

# BRUNEL MEDICAL SCHOOL

**CREATING DOCTORS FOR A  
CHANGING WORLD**



**BRUNEL MEDICAL SCHOOL LAUNCHES ON CAMPUS**

**MEET YOUR 2021 ALUMNI OF THE YEAR**

**THE LIFE AND TIMES OF IZZY THE DINOSAUR**

**IN CONVERSATION WITH OUR ALUMNI**

**CONNECTING WITH OUR GLOBAL COMMUNITY**

# WELCOME

## FROM OUR VICE CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT



I am delighted to welcome you to your 2021 edition of Link Magazine: a celebration of your many successes and achievements and a collection of Brunel news stories, updates, and research developments from the past year.

As we continue to navigate our way through the pandemic and pull together as a community, I am immensely proud of all that our alumni have achieved during this time and grateful for all the support you have provided. I am sure too that you would share my pride in the way the university has risen to the many challenges the pandemic has brought with colleagues going beyond the extra mile to support our students, continue with their research and support the community and students, responding magnificently to coping with new ways of learning and interacting with one another - a very different university experience from the one they imagined.

The network of support from our worldwide alumni community continues to go from strength to strength. You have helped to provide much-needed financial support for exceptional students, regardless of their background, and supported our students facing financial hardship during these challenging times. Your support through our annual telephone campaign and donations throughout the year to fund our scholarships also continue to transform the lives of young people and enrich our Brunel campus community. The outreach work and scholarships we offer continue to be life-changing because of you.

You have also generously given your time by leading our international alumni associations and networks, organising reunions, providing digital content, speaking at events, and offering careers advice and mentoring to our students. It is vital for our students, and indeed your fellow alumni, to have role models who have also been on the Brunel journey to look up to and be inspired by. Your passion, commitment and enthusiasm mean a great deal, and we are lucky to have you as part of our community.

Please don't forget that we are also here to help you; the support Brunel offers doesn't end at graduation, it's an ongoing journey together, and we are always keen to hear about your career and achievements.

This will be the last time I write to you as Vice-Chancellor for the Alumni Link Magazine as my term of office is coming to an end and the University Council is currently seeking my successor. Leading Brunel over the past almost 10 years has been a great privilege and pleasure and I shall look back on my time here, and those many times we have engaged through alumni events etc., with joy and affection. I wish you all every success in the future.

With my very best wishes for the year ahead.

**Professor Julia Buckingham CBE**  
Vice Chancellor and President



## FROM OUR DEVELOPMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS TEAM

As always, 2021 has seen our alumni community shine. From your many successes to your generosity and support with volunteering and fundraising, you have been the driving force for another wonderful year. We've loved chatting with you at online reunions, celebrating your achievements at our Alumni Awards and connecting with you at our networking events.

Thank you for making Brunel a better place for your fellow alumni, our students, and wider community.

Here's to a kind, healthy and productive year ahead.

## Contents

- 3 Brunel Medical School
- 4 - 5 Alumni of the Year Awards 2021
- 6 - 9 Alumni news and success highlights
- 10 - 11 Alumni spotlight: 'Making Mum Proud' with Sahil Vohra
- 12 - 13 International associations
- 14 - 15 Archive spotlight: Izzy the Dinosaur
- 16 - 17 Research news highlights
- 18 - 19 Brunel news highlights
- 20 - 22 Alumni spotlight: In conversation with Ellie Prohan
- 23 Brunel in print
- 24 - 25 Brunelians around the globe
- 26 Brunel love stories
- 27 Our top picks

# BRUNEL MEDICAL SCHOOL LAUNCHES ON CAMPUS

## BRUNEL MEDICAL SCHOOL (BMS), DESIGNED FROM THE GROUND UP, WILL SOON BE OPENING ITS DOORS TO ITS FIRST COHORT OF STUDENTS, CREATING DOCTORS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY AND A CHANGING WORLD.

With the first intake of students planned for September 2022, the Medical School aims to become a leader in the delivery of undergraduate and postgraduate clinical and non-clinical programmes. Our goal is to achieve the highest standards in research that will make an impact on health-related challenges for the benefit of local and global communities.



"By educating our students using modern, evidence-based approaches, we will ensure they graduate well prepared to serve their patients and communities in a rapidly changing healthcare environment."

**Professor Naomi Low-Beer,**  
Brunel Medical School Founding Dean

Using evidence-based pedagogical approaches, and focusing on the emerging directions of medicine, Brunel will create doctors to practise medicine in the modern world. Medicine is changing at an incredible pace, and the COVID-19 pandemic not only illustrates how critical it is for our society, but also how much it needs to change to be humane, effective, patient-centred and technology-aware.

## Team-based learning (TBL)

The extensive use of Team-based Learning (TBL) will parallel the way health professionals work in teams to best manage patients, and is a highly engaging flipped classroom approach to learning. Working with their peers, taught by leading academics, and guided by content experts, students will learn to source, analyse and apply information to real-world clinical problems, developing their communication skills, leadership and lifelong learning - key attributes of the modern doctor.

## New technologies to support learning

Brunel will focus on new technologies that drive knowledge, patient care and patient interactions, such as genomics and bio-informatics, to determine the genetic and environmental contributions of disease. Students will use point of care ultrasound to understand the relationships between physiology and anatomy, and the early practice of telemedicine, augmented reality, and virtual reality to enhance communications with peers, colleagues and patients, at a safe distance.

## Person-centred care

Brunel will place a strong emphasis on the values and behaviours that drive person-centred care, such as kindness, empathy and respect. The curriculum will enable students to develop these qualities in our brand-new simulation facility with the involvement of simulated patients and patient educators, developing the professional skills in preparation for clinical learning with patients on placements and in the community.

## A focus on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

Our person-centred care philosophy is underpinned by our EDI principles, embedded across all aspects of the School, and enabling our students to become equipped with the knowledge, skills and behaviours to treat all patients equitably and non-judgementally. Our community partnership programme will ensure that those with lived experience of health and social care have a voice in the development of our curriculum and the selection of our students.

## A medical school for the local community

We envisage engagement of the Medical School with the local community as a two-way process, working with local community representatives and through the contribution of staff and students to the local borough in a meaningful sustainable way, through health promotion initiatives, charity work and career development support for young people.

## State-of-the-art facilities

Our students will benefit from brand-new facilities specifically designed for the best teaching experience, including a team-based learning studio, anatomy suite, two large clinical skills laboratories, biomedical science and biomechanics laboratories, and an 18-room clinical communications suite for video-linked interactions and communications with patients.

## Contributors

Development and Alumni Relations Office  
Media Relations Office

Brunel University London Archive



# INTRODUCING YOUR 2021 ALUMNI OF THE YEAR TRIO

**THE BRUNEL ALUMNI OF THE YEAR AWARDS IS AN ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF THE UNIVERSITY'S GLOBAL COMMUNITY, AND SEEKS TO RECOGNISE NOT ONLY OUTSTANDING PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS, BUT ALSO COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY AND ONGOING CONTRIBUTION TO BRUNEL THROUGH VOLUNTEERING AND ADVOCACY.**

For 2021, we were delighted to expand our awards with three new categories, and with 77 nominations, 18 finalists and nearly 1,000 votes from our alumni community, it was certainly a bumper year. Here's who you voted as your trio of winners...



### UK Alumnus of the Year

**Thomas Fudge  
(MSc Sustainability, Entrepreneurship  
and Design, 2016)**

As an intellectually curious person, Thomas enrolled on a PhD in Mechanical Engineering research with Brunel after completing his master's degree to continue with his dissertation idea of transforming human waste into energy - a perfect solution for energy scarce countries like Kenya. In 2017, during his PhD studies, Thomas founded WASE, an environmental engineering company developing decentralised sanitation solutions that allow waste to be changed into biogas, fertilisers, and usable water.

The company's portfolio comprises pilots in the UK and Kenya, where they are validating their technology in various set-ups and on different waste streams, demonstrating the implementation of ecological and social sustainability principles learned at Brunel. Thomas has created a team of 15 passionate people at WASE, comprising 40% of Brunel graduates. Thomas envisioned an inclusive and fair world and has created opportunities for others to follow their passion and make a significant contribution to the world.

"It is fantastic to have just been nominated by my fellow colleagues and previous Brunel alumni Faryal and Harvey. To read their nominations was recognition enough. To win was such a surprise. Everyone nominated has achieved so much in creating a better future, so it is fantastic to have been recognised by fellow alumni," said Thomas.

"It is all down to the wonderful teaching I've had at Brunel. In particular, Dr Abdul Chaudrey, Dr Ed Routledge, Dr Zahir Dehouche and Prof Rob Holdway have provided me with the knowledge and encouragement to start WASE after my masters in sustainability entrepreneurship and design. WASE also wouldn't be where we are without my fellow co-founders and Brunel alumni Llyr Anwyl and William Gambier. And our team that is made up of so many fantastic alumni."



### International Alumna of the Year

**Dr Esra AIDhaen  
(PhD without residence Management  
Studies, 2017)**

Esra works as an Assistant Professor and Executive Director of Quality Assurance at Ahlia University in her home country of Bahrain. Esra is passionate about giving back to the community and formed the alumni club for fellow PhD without Residence graduates in 2017, aiming to maintain relationships and support collaborative research across alumni, PhD researchers and supervisors.

As an academic, Esra has been awarded the Principle Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy, as well as receiving two research awards in 2020 from Emerald Publishing and ICAI. She has been active in giving back through seminars and organising conferences, and is a coordinator with the United Nations to support commitment to sustainable goals. Esra also supports applicants with high quality proposals for the PhD without Residence and is a Brunel-recognised supervisor, currently supervising three PhD researchers.

"I am very pleased to win this award, it will definitely motivate me to extend the alumni club initiative and expand its remit," said Esra on receiving her award. "Being in Bahrain, I am targeting to maintain the relationship with all alumni across the GCC region and establish a hub of research and intellectual contribution that will create an impact on the society at large."



### Recent Alumna of the Year

**Dr Pauly Otermans  
PhD Psychology, 2018)**

Dedicated to social innovation and change, Dr Pauly Otermans has been an inspiration to the Brunel community. As the former Union of Brunel Students President, Pauly is now a Lecturer and Deputy Divisional Lead in Psychology at the university.

Pauly is the founder of the Otermans Institute, an organisation whose work is dedicated to upskilling underserved and unserved learners across refugee camps in Iraq, working with governments in Afghanistan and India, assisting foundations from Palestine and Lebanon, and supporting children of war victims in Sri Lanka. Her work with Otermans Institute supported 30,000 learners during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the launch of an AI-driven virtual teacher, and was recognised by the UK Prime Minister in January 2021 with a Points of Light Award.

During the pandemic, Pauly also launched 'Lessons for Humanity' - a free learning series for essential life skills and mental wellbeing support and released her book 'Together: An anthology from the COVID-19 pandemic,' with all proceeds donated to NHS charities and frontline services. Championing the Brunel spirit, Pauly has provided work placements and volunteering opportunities with Otermans Institute for Brunel students and is an active mentor as part of the Brunel Mentoring Scheme.

"I am truly humbled by the win and would like to thank the members of the alumni community who had nominated me," said Pauly. "It is things like winning this recognition that fuels me to continue serving the wider global community through my work. Also, this recognition has led to many members of the alumni community contacting me and perhaps these new connections will help me increase the reach of my work to upskill a generation of learners globally."

Congratulations to all winners, finalists and nominees, who continue to support Brunel and inspire our community.



# ALUMNI NEWS AND SUCCESS HIGHLIGHTS

## STUDY UK ALUMNI AWARDS



**Professional Achievement Award**  
**Gizem Apak**  
Brunel University London

### BRITISH COUNCIL: STUDY UK ALUMNI AWARD SUCCESS

Gizem Apak (MA Design Strategy & Innovation, 2013) was named as the winner of the Professional Achievement Award in the 2021 British Council Study UK Alumni Awards for Turkey. Dev Aditya was also named as a finalist for India in Social Impact category and has been named as Brunel's first ever Global Finalist!

### Alumnus showcased at international video poetry festival

'Warp In The Rain' from Kristijonas Dirse (BA Film & Television Studies & Music, 2014) - in collaboration with Brunel's Colin Riley and Nick Papadimitriou - combining music, poetry and video, was selected to be screened in the 9th International Video Poetry Festival in Athens, Greece.

## ALUMNA RELEASES ARIANA MAGAZINE

Ariana Abawe (BA Journalism, 2020) recently launched her own publication - Ariana Magazine - featuring talented individuals from the Afghan community including artists, writers, actors, models, entrepreneurs and travellers.



### New police and crime commissioner

Matthew Barber (BA Politics & Philosophy, 2002) has been named as the new Police and Crime Commissioner for Oxfordshire.

### HTN Health Tech Hero award

Rand Whitmore (BSc Business & Management Marketing, 2012) won the HTN Health Tech Hero award for leading the delivery of the national COVID-19 home testing service.



## BAFTA SUCCESS FOR ALUMNUS

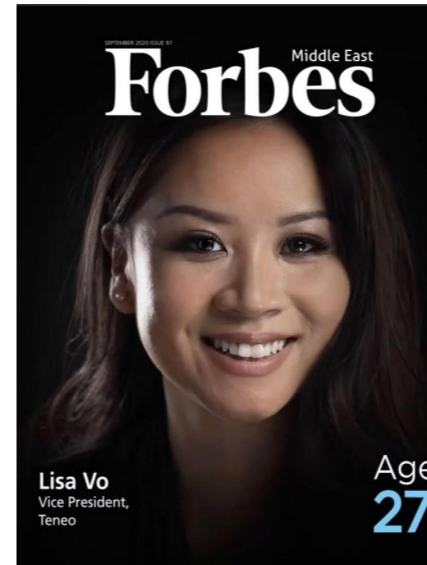
It was a huge BAFTA win for Brunel's Professor Benjamin Zephaniah and alumnus, co-creator and producer, Isaac Nartey (BSc Information Systems, 2012), as their show Life and Rhymes for Sky Arts - the UK's first spoken word performance open-mic show - scooped the award for Best Entertainment Programme over Strictly Come Dancing and Ant and Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway!

"I think it is a massive turning point for poetry on TV - I am just honoured to have been part of the history of making it happen," said Isaac. Photo credit: BAFTA 2021.



## WASHING MACHINE INVENTION SCOOPS AWARD

Paramveer Bhachu and Joanna Power (both BSc Product Design Engineering, 2021) beat 3,800 entries to win the 2020 Red Bull Basement event with their Lava Aqua X washing machine invention, tackling water sustainability!



**Lisa Vo**  
Vice President,  
Teneo

Age  
**27**

## ALUMNA NAMED ON FORBES MIDDLE EAST 30 UNDER 30 LIST

Vice President at Teneo, Lisa Vo (BSc International Business, 2013), was named on the Forbes Middle East 30 Under 30 list as a young innovator working to change the region! At 27, Lisa became the youngest VP of the company's Middle East and Africa practice.

## UK Portrait Photographer of the Year

Paul Wilkinson (BSc Industrial Design & Technology, 1992 / PhD Design, 1997) was crowned the UK Portrait Photographer of the Year at the 2020 Master Photography Awards for his "wonderfully emotive" image.

## Alumna named as top 100 entrepreneur

Seffie Wells (MSc Psychological & Psychiatric Anthropology, 2010) of Aidie London and The Aidie Trust was named as one of the UK's top 100 female entrepreneurs in the f:Entrepreneuruk #ialso campaign.

## Olympian named as BRIT Ambassador

Olympian, World Championship medallist and European and British Champion Shelayna Oskan-Clarke (BSc Sport Sciences, 2011) was named as a BRIT Ambassador to champion the 2021 BRIT Challenge.

## Good Homes feature for Design alumna

Mark Mitchell (BA Industrial Design & Technology, 2019) featured in an interview in the May 2021 edition of Good Homes India magazine, highlighted as a rising star of industrial design.

## Debut novel optioned for screen adaptation

Debut novel - Careless - from alumna Kirsty Capes (BA Creative Writing, 2014 / MA 2015 / PhD 2020) has been optioned for screen adaptation.

## Alumnus named as football club Vice President

Burak Çağlan Kızıllan (MSc Engineering Management, 2007) was named as the new Vice President of Fenerbahçe; one of Turkey's biggest football clubs.

## MBE HONOUR FOR SERVICES TO YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH MUSIC

Lorraine Wright (BSc Information Systems, 2009) was recognised with an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List 2021 for her services to young people through music.

## LAW ALUMNUS NAMED AS GLOBAL YOUNG INNOVATOR

Dev Aditya (LLB Law, 2017) was selected as one of the top 30 Under 30 UK Global Young Innovators for his work with the Otermans Institute tackling the global education and training divide.

## Fellowship for contributions in Photonics

Education alumnus and former Brunel Senior Lecturer, Dr Salah Obayya (PGCE, 2006) was named as a Fellow by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers for his remarkable contributions in the field of Photonics.

## Music alumna features on BBC Sounds

Savannah Roberts (BA Music, 2020) featured on an episode of BBC Sounds with her track 'Rosy' from her debut album Lemon and Honey, available on Spotify and Apple Music.



## VERENA WINIFRED HOLMES AWARD SUCCESS

Daniel Ronen (BEng Mechanical Engineering, 1996) of UAVaid was awarded the Verena Winifred Holmes Award 2020 by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) for his work in the development of 'drones' for humanitarian & global development projects.



## Reporting for My London

Whelan Barzey (BA Journalism, 2017), has joined the team of reporters with My London, having previously written for Empire, Time Out London, The BFI and BAFTA, and hosted podcasts and interviews for The British Blacklist.

## Alumna named on Forbes 30 Under 30 list

Marina Diez (MA Digital Games: Theory & Design, 2019) - CEO of Three of Cups Games - was named in the Forbes 30 Under 30 list for Sports and Games.

## Energy News Network 40 Under 40 award

Tiziana Bottino (BSc International Business, 2009) received a 2020 Energy News Network 40 Under 40 award for her work in the United States transition to a clean energy economy.

## Deans Mech Award for engineering alumnus

Nico Lomas (BEng Mechanical Engineering, 2019) was the winner of the Deans Mech Award for his Smart Window Shutter project with Hoare Lea and Sonobex, reducing noise pollution and electricity to naturally ventilate city centre buildings.

## Heading for the bright lights of the theatre

Kayi Ushe (BA Modern Drama Studies, 2009) will be playing Simba when The Lion King reopens on the West End and Samantha Bingley (BA Theatre & Creative Writing, 2019) will be appearing in Disney's 25th anniversary tour of Beauty and the Beast.

## Big win for Design alumna

Cosi Care from Lauren Bell (BSc Product Design, 2018) was named as the RAPID Challenge 2020 winner, securing a share of the £50k prize in the hardware start-up competition!

## Reporting for My London

Whelan Barzey (BA Journalism, 2017), has joined the team of reporters with My London, having previously written for Empire, Time Out London, The BFI and BAFTA, and hosted podcasts and interviews for The British Blacklist.

## Medical advancements in Uganda

Dr Margaret Saimo-Kahwa (MSc Applied Immunology, 1988) has been making an impact on medical advancements as the lead developer of an anti-tick vaccine in Uganda.

## Team Brunel athlete competes at European Athletics Indoor Championships

Emma Nwofor (BSc Sport Sciences, 2018) was selected for the British Athletics team for the 2021 European Athletics Indoor Championships in Poland.

## Alumna named as High Commissioner

Isatu Aminata Bundu (MA International Relations, 2008) was approved as the new High Commissioner to the Sierra Leone High Commission in Kenya.



## OBE HONOUR FOR SERVICES TO YOUNG PEOPLE

CEO of UK Youth, Ndidi Okezie (BSc Psychology, 2002) was honoured with an OBE in the Queens Honours List for services to young people during the COVID-19 response.

## OBE honour for services to robotic engineering

Professor Rob Buckingham (BSc Special Engineering Programme, 1987 / MEng Mechanical Engineering, 1989) was awarded an OBE in the New Year's Honours List for services to robotic engineering.



## ALUMNUS RELEASES DEBUT MOVIE

Actor and producer Bizhan Neromand (BSc Business & Management, 2018 / MSc Management, 2019) recently released Salam London - his first international Afghan movie - which has been bought by Tolo TV, the most famous TV station in Afghanistan.

## Basketball coach scores success

Basketball coach, Mark Clark (Borough Road College, 1982) - former coach for England and Great Britain and basketball commentator for Eurosport - led the London Lions Basketball Club to the British Women's Trophy Cup win.

## Alumnus plays a role in Mars mission

Dr Iain Botterill (BEng Electronic & Electrical Engineering, 1991 / PhD 1996) helped design a chip used in the Ingenuity drone, which landed on Mars in the underbelly of NASA's Perseverance rover.

## POINTS OF LIGHT AWARD FOR ALUMNI PAIR

Dr Pauly Otermans (PhD Psychology, 2018) and Dev Aditya (LLB Law, 2017) were recognised by the Prime Minister with a Points of Light Award for their work with the Otermans Institute to upskill underprivileged children in Nepal, India and Bangladesh



## ALUMNI CREATION MOST DOWNLOADED GAME ON PLAYSTATION PLUS

Mediatonic, the award-winning UK games developer founded by alumni David Bailey and Paul Croft (both BSc Multimedia Technology & Design, 2006) during their studies, created the 2020 feel-good gaming hit, Fall Guys; the most downloaded game ever on PlayStation Plus!

# ALUMNUS SETS UP A NEW BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT FUND FOR STUDENTS WITH HIS CHARITY, MAKING MUM PROUD

After alumnus Sahil Vohra sadly lost multiple family members, he was determined not to lose hope. Sahil set up the Making Mum Proud (MMP) charity, created to ensure young adults have the support and foundations to continue with their studies, personal dreams and aspirations despite losing a parent or legal guardian.



Sahil graduated from BSc Business and Management (Marketing) in 2016 and within two years, he'd lost his mother, aunt, uncle and grandparents in a series of car accidents in his home country of Kenya. Sahil found himself at a crossroads between teenage and adult life, dealing with new responsibilities and important decisions, all whilst still trying to process his grief.

Three years on, Sahil has officially founded the Making Mum Proud charity and has partnered with Brunel and the Union of Brunel Students

to establish a Making Mum Proud fund as their first endeavour to support students who have lost loved ones to finish their degree. We spoke to Sahil about the growth of his charity, why supporting Brunel students is close to his heart, and why it's important to have role models.

**Why was it important for you and your charity to give back and support Brunel students as your first partnership?**

It was important to start the initial Bereavement Fund with Brunel because this is where I gained my degree. I wanted to start at Brunel as my Mum always said that "charity starts at home" and for me this was my second home for three years. She also said to "always give where you can," so for me there was no better place than here to help support bereaved young adults to complete their studies. The charity aims to further our support across Brunel and other areas of the country in the future.

**With higher numbers of students likely having suffered with bereavement following the pandemic, what types of support will the Making Mum Proud charity provide?**

It's been a very difficult time for all students and young people in general. They have adapted to very different and challenging

circumstances over the last year to complete their studies. Adapting to changes following bereavement in this climate is something that, unfortunately, some students will inevitably have gone through.

The Making Mum Proud Charity will primarily look to provide support to students aged 18-26 to empower them to complete their university education after losing a parent or legal guardian. Our first initiative is to create the MMP Bereavement Fund and provide some financial support. It is important for MMP to develop and maintain a communication stream with bereaved students, including alumni, in order to identify additional avenues of support which MMP could provide.

**How has your provision of student support grown and changed since launching the charity?**

Since launching the charity, we have been focusing on setting up the Bereavement Fund. Originally, I wanted to have so many different projects but quickly I realised that we needed to focus on one thing at a time. As we gain more donations and grow our partnerships, we will be able to increase our support offering. One thing that is very important to me is enabling others to start initiatives. All of

our trustees have areas of support that they want to launch and I want Making Mum Proud to allow others to collaborate and partner with these projects.

Of course, with Covid 19 and a growing number of young adults dealing with bereavement, we have had to change how we provide support. We continually work with the Development and Alumni Office and Union of Brunel Students to provide support where needed. However, it has not been without its challenges and it has been a steep learning curve for me, coming from a background with little experience of starting a charity. I had a clear aim from the beginning that support should be available to those students who require it in these unfortunate circumstances, especially given my own experiences of bereavement.

**Why do you think it is important to have role models to inspire our students to continue past grief?**

When you lose a parent or legal guardian, you lose a pillar of support in your life. It becomes difficult to not have the support, the guidance and even the ability to give that person a hug or phone call. Having role models, mentors and people there to support you is extremely important in my opinion.

I have a great group of friends around me that are always there, whether I need advice or just someone to talk to. I have a great Dad, Sister and Brother-in-Law who I communicate with daily and who offer advice and support whenever I am in need. I also have a great mentor and business role model who help guide me on a regular basis.

From a personal stand point, I believe that a role model is important, but what is more important is surrounding yourself with good people. Grief is very difficult to deal with and there is no solution on how to move forward. It will never be the same but it will get easier. I am fortunate that I have a role model like my Dad whom I admire for all he has gone through and how he continues to maintain a positive outlook in every situation, whilst still managing to support me with my endeavours.

**What has been the biggest highlight for you from setting up your charity?**

I think the biggest highlight has been seeing how much the cause resonates with people, which has been reflected in the messages and donations that have been received so far. This is something I am really passionate about. Although it has been challenging at times, it has also been extremely rewarding to be working towards a cause which has affected so many people and hopefully will help them in the future.

**Do you have any tips for anyone who might also like to set up a charity?**

I am still very new to the journey and learning every day. My main tips would be to surround yourself with a good trustee team. Originally the charity was just an idea, but the support of Tiffany Bright, Harpreet Mangat and Nick Mazzotta have helped me to make it a reality. All the trustees bring a different skill and their own experiences of bereavement which has tailored how the charity has been structured.

Another piece of advice would be to try and learn as much as you can about setting up a

charity. Doing research and asking others who have been in similar situations about their experiences is invaluable.

It has been difficult for me to find a balance between my priorities as I have my own business and personal responsibilities alongside the charity. Trying to build a strong network with other charities, create partnerships and prioritise my goals one step at a time has helped me progress through each step of the process.

For anyone in a similar situation that wants to start a charity, my best advice is to try your best to fulfil your aim. Whether this is something that takes six months, a year or 10 years, at least you have started something to help others. Try not to be hard on yourself and learn as much as you can from all those around you.

Sahil is currently raising funds for the Making Mum Proud charity with the aim of reaching a fundraising target of £10,000. Here's how you can show your support.



# CONNECTING WITH OUR GLOBAL ALUMNI COMMUNITY

Our alumni are truly a worldwide community. With over 145,000 Brunel alumni across the globe, and with over 25,500 based overseas, chances are there is always a fellow Brunel graduate and a thriving Alumni Association nearby. This past year has seen some wonderful events from our alumni communities, including a 'Branding in a Pandemic' webinar from our India Association; a Tech and Innovation webinar from our Pakistan Association; and reunion events from our Lahore, Islamabad, Singapore, and Saudi Arabia Associations.

We took a moment to chat to the Presidents of four of our Alumni Associations to find out what it means to them to be part of a Brunel group in their country.



## Saudi Arabia Alumni Association

**Zahra Khan**

**What's your favourite moment from leading an alumni association so far?**

One of the best things about leading an alumni association is to be able to give back. The university years have been an extremely unforgettable time of my life and I knew I wanted to stay involved with it in whatever capacity I could.

**What does it mean to you to stay connected to other Brunel alumni from your country?**

It is a great way to stay connected with likeminded people and see how everyone has grown from their Brunel experience. It is inspiring to see what everyone's journey has been like and to be able to push them to pursue their ambitions and somehow be a part of their future endeavours.

**Why would you encourage alumni from your country to join your events and activities?**

Conducting events and being engaged in different activities makes us a part of something bigger than our day-to-day routine. It gives us an opportunity for intellectual and networking growth. The alumni association for me is much more than a group. It is an institution without a learning deadline and a family with a purpose and a strong sense of belonging.

## Bahrain Alumni Club (PhD without residence)

**Esra AIDhaen**

**What's your favourite moment from leading an alumni association so far?**

I established the alumni club in 2017 after approval by the Partnership Board between Brunel and Ahlia University. My favourite moments are the intellectual collaborations between the PhD researchers and alumni, seeing the alumni progression in all aspects, and leading collaborative work between the PhD researchers, alumni and supervisors from both Brunel and Ahlia.

**What does it mean to you to stay connected to other Brunel alumni from your country?**

Being in touch with our alumni gives me the greatest joy to link them together after a long time since graduation and support collaborative research between the alumni as well as their PhD supervisors. As an outcome of the alumni club, a number of collaborative researches have been conducted between alumni from different research areas, which has created a real impact to society. As a next step we are thinking to expand our alumni club and have representatives in other countries to keep us connected and actively engaged.

**Why would you encourage alumni from your country to join your events and activities?**

Attending our events and activities as well as being engaged in terms of research and other intellectual activities is a means of knowledge sharing and continuous improvement. We have a lot to support our alumni with future development and research support. We believe that supporting our alumni with different activities and research support is a way to produce quality research and promote outreach to our community.



## Lahore Alumni Association

**Ahsen Zia Akhtar**

**What's your favourite moment from leading an alumni association so far?**

My favourite moment has got to be from our first virtual alumni engagement during the Covid-19 pandemic. I was delighted to reconnect with my old classmates from Brunel after a decade. Conversation with them was an incredible experience of belonging - it was a real homecoming after a decade.

**What does it mean to you to stay connected to other Brunel alumni from your country?**

Brunel alumni come from just about every corner of Pakistan and are engaged in almost

all possible human endeavours. By staying connected, we can continue to learn and grow, to lend a hand or an idea, to be a part of strengthening our community. Each year our alumni network in Pakistan grows stronger and more diverse. I believe our greatest strengths are realised by working together.

**Why would you encourage alumni from your country to join your events and activities?**

The alumni events and activities are a great platform for networking, intellectual development and resource generation. These opportunities enhance and renew the lifelong Brunel experience by inspiring new ideas, affiliations, friendships, professional fulfilment, and acts of service. Therefore, I encourage all alumni to participate.

## Singapore Alumni Association

**Chris Pardey**

**What's your favourite moment from leading an alumni association so far?**

I've been leading the Brunel alumni associate based in Singapore for 5 years. The highlights have been the visits to Singapore from Brunel's Vice Chancellor and other members of staff.

**What does it mean to you to stay connected to other Brunel alumni from your country?**

I have found it useful for business opportunities and for the development of my charity interests by being connected with Brunel alumni.

**Why would you encourage alumni from your country to join your events and activities?**

The activities we hold in Singapore are good for informal networking opportunities and always in central locations.



## ALUMNI REUNIONS AROUND THE WORLD

Lahore (Oct 2020)



Saudi Arabia (Dec 2020)



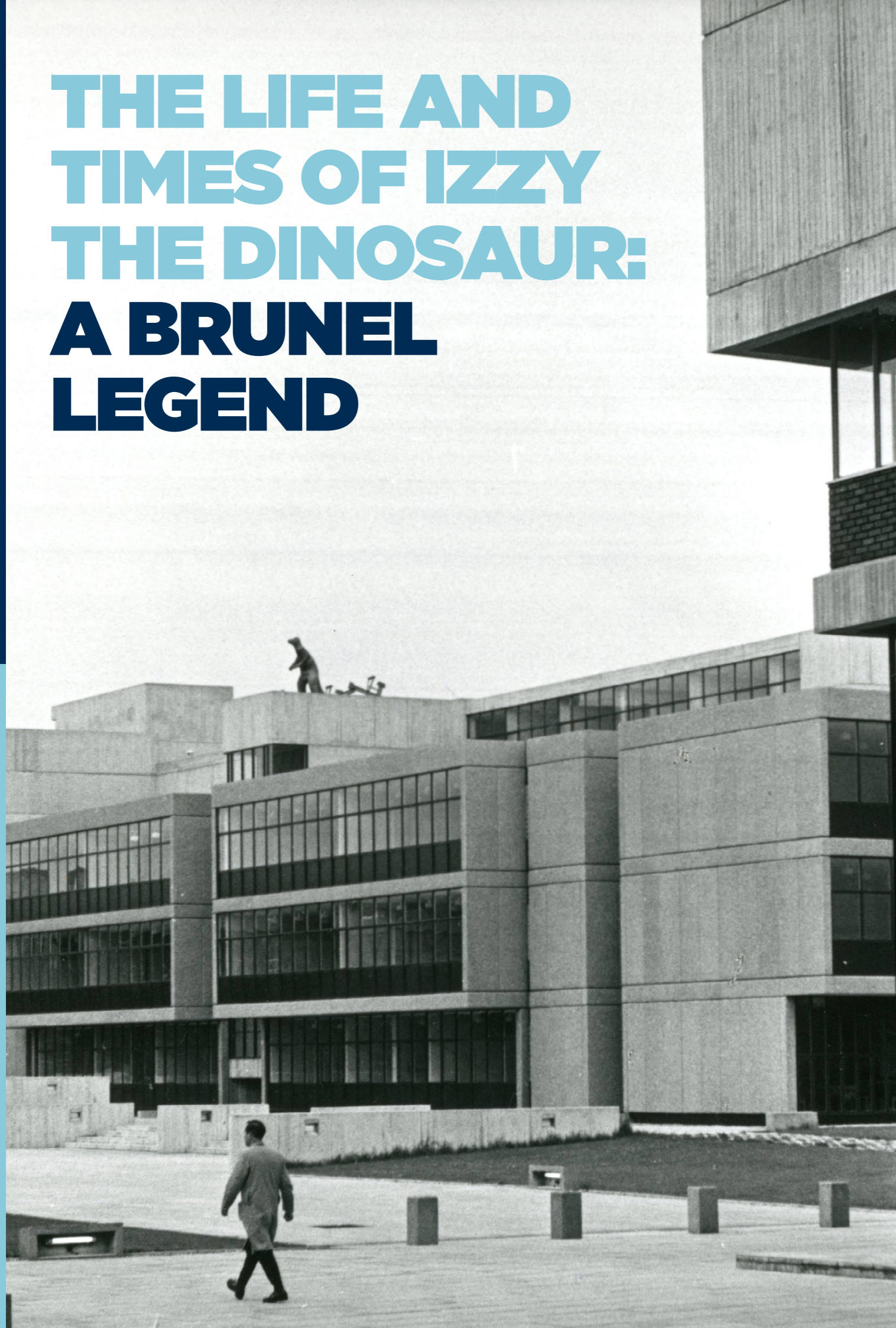
Islamabad (Oct 2020)



Singapore (Dec 2020)



# THE LIFE AND TIMES OF IZZY THE DINOSAUR: A BRUNEL LEGEND



As mascots go, having a six-foot-high Brontosaurus named Isambardina (aka 'Izzy') is something to behold! From 1960 to 1978, Brunel's beloved mascot Izzy was a prime target for inter-college mascot raiding; a popular mission amongst students. Izzy was frequently stolen and recaptured, until that fateful day when she didn't come home.

## The birth of Izzy

Izzy the dinosaur was designed by Jim Johnstone and Mike Waterfield in 1960. Her skeleton was made of steel conduit tube with steel hoops as ribs and chicken wire as a framework, covered by paper mache. Various group of students worked on her including biologists, engineers, and 'a mad bunch of first year electricals', with welding supported by Mr Brown, the Physics Laboratory Chief. Once her foundations were complete, Izzy was covered with fibreglass and resin, and provided with gloves for hands and plasticine and ping pong ball eyes.

## The mascot raids begin

Izzy normally resided in the refectory / canteen, but in January 1963 the raids started - she was abducted by students from Watford College of Technology, but soon recovered. The Isambardina Club (later Izzy Soc.) was formed to undertake her maintenance and rescues, along with attempting to abduct other colleges mascots, such as 'Phred', a wooden horse taken from Phillipa Fawcett Teachers Training College in 1965. Izzy was abducted once again in November 1963 by students from Northampton College in Clerkenwell. Despite a ransom being paid she was not returned, leading 26 Brunel students on a rescue mission, which for six of them ended in capture and a ducking in a horse trough. Events then become quite confusing, but seem to involve paint, a car chase around London and custody of Izzy being decided by a game of high-stakes tiddlywinks. In November 1965, Izzy was set upon by a visiting sports team from Bristol, which apparently involved a firehose.

In February 1968, Izzy was captured once again. A phone message claimed that she was undamaged and further information could be found in the London University newsletter, Sennet. Reconnaissance parties were dispatched and a Brunel scouting group found her held captive in the bar of Queen Mary College, but they were too few in numbers to retrieve her themselves. A rescue mission was mounted, and a large raiding party of 60 students was assembled a few days later, but she had



disappeared. A fortnight later, an invitation appeared for Brunel to steal her back or pay £12 ransom for her liberation. Another raid was dispatched that afternoon. After a lengthy search at Queen Mary's, Izzy was discovered behind a boiler house, along with Horace the Tapir of North Western Polytechnic - both were taken by van back to Uxbridge.

## Izzy the adventurer

There followed a time of highs and lows for Izzy. She made a grand appearance at graduation day in 1969, complete in graduation gown, standing on the roof of the Lecture Centre. Always an adventurer, she also embarked on a tour of London visiting Euston Parcels Office, Acton Technical College, the Thames Embankments and the Natural History Museum. However, she also seems to have lost her head around this time and the Isambardina Society pledged

to rebuild her in 1971. Her reincarnation was described as being made of green and yellow fibre glass, standing at six feet tall, and appears to have had a taste for scuba diving; it was recorded in 1975 that she undertook an extended underwater exploration of the university pond.

## The final abduction

Izzy was abducted from Brunel for the final time in August 1976, when the Students' Union received a ransom letter from Imperial College. The ransom was set as £50, payable to Imperial Colleges RAG. Two failed rescue missions took place at the beginning of the 1976 academic year, and in 1978, the Isambardina Society sent two members on a reconnaissance trip to Oxford following a tip-off. They returned with the news that Izzy had been destroyed after having been sold by Imperial College to Keble College, from where Lincoln College had won possession of her in a drinking contest.

Izzy's remains were taken to an unknown location, with the date of death given as 15 December 1977.

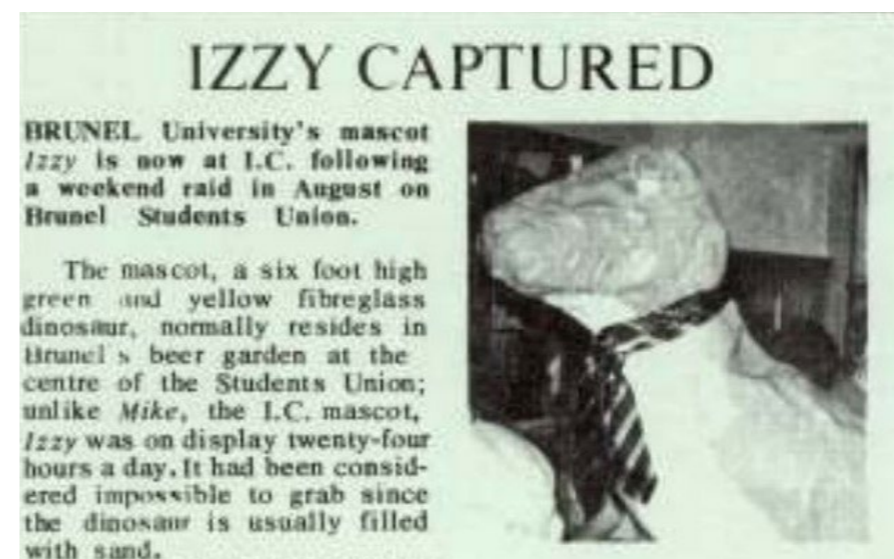
*Researched in the archives and written by Jagveer Johal, Brunel History dept alumnus, abridged and edited for publication by Phaedra Casey, archivist.*

*Sources: Isam Newsletters 1960-1972 and Le Nurb Newspaper 1975-8.*

## Donate to our archives

If you have any items from your time at Brunel or its predecessor colleges that you would like to donate to the Brunel Archives, they'd love to hear from you: [archivesandrecords@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:archivesandrecords@brunel.ac.uk)

Please note, it doesn't have to be Brontosaurus related! The team are happy to take scanned copies of photos if you'd like to keep the originals, but please get in touch before scanning items, as they have a few tips and requirements.





# RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS



## Why are some bilingual people dyslexic in English but not their other language?

In the English-speaking world, dyslexia is a learning disorder we're all familiar with. More than 1 in 10 people that grew up with English as their first language are said to have dyslexia, with wide consensus pointing towards a person's genetic history as the leading cause. So, how then have we ended up with the phenomenon that some people who speak

both English and another language can be dyslexic in one, but not the other? The answer, it seems, is hidden in the characteristics of a language and its writing system.

## Brunel joins forces with Lotus to drive forward next-generation electric vehicle architecture

A collaborative partnership between Brunel University London and renowned car makers Lotus to develop next-generation electric vehicle (EV) architecture has won backing from the UK Government.

The LEVA project - Lightweight Electric Vehicle Architecture - will

aim to accelerate innovation in the development of lightweight structures for EVs, acting as a showcase for new, cutting-edge chassis and powertrain concepts.



## Heart disease and obesity driven by liver function

How susceptible we are to obesity and heart disease could be determined by our livers, a new study has revealed. Using a sample of over 700,000 individuals, scientists from Brunel and Imperial College London found that heart disease is far more prevalent in

people who were born with a set of genes that have previously been associated with how our bodies control functions such as the metabolism of fat and glucose.



## Fizz tech to capture carbon from the sea

A new way to capture carbon dioxide from seawater could help tackle climate change. Like capturing the CO2 bubbles in a fizzy drink, the technology uses natural processes and renewable energy to remove carbon, which in turn lets the seawater take more CO2 out of the atmosphere.

SeaCURE - led by the University of Exeter, with Plymouth Marine Laboratory, Brunel University London and industrial partner, tpgroup - has won a £250,000 grant for an initial study. The funding comes from the Net Zero Innovation Portfolio, run by the UK government's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

## Playing video games helps stroke recovery

A genius game controller helping stroke patients get back hand and arm movement by playing on the computer is set to start tests in a stroke unit. 1.5 million Brits have a stroke and 70 per cent of them get weakness in their hands and arms, leaving many unable to even make a cup of tea or get dressed.

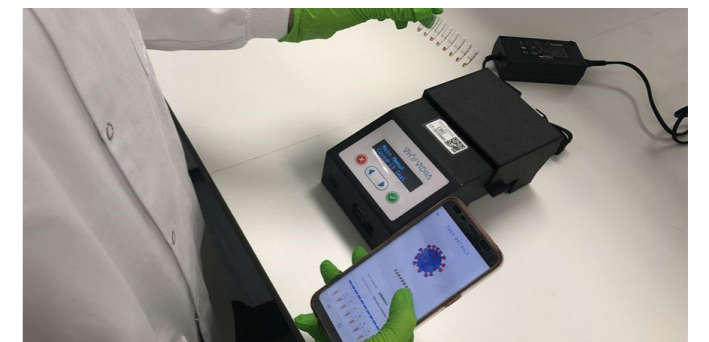
The NeuroBall is shown to help people regain strength and movement in their arms and hands after a stroke by making dull daily rehab exercises more fun. Now makers Brunel University London and UK firm Neurofenix have won £60,000 from The Stoke Association and MedCity to take development to the next level.



## Virus Hunter COVID test trialled in hospital

A new, highly accurate COVID-19 test developed by Brunel, Surrey and Lancaster Universities and medical technology firm Vidiia is in use at the Royal Lancaster Infirmary. Virus Hunter 6 (VH6) can test up to six samples simultaneously and is shown to be 99 per cent accurate in lab trials.

Results take 20-30 minutes and it is already MHRA (Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency) approved, CE safety certified and backed by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council.



## Sickle cell target could treat Covid

Scientists have found a way to lower stroke risk in Sickle Cell patients that opens a gateway of potential treatments for inflammation and clotting stemming from conditions such as Covid-19.

For the first time, they investigated using immune cell proteins as an anti-inflammatory drug to reduce blood clotting in people with Sickle Cell Disease.



## 'Cinderella' of the medicinal plant world could be the answer to better breast cancer treatment

A plant which had previously been dismissed as not being medically useful could prove to be a hero in disguise, after scientists discovered it not only stops the growth of breast cancer cells but does not affect normal cells - a potential first for future cancer chemotherapy treatment.

The ground-breaking research by the team of Brunel's Dr Amanda Harvey, in collaboration with Prof Alessandra Devoto at Royal Holloway, University of London, and Prof Nicholas Smirnov at the University of Exeter, treated leaves from Arabidopsis thaliana - also

known as thale cress - with the plant hormone jasmonate, a substance discovered in jasmine that boosts plant responses to stress. They then incubated the treated leaves with breast cancer cells.

Research found that although the cancer cells stopped growing, the normal cells remained unaffected, meaning the use of the plant in breast cancer treatment could potentially lead to a quicker recovery time and fewer secondary effects for patients subjected to chemical treatment.

# BRUNEL NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

## BRUNEL'S VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT TO STEP DOWN



Our Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Julia Buckingham CBE has announced plans to step down after nearly 10 years in the role. The University has begun the process of finding a successor, during which time Julia will remain in post to ensure a smooth handover.

"It has been a huge privilege to steer Brunel through some of the most important changes ever seen in the higher education sector," said Julia, who joined Brunel in 2012. "I am incredibly proud of everything our wonderful community has achieved and know, not least from the experiences of the past year, that this incredible institution has everything it needs to thrive and to continue to make major contributions to our global society."

Julia has recently been awarded the Wellcome Gold Medal by the British Pharmacological Society (BPS) for 'exceptional contribution to pharmacology' and has been announced as next Chair of The Institute of Cancer Research; an influential role that will begin from August 2021.

## Brunei agree wide-ranging collaboration with Pakistan's largest university

Brunel University London has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the prestigious University of the Punjab, Pakistan's largest university that will cover a variety of activities, including staff and student mobility, research, and the development of new degree programmes.

## BOOKER PRIZE-WINNING AUTHOR BACKS NEW SCHOLARSHIP FOR BLACK AND ASIAN WRITERS

The Bernardine Evaristo Scholarship will help one student study for a part-time Master's degree in Brunel's well-regarded creative writing department. "I believe in giving back and paying it forward and winning the Booker Prize has given me a larger platform and new opportunities to support the next generation of writers," said Prof Evaristo, whose fellow teaching staff at Brunel includes poets Professor Benjamin Zephaniah and Daljit Nagra, and author Max Kinning.

## BRUNEL'S NEW DESIGN SCHOOL RECOGNISED AMONGST THE BEST IN THE WORLD

Brunel Design School has been recognised as one of the best places in the world to research and study design by the 2021 QS World University Rankings by Subject. The school includes industry-standard design studios, workshops and labs that allow its researchers and students to see real-world projects through from early concept through to fully-fledged working prototypes.



## NEW NURSING DEGREE PROGRAMME LAUNCHES AT BRUNEL

Freshly approved by The Nursing and Midwifery Council, from September 2021 Brunel will offer three new undergraduate degree courses to train registered nurses to specialise in mental health, adult health and child health.

It comes as the response to the pandemic appears to have influenced career and degree choices leading to a surge in applications to do nursing. "Nurses have literally been on the frontline throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and as we start our path to recovery, we need professionally trained registered nurses more than ever," said Dr Karen Harrison White, Brunel's new division lead for nursing.



## Brunei joins new employability programme for autistic students

Brunel has joined The Employ Autism Higher Education Network, a ground-breaking higher education employability programme which aims to unlock the potential of autistic students and graduates and help them into full-time work. The nationwide programme is run by Santander, through Santander Universities UK, and the charity Ambitious about Autism, and

will enable autistic students and graduates studying at Brunel to access paid internships and tailored careers support and advice.

## OUTWARD LOOKING: BRUNEL RANKED AMONGST WORLD'S MOST INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES

Brunel has been recognised as one of the world's most internationally-focused institutions in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2021. The university was ranked 28th globally for its 'International Outlook' (7th in the UK), topping other prestigious institutions such as Cambridge, London School of Economics and King's College London.



## Brunei apprentice scheme grabs gold standard

Brunel is Britain's first university among 12 employers to gain the gold stamp of approval on the chances it creates for staff to learn on the job. The new Government-backed 'We Invest in Apprentices' accreditation rates the quality of UK apprenticeship programmes, awarding organisations silver, gold or platinum.

## BRUNEL STUDENTS AND GRADUATES TO BENEFIT FROM RENEWED SANTANDER UNIVERSITIES PARTNERSHIP

Brunel was delighted to confirm another three years of collaboration and generous funding from Santander Universities. The partnership, now in its seventh year, will support student and graduate mobility and entrepreneurship activities. Funding will go towards helping Brunel students from a widening participation background to take part in life-changing experiences such as overseas opportunities, whilst students and graduates alike will have the opportunity to apply for equity-free seed funding to help advance their entrepreneurial ventures.





# IN CONVERSATION WITH ELLIE PROHAN: DJ, RADIO AND TV PRESENTER

AS A TALENTED GAY, MIDDLE EASTERN WOMAN, BEING AN ACTIVE REPRESENTATION WITHIN THE MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY IS OF UPMOST IMPORTANCE TO ELLIE.

Hailing from West London, Ellie Prohan (BSc Business & Management Marketing, 2006), has fast cemented her name in the industry. Raised in a single mother Persian household, Ellie outplayed the odds by coming out with her sexuality and pursuing her dream of being an international DJ. In a short span, Ellie has organised charity events for world mental health day, started a club night for the LGBTQIA+ community, created a series of DJ showcase nights and started her own cultural discovery show 'Eat, Dance, Discover'.

Ellie has interviewed the likes of MHuncho, DaBaby, Tiwa Savage, Princess Nokia, Waka Floka, Stefflon Don, Digga D, Vic Mensa, Ghetts, Frisco, MoneybaggYo, OFB, Bandokay & LZ OFB, Youngs Teflon, Lyrica Anderson, B Simone, Br3nya, and AWA amongst many more. Having previously hosted the primetime 'Happy Hour' show on female-led station Foundation FM, Ellie has since joined the Apple Music family for The Apple Music 1 List show out of the London studios. The show brings the playlist to life and showcases the world's best new music. Ellie also hosts her own Tuesday weekly specialist show on Kiss FM from 11pm-1am highlighting independent artists in the rap, drill, trap and hip-hop community. Not only so, but has recently become one of the latest presenters for the drive time 7-9pm slot on Kiss Fresh, Monday to Thursday!

In a recent interview as part of Brunel's LGBTQ+ Changemaker series, we chatted to Ellie about how her Brunel experience shaped her path to self-discovery, navigating lockdown, changing stereotypes, and breaking into the music industry.

#### **You're from West London; can you tell us about the journey that brought you to Brunel?**

As everybody does when they're in that particular timeframe in their life, there was choosing either to travel, or to go to uni, or to just get a job. I'm from a Persian household, so there is no travel and there is no get a job, there's go to uni! So, for anyone who's from a cultural background - or not, as well - you are sort of bound at those ages by what your parents want you to do. In a Persian household, you really are super bound by it - culturally, it's all about not bringing shame on the family, not embarrassing them, and having that graduation picture with the hat!

**"I think everybody deserves the right to be represented, it gives you power and confidence in who you are."**

I knew Brunel quite well because I knew siblings of friends who had gone there, so I knew it would be up my street in terms of environment and the cultural side of it, as it's very diverse. So, when I went and actually had a look at Brunel, I was like, "this is my home." Also, leaving my family and moving away just wasn't an option. Brunel was close to where I lived, so I could get in the car and drive there - I could live the campus life but not live on campus, so I spent a lot of time on campus, but hung out in friends' rooms. I think the minute I went there and saw that everything was on campus - the dorms, the shops, the library - it just felt like a home away from home. I was just so grateful that I ended up going to Brunel because it really was my first choice.

#### **Looking back, do you have any favourite memories of Brunel?**

I've got so many memories of Brunel. I've got memories of the gigantic auditorium, I swear it housed like 600 people - when it was at its peak, it was just the best. I've got some great memories of sitting in there - it always reminded of the American movies because it's sort of stacked, and when I first saw that room, I thought, "I'm an actual grown-up in this grown-up place!"

The other thing were the memories of actually being independent for the first time and not having that same attention on you that you would do at sixth form. You really had to take ownership of your studies and your schedule. You really had to take accountability of yourself at uni and I think that was one of the great teachings of that first step into the adult world.

I developed such a fantastic group of friends, and for me, Brunel was a time where I was with a mixed group of people. I went to a girl's school and sixth form, so even that was a shock - that was the first time I'd had guy friends. It was learning how to interact, finding your community, finding your group of people. I experienced a lot in a couple of years and I have so many great memories, but all very important to where I am today.

#### **We'd be really interested to hear how Brunel shaped your journey to self-discovery. Can you reflect on the relationships and experiences that have helped you to find your identity?**

Brunel was the first time I got hit on by a girl, but I didn't quite understand it at the time. At that point, I still wasn't comfortable with my sexuality. Being from such a strong culture, it's not really acceptable to explore your sexuality like that, so being at Brunel, I got the chance to step away and experience certain things away from the culture that you wouldn't necessarily get to experience in your younger years.

In the friendships that I made, and in the group that I became a part of, everybody was so tenacious and so on-life and business-minded and I got to meet people who were actually like myself. I had such a diverse group of friendships and I just felt totally at home. That was really important, going throughout my whole life, even the studying aspect of it. It was the inspiration of that group of friends and the energy that we gave to each other which I think is really important when you're at uni - to pick your community really well.

I ended up starting my business in my second year at Brunel and based my dissertation on it. It was called 'The effects of female entrepreneurs and small business marketing' - I will never forget it. It was based on the hair and beauty industry, and my business wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for Brunel. I'll never forget sitting down with that group of friends and saying "what shall I call this shop, this is going to be my first business." The name of my business is still going 16 years later and was birthed at Brunel in the canteen that day.

If it wasn't for Brunel, I don't know what I would be doing now? Even the course that I took in

Business, I thought, I can do anything with this in my whole life and am still using my degree in so many ways, even though I've shifted careers to being a DJ and radio, tv presenter. I remember things all the time - I'll never forget there was a class in my marketing session and they played a video about identifying subliminal messaging in marketing. I will never forget that, because just that moment taught me so much about attention to detail.

**"I definitely wouldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for my experiences at Brunel."**

I think university is what you make it. You take from it and you really can flourish in life and you can keep all of these little gems with you, keep friends, or not keep friends - whatever it is, it's going to shape who you are. In terms of my sexuality, I definitely wouldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for my experiences at Brunel.

#### **What did it finally mean to you to graduate? Was that a proud moment for your family?**

Weirdly, I started my business in my second year and my business tutor ended up becoming a client of my business for years. When I was doing my dissertation and during my second year, I was trying to juggle uni and starting the business. Then one day, my Mum said to me that "your tutor at Brunel has called me and she said you keep missing lessons." One day, I had a class and left to take a business call and the tutor asked to see me. I ended up speaking to her and she said, "what's going on?" and "are you in trouble?" I said, "no, I'm starting a business, this is what you've taught me, I'm doing it." She supported me every single step of the way after that and she made it so easy. I got extra help to be able to know what was happening in classes so I could manage both, and I just think that is the absolute beauty of a great tutor, because without her I wouldn't have been able to get through that time period.

I built the whole business on £11k at the time and it was just such an important moment in my life. I had to close the shop to go to my graduation, so that was amazing. I'll never forget what I was wearing, the worst outfit ever - I was wearing chandelier heels, don't ask me why, I can't even walk in heels now! My Mum came, and it was absolutely incredible. That moment where you get onto the stage and you get your certificate, nothing really beats that. It's such an achievement, especially as I had built a business off my whole experience at uni, which is still going, 16 years strong.

#### **You came to being a DJ as a career change - can you talk about the experience of moving from business and breaking into the music industry?**

I'm in my 30's now, and during my 20's after I graduated, I really just put my head down and worked my absolute butt off. This business

that I'd managed to put together at uni flourished so incredibly and did so well, that I'd got to my peak at 28. I was bored and wanted to do something different, I wanted to learn a new hobby. I'd gone to a house party in Dubai when I was on holiday and there was a guy DJ'ing old-school hip-hop and R&B (anyone who knows old-school hip-hop and R&B will know that nostalgic feeling you get when you hear that music). He was mixing, and I thought, this sounds like what they do in the club, how does this work - he briefly showed me and I thought, I think I could do this, I'm actually going to become a DJ. If I have a moment where I think I'm good at something, I just think, why not learn it!

**"It's important that you hone in on what you want to do and what you want to bring to the world."**

I befriended a DJ and we bartered our skill set - I gave her freebies, and she gave me freebies and taught me how to DJ. Soon after that it went from just a hobby to me buying second-hand decks and practicing to the bone - within around five months, I had my first residency. I was starting to get told that I was really good, so I grew with this in confidence and started to take it seriously. I only started DJ'ing in my late 20's and last year bagged Apple and Kiss in the same year - I have shows on both of those now, and only really started that radio journey about four and a half years ago.

It just goes to show, you can study whatever you want, but your career can also do a 180 and you can be doing something completely different. I don't think anyone is bound to anything. As long as you do everything with honesty to yourself and do everything for the right reasons. I didn't start DJ'ing for anything other than myself, and then as I grew and got money out of it, I thought, this is actually a career, so then I started to apply my business-head to it. That's why I say my whole degree has taken me through my life in everything that I do.

**You've talked a lot about breaking stereotypes - how do you navigate those spaces where outspoken female, Middle Eastern and queer identities are still rare?**

I think rare is an understatement. I don't know anybody who's queer and Middle Eastern in music, and that's really sad because I know that they must be there. I think everybody deserves the right to be represented, it gives you power and confidence in who you are. Growing up I never fit in anywhere; I always felt that I related more to the black community than anything else. Within that, I still didn't have my own identity and I think that as a Persian, queer, gay woman it's important that eight-year-old me can look up and see that there is representation for her in whatever she wants to do.

Within my culture, if I'd told my Mum I wanted to become a DJ and radio presenter at 18, you could forget about it. It was not happening. It would be, "DJ who? Play tunes, play songs? No!" My Mum would say "that's not a career, that's embarrassing." My Mum was a single parent, so when you do come from a single parent cultural

household, there's so much pressure for, "you see, she should have got married, that's why her child's a DJ, they have no Dad." I think I like to break stereotypes generally, but the stereotype of 'what does gay look like' is something that I'd absolutely love to smash to pieces because I get it all the time. "You don't look gay" - and I'm like "what does gay look like?" I don't get it, but hopefully as time goes on, with everything that I'm doing, that will change. I'm a gay Middle Eastern woman who loves drill and trap and rap music - there needs to be a space for me because there are going to be many other women who benefit off the back of me pushing forward.

**You curate the EnGayged playlist from the Gay Times - what does it mean to you to be able to showcase queer artists and music?**

It means everything! Gay Times gave me the opportunity to update that playlist every month and put everything together, from the name and all of the tracks, it's all chosen by me. I feel that when you are gay, you have to be a part of the LGBTQ+ community. I love my community, but I also don't feel that we should be segregated, because I do feel that within our community there are so many extra communities, that it can sometimes feel like you don't belong unless you belong to one of them. I don't feel that it should be that way - I feel that we should all be accepted into the world.



Like I say on my playlist, we're not part of the scene, we are the scene, and that's what my playlist is about; bringing together artists from the community and artists that are allies of the community, in hip-hop and rap, together on one playlist where there's that mutual respect for music.

**This past year has been like no other. How have you navigated lockdown, and what has been the best digital opportunity you've experienced?**

Nobody expected this and when lockdown hit, I just thought, all of our plans are out of the window. But then you just have to switch up the game plan, and I think the best thing about lockdown has been that it's made us all really evaluate what we want. Everyone that I've spoken to has had a personal journey in the last year of 'what do I want?' and 'who am I?' We

can't escape from things anymore, we've really had to sit with ourselves. I'm the type of person who works 24-hours a day, so I can definitely escape from myself very well, but the last year has not allowed me to do that.

**"Do everything with honesty to yourself and do everything for the right reasons."**

So, I sat down and thought about the game plan - what are we doing and how do we adapt. I think adapting has become the most important part of the last year. Just look at the way we're having this conversation now (via a Zoom call with Ellie in the Caribbean), and it's not weird now because we've all got used to it. I think the way we've navigated it is that we haven't stopped, we haven't allowed it to get us down. With Amanda, my manager, we've had moments where we've hugged each other and cried, and they've been important moments, encouraging each other to get up and go for it.

You have to find a new way to do things, you have to keep going for your goal and dreams, you cannot stop. I think the last year has proved that we can all still maintain everything that we want to do in life, we just have to find a better way. And a way that's better for our mental health, because now that we're going back into the real world, I don't think that anybody's going back to the way they had before. I think that working from home has become a culture that the country is ok with now. Companies and employers now know that we can actually be productive from home and we can create everything that we need to if we're left to our own devices. I think that's been important for accountability and responsibility in managing ourselves. It's been an important year of growth, and if we can do this, what else can we achieve! We've got this!

**What advice would you give to aspiring DJ's and presenters that want to follow in your footsteps?**

Don't come into the game trying to be like anybody else. Bring something new. Bring something that is a different energy that nobody's seen before. Break barriers. I feel that if you come into something for the wrong reasons, it never really lasts very long. It's not an easy industry to get into, but I've proved that you can do it, if you do it the right way.

There were many years where I worked and did so many things for free. It's all about the hustle, watch people and go and network. For a whole two years of DJ'ing, I never left my set after I'd finished, I always stayed on and watched the other DJ's - that is one of the best things you can do. If you want to get into music, there's things that you can do to get involved. Watch people who have been in the industry for years and see what you want to do, because you might not want to be a DJ or presenter, you might want to be in A&R, or marketing, or PR. It's important that you hone in on what you want to do and what you want to bring to the world.

**TOGETHER: AN ANTHOLOGY FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

DR PAULDY OTERMANS AND DEV ADITYA

(PhD Psychology, 2018) / (LLB Law, 2017)



**"A record of human experiences from the Coronavirus pandemic for the future to behold"**

Dr Pauly Otermans and Dev Aditya Alumni 2017

**UROLOGY FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS AND JUNIOR DOCTORS**

RICKY ELLIS (BSc Biomedical Sciences, 2010)



**6G: THE ROAD TO THE FUTURE WIRELESS TECHNOLOGIES 2030**

PAULO SERGIO RUFINO HENRIQUE (PG Cert Wireless Communication Systems, 2016)

**CARELESS**

KIRSTY CAPES (Creative Writing, BA 2014 / MA 2015 / PhD 2020)



**THE NATURE OF WELDING AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STEEL INDUSTRY**

(academic paper) DR EDWIN J FRANCE (BTech Metallurgy, 1970)

**COMPLETING YOUR EDD: THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO THE DOCTOR OF EDUCATION**

JODI ROFFEY-BARENTSEN (MA Education, 2004 / EDD Education, 2012)



**ORKNEY: A SPECIAL WAY OF LIFE**

RICHARD CLUBLEY (BTech Applied Biology, 1973)



**CLARK GABLE AND HIS PLASTIC DUCK**

PROF PHILIP TEW (PhD Creative Writing: The Novel, 2016)

**CONNECTING WITH A LIFE COACH OF 25 YEARS TO ESTABLISH PERSPECTIVES ON LIFE**

GISELLE MARRINAN (Applied Immunology, 1991)



**AN IMMIGRANT'S COMMITMENTS**

SAM LINGAYAH (MA Public & Social Administration, 1990)

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HELEN CULLEN (MA English Literature, 2019)

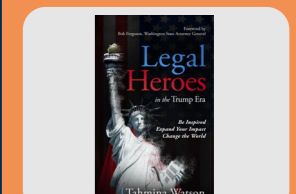
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VANESSA HOLBURN (Communication Information Studies, 1992)



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TAHMINA WATSON (LLB Law, 2000)



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ALLEN PEPPITT (Economics & Law, 1980)

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DR JOSEPHINE PERRY (BSc Politics & History, 1999)

**SMOKING GUN**

DR JOHN MATLIN (American Studies, BA 2004 / MA 2006)



**SIR FRANK GILL KCMG OBE: THE UNIQUE STORY OF A MANX TELECOMMUNICATIONS PIONEER**

ROBERT STIMPSON (BTech Mechanical Engineering, 1980)



# BRUNELIANS AROUND THE GLOBE

Living overseas can be an exciting adventure, bringing travel, cultures and new opportunities to life. We caught up with four of our UK alumni who all decided to live overseas after graduation.



## LIVING IN SINGAPORE - CHRIS PARDEY (BSC MATHS & MANAGEMENT STUDIES, 1985)

**How long have you lived in Singapore?**

I've lived in Singapore for 16 years.

**How did your journey from the UK to Singapore come about?**

On graduation from Brunel in 1985 I joined Cargill. I spent 20 enjoyable years with the company working in London, Liverpool, Nottingham, Geneva and Germany in a variety of international commodity trading roles. In 2005 I got the opportunity to join Noble Group in Singapore and to relocate my family to Asia. I have worked in the commodity sector in Singapore for Merrill Lynch, Barclays Capital, RCMA Group and R1 International. I have also established two companies: Tosca PTE. Ltd for commodity business and Icarus Group PTE for general investment.

**What cultural change have you enjoyed the most?**

In my 16 years in Asia I have seen tremendous growth across the region, much higher than other parts of the world. The opportunity to travel extensively around the region has been the most enjoyable.

In 2009 I was founding trustee for a charity working with disabled athletes, called BSF Asia. From 2016, Brunel has also supported this charity and supporting volunteers for work experience. Working with the disabled athletes and the students has been very rewarding.

**What's the biggest thing you miss about living in the UK?**

I enjoy live sports and sometimes miss the opportunity to watch big events regularly. Fortunately, I have had the opportunity to travel back to the UK regularly and to get to other countries for sports events.

**What's your favourite memory of Brunel?**

I was very active in the football and cricket clubs at Brunel. I have many happy memories of sports trips, specifically the first international tours to Malta in 1982 and Paris in 1984.

## LIVING IN CANADA - SIMON BACKER (BTECH PHYSICS, 1978)

**How long have you lived in Canada?**

40+ years!

**How did your journey from the UK to Canada come about?**

In my second year University work placement I started to wonder if there were better places to work. It was also a time of miner's strikes and general discord in the UK. I had heard about Waterloo University in Canada which did similar sandwich courses (or co-op as they call them here). I wrote letters - this being before the internet - and after an extended series of improbable events, managed to get offered a work placement in Toronto.

**What cultural change have you enjoyed the most?**

I found Canada to be much more of a meritocracy than the UK - i.e. if you can do something and do it well, you will get the chance to perform in a work environment. It is less based on 'class'/schools/knowning the right person. I also love the wide-open spaces, nature and ice hockey.

**What's the biggest thing you miss about the UK?**

I missed beer and football. In recent years the craft beer scene has developed dramatically and you can get wonderful beer here. The football is still pretty lame, although some of the English and European greats get to play out their twilight years here.

**What's your favourite memory of Brunel?**

The lifelong friends I made there. Also, the concerts, with the Sex Pistols being the stand-out!



## LIVING IN EGYPT - VICTORIA STOKES (BSC SPORT SCIENCES, 2012)

**How long have you lived in Egypt?**

We have been here for 3 years in October 2021.

**How did your journey from the UK to Egypt come about?**

We came here with my husband's job but I managed to find remote work with a financial consultancy firm and I am also studying remotely for a Master's degree part time.

**What cultural change have you enjoyed the most?**

The generosity and friendliness of Egyptian people has been overwhelming, especially during the pandemic. We have met such amazing people here and know it will be hard to leave!

**What's the biggest thing you miss about the UK?**

Certain foods - Greggs sausage rolls and Terry's chocolate orange to be precise!

**What's your favourite memory of Brunel?**

My favourite memory of Brunel would probably be being part of the dance club and cheer team - I have made lifelong friends from these groups and have such great memories of us going away on tour! Brunel people are the best!

## LIVING IN AUSTRALIA - SIOBHAN FEENEY (BSC BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT, 2012)

**How long have you lived in Australia?**

Almost 2.5 years - it'll be 3 years in January 2022

**How did your journey from the UK to Australia come about?**

I travelled here after uni and loved that it was a big city so close to amazing beautiful beaches, so thought I would love to live here at some point. I then had more friends move over and say how great it was and I had to do it before I turned 30 for visa purposes, so went for it. I was only planning 6-12 months but got sucked in (like most people seem to)!

**What cultural change that you've enjoyed the most?**

The more acceptable appreciation of work-life balance and how important your personal

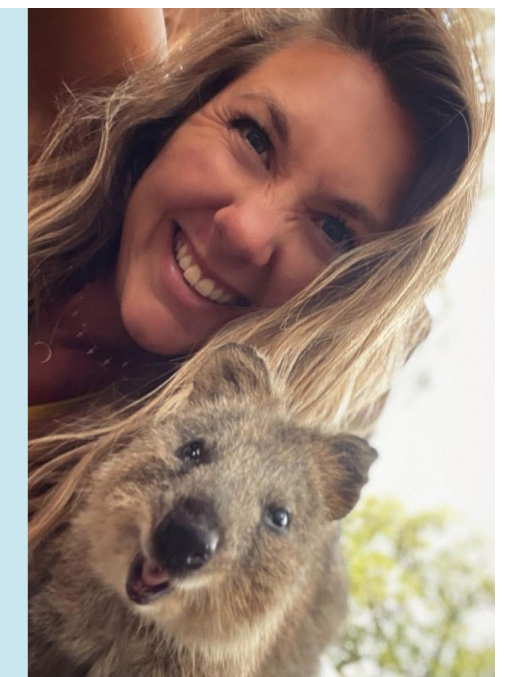
time is - making the most of the mornings before work and evenings after work.

**What's the biggest thing you miss about the UK?**

The variety and vast number of different and unusual things on your doorstep such as events, nightlife, and weekends away (including Europe being so close!).

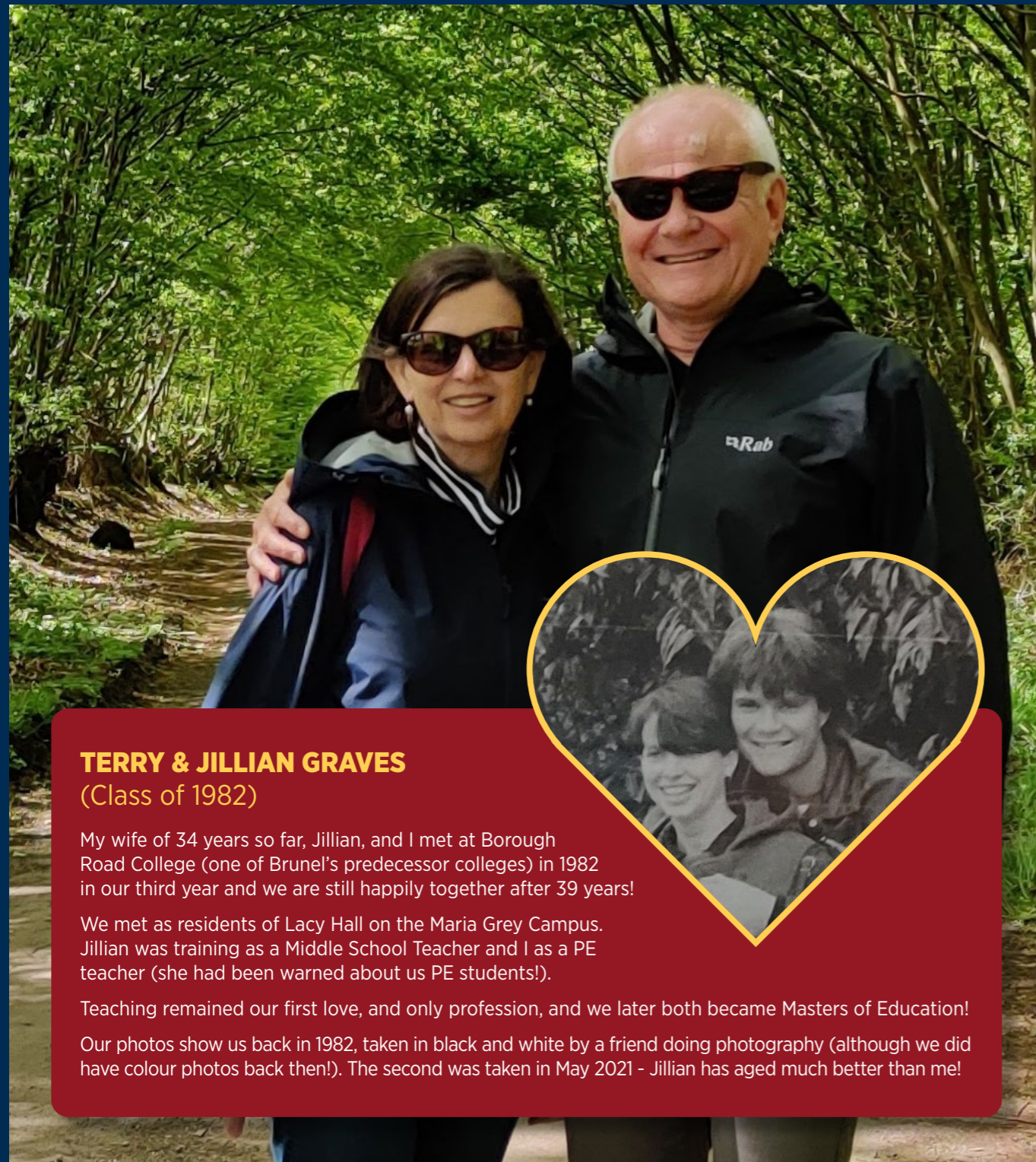
**What's your favourite memory of Brunel?**

It feeling like a close-knit community with the uni as the little central hub. Everyone lived so close so it was really easy to see people, and not too many options of places to go, so you always knew where you'd find people on nights out!



# FALLING IN LOVE AT BRUNEL

We're suckers for a good love story, and there are so many tales of students finding love at Brunel and our predecessor colleges that make our hearts happy. Meet Terry and Jillian Graves, who met as students and are still going strong after nearly 40 years together!



## TERRY & JILLIAN GRAVES (Class of 1982)

My wife of 34 years so far, Jillian, and I met at Borough Road College (one of Brunel's predecessor colleges) in 1982 in our third year and we are still happily together after 39 years!

We met as residents of Lacy Hall on the Maria Grey Campus. Jillian was training as a Middle School Teacher and I as a PE teacher (she had been warned about us PE students!).

Teaching remained our first love, and only profession, and we later both became Masters of Education!

Our photos show us back in 1982, taken in black and white by a friend doing photography (although we did have colour photos back then!). The second was taken in May 2021 - Jillian has aged much better than me!

# OUR TOP PICKS JUST FOR YOU

With a little more time on our hands this past year for indulging in watching, reading or listening to something new, the team in your Development and Alumni Relations Office have pulled together a few of their favourite recommendations just for you.



**MOHAMMED ALAM, OUR SENIOR DEVELOPMENT OFFICER FOR TRUSTS & FOUNDATIONS RECOMMENDS...**

### THE GODFATHER

Having been recommended the Godfather movies many a time by family and friends, I finally decided to go against my philosophical objection to anything remotely to do with the mafia. I decided to read the book at first; at least I wouldn't have to contend with any imagery. But as I read through the pages and chapters, I found myself totally engrossed, and totally gripped by the story and the dynamics of each character - Luca Brasi for instance (aside from the main characters).

I finished the book in one week. The movie (at least the first part, as there is a trilogy) was an excellent depiction of the book, but I would recommend reading the book before watching the movie.



**KIRSTY SMITH, OUR HEAD OF DEVELOPMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS RECOMMENDS...**

### FEEL BETTER, LIVE MORE PODCAST

Having never spent a lot of time listening to podcasts, Lockdown pushed me to set up a new morning routine that has me listening to a wealth of podcasts every day whilst I exercise. 'Feel Better, Live More' with Dr Rangan Chatterjee' (GP and author), covers so many different areas of health and wellbeing that I feel like I'm learning a little something new before the working day has even begun!



**HILARY WHALE, OUR ALUMNI DATABASE AND WEBSITE MANAGER RECOMMENDS...**

### BLOWN AWAY ON NETFLIX

I recommend Blown Away as it is amazing what you can do with glass! This is a competition and each episode is 30 minutes long. The contestants are given a specific theme to work to and put their interpretation on it, and they also have a specialist guest on each one. There are two series to watch on Netflix and it had me gripped! Well worth a watch!



**LEE COLLINS, OUR DATABASE AND WEBSITE ASSISTANT RECOMMENDS...**

### THE LAST KINGDOM SERIES BY BERNARD CORNWELL

Books, audio books and now a TV show, it's a fantastic "docudrama" that chronicles the birth of England from post Roman Britain by fighting off the Danish invasion. The series follows the life of fictional protagonist Uhtred of Bebbanburg through life in Britain as Alfred the Great, then his children, fight to unite the Saxons.



**ANDREW WILLIAMS, OUR SENIOR INTERNATIONAL ALUMNI OFFICER RECOMMENDS...**

### GETTING BACK TO WATCHING SPORTS

I've loved all the sport that we have been treated to over the summer this year, including tuning in to the Olympics to cheer on our Team GB athletes to win some medals. With football nearly coming home, I was glued to the sofa for most of the Euros matches, while also watching the British and Irish Lions rugby tour. Getting back to Lord's and watching some live cricket again with my Dad has been another highlight.



**KAREN AULD, OUR SENIOR ALUMNI OFFICER RECOMMENDS...**

### MARE OF EASTTOWN ON SKY ATLANTIC

This was a fantastic crime drama series starring Kate Winslet as a detective investigating a murder in a small town near Philadelphia. Each episode had me gripped and you really got to know the characters - if you like a good 'whodunnit' that keeps you guessing until the end, this is a great watch.



**JESSICA KATH, OUR PROSPECT DEVELOPMENT AND SPECIAL PROJECTS OFFICER AND LGBTQ+ STAFF NETWORK COORDINATOR RECOMMENDS...**

### GARDENER'S WORLD ON THE BBC

We are keen allotment growers so my recommendation for the lockdown must-watch is, of course, Gardener's World on the BBC. It was really amazing last spring and summer to watch Monty Don and his crew adapt to filming the show remotely, and week to week they would add great features like remote controlled cameras and lockdown gardening clips from viewers all over the world.

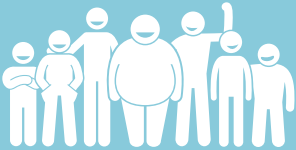
Since I couldn't travel to visit my Mom in the USA last year, we would make a point to video chat from our gardens and discuss that week's episode - and we're still doing it this summer, too. It's great to know even a global pandemic couldn't stop those famous slow-motion shots of bees on flowers, and Monty's lovely dogs bouncing around Longmeadow as they always do!

# STAY CONNECTED

Join us on the official Brunel Network platform  
at **brunelalumni.com**

## RE-CONNECT

Re-discover old friendships, reminisce with classmates and find out about our reunion events



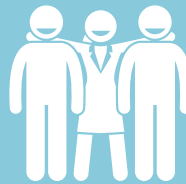
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