



ABER News

150th Anniversary - a year to remember

As a year of 150th Anniversary events draws to an end, the University recently welcomed back former students from a whole range of departments.

The Reunion Weekend took place in June and was a chance to reconnect with old friends and celebrate a century and a half of achievements as Wales' first University college, as well as 130 years of the Old Students' Association.

Town and campus were buzzing, with attendees having the chance to look around new facilities such as the Healthcare Education Centre and Veterinary Education Centre, hear the latest on the redevelopment of the Old College, attend departmental events, a 150th anniversary dinner, and enjoy a walk along the prom to kick the bar.

The reunion was the latest in a series of events and activities which have taken place throughout

the year and have provided an opportunity to celebrate with our students, staff, alumni and local community who have all played a part in shaping the University.

Previous events have included Founders' Day celebrations in Aberystwyth, Cardiff and London; visits to south-east Asia, Washington DC and New York; a reception at the House of Lords; 'Gig Mawr' which celebrated the University's musical heritage; and a charity dinner in partnership with The Scarlets.

We also commemorated the landmark with the publication of the beautifully illustrated *Pennies of the People*, which presents the history of the University through 150 fascinating objects. Copies of the book are available in the Arts Centre and Students' Union shops on campus and from high street bookshops.

Charity of the Year fundraising

Aberystwyth University and Students' Union staff have completed the Welsh Three Peaks Challenge, raising £5,800 for the Chemotherapy Unit at Bronglais Hospital.

Setting off before dawn on Monday 15 May, the 21 walkers took on the challenge of completing the 17-mile trek in less than 24 hours, including travel time.



Shrouded in mist, the cold damp summit of yr Wyddfa was scaled in just two and a half hours, and by lunchtime the crew had reached the sun-lit yet bitterly cold peak of Cadair Idris with its stunning views across mid Wales.



And by 8pm, and bathed in late evening sunshine, the team had reached the highest point in Bannau Brycheiniog, Pen y Fan, having climbed just over 6,000 feet in just 16 hours.

The team of walkers impressed experienced mountain leaders Paul Inch and Connaire Cann with their togetherness on what proved to be an incident free and thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding experience.

Staff member Jean Jones, who helped organise the walk, said: "What a fantastic day – exhausting and exhilarating in equal measure and for such an important cause. We all know people who have benefitted from the facilities at Bronglais so it is nice to feel we have made a little bit of a difference by completing this challenge. Thanks to everyone who took part, to those who supported us on the day, and to everyone who has contributed to the fundraising."

One of the many to congratulate the team on completing the challenge is Professor Andrew Thomas from the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences, who has himself received chemotherapy treatment at Bronglais General Hospital.

Andrew said: "Well done to everyone. I obviously really appreciate the cause, even though I know this isn't about me. But chemo is horrible and the thought of having to travel for it doesn't bear thinking about, and all the hundreds of people going through this in Aber at the moment would agree. It is so important to have the unit in Bronglais, and they are really good. Massive respect and appreciation."



Vice-Chancellor's Column

I'm pleased to be back in Aberystwyth after my most recent medical treatment. Due to the requirements of the treatment my work schedule has been far trickier than usual, and my thanks go to everyone who has helped keep our institution running smoothly during this period. I am also touched by, and thankful for, the many personal messages of support I have received, especially since I shared the personal news in May that I will be retiring at the end of this calendar year.



The process of recruiting our next Vice-Chancellor has begun, and I am committed to ensuring that the handover is smooth. I am sure that the Chair of Council will update you as to the timescale and process as soon as possible.

While I am proud of the achievements over the last six years, there continues to be an awful lot to do and we can't afford to lose momentum. Externally, matters remain challenging. There is so much that I want to achieve during my last six months in office, and I want to share some of my priorities for this period with you.

It will not come as a surprise to you that the main focus right now is on ensuring a strong intake of students for the new academic year. As we target further growth in our student numbers, we need to ensure that everything is in place to support these students appropriately. Where we see additional arrivals from overseas, we are also looking at what additional provisions we should put in place. An increase in student numbers is always good news, and the positive impact on our financial situation means that, although finances are still tight, we are making progress. We must continue to build the annual financial surpluses as we look to make important investments in our operations and our estate. This includes, of course, our ongoing work to relieve workload pressure where pinch-points are identified.

We are already working on a number of academic areas that provide our University with scope to grow. These include Clean Engineering and Nursing, which are examples of how areas in which we are currently working can develop.

We welcome our new PVC for research - Professor Angela Hatton - at the beginning of August. One area she will need to lead on immediately is the impact of the changes to REF for REF2028. They are significant and the University will need to make changes to the way in which we research and undertake impact assessments.

I was delighted to see the recent update on the Old College project, that is now progressing very well. The project is incredibly exciting for the future of this wonderful part of our heritage and of Aberystwyth town centre. As I have spoken about previously, it is also part of our efforts to safeguard the University's future financial sustainability, as we turn parts of our estate that are currently drawing heavily on our resources into excellent assets for our institution and our region.

We will be seeing some staffing changes in the next weeks and months, and some very familiar faces will be retiring. Professor Robert Meyrick from the School of Art, will be retiring at the end of July after a remarkable 41 years

of service to the University, nineteen of those as Head of Department. We will also be saying farewell to Professor Colin McInnes, Pro Vice-Chancellor - Research, Knowledge Exchange and Innovation, after 33 years at the University. Martin Davies our payroll manager retired last week having made sure that we were all paid. Last but not least Sue Pester in RB&I has retired for the second time. I've been told that someone has calculated the value of research grants Sue was connected with and the total is in excess of £100m. My heartfelt thanks to them, and to others who are leaving us, for their commitment, their support and their friendship.

Our 150th anniversary year is now drawing to a close. I am grateful for your support in helping us to mark this remarkable milestone as a University community. We have held events in locations at home and abroad, and at all of them we have been met with a great positivity, which clearly reflects the affectionate fondness that people have for our University and for Aberystwyth town.

The next big event on the University calendar is, of course, graduation, which I always look forward to. It is a joy and a privilege to see the delight on the faces of our newest graduates and their supporters, and to share pride in their achievements. My thanks go to colleagues who are busily working behind the scenes to get everything ready for this year's ceremonies.

Thanks to you all for your continued hard work and support and I hope that you have planned to take a break at some point over the summer.

Professor Elizabeth Treasure
Vice-Chancellor



The Pursuit of Peace

Aberystwyth University Festival of Research, 1-7 November 2023

Professor Mererid Hopwood, Department of Welsh and Celtic Studies

Dr Jenny Mathers, Department of International Politics

Dr Jennifer Wolowic, Dialogue Centre

A century ago, in the aftermath of a devastating war and a global pandemic, the Welsh League of Nations Union Conference convened in Aberystwyth. Its aim was to secure a peaceful and prosperous future for all. Notably, Annie Hughes Griffiths proposed that the women of Wales should petition their American sisters to ensure the USA's membership in the League of Nations. In the subsequent months, women from all backgrounds the length and breadth of Wales were mobilised, and 390,296 signatures were gathered. Now, a hundred years later, the historic petition has been returned from the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. to the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth.

Inspired by this story, Aberystwyth University's 2023 Festival of Research will highlight how individual aspirations and collective commitment can hold significant influence locally, nationally and globally. It aims to celebrate the individuals, groups, and ideas that have shaped peace-making in the past and to explore ways in which we can shape a peaceful future.

As we face the challenges of a contemporary global pandemic, wars in Europe and other continents, and the pressing forces of climate emergency, a new generation of citizens, leaders, and innovative thinkers from Aberystwyth and elsewhere are rising to seek solutions to these circumstances. They are establishing their own networks of influence and contributing to the pursuit of a peaceful and prosperous future.

Join us from 1-7 November, and celebrate the pursuit of peace that has shaped our past and explore ways of defining a peaceful future. The festival will feature book launches, keynote discussions across all disciplines, a community fair, arts and music, as well as impactful dialogues, workshops, and more.

Get involved

We would like to hold sessions related to each of the University's research hubs - The Worlds We Want, Rural Futures, and Artificial Intelligence. Please [submit ideas for events, talks, workshops, student or community programming](#) by 21 July.



The delegation of women who took the historic peace petition to the United States of America in 1924 was led by Annie Hughes-Griffiths who is pictured holding the appeal on the steps of the White House in Washington DC with (L-R) Gladys Thomas, Mary Ellis and Elined Prys).

Photo credit: Welsh Centre for International Affairs.

Hay Festival Medal

Mererid Hopwood, Professor of Welsh and Celtic Studies, was presented with this year's Hay Festival Medal for Poetry.

Awarded annually since Britain's Olympic year (2012), and crafted locally by silversmith Christopher Hamilton, the Hay Festival Medals draw inspiration from the original Olympic medal given for poetry.

Joining Professor Hopwood as Hay Festival Medal winners were celebrated author, illustrator and screenwriter Alice Oseman (Medal for Fiction), Ukraine's rock star poet Serhiy Zhadan (Medal for Songwriting) and prize-winning novelist Salman Rushdie (Medal for Prose).



Professor Mererid Hopwood with Hay Festival CEO Julie Finch. Credit: Adam Tatton-Reid



Town Bard for Aberystwyth



Lecturer in Creative Writing and award-winning poet, Eurig Salisbury, has been appointed as Aberystwyth's first ever Town Bard (Bardd y Dref).

The announcement was made at Aberystwyth Town Council's Mayoral Inauguration Ceremony on 19 May, where Aberystwyth University alumna, Councillor Kerry Ferguson assumed office as Mayor.

At the Ceremony at the National Library of Wales, the new Mayor presented Eurig with the bardic staff and certificate. In return, Eurig

read poems for the newly appointed Mayor and retiring Mayor, Talat Chaudhri.

The idea of creating the post of Town Bard in Aberystwyth was the suggestion of Councillor Emlyn Jones, the new Mayor's consort, who said: "Aberystwyth is a very literary and artistic town, and I am very proud that we have agreed to establish a Town Bard. This is a reflection of the area's poetic wealth, with a look back to the Welsh poetic tradition of having a 'court' poet, but mainly looking forward to celebrating modern Welsh poets and poems that flourish here in Aberystwyth. I can think of no one better than Eurig to be the first bard in this new tradition!"

In receiving his new title, Eurig said: "I feel honoured to have been appointed Aberystwyth's first ever Town Bard, and am looking forward to a year of poetry ahead. This new initiative is a wonderful demonstration of the continuing importance of poetry of a strong public, community-based nature here in Wales."

Computer Science crowned Department of the Year 2023

Computer Science was crowned Department of the Year 2023 at the Teaching, Learning & Student Experience Awards held by Aberystwyth Students' Union on Thursday 4 May.



Organised annually by the Students' Union with the support of the University, the awards highlight teaching excellence and recognise the contributions of staff and students to the student experience.

Nominations for the Department of Computer Science praised the passion and knowledge of teaching staff, state-of-the-art facilities and cutting-edge research. They commended the supportive learning environment, vibrant and engaging atmosphere, and commitment to diversity and inclusion. Nominations also praised the department's strong connections with top technology companies and community engagement and outreach work, and the opportunities that these afforded to students.

Aberystwyth University Students' Union Academic Affairs Officer, Elizabeth Manners said: "Well done to everyone who was nominated for an award this year, and congratulations to our winners. The nominations were a pleasure to read and a testament to our fantastic staff and students who strive to make the Aberystwyth student experience truly fantastic."

Professor Tim Woods, Pro Vice Chancellor for Learning, Teaching and Student Experience said: "Thank you to Aberystwyth Students' Union for an enjoyable evening celebrating everything that makes our University so special, and my warmest congratulations to all the winners."

The winners of the Aberystwyth University Teaching, Learning & Student Experience Awards 2023 are:

Department of the Year

Department of Computer Science

Lecturer of the Year

Andrew Baldwin, School of Art

Personal Tutor of the Year

Dr Helen Miles, Department of Computer Science

Supervisor of the Year

Professor Luis Mur, Department of Life Sciences

Support/Service Staff Member of the Year

Helen Williams

Postgraduate Teacher of the Year

Abby Monk

Student Staff Member of the Year

Lilly Casey-Green

Student Mentor of the Year

Muhammad Naveed Arshad

Student Volunteer of the Year

Andrine Vangberg

Welsh Culture Champion

Cai Phillips

Academic Representative of the Year

Zoe Hayne

Liberation Champion Award

Dax Aziraphale FitzMedrud & Elena Bloomquist

Old College restoration work begins

Last month saw the restoration stage of the Old College project get underway.

Scaffolding is now being erected along the prom-facing side of the Old College as work on the fabric of the building - the stonework, windows and roof - gets underway to make the building water-tight before winter.

This marks an important milestone in the project and follows on from extensive work to remove internal and external features added to the historic site over more recent decades.

The old Estates Building in King Street has been removed to make way for a new atrium that will offer access to all levels of the building.

Additions to inside the building made during the 1960s have also been removed, revealing many original architectural features, including what is believed to have been a gymnasium in the early days of the University.

Respecting the heritage of the building is a priority and has required detailed architectural work to comply with the listed building consents necessary before work can be done on the Grade 1 listed building, work which will be ongoing as the project evolves.

Manchester based Stoneguard will be working on the stonework and has worked on prestigious projects in Kew Gardens, the Natural History Museum and the Palace of Westminster.

The Old College features 664 windows set in stone, steel and wooden frames. Restoration of the wooden frames is underway and being done by Cardigan-based heritage carpenter Gary Davies, who worked on the award-winning restoration of Cardigan Castle.

And the mammoth task of reroofing the Old



Cardigan based heritage carpenter Gary Davies (left) and Leighton Brown, Project Manager with Andrew Scott Ltd with one of the original windows from the Georgian Villas.

College is being taken on by heritage roof restoration specialists Greenough and Sons from Ynys Môn, who have worked previously on the National Library of Wales and Castell Coch, and are also currently working on Manchester Town Hall.

[You can read more about the restoration work online here.](#)

Levelling Up Fund

The Old College project has been awarded £5.4m from the UK Government through its Levelling Up Fund as part of a successful package of bids led by Ceredigion County Council and announced in October 2021.

The grant is fully funding the acquisition and integration of The Cambria into the Old College project.

The Cambria, home to the Theological College for the best part of the last century but more recently office space, sits next to the Old College and the Georgian villas and immediately opposite the Pier. Once completed it will provide additional conference and meeting facilities along with additional 4* hotel accommodation.

A £43m investment

With the addition of The Cambria, the Old College project in its entirety represents a £43m investment.

The addition of The Cambria represents a second phase to the project.

Phase 1, which involves the Old College itself and the Georgian villas (1 & 2 Marine Terrace), is expected to be completed around the end of 2025.

Phase 2, The Cambria, will follow and is expected to take another year to be completed.

The Grade 1 listed status of Old College makes this a challenging project which may yet present further challenges as work progresses.

Want to know more?

You can find out more about the Old College project [on our web pages.](#)



Students and staff beat the hacker in Cyber Escape experience



Over one hundred students and staff learned about online security in a hands-on way when they took part in a Cyber Escape experience on Penglais Campus at the beginning of June.

The escape room-style event saw teams of five working together to discover clues, solve puzzles and decipher riddles in a touring escape room built inside a shipping container.

Participants were able to improve their understanding of potential cyber security risks while learning how to reduce the impact of a cyber-attack by protecting online information and assets.

Organised by Information Services, Cyber Escape was a collaboration between CGI (IT and business consultants), Dyfed-Powys Police, and the Cyber Resilience Centre for Wales.



Team from Student Services

Dan Monaghan, Cyber Security Team Leader in Information Services, said:

"Malware and phishing attempts are a significant threat to institutions such as the University, as cyber attacks are becoming increasingly complex and intelligent. The CGI Cyber Escape experience gave students and staff the opportunity to learn about online security risks in a fun, interactive and hopefully memorable way.

"Feedback from those who took part in the exercise was really positive, with people commenting on how the practical format of the session had more impact than traditional training, and how it had been an effective team-building activity. We are hugely grateful to CGI for bringing the Cyber Escape experience to the University."

Information Services hopes to be able to bring the Cyber Escape experience back to the campus again in 2024.



Team from Human Resources



Team from the Department of Computer Science



Team from Information Services

Law lecturer opens home to Ukrainian refugees

On 27 February 2023, dozens of Ukrainians, host families and dignitaries from across Wales gathered at the Senedd in Cardiff Bay to show continuing support for Ukraine more than a year on since the Russian invasion.

Among them was Aberystwyth University law lecturer Rosemary Toll who, along with her partner Jonathan, has hosted three generations of one family since May 2022.

We asked Rosemary to tell us more about her experience:

What made you decide to become a sponsor?

When the war started and other European countries started to offer assistance to Ukraine, we immediately felt that we wanted to help if we could. Jon and I knew that we had enough space to host a family and that it made sense to offer it to those in need. Our main reason to host, however, was because we knew that if we were ever refugees fleeing a warzone, we would want to know that somebody, somewhere, would be willing to help us.

What was the process of becoming a sponsor like?

As soon as the Homes for Ukraine Scheme was launched, I set about trying to find a family to host. At the time (March 2022) there was no formal matching process and the Welsh Government was not yet acting as a sponsor itself. Essentially, this meant that if you wanted to host, you had to find named individuals. Most people were doing this through social media and, frankly, it was heartbreaking. There were so many people in need and it was really hard to decide who to contact.

I saw Iryna's post about her family of four and felt that we could manage to host a bigger group, thereby helping them avoid being split up. I sent her a message and, as the saying goes, the rest is history... minus the enormous problems we had with the UK Home Office that dragged on for 7 weeks. I should add here that

my MP, Liz Saville-Roberts, was fantastic in helping me put pressure on the Home Office to issue their visas promptly.

Tell us a bit about the family you have staying with you.

We have Iryna and her two sons, aged 17 and 11, along with Iryna's mother, Nina.

Iryna's husband is still in Ukraine and can't leave, but we have met him on video calls and he seems to be an incredibly kind and resilient man. In addition, I helped to find a sponsor for Iryna's sister and her son only two miles away, so the six of them could live near to each other, until Iryna's sister and her son returned to Ukraine.



Nina, Iryna and Iryna's sons

Nina enjoys cooking and we have tried many traditional Ukrainian dishes thanks to her. Iryna is working locally and helping to support her family back home financially. The younger boy, Vova, is at primary school, and will start secondary school in September. He loves football and is playing for the local under-11 team. He barely spoke any language when he arrived and is now chatting away in both English and Welsh, which is very impressive! His older brother, Yarik, is working part time whilst he completes his Ukrainian school diploma online and learns more advanced English. He has always wanted to study law and business and has an offer to study at Aberystwyth - I really hope he will join us later this year.

What was it like welcoming a family of strangers into your home?

There is no denying that it was daunting. I was really nervous when we went to collect them from Liverpool Airport; Jon and I had no idea what to expect. At the beginning of the Scheme, there was very little support organised for hosts and guests. However, over the months, that infrastructure improved and I can honestly say that our County Council, Gwynedd, have been incredible.

Whenever I felt overwhelmed or worried, I always tried to remind myself how much scarier this experience was for our guests, who had left their country, family and home behind in such awful circumstances.

What have you learnt from the experience?

Sharing your home with a family of strangers (although, they are not strangers now) with a different culture and language teaches you a lot about tolerance. I think we have a tendency in the West to feel that the way we do everything is 'better' and we can look down on those from other cultures. It has been very humbling to see this family, and the other Ukrainians we have met in our local community, build lives here, albeit that they hope to return home as soon as they can.

Tell us about the event you attended at the Senedd.

In February, the Welsh Government invited us to a special commemorative event to mark the one year anniversary of the war. We were one of only seven host families from across Wales that was invited, so it was a huge privilege and honour to attend. There were various speakers, including Mick Antoniwi, Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution, and a representative of the Ambassador to Ukraine.

There were also some Ukrainian musicians who had sought sanctuary in Wales, playing traditional music. We were all offered lunch, and the chance to chat to others involved



Nina, Vova, Iryna and Yarik



Rosemary with Iryna, Yarik and Vova

with the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. Then our guests were given a tour of the Senedd, with a translator. They very much enjoyed the event and said it was very special and emotional for them.



If you knew what the experience would be like, would you do it over again?

Well, with the support of Gwynedd County Council, the family who have been living with us have found a house to rent in a nearby town, and so will be moving out of our home in July. We will continue to support them as they navigate life in Wales.

Jon and I have agreed that we would definitely consider hosting a refugee family again. The experience we have gained has helped us understand what we could and would do differently next time to make things easier and smoother for all involved.

Sponsored walk

Student nurses and lecturers from Aberystwyth University walked the Aberystwyth promenade to raise funds for Bronglais Hospital chemotherapy day unit, the University's Charity of the Year 2022-23.

The sponsored walk, which took place on 28 May 2023, saw student nurses and nursing lecturers walk the promenade 10 times.

Gwenno Jones, a student representative for Mental Health Nursing at Aberystwyth

University, said: "As the first nursing cohort of Aberystwyth University, it's important that we support the local hospital, in particular the chemotherapy day unit as it's such a vital unit to have in a very rural area.

"It's also important to us to support the university's chosen charity of the year as they have put in so much work to welcome us nurses to the area. Creating the nursing course in a town like Aberystwyth has allowed many local people to fulfil their dreams of becoming future nurses."



Empowering digital skills: two years of supporting student and staff development



Dr Sioned Llywelyn leads the University's Digital Skills Project. Launched in summer 2021, the project supports students and staff to both assess and develop their digital skills. We heard from Sioned back in our February 2022 edition, so we have invited her to update us on the project's exciting progress since then.

What has been your biggest achievement over the past year?

One of our major achievements this year has been the successful rollout of the [Jisc Digital Discovery Tool \(DDT\)](#) to all foundation and first-year students. Following a pilot in 2021/22, over 1,000 students completed the DDT this year, enabling them to assess and improve their digital skills.

This accomplishment was made possible through collaboration with various departments and teams, including academic colleagues, Subject Librarians, Careers Consultants, and valuable feedback from students themselves.

When will other students be able to use the Digital Discovery Tool (DDT), and is it available for staff?

We encourage students to complete the DDT annually to track their evolving digital skills. With support from the Subject Librarians, Careers Consultants, and academic colleagues, we have conducted another pilot this year and have developed a comprehensive plan for how all undergraduate and postgraduate students will be supported to engage with the DDT and develop their digital skills in the upcoming academic year.

The DDT is also a valuable resource for staff, who are also encouraged to complete

it annually. Staff have access to a variety of question sets, including self-assessing their overall digital skills, digital accessibility and inclusion, effective digital teaching, and leading for digital change.

You mentioned last time that you were planning on developing new resources, can you tell us a bit more about these?

We've developed several new resources this year, but the two main ones have been the Digital Skills Library and the Digital Skills collections in LinkedIn Learning.

The [Digital Skills Library](#) contains over 200 AU and external resources to support students to develop a range of new and existing digital skills. These are split into six collections and provide resources on improving online safety; developing skills in specific software, such as how to code using Python; and tips on collaborating with others online. We will be launching another library, specifically for staff, in June 2023.

We have also developed 30 new Digital Skills Collections in LinkedIn Learning ([15 for students](#) and [15 for staff](#)) to make it much easier to find courses and videos within the online learning platform to help develop specific digital skills. Each collection contains nine resources, ranging from short 3-minute videos to more in-depth courses.

Can you tell us about any other key developments?

We responded to the feedback for more staff training in digital skills development, both for staff themselves and to support their students with their development. This year, we conducted new training sessions, engaging with 110 members of staff.

Another significant development was the appointment of Student Digital Champions within our team. They have provided invaluable insights into student needs and have led several innovative projects including interviewing graduates about the digital skills they are using in the workplace; gathering student feedback on LinkedIn Learning; creating diverse LinkedIn Learning collections on topics like time management and online safety; publishing informative blog posts; and promoting our team's resources through stands, social media, and infographics.

What are you most looking forward to next year?

The first is the Digital Skills Festival, a new event set to take place from 6-10 November 2023. It will be a week-long event with opportunities for students to explore all things digital. We'll have a combination of hands-on workshops, demonstrations, drop-in sessions, and much more.

Additionally, we're collaborating with colleagues from Information Services (IS) to develop the IS Digital Essentials for Teaching module. This module will provide new academic staff and those with teaching responsibilities with essential training, guidance, and support from IS all in one place. It will be launched at the end of summer 2023, ensuring that new academic staff are well-prepared for the upcoming academic year.

Who's who



Dr Sioned Llywelyn
Digital Skills Lead



Shân Saunders
Digital Capabilities & Skills Development Coordinator



Jia Ping Lee
Digital Capabilities & Skills Development Coordinator



Jeffrey Clark
Student Digital Champion



Laurie Stevenson
Student Digital Champion

Keeping up to date

To keep up to date with the project, please subscribe to our [Digital Skills WordPress site](#).

If you have any general questions about our work or the resources we support, please get in touch - digi@aber.ac.uk

Development of new Smart Home Lab

by Dr Patricia Shaw, Senior Lecturer, Intelligent Robotics, Computer Science

A new facility is being built on Penglais Campus to support and further develop research by the University's Intelligent Robotics research group based in the Department of Computer Science..



Professor Colin McInnes and Dr Patricia Shaw at the smart home construction site

The new Smart Home Lab will be modelled on a 3-bedroom bungalow and will support collaborative research for developing and evaluating new technologies that can assist independent living for the elderly and people with disabilities.

Equipped with a wide range of sensors for monitoring activities within the house, the lab will also include robotic equipment to assist with day-to-day activities. The space will be fully functional, enabling participants to take part in experiments that involve staying overnight or over a series of days.

The facility will allow the Intelligent Robotics research group to work in collaboration with academics across the University, in particular colleagues from the Department of Psychology, as well as health and social care providers across Wales.

One aspect of research that will take place within the Smart Home Lab is assisted wheelchair navigation. Steering around corridors and through tight doorways is a significant challenge for many wheelchair users, and existing research at Aberystwyth has considered how technology can assist with this.

The system developed enabled the user to give instructions to the chair, for example "Take me to the kettle", which would then plan a route to the most likely remembered location of the object. Having the new Smart Home Lab will enable us to further develop and test systems such as this in a near real-world setting. Through working closely with stakeholders, such as social care providers, we plan to apply our research to support the development of technologies to meet the end-users needs and solve real-world issues.



Dr Patricia Shaw

Another aspect of research that will be further explored and developed using the new Smart Home Lab is robot pets. Whilst these robots provide social interaction and companionship like a pet, they are also able to learn our typical routines - for example, when we get up, go out, or arrive home. Observing changes in patterns over time, such as getting up later or not going out as much, can be early indicators for

mental health conditions such as depression. Furthermore, as a mobile robot, if the occupant had a fall or collapsed, the robot would be able to raise an alarm, communicating with family or carers to bring help for someone living on their own. Further research enabled by the lab will explore technologies for rural health care including remote access to medical practitioners and technologies for monitoring health and wellbeing, as well as linking into ambulance response for providing additional information and an 'eye inside' enroute to calls.

The new Smart Home Lab will provide mid-Wales with a unique opportunity to showcase how technology can support our lives in the home of the future. Whilst its chief purpose is for research on assisted living, it is hoped that the new space will also provide an opportunity for others to develop research relating to the home environment. The space will be useful for research topics ranging from energy management, use of space or monitoring air quality, experiments requiring a home environment (such as research on stroke rehabilitation), or training opportunities.

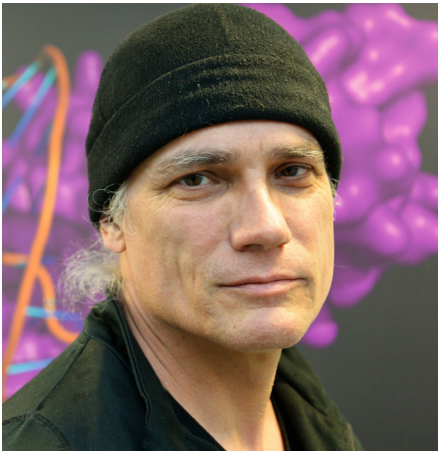
Anyone interested in using the new Smart Home Lab should contact Dr Patricia Shaw - phs@aber.ac.uk.



'Pixel' the robot cat

Spotlight on... the Graduate School

by Professor Reyer Zwiggelaar, Head of the Graduate School



The Graduate School supports our postgraduate students (both research and taught), offering a suite of programmes to enhance their personal and professional development, and prepare them for the next steps in their careers.

The team has recently expanded with a number of fractional appointments. Taken together, these significantly strengthen support for empowering postgraduate students and early career researchers across the University to succeed in their chosen careers, bringing a range of expertise and experience as well as enthusiasm to their roles.

Firstly, we have expanded the Graduate School team with the appointment of two additional Deputy Heads: Professor Matt Jarvis (English and Creative Writing) and Dr Mitch Rose (Geography and Earth Sciences), each at 0.2 FTE (full time equivalent). Whilst both will contribute to the overall direction of the Graduate School, Matt will specifically take responsibility for postgraduate research student well-being and the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers; and Mitch for the postgraduate research supervisor development programme and the Research Students' Consultative Group. Mitch will continue (at an additional 0.4 FTE) to provide our research design and qualitative training and contribute to the Teaching for Postgraduates at Aberystwyth University (TPAU) programme.

We have extended the role of Dr Sophie Bennett-Gillison, who is our Deputy Head of the Professional Doctorate (DProf) Programme, to 0.3 FTE. She will further develop our provision for DProf students, but will also specifically contribute to our induction, TPAU and supervisor development programmes.

Dr Peter Wootton-Beard (IBERS) and Dr Sam

Doyle (Geography and Earth Sciences) also recently started roles within the Graduate School (as Senior Teaching Fellow at 0.1 FTE and Lecturer at 0.3 FTE, respectively) and will provide support in hybrid learning and in our quantitative provision, respectively. We have also formalised the writing support, module coordination and teaching that Dr John Morgan provides (at 0.2 FTE) for our postgraduate students. In addition, John will take on additional responsibilities within our DProf and induction provision.

In developing the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, we have appointed Dr Sarah Wydall as Academic Lead (at 0.25 FTE) and Dr Otar Akanyeti as Deputy Academic Lead (at 0.15 FTE). The pair will lead the University's increasing efforts to create a healthy, inclusive, and supportive research environment where researchers are recruited, employed, and managed under conditions that recognise and value their contributions, and have time and opportunity for personal and professional growth. The Concordat team will also contribute to the design and delivery of the Aberystwyth-Bangor Research Leadership programme.

They are all expertly supported by the wider Graduate School team, which includes Jan Davies (Assistant Registrar), Shân Jones (Administrative Officer), Julie Hancox (DProf Administrator), and Claire Salter (Academic Registry Admin Assistant), who can all be contacted through the graduate.school@aber.ac.uk email address. Finally, Dr Alan Macmillan (Faculty Registrar for Business and Physical Sciences), has responsibility for the Graduate School within the Academic Registry and oversees PGR policy, regulations and quality assurance.

Left to right:

*Jan Davies
Mitch Rose
Sarah Wydall
Peter Wootton-Beard
Alan Macmillan
Reyer Zwiggelaar
Julie Hancox
Claire Salter
Samuel Doyle
Sophie Bennett-Gillison
Otar Akanyeti
John Morgan.*



Travel to work

The University recently launched its annual Staff Commuting Survey, which collects information on how members of staff travel to work.

The results of the survey help the Sustainability Team to identify priorities and explore ways to reduce travel emissions, as we work towards our ambition of becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

The anonymous survey, which takes approximately five minutes to complete, can be found here:

<https://forms.office.com/e/3NDBDkEBUu>





AberWW2 allotment at Penglais

Since spring 2022, a new 'living history' experiment has been taking place in the field between the Fferm Penglais and Pentre Jane Morgan student residences.

The AberWW2 allotment was originally launched as a COVID-safe activity for the Department of History and Welsh History's National Lottery Heritage Fund project, *People's Voices in a People's War: Aberystwyth 1939-45*.

Inspired by a 1942 pamphlet encouraging

people to turn their gardens into 'Dig for Victory' vegetable plots, it aims to provide students, staff and community volunteers with the opportunity to experience gardening methods of the past, grow their own vegetables, contribute to community food sustainability and enjoy a new green outdoor campus space.



Long-established weeds, pre cultivation

Last year was very much an experiment. The plot had never been cultivated before, so weeding was a constant battle. The field's rabbit population wiped out our entire pea and French bean crop. We were astonished at how many onions the wartime gardener aimed to grow (eight rows, some 400 plants - we didn't come close). But we were also astonished at how many potatoes we managed to grow (several sackfuls); at how productive our broad beans and runner beans were (planted for us by Dosbarth 1 students at Ysgol Gatholig Padarn Sant), despite the near-absence of rain; and how huge our savoy cabbages grew.

Despite the drought (and the rabbits) we were able to harvest vegetables from July until December, including broad and runner beans, shallots, onions, potatoes, three kinds of cabbage, carrots, leeks, brussels sprouts, perpetual spinach and kale. Our produce was shared among our volunteers and donated to Aber Food Surplus and to the St Paul's Methodist Centre 'pay as you feel' café.



Volunteers, Yi and Julio, with savoy cabbage

We learned some things about wartime gardening: notably, the time and effort it must have taken at a time when people's lives were already so busy, but also how surprisingly helpful and well thought out wartime gardening guides, leaflets and books typically were. We also found the need to compromise over some aspects of wartime gardening practice. Double-digging was something no-one was



Volunteer, Kate with some of the produce



Volunteer, Hannah, planting shallots

keen on. Planting in rows raised eyebrows from those more used to companion planting. And we were slightly taken aback by the typical wartime gardener's reliance on chemical assistance (notably nicotine spray - highly toxic and thankfully now illegal), so took inspiration instead from a more prescient wartime publication, Lady Eve Balfour's organic manifesto *The Living Soil* (1943).

This year the allotment has benefited mightily from the generosity of Tyfu Dyfi, the Welsh Government's Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being (ENRaW) project, who have provided us with a proper rabbit-proof fence, a toolshed and two much-appreciated garden benches.

Now in the second year of our three-year wartime crop rotation, we have extended the range of vegetables planted with assistance from the Heritage Seed Library, our peas and beans are flowering and St Padarn's runner beans are thriving. Our volunteer base continued to grow, and includes students, staff and community gardeners.

The AberWW2 allotment is the first element of a planned 'Living History Garden Project' on the site, to include a medieval herb garden, plots for student and community gardeners, and a heritage fruit orchard to mark the University's 150th anniversary. We hope to develop its use in teaching and in schools outreach activities. Beyond any historical lessons, though, the AberWW2 allotment demonstrates the value of gardening, for outdoor activity, for healthy and sustainable eating, and for wellbeing.



St Padarn's beans



The new rabbit-proof fence, April 2023



Produce for Aber Food Surplus

Would you like to know more?

If you would like to learn more, become a volunteer, and/or receive our weekly email updates, please contact Professor Siân Nicholas, Department of History and Welsh History, shn@aber.ac.uk

KEEZLE WACKA

Our regular article from the University's Information Governance Team highlighting just a few of the extraordinary items preserved for posterity in the University archive.

Graduation through the ages

As we have now passed the longest day, we are also hurtling towards the end of another academic year, and that can only mean one thing - graduation.

After last year's bumper edition following two years of COVID cancellations, this year's event will be a slightly more compact, bijou affair, taking place over three days in the Arts Centre's Great Hall.

With the growth of the Penglais campus in the 60s and 70s, 1971 saw the Great Hall playing host to the University's celebration of graduating students for the first time. What a party! And since its addition to the piazza in 2003, there is no happier sight than seeing the hundreds of flying caps above the steps of La Scala, the pinnacle of years of hard work and conscientious study.



Graduation 2019

The setting for graduation has changed several times over the years, with the first major graduation ceremony held at the newly completed Royal Pier Pavilion on 26 June 1896, following the granting of the Royal Charter which meant that the University could award its

own degrees.

One notable difference is that since 1902, each of the constituent colleges of the University of Wales would alternately play host to its sister colleges, as seen in the 1920 photograph of Aber graduates on tour indicates below.



Capping Ceremony, Bangor, 15 July 1920 - Aberystwyth Graduates

In 1907, it was held on 22 November at the Coliseum (now part of the museum on Terrace Road) and then in the Parish Hall before moving in 1923 to the newly built 3,000 seater College Hall in North Road. With the late lamented College Hall, destroyed by fire on Sunday, 13th August 1933, the Parish Hall again provided a temporary stopgap. The eventually flattened King's Hall then became our graduation venue. The procession from the Old College along the Prom to the King's Hall was an important annual event in Aberystwyth.



College Hall, Aberystwyth




Women in cap and gown opposite the King's Hall

The itinerary for graduation day has also seen change, so what was it like in the past, you might ask?

The ceremony was initially held annually in November. However, on 22 November 1907, the ceremony at the Coliseum resulted in a full-scale riot by the students that brought proceedings to end before all the degrees were awarded. Following this incident the University decided that the degree ceremony would from then on be held in July.

Thanks to recent accessions into the archive, we have an insight into the degree congregation and graduation ceremonies held in 1953 and 1967.

In 1953, the ceremony was held in the King's Hall and the College Song was included in the Order of Proceedings.

PRIFYSGOL CYMRU  UNIVERSITY OF WALES

CONGREGATION OF THE UNIVERSITY
to be held in the
KING'S HALL, ABERYSTWYTH,
on TUESDAY, 21 JULY, 1953, at 2.30 p.m.

ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS.

Procession of the Mayor and Town Council of Aberystwyth entering the Congregation.

Procession of the University and College Officers entering the Congregation.

The College Song.

COLLEGE SONG.

Some boast their classic stream
Where nymphs and naiads dream,
Their buildings touched by Time fill old and grey.
Our College towers in pride
By the Western Waters side
Where wild waves vainly beat along the bay.

Chorus—
"What may your motto be, O College by the sea?"
"Nid byd, byd heb wybodaeth," answer we,
Rage ye gales! Ye surges seethe!
Aberystwyth fu a fydd!

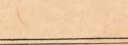
Proclamation of the Congregation.

Declaration of a resolution of the Court authorising the admission of graduands to degrees and honours.

University College of Wales, Aberystwyth
1872-1947

Graduation Ceremony
IN THE KING'S HALL, ABERYSTWYTH
on Saturday, 25th October, at 11 a.m.
Doors Open 10 a.m.
Ticket holders are requested to be seated before 10-45 a.m.

Ticket of admission — not transferable

Prifysgol Cymru  University of Wales

Graduation Ceremony
in the
KING'S HALL, ABERYSTWYTH
Thursday, July 29th, 1948, at 2.30 p.m.

GRADUAND'S FRIEND

Admission at the main entrance, King's Hall Doors open 2 p.m.
Ticket holders are requested to be seated before 2.15 p.m.

In 1967, the dress code was somewhat limiting "it is desired that men students should wear dark suits, white collars and College ties and that women students should wear dark skirts, stockings, white blouses and College ties." My word, how times have changed!



Graduation procession in the 1960s, led by Principal Sir Thomas Parry

Graduation gowns and mortarboards (hats) are now ordered online through J Wippell & Co. Ltd., Academic Robes, Exeter at a cost of £69 (undergraduate robes). Interestingly, back in 1967, the graduand was able to choose the material of both gown and hood and there was also a choice of cap.

EDE & RAVENSCROFT LTD. 1967
 93-94 CHANCERY LANE, LONDON, W.C.2
 Official Robemakers to the University
 Wales University Degree Ceremony

Please complete the form below and RETURN IMMEDIATELY together with the appropriate amount of money. If Hired, the robes will be in the robing room provided by the University prior to the Ceremony, and should be returned there immediately afterwards. Should extra time have been paid for they should be returned, as per label supplied, within 7 days, but if retained longer they will be liable to an extra charge.

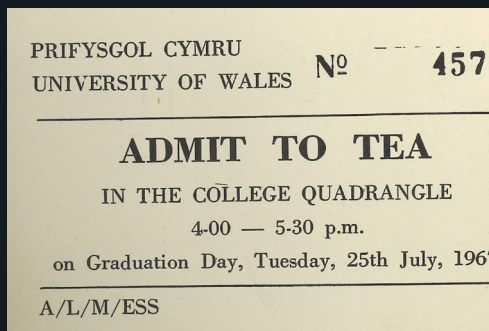
NEW Bachelors' Degrees			
Gowns—	Twill	£5 18 6	
	Rayon Cord	£7 7 0	
	Russell Cord	£8 19 6	
Hoods—	Art Silk	£4 7 0	
	Russell Cord	£3 18 6	
	Rayon Cord	£2 17 0	
	M.B. £4 19 6 B.Mus.	£5 17 0	
Caps—	folding skull	£1 7 6	hard skull £2 7 6

Prices for Doctors' and Masters Robes on Application

HIRE Charges for Robes:	Bachelors	Masters	Doctors
	Incl. M.B.		
For Ceremony	30/-	35/-	65/-
For additional time (up to one week)	10/-	15/-	20/-

★ Orders (with remittance) must be placed immediately

A graduation ball was held at the King's Hall on the eve of the ceremony and, as you'd expect, family and friends were invited by the college to tea in the quadrangle immediately after the ceremony. A cup of tea was always the go-to back then and there was no sign of a bottle of bubbly.



And believe it or not, before graduands were admitted to their degrees they were required to sign the University of Wales Roll. Each page of the Roll begins with the following declaration "I pledge myself and promise to the Chancellor of the University, giving my hand, that I will maintain and advance our University, its honour, reputation and safety; that I will never forget the benefit of knowledge that has been bestowed upon me, nor put it to ignoble ends, but will live honourably to increase, extend and spread knowledge to the utmost of my powers."

It feels as though Aber graduates do a pretty good job of adhering to those principles, but perhaps it's about time we created our own pledge?

Why "Keezle Wacka"?

The column's title is taken from the Aberystwyth 'College Yell', which originates from 1905 when the decision was taken to establish a chant with which to support fellow Aber students at inter-college sporting events. Following a competition in the Old College Quad when a number of proposed yells were demonstrated by their composers, a winning yell was adopted. The expression 'Keezle Wacka' used in the Aberystwyth College Yell was later chosen as the title for the Aber RAG magazine which ran for several decades, and seemed an appropriately quirky title for this column.



An update from AberSU

We've hosted and attended a number of celebratory events at the end of the 2022-23 academic year and therefore taking the opportunity to share a number of wins in this edition of AberNews

Elections

In March, 24% of Aber students voted for the next team of full-time officers and volunteer officers to lead the Union and represent Aber students.

Congratulations to all candidates and good luck to the incoming officer team:

Students' Union President

Bayanda Vundamina (Biochemistry)

Welsh Culture Officer & UMCA President

Elain Gwynedd (Cymraeg)

Student Opportunities Officer

Tiff McWilliams (Psychology)

Academic Affairs Officer

Anna Simpkins (English Literature)

Wellbeing Officer

Helen Cooper (English Literature)

[Full Elections results can be found here.](#)

AberSU Celebrates

Celebrates week took place in May with our two main events - the Teaching, Learning, & Student Experience Awards and the Sports and Societies Awards - taking place in the Students' Union for the first time in a number of years.

858 nominations were received in total this year.

[Societies Awards results](#)

[Sports Awards results](#)

[Teaching, Learning, & Student Experience Awards](#)

Employee Engagement Survey

We are thrilled with the results of our 2023 Employee Engagement Survey which show us benchmarking higher than our peer group (all participating Students' Unions and participating third sector organisations) in nearly all but a couple of areas and statements.

WhatUni awards

We were delighted with Aberystwyth's win in the Student Life category at the recent WhatUni Student Choice Awards 2023.

This highlights the hard work and dedication of the Students' Union staff team in providing opportunities for students to have the best time possible here at Aberystwyth; from over 100 Sports Clubs and Societies to join, a variety of volunteering experiences on offer, and a range of events offering opportunities to meet your Aber community AberSU.



Key 2022-23 Impacts

- Half of all Aber students have engaged with the Students' Union either through democracy, volunteering, clubs or societies or by being an Academic Representative.
- Our Advice Service directly supported 319 student cases and had 12,572 interactions with our information and guidance.
- 8,323 volunteering hours logged this year by the 116 students registered as volunteers.
- Almost half of Aber students have been a part of one of our Tîm Aber groups; 43 Sports Clubs and 78 Societies.
- 27 Aberystwyth sports teams competed in 520 BUCS fixtures and won 52 games.
- 278 Academic Representatives were elected this academic year.

In addition to the day job...



Helen Jones

Many of you will know Helen Jones in her capacity as Director of Research, Business and Innovation (RBI). Fewer of you may know that, in addition to the day job, Helen is a keen softball player.

In November 2022, Helen headed to the Gold Coast in Queensland, Australia to compete in the Pan Pacific Masters Games. We asked Helen to tell us about her enjoyment of softball and her trip.

Can you explain what softball is?

It's a game similar to baseball played with a larger ball on a smaller field, with more restrictions on when you can run and using only underhand pitches.

It's played competitively at club levels, the college level, and the professional level. The game was first created in 1887 and is one of the most popular social sports in the east coast of Australia, but it's been an official Olympic sport too.

The ball isn't soft - at all. It's broken four of my fingers, two toes and a few bones on the back of my hand over the many years of playing in New South Wales and Queensland!

There are two forms of the game; Slowpitch - more like rounders, and Fastpitch - which moves faster than baseball and the pitches are



between 40-50mph in the grade that I play.

How did you get into playing softball?

I started playing when I moved to Australia in 2000, mainly to make new friends. There's normally about 15 players in a social team, but we only field with 9 players. It's a graded league and I had to start playing at the lowest level: "Ladies grade" where games were like a comedy sketch. But gradually I moved up to more competitive levels. I played for many years in the Sydney Northern Beaches league and

when I moved further north, I played in both the Redlands and Redcliff leagues in Queensland.

What's the best thing about playing softball?

Batting big and hitting home runs with a delighted team of middle-aged women squealing from the side-lines.

And the worst thing?

Apart from losing so much skin off my legs from sliding on gravel (my fault), I'd say getting sunburned during the long innings.

Tell us about your trip to the Gold Coast to compete in the Pan Pacific Masters Games.

The Pan Pacific Masters Games is the biggest biennial masters event in the world, a bit like spring break for oldies but with sport! You have to be over 35 to enter and there's no upper age limit.

There's over 40 sports and about 16,000 competitors from all over the Asia Pacific region descending on the Gold Coast beaches in

Queensland around November time.

The women's softball category had almost 120 teams playing last year. I compete with my previous Sydney team who have remained my firm friends despite my various moves since leaving Sydney in 2013.

We play two games per day over a week against teams from Australia and many other countries including Fiji, Japan, New Zealand and invariably end up playing against another local Sydney team - we normally play that game with a hangover.

Anything you'd like to add to finish?

Sport is a great leveller, and playing softball always reminds me that you needn't be good at everything - what matters is knowing what you're good at and how this complements the rest of your team. Also, as we never win, I'd say that winning isn't as important as having fun.



Appointments

A warm welcome to colleagues who have joined the University in recent months, including:

ABERYSTWYTH ARTS CENTRE



David Wilson has just begun in post as the new Director of Aberystwyth Arts Centre. Originally a professional actor, David is an Aberystwyth alumnus (Drama) and completed a postgraduate diploma

in Arts Management from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. He is co-founder of Actors Workshop and also co-founder of Porter's in Cardiff. He worked at the Cardiff International Festival of Musical Theatre, before becoming Deputy Director of Diversions (later National Dance Company Wales). David joins us from Theatr Brycheiniog in Brecon, where he had been Director since 2019.

INSTITUTE OF BIOLOGICAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND RURAL SCIENCES



Professor Gancho Slavov has joined as the Germinal Chair of Crop Genomics, part of ongoing investment in cutting-edge research on the breeding of new agricultural grass

and forage varieties. He has nearly 20 years' post-doctoral research experience in plant genetics and genomics, including large-scale operational breeding programmes based on genomic selection. Having worked with researchers and breeders around the world, he brings international know-how to Aberystwyth University from his most recent post in New Zealand.

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH, BUSINESS AND INNOVATION



Ed Geuter has joined the Department of Research, Business and Innovation as Programme Manager. Originally from Aberystwyth, Ed held leadership, operational, programme

management and training roles in the military, studied with the OU and Henley Business School and worked as part of a consultancy's senior leadership team, before returning to Aberystwyth to train and manage HM Coastguard Search and Rescue teams across Wales.

HEALTHCARE EDUCATION CENTRE



Nicole Crimmings has joined as a Healthcare Lecturer. Nicole is a registered Paediatric nurse with the Nursing and Midwifery Council, a registered specialist practitioner in paediatric intensive care, and a

Specialist Community Public Health Nurse (Health Visiting), with a career spanning nearly 30 years. She previously worked as the Family Support Lead at Ty Hafan children's hospice in Sully near Cardiff, which involved developing and shaping a service that would best support families and carers of life-shortened children and young people, whilst the COVID-19 pandemic rapidly developed – work for which she and a colleague were nominated for the RCN Wales Nurse of the Year award.



Lisa Kinsella has joined as a Lecturer in Healthcare Education. Lisa qualified as a Mental Health Nurse in 1998 and has worked in the NHS for nearly 25 years, initially in an acute inpatient unit, then day hospital,

and then as a Community Psychiatric Nurse. She has studied as a Systemic & Family Psychotherapist at MSc level and had a short period of study at Tavistock & Portman in Psychodynamic Psychotherapy. Lisa's research interests include adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), the Intergenerational Transmission of Poverty Model, Perinatal Mental Health, Eating Disorders, Early Childhood Trauma and Attachment Theory.



Matt Townsend is a Lecturer in Healthcare Education and joins the University from Hywel Dda UHB where he worked as a Registered Nurse specialising in Intensive Care Nursing. Alongside this, Matt worked as a

clinical academic and has researched and published on: Bowel Cancer; End-of-Life Care; and Covid-19. He is extremely research active with his areas of research interest being: LGBTQ+ inclusivity in healthcare; death and dying; quality improvement and change methodology in healthcare.

FACULTY OF BUSINESS & PHYSICAL SCIENCES



Professor Nigel Copner has been appointed to establish and develop the University's new Engineering Unit, and has already made considerable progress in setting up a series of new

degrees in Electrical and Electronic Engineering with an emphasis on preparing graduates for future employment in sustainability-related contexts. He already has an impressive record of research, innovation and commercialisation (>40 patents), and is looking forward to collaborating on further projects with Aber colleagues.

DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE



Dr Muhammad Aslam has joined the department as a lecturer. Prior to this, he was a lecturer at the University of West of Scotland. Dr Aslam holds an MS degree from the Department

of Electrical Engineering (Networking) at COMSATS University Islamabad (Pakistan) and obtained his PhD from the School of Computer Science and Technology at Dalian University of Technology in Dalian (China). As a postdoctoral research scholar, he was affiliated with the School of Cyber Science and Engineering at Wuhan University, where he participated in the International Postdoctoral Exchange Fellowship Program. His research interests include Machine Learning, Cyber Security, Software Defined Networking, Wireless Sensor Networks, and Network Security.

HUMAN RESOURCES



James Thomas has joined the payroll team in the Human Resources department as Payroll and Rewards Manager. He is from Aberystwyth and prior to starting in Aberystwyth University James worked as an

accountant at the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, specialising in Payroll and Pensions.

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & WELSH HISTORY



Dr Diana Valencia-Duarte has joined the department as Lecturer in the History of the Global South, with a focus on environmental history of Latin America and the Caribbean. Diana has a PhD in History from the University of Exeter. Her doctoral thesis *The Peasant Food Question* combined comparative environmental history and Critical Agrarian Studies, to study practical impacts of agrarian policies across five decades in Colombia. Most recently, she was a postdoctoral researcher for the University of Bristol's 'Memories from the margins' project.

New Heads of Department

Three new Heads of Department have been appointed in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.



Professor Catrin Webster will join us as the new Head of the School of Art in September. A Professor of Fine Art, Catrin joins us from Camberwell, University of the Arts London, where she is Programme Director of

BA & MA Fine Art, leading and managing an interdisciplinary portfolio of courses. She was formerly Programme Director of Research Degrees, the Masters' Contemporary Dialogues portfolio and BA Fine Art at Swansea College of Art, University of Wales Trinity Saint David. She was given a Professorship in 2016 for her contribution to teaching and research in Fine Art Practice. An experienced artist, educator and academic leader, Catrin will bring over thirty years' experience to the role.

2011. She received her PhD from the University of Edinburgh in 2007 and taught on the Film Studies programme there before becoming Postdoctoral Research Fellow on the Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project 'Poetry Beyond Text: Vision, Text and Cognition' at the University of Kent. Since 2008, she has been Experimental Film Programmer for the Edinburgh International Film Festival. She is currently serving as the Department's Director of Research, and will take over as Head of Department in September.



Dr Steven Thompson has been appointed Head of the Department of History and Welsh History. His research focuses on the history of nineteenth and twentieth-century Wales and Britain, particularly the history of health

and medicine, the provision of social welfare, women and gender, disability, and the labour movement. He has been editor of *Llafur*, the Welsh People's History Society journal, since 2008. He will take over as Head of the Department of History and Welsh History, a role he has previously performed on an interim basis, in August.



Dr Kim Knowles has been appointed the new Head of the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies. A Senior Lecturer in Alternative and Experimental Film, Kim joined the department in

Aberystwyth Arts Centre

BBC Proms: The Gesualdo Six

Sunday 30 July, 2pm

£15

The world's greatest classical music festival comes to Aberystwyth.

Owain Park conducts The Gesualdo Six in a journey through five centuries of madrigals, from English Tudor composer Thomas Weelkes (celebrating his 400th anniversary this year) and Orlando Gibbons to contemporary composers Judith Weir and Sarah Rimkus.



The Gesualdo Six. Credit Ash Mills

Musicfest

31 July - 5 August

£8-£25 per concert

Our annual international festival and summer school of concerts and conviviality returns with a new Musical Director, Catrin Finch, and an outstanding revitalised programme. The festival will have a new look whilst also retaining the best qualities of the old. It is a festival which supports excellence in both teaching and performance and offers a unique opportunity to engage with new works and the established repertoire. Our audience return year-after-year to enjoy some world class music making.

Full details of the programme:
www.musicfestaberystwyth.org



MUSICFEST Aberystwyth FIND OUT MORE AT MUSICFESTABERYSTWYTH.ORG, OR CALL BOX OFFICE ON 01970 62 32 32

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YN SEILIEDIG AR Y SCRIPT GAN
BASED ON THE SCREENPLAY BY
MARK HERMAN

CYFARWYDDWYD GAN | DIRECTED BY
RICHARD CHESHIRE

4-26 AWST / AUGUST

£30 (£26) GRWPIAU / GROUPS £24

7.30PM NOS FAWRTH - NOS SADWRN / TUESDAY - SATURDAY

2.30PM DYDD MERCHER + DYDD SADWRN / WEDNESDAY + SATURDAY

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✉ artstaff@aber.ac.uk

