?**

When the doctor asks how much wine I drink, but I expect all doctors are aware of this and generally double any answer given.

### **What is your greatest regret?**

I'd love to have a dog, but feel I can't as we both work full time. I'd happily settle for a cat but in our house I've been told it's not an appropriate substitution!

### **When and where were you happiest?**

I'm generally happy every day. I have a lovely husband, an amazing family and great friends, a job I enjoy and enough money to pay for a stack of paperbacks and a good bottle of wine. Maybe in the future I'll look back and say this was the happiest time of my life, but I'm hoping to maintain it for a good while yet.

*If you wish to feature in a Have you met...?, please contact [I.singleton@bham.ac.uk](mailto:I.singleton@bham.ac.uk).*



## Bits and bobs

### Meet UEB

Have you ever wanted to ask UEB a particular question? Do you want to learn more about the role of UEB? Do you want to share your views about the University with UEB?

Meet UEB is your opportunity to do this. Sign up now as places are limited and are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Tuesday 11 December, 12–1.30pm, Avon coffee lounge, University Centre.

12.00noon: Arrival, registration and buffet lunch

12.30pm: Meet UEB round-table event

1.30pm: Close

#### Who can attend?

Meet UEB is open to all University staff, and colleagues from across Colleges and Professional Services are encouraged to attend. However as places are limited we do request that you register in advance.

#### How to register?

To register your attendance please contact [internalcomms@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:internalcomms@contacts.bham.ac.uk). If you would like to meet a particular UEB member, know the topics you want to discuss, or have any specific questions you want to ask please let us know: we will do our best to seat you at the appropriate table.

#### Want to learn more about UEB before you register?

If you would like to see who is a member of UEB or to hear UEB members talk about themselves and their role, visit the Meet UEB section of the University intranet: <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/resources/Meet-UEB/Meet-UEB.aspx>.

### College Christmas Social

The College Christmas Social will be held on Tuesday 11 December, 5–8pm, in the Barber Institute. Please confirm if you are able to attend by contacting [l.singleton@bham.ac.uk](mailto:l.singleton@bham.ac.uk).

Drinks and snacks will be provided, as well as 20% off at the Barber gift shop—ideal for some last minute Christmas shopping!

### EPS Curriculum Roadshow

Karen O'Brien, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, spoke at the EPS Curriculum Roadshow in late November, discussing processes and emerging priorities and looking to explore new ways for students and staff to engage with the curriculum. The presentation can be downloaded here: <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/eps/communications/presentations.aspx>.



### Caption competition

Can you think of a *print-friendly* caption to accompany this photo of Professors Mark Sterling and Andy Schofield at the recent Open Day?

If so, why not submit to [l.singleton@bham.ac.uk](mailto:l.singleton@bham.ac.uk). The best will be printed in the next issue.