

# FOREVER *Keele*

— *Winter 2023* —



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# Keele strikes **Gold** in national assessment of education

Keele University has been awarded the highest rating for the quality of its educational offer in an important national assessment of all higher education institutions in England.



## Teaching Excellence Framework

The University's performance in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023 has been published by the Office for Students (OfS), with Keele achieving a Gold rating overall, maintaining its Gold standard achieved in the previous exercise in 2017.

The TEF assessment identifies excellence in the educational experience and outcomes of our students, focussing on all undergraduate courses and students. The overall Gold rating, which Keele will hold for the next four years, signifies that the student experience and student outcomes at Keele are typically outstanding for all students and across all subjects and courses.

Professor Kristyan Spelman Miller, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education at Keele, said: "We are delighted that the education we offer has been recognised as being of the highest standard in the sector.

"Gold TEF is a crucial hallmark of excellence. This achievement for Keele gives students confidence that the education they receive with us is of the highest quality, which will set them on a good course for their future careers, all delivered by staff at the forefront of their respective fields."



[READ THE FULL STORY](#)



# Celebrations as NHS marks 75 years

On Thursday 23 November, Keele University's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences hosted a celebration of the NHS in a prestigious ceremony at Keele Hall with local partners from health and social care organisations.

The incredible partnerships and strong relationships that Keele has with its health and social care partners were showcased through a series of awards, recognising and celebrating excellence in collaboration and partnership.

Hosting the evening was Professor Pauline Walsh, Pro Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean for the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, who described the evening as the perfect way to mark the end of the year which has seen the NHS turn 75. Joining her were staff from across our local NHS Trust partners, local business and the third sector, public members and staff from across the faculty.

The evening culminated in an awards ceremony, with nine awards being given out to very worthy winners.

Keele alumni success was recognised in the Keele Alumni Achievement Award, which was won by former Nursing (Learning Disability) student, Lincoln Gombedza. Lincoln was nominated for his successful partnerships with NHS Digital's Decision-Making Council, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), Speakers for Schools, CHIME International, Florence Nightingale Foundation, Sigma Nursing, and Daisy Foundation. Lincoln's nomination recognised his many previous accolades including receiving the Chairman's Award at Combined Healthcare's staff REACH Awards 2022 and being a standout finalist at the Nursing Times Awards.



Lincoln receiving his award

Runner up in the Alumni Achievement award went to Jacob Oguntimehin. Jacob founded The Aspiring Medic's Support (TAMS) CIC, a community interest company based in London which works with schools and parents to support applicants from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. TAMS hosts borough-wide events for schools that do not have access to university-led schemes. Jacob, a Keele University Medical student between 2015 and 2021, said: "Our sole aim was to change the under-representation of medical school applicants and medical students from less advantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. The communities we serve face several social and economic hurdles both when applying to medical school and completing their medical degrees. We exist to positively shift this narrative, with the vision that significantly more can be done to support them in their career aspirations, career progression, and personal development."



**READ ABOUT THE  
WINNERS ACROSS ALL  
CATEGORIES**



# From the lecture theatre to the NHS frontline

At Keele, our healthcare academics don't just prepare students for working in the NHS of tomorrow. With more than 200 of our lecturers, teaching staff, and researchers also working clinically in the NHS, some quite literally go from the lecture theatre to the operating theatre.

From delivering babies, to saving lives on the frontline as paramedics, the wealth of world-leading expertise at Keele has a positive impact not just on our students, but also on local people, communities, and the health service on a daily basis.

We are proud to have launched a new campaign to celebrate the positive impact our University has on the health and wellbeing of local people and communities in North Staffordshire and beyond, featuring three academics from the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences.

- **Dr Pensée Wu**, one of our clinical academics, also works as a Consultant Obstetrician at the local hospital, where she has delivered more than 500 babies and counting, including performing emergency C-Sections.

- **Professor Jo Protheroe**, Keele's Director of General Practice Education, has been a GP for more than 20 years, and works at a surgery in Newcastle-under-Lyme.
- **Kevin Armstrong**, our Director of Paramedic Services, works part-time as a paramedic for West Midlands Ambulance Service, where he has attended more than 9,000 incidents across the local area.

Kevin said: "In my role as Director at Keele I have oversight of all the educational aspects of the programme. When I'm not at Keele, I'll undertake a standard 12-hour ambulance service shift across Staffordshire. Being able to work within an educational setting in the University and also in clinical practice with patients, means I'm current and I can stay up to date with new developments.



Kevin Armstrong

"I think the students like it because I'm more relatable to what they're experiencing. I'm aware of new developments and can understand the demands students might be facing when they're out on clinical practice. Being from Staffordshire myself, it is good to be able to help people in my local community and give something back. You do get a sense of achievement at the end of the day which is nice."

As we look forward to our 75th anniversary next year, our mission remains the same as it was back in 1949 - to support the communities in North Staffordshire and beyond.



**CLICK HERE TO WATCH THREE VIDEOS, WHICH SHINE A LIGHT ON THE ROLES OF PENSÉE, JO AND KEVIN AT KEELE, AND IN THE COMMUNITY**



Dr Pensée Wu



# Parent Perspective Podcast features Keele University Apprenticeships

Tune in to 'The Amazing Apprenticeships Parent Perspective Podcast' to hear from Marie Doherty and Registered Nurse Apprentice Karen Estcourt, of Keele University's School of Nursing and Midwifery, as they share valuable insights on retraining through apprenticeships.

The episode was released as part of Amazing Apprenticeships' 'October Options' and the podcast is hosted by Rachel Burden, the renowned BBC Radio 5 Live Broadcaster, and produced by Steve Bland, known for his work on "You, Me and the Big C" and other famous podcasts.

The podcast is in its third series and is aimed at parents and carers, helping them to support their children with careers advice and guidance. This episode aims to highlight apprenticeships as an option for retraining for anyone, including parents and carers themselves.

Keele University was awarded a "Good" Ofsted rating for Apprenticeships in a Full Inspection in June 2023.





## ALUMNI REUNIONS

# Sri Lanka

In October, Professor Eran Edirisinghe, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation), and Professor Antonius Raghubansie, Pro Vice-Chancellor (International), were delighted to meet alumni as part of a visit to Sri Lanka.

Alumni were invited to attend the inaugural meeting of the 'Sri Lankan UK Alumni Forum', organised by the British Council. The event was an excellent opportunity for Keele alumni to network and meet Keele colleagues.

The topic for the event was 'A Transdisciplinary Approach for Sustainable Development', and Professor Edirisinghe delivered a presentation on 'Leading a nation towards net zero - the Keele journey'. The formal programme was followed by dinner and fellowship.



Leading a Nation Towards Net Zero  
The Keele Journey

Eran Edirisinghe  
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation)  
Professor of Digital Health

2023-24  
Alumni UK Programme of the British Council  
Transdisciplinary Approaches for Sustainable Development  
University of Keele, Keele, ST5 5TA

BRITISH COUNCIL  
Alumni UK  
Connect, learn, share and grow



## ALUMNI REUNIONS

# Keele gamers reunite on campus

Written by Phil Lucas,  
English & History (Class of 1988)

**“We should do a reunion!”**

With those fateful words, spoken in an online chat, the ball was set rolling for a get-together of gamers, former members of the Keele Sword & Sorcery Society in the 80s and 90s and specifically those who had played in, or been associated with, one particular long-running Dungeons & Dragons game.

We were directed to the Courtyard Marriott as a venue, and they looked after us admirably with a conference room booked for two days with tea and coffee, a catered lunch both days and dinner in the restaurant on the Saturday evening. Some attendees also stayed in the hotel, while others stayed locally or commuted in. A far cry from student days playing games in the Square or Hex at Lindsay or the Chancellor's Building!

All those invited were still in touch via social media or otherwise. Though some hadn't sat down together at a table for over thirty years, others had been still actively playing games together until a few years ago. Friendships built at Keele really do last!

Before the reunion, there was plenty of discussion over what rules we should use and what kind of adventure scenario we should play through, as well as lots of reminiscing. Ultimately it was agreed to use the current rules edition of the world's oldest and best-selling role-playing game, Dungeons & Dragons, and for the adventure to retrace a perilous route from a previous game many years before. This was made possible by one of our players sharing a treasure trove of old maps and game notes that they'd been safeguarding.

The weekend commenced with a drink and a bite to eat in the Sneyd Arms, where it was observed by one attendee that we had all got incredibly old! The actual fun and games began at midday Saturday, which gave those already there the chance to explore the much-expanded campus and the local area.



The game itself transported us all back to our days rolling dice together at Keele and the years just fell away, even if our dinner conversation was about careers, families and world events. All those who were able to be there enjoyed reliving their glory days together and there is talk of further reunions in the future, which may be opened to other role-playing alumni.

What was also gratifying is the overwhelmingly positive comments, questions and shared stories inspired by the many pictures taken of the campus and local area during the weekend and posted in the alumni Facebook group.

The attendees were Rachel Brain, Ian Case, Tim Copsey, Russ Emslie, Sarah Haddock, Dave Harrison, Dave Lister, Gus Lee, Phil Lucas, and Stephen Riley.





## ALUMNI REUNIONS

# Alumni events form part of visit to strengthen UK-China academic relations

In September, Professor David Law, Academic Director of Global Partnerships and PhD History (Class of 1987) was part of a delegation to visit Chinese universities and higher education agencies, organised by Universities UK.

During the visit, Professor Law was able to meet six other Keele alumni in Hong Kong where drinks and nibbles were served at the Peninsula Hotel. Lynn Wu, Keele's regional manager in Hong Kong, also attended. Later in the trip, in Shanghai, the British Council held an alumni dinner for all the universities involved in the delegation. At this event, David met four 2023 graduates from the Dual Degree programme that Keele runs with the Beijing Foreign Studies University (BA International Governance and Public Policy). All four have either continued their studies in China or are in graduate trainee posts in local government.

The attendees in Hong Kong were: Nick Case, Founder of Asia Edit (BA Economics and Politics, Class of 1990; MBA, Class of 1992); David Poon, Lecturer in the School of Professional Development, Hong Kong Police College (BSc Economics and Statistics, Class of 1994); Sadhwani Kamlesh, a well-known barrister in 601 Dina in Hong Kong (BA Law and Management Science, Class of 1993); Agnes Wang, Partner in Zimmern Law (LLB with Business Administration, Class of 2007); and a married couple who both studied at Keele but only met later - Berenice Earn Ee Lee (MA American Studies, Class of 1991) and Ron Hon Ming Chan (Economics &

Politics, Class of 1992). Sadhwani Kamlesh will be very pleased to speak with any Keele graduate or student considering a legal career in Hong Kong so please contact the Alumni Office if you would like to get in touch.

In Shanghai we were pleased to entertain Yia Kechun (now at East China Normal University), Wang Yi, Wai Chong U (now at Fudan University), and Bai Wendan (Elizabeth).

The attendees in the two cities were from different generations and, because of the pandemic, the younger students never had the

chance to visit Keele, although they have friends from the programme who are now spending a full year on campus. However, all ten shared a strong sense of gratitude to the academic staff who taught them.

An interesting 'twist to the tale' was that Sadhwani Kamlesh well remembered meeting David Law at a student recruitment fair in Hong Kong over thirty years ago!







A Potteries Parthenon: The Bird Cote by Arthur Berry, by kind permission of the Estate.



Food Bank by Ian Mood

# Keele's Art Collection: a short history

Keele University's Art Collection has a rich and diverse history that spans several decades. The collection was established shortly after the founding of Keele University with a donation from Sir Barnet Stross, and his wife Olive Stross, towards setting up a 'Paintings on Loan' scheme for the University. Barnett Stross was a renowned physician and politician, and was locally known for his efforts in the Lidice Shall Live campaign.

The original donation included works from well-known artists such as L.S Lowry, Jacob Kramer, Jacob Epstein and Henry Moore, and included a variety of pieces, ranging from paintings and sculptures to prints and drawings. These artworks showcased different styles, themes, and periods, reflecting Stross' diverse taste and interests. Stross' generosity serves as a testament to the importance of philanthropy in supporting the arts and education. His donations have left a lasting impact on the Keele University Art Collection, allowing future generations to benefit from his love for art and his commitment to enriching the cultural landscape of the University.

In the following decades, the collection continued to grow and develop, responding to changing art trends and educational needs, and receiving further gifts from artists including Barbara Hepworth and commissioning new works and residencies. More recently, the University has been lucky to receive donations of work to the collection from local and international artists including work by Arthur Berry, kindly donated by the artist's Estate; Ian Mood, an artist based in Newcastle-under-Lyme; and Semaan Khawam, a Lebanese-Syrian artist who recently held a solo exhibition on campus.



Article from Sentinel newspaper marking the donation by Sir Barnet Stross and his wife Olive.



The Wicked Land Poem by Semaan Khawam

Keele University's Art Collection has always been committed to engagement. A good proportion of its art collection is shared on ArtUK, an online platform for UK public collections. ArtsKeele regularly organises exhibitions, displays, and events, both on campus and in external venues, to share its treasures with a wider audience, forging new relationships and raising the profile of local emerging and established artists. In 2024, The Mill Gates by L.S Lowry will go on display at the Bowes Museum as part of the exhibition Kith and Kinship: Cornish and Lowry.

A selection of items from the wider collection will also go on display at the Brampton Museum in Newcastle-under-Lyme from April, as part of the University's 75th anniversary celebrations.

Today, Keele University's Art Collection continues to evolve, adapt, and grow, remaining a vital resource for artistic, academic and cultural endeavours at Keele University and beyond.



# Breaking the Mould

The success and ingenuity of organisations from across Staffordshire and beyond has been celebrated at this year's Breaking the Mould awards, held in October. The awards shine a spotlight on the region's innovative businesses, entrepreneurs, not-for-profits and charities that have benefitted from the range of collaboration opportunities available with Keele University.

In keeping with the theme of celebrating innovation and "breaking the mould", the event prides itself on moving beyond the traditional awards ceremony format by delivering a unique combination of surprise musical performances, and locally-sourced ethical food and drink, interspersed with inspiring stories of local organisations making a real difference in the area.

This year's awards were hosted by Natasha Kaplinsky and covered ten wide-ranging categories, the winners of which are listed below.

- Apnea Tech, winners of the Health and Wellbeing award, sponsored by Thea Pharmaceuticals
- Velorim, winners of the Sustainable Futures award, sponsored by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
- Expert Citizens, winners of the Social Inclusion award, sponsored by Synectics Solutions
- Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, winners of the Cultivating Talent award, sponsored by We Are Staffordshire
- River Canal Rescue, winners of the Leading Innovation award, sponsored by Staffordshire County Council
- Earth Stories Film Festival, winners of the Entrepreneurial Student of the Year award, sponsored by Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce
- VUIT Online, winners of the Digital Futures award, sponsored by Concentric Solutions
- TMT First, winners of the Going for Growth award, sponsored by EQUANS UK (Highly commended – Concentric Solutions)
- SH:24, winners of the Keele University Science and Innovation Park Company of the Year, sponsored by Biocomposites (Runner up – Socially Grown)
- TMT First, winners of the Collaboration of the Year award, sponsored by Charles River Laboratories.





# A spotlight on Postgraduate Study at Keele

Keele University offers a range of postgraduate taught and research degrees, both in person and online. Postgraduate students are central to our learning community, where our rural campus community provides an environment that is focused, relevant and mature.

Emma Price, Postgraduate Student Recruitment Manager (UK), talks to PhD candidate Amy Blaney (pictured) about her time as a postgraduate student at Keele University and how her postgraduate degrees have enhanced her career prospects.

**Emma Price: Tell us about yourself and what you've studied at Keele**

**Amy Blaney:** I arrived at Keele in 2018 when I returned to study for my MA in English Literature. I decided to remain at Keele to undertake my PhD in English and am now in the final stages of writing up my thesis, which is provisionally entitled 'King Arthur in British Literature, 1660-1830'.

**EP: How did you find the transition from your undergraduate to postgraduate degree?**

**AB:** I had an 11-year break between completing my undergraduate degree and starting my MA, so it was a little bit daunting! I was worried that I would be a lot older than the other students on my course, and that I would find it difficult

to make friends, especially as I would be commuting and wouldn't be living on campus. It was a pleasant surprise to discover that Keele's postgraduate community is so diverse and that there were lots of students who, like me, had returned to study after a break.

My MA course was very intense and a definite step up from undergraduate, especially in terms of the amount of reading and independent research required. However, I had lots of support from my tutors to help me adjust. I also went to training sessions run by the Library and the Academic Skills team, which really helped me get used to systems and technologies that hadn't been available when I was an undergraduate.

**EP: And how about the difference between studying for your master's and PhD?**

**AB:** Oddly, the transition from MA to PhD didn't feel like quite such a leap. By the time I completed my MA, I had already managed a small research project (a 15,000-word dissertation) and had undertaken two modules



on Research Skills as part of my MA programme, so I felt as if I had a good grounding for going into the PhD itself. Staying on at Keele also really helped because my main PhD supervisor supervised my MA dissertation, so we had already established a good working relationship.

**EP: What opportunities have been available to you to enrich your student experience and gain key employability skills?**

**AB:** During my MA programme I opted to undertake a Work Placement module. I ended up working with a local museum and helped them to improve digital access to their collections by starting up a collections blog and making some video user guides. In addition to giving me work experience within an area of interest, the placement subsequently led to further collaboration as I partnered with the same museum during my PhD to run an archival skills training day for PGR students. The skills gained as part of that module also helped me to secure a paid internship with another local heritage organisation during my PhD.

**EP: What kind of support do postgraduate students receive at Keele?**

**AB:** One of the main reasons that I chose to stay at Keele for my PhD was because of how supported I felt during my MA programme. My tutors were so approachable and always encouraged me to get in touch if I had questions or was unsure about any aspect of the course. I have also found the additional skills training offered by the Library, Academic Services, and the Keele Doctoral Academy (KDA) very helpful.

Keele is one of only two universities in the country to have a dedicated postgraduate students' union – the Keele Postgraduate Association (KPA) – and that has been a huge source of support too. In addition to running regular social events that help to create a vibrant and friendly postgraduate community, the KPA provides advice, support, and bursaries to postgraduate students.



Studying a postgraduate course can be tough at times but there's also lots of support for mental and physical health, ranging from counselling and wellbeing services to mindfulness activities, free or reduced cost sports sessions, and wellbeing walks around our beautiful campus!

**EP: Can you tell us about the information and advice available to you with regards to postgraduate student finance, bursaries and scholarships?**

**AB:** I used a UK Government Masters Loan to partially fund my MA studies, and then worked part-time to fund the remainder of that MA year. However, when I applied to Keele, I was told by the Admissions team that I had automatically qualified for – and been granted – two bursaries that helped to reduce the cost of my fees.

When I arrived at Keele, I was also made aware of other internal support that is available to our students, including the KPA Bursary and the Student Hardship Fund that is administered by Student Services.

During my MA, I had the opportunity to attend an information session about applying for a PhD. During this, we were guided through the various finance options available and through the process for applying for funded studentships within my academic school.

My PhD is funded but, to secure that, I had to apply for funding via a competition. My supervisor worked with me to help me turn my initial research proposal into a funding proposal. This was invaluable as I'd never written a funding proposal before so had no idea what information to include, or how to write such a document!

**EP: Are there any on-campus facilities that you've used and found useful as a postgraduate student?**

**AB:** Having a library that is open 24/7 in term-time is wonderful! I'm not a night owl but I'm often on campus quite early, so it's great that I don't have to wait around for the library to open and can just head straight there and get started with my work.

The KPA Clubhouse is another great space for postgraduates on campus. It's where I go if I want to take a bit of a break during a busy day as I'm always guaranteed to see a friendly face in there. Plus, it does excellent food!

**EP: How have your postgraduate degrees enhanced your career prospects?**

**AB:** I decided to return to postgraduate study because I wanted to change career paths into academia. My MA and PhD have, I hope, equipped me with the skills that I need to pursue that career. In addition to undertaking an extensive research project in the form of my PhD thesis, I've been encouraged and supported to present at (and organise!) conferences, to publish my work in appropriate peer-reviewed journals, and to get involved in teaching and demonstrating. I've also been supported in completing my Associate Fellowship for Advance HE, and have benefitted from additional training opportunities such as the sessions offered by the Keele Doctoral Academy and attendance at Keele's Latin and Paleography Summer School.

Since returning to postgraduate study, I've also become much more aware of how the skills and experience that I have gained can equip me for life beyond or outside of academia. Whilst I still want to pursue an academic career, my tutors have always encouraged me to think in terms of skills rather than just knowledge, and this has helped me to broaden my scope when searching for and considering future job roles.

**EP: How useful have you found the careers service?**

**AB:** I've found the Careers and Employability team to be invaluable. I've worked in several part-time roles during my MA and PhD and have always turned to them for advice when it comes to putting together my CV and covering letter. Whether you're applying for an academic post, a graduate role, an internship, or a weekend job, they have the skills and the knowledge to make sure you're saying the right things and showcasing your skills in the best way!

**EP: What would you like to say to anyone who is considering a postgraduate degree, either taught or research, at Keele?**

**AB:** I would say go for it! Although with the caveat that you do need to make sure you choose the right programme of study for you, and that you undertake it for the right reasons. Postgraduate study is a real step up from undergraduate, so you need to have that reason to keep going with it when times get tough.

Reach out and speak with the Admissions and Enquiries team, as well as with course leaders and potential supervisors to find out more about the courses you are interested in and, if you can, come along to one of Keele's Postgraduate Open Events to meet current postgraduate students and representatives from support services and various academic schools. That way you can ensure you are making a fully informed choice and that you're excited and prepared for your postgraduate degree!

Did you know that, as Keele alumni, you could be eligible for up to **20% discount** on the standard postgraduate taught and research tuition fees?



**FIND OUT MORE**





# Keele love stories

Keele has been the setting for countless love stories over the years, and we are most grateful to the alumni who have shared theirs with us for this feature. If you ever want to share your own, please get in touch.



**Moira Newns (English & Psychology, Class of 1980) and Richard News (Computer Science & Electronics, Class of 1978)**

Rich and Moira Newns, who met while studying at Keele in the 1970s, are celebrating their 45th wedding anniversary this month. The couple got married at a snowy Keele Chapel on 23 December 1978 after meeting at a social event in the Students' Union. After they married, they moved to Bedfordshire, then to New Jersey in

the United States and finally North Carolina, where they have lived for the past 30 years with their two children, Rob and Kate.

Daughter Kate, who got in touch with Keele to celebrate her parents' sapphire anniversary, said: "My parents absolutely loved their time at Keele. The campus is so beautiful and they spent lots of time there and at the Students' Union. We've been back to visit several times, and they brought us to see where they got married at Keele Chapel about 15 years ago."

"More personally, they are really just the most wonderful people. They are both the most generous, fun, and thoughtful people, are incredibly loyal friends, and have set the best example for me and my brother for a healthy, happy marriage."

"We still live locally and have two grown up daughters who now grace the local music scene in their own bands."

"Geoff is a Senior Lecturer and Researcher in Information Science at MMU and I teach music for the Staffordshire Music Service across local Primary schools."



**Caroline Walton née Bollen (Music and Sociology, Class of 1987) and Geoff Walton (Sociology and Psychology, Class of 1983)**

"Geoff and I got married in a local church at Bucknall in 1991. We met while Geoff was gigging in local bands Boneshaker and Heymaker and I was a groupie! Geoff was also in a band called Decomposition which won battle of the bands in 1987. They later formed the band Greensward along with Keele graduates James Berriman, Steve Mitchell and Damien Cavanagh."



**Lauren Burton (Law and Criminology, Class of 2013) and Steven Russell (Maths and Economics, Class of 2011)**

"Although Steven and I both attended Keele, we didn't meet until 2019, several years after we had graduated. Looking back now it's funny that our paths didn't cross for all that time, given that we both even lived in Horwood during the same year (probably only about 50 metres apart!)."

"We've also had a look at our pictures from our time at Keele and realised that we were both on the same nights out so it's very possible that we could have stood next to each other in the queue for the bar and never even known!"

"Since graduating, I qualified as a solicitor and Steven now works in banking. We met on a dating app whilst we were both living in Birmingham and the fact that we had Keele in common helped to break the ice on that first date and has provided many opportunities to reminisce and compare our Keele stories since. On Christmas Eve in 2021, Steven got down on one knee and proposed and we are due to get married next summer. We also welcomed a daughter, Amelia, last year (perhaps a future Keelite!). Despite the fact that we didn't meet there, Keele definitely played its role in our love story and remains a special place for both of us. We can't wait to visit again soon and show Amelia around!"

**Louise Hubball (English & Creative Writing, Class of 2018) and Robert Smith (Medicine, Class of 2020)**

"Myself and Rob met at a Barnes X block pre-drinks gathering, not the most romantic of settings but after a night out in the SU and a few drunken conversations in the Scruffy Squirrel, I eventually agreed to go on a date and the rest is history. Rob is now a qualified doctor, and I am a social worker. We got married in April 2022 and couldn't not have a piece of Keele at our wedding - our table names were 'Barnes', 'Horwood', 'Lindsay' and the top table was of course 'Scruffy Squirrel'. Our first dance was to Sigala's 'Sweet Lovin', a regular song played in the SU when we first started dating. We ended our wedding with a few Keele SU classics and danced the night away, just like we did as students. Keele will always have a special place in our hearts."





there so start pacing nervously, waiting for my new housemates and wondering what they'll be like. I find myself standing at the top of the stairs when I hear the front door open. I see a face peering up at me and I suddenly know that everything will be OK.

**Sonal Dack née Patel (French and European Studies, Class of 1997) and Stacey Bell (French and American Studies, Class of 1997)**

"I'd like to offer an alternative story of platonic love which I think is just as important. I (Sonal) had been at Keele for a year and had failed at securing on-campus accommodation. The summer break was almost over, and I realised I had nowhere to live! One quick call to the student accommodation office later, I was offered a place at a university-owned house in Chesterton. Fast forward to late September, I arrive at the house and discover I'm the first one

"That face belongs to my best friend Stacey. We've been inseparable ever since (not literally, but we speak several times a week!). Our friendship has weathered almost every life change you could think of - and we've laughed, cried, celebrated, commiserated and grieved together over the decades. We don't always agree - in fact, we're so different it's hilarious. Yet in each other we've found exactly what a lasting friendship needs; care, understanding, fun and, of course, love. I'm always conscious that I sound about 6 years old when I say the words "my best friend" but knowing that I have one like her feels like the greatest gift I could've hoped for. Soulmates come in all forms, and I thank my lucky stars that she's one of mine."

**Carol Botham née Stretton (Mathematics, Class of 1980) and Steve Botham, International Relations (Class of 1979)**

"I met my wife at Keele in the 1970s. We were involved politically - I had been President of the Union and she was head of Horwood Hall and we were both involved in the Christian Union. We had a meal in a curry house in Newcastle and walked back up the hill to Keele and love blossomed! We married in 1980 and had many Keele friends join the celebration. Many years later we find that young love has transitioned to a fantastic partnership shaped by shared values, a sense of fun and a strong commitment to each other. Thank you, Keele."



**Jill Budd, née Garnett, (French & Latin, Class of 1963) and Tony Budd (Geography & Geology, Class of 1963)**

"Having started at Keele on Wednesday 7 October 1959, on Saturday 10 October I (Tony) got on board the college bus into Newcastle and found myself standing next to two attractive young women. Never having had much of a chance to polish my chat-up lines I asked them "Do you know what time the bus goes back?" They said they didn't but would like to find out.

"So when we got off in Newcastle I went round and asked the driver. But by that time the other two had walked off. When I managed to catch them up, I gave them the information before we wandered off in different directions. However, I was careful to meet up with them for the return journey, and once on board we chatted. It turned out that Jill and Cynthia were room-mates, and I found it difficult to work out how to ask just one of them if she'd like to join me at the Freshers' Hop that night. So I very stupidly asked them both. Cynthia accepted but Jill refused.

"After Cynthia and I had been to the hop, she contacted me the next day, Sunday, to say that, as a result of the medical tests on arrival at Keele, she'd just been diagnosed with

tuberculosis. So she was taken straight back to hospital in her home city, Manchester, and was told that she would now miss the rest of the academic year. Jill and I discussed what we could do to support Cynthia and decided that we'd go together to see her in hospital and try and cheer her up, which we did. When we met up with her, Cynthia said to Jill "Look after him for me." Jill and I laughed, and on our way back to Keele we chatted and found that we had quite a lot in common.

"So we agreed we'd meet up in the refectory and for the Foundation Year lectures every day, and we very soon became an item. We decided to go to the Christmas Ball and so Jill's mother came over to Keele to help her get a suitable dress. The two of them were in the refectory queue for lunch, standing a little way ahead, and the girl behind me tapped me on the shoulder and said jokingly, "Future mother-in-law?". She was rather surprised when I said "Yes".

"We actually got officially engaged at the end of P2, and were married (by Jill's father, a congregational minister) at the end of July 1963, less than four weeks after graduating. This year we have therefore celebrated our diamond wedding. We have remained good friends with Cynthia and her also-Keelite husband Eric. Thank you, Keele."







**Jennifer Parker, née Parks (Criminology & Psychology, Class of 2015) and Tom Parker (Medicine, Class of 2015)**

"We met in the Scruffy Squirrel of the Keele Students' Union one Wednesday night back in 2013. We were both on sporting socials when we were introduced by a mutual friend. Tom was on a white t-shirt social, and I was dressed as a koala. We hit it off straight away and after graduating in 2015, we've found ourselves hitched with a miniature sausage dog and a 1-year-old for company at our home in Oxfordshire.

"Early dates involved walks around the beautiful Keele Hall and its grounds. In October 2018, we returned one crisp, autumnal morning and got engaged next to one of the lakes. We went back to the centre of campus and celebrated where it all began, with a pint in the Scruffy Squirrel. Keele is such a huge part of our story, with us even naming our wedding tables after University buildings and keeping the old hall of residence sign from Jen's block on display in our house (legitimately acquired!). We can't wait to return to Keele very soon and be reminded of all the wonderful memories we made there."

**Claire Nerval, née Stent (History & Maths, Class of 1988), and Simon Nerval (American Studies & Politics, Class of 1986)**

"I met my now husband Simon at Keele in autumn 1984. I had just started, he was in his third year. We had some mutual friends, who said to me "you must know Simon, he comes from the Isle of Wight like you". They didn't realise there are 150,000 people on the Island, and Simon had only moved there with his family the day before starting at Keele! But they persuaded us to meet up, and we started dating in November 1984. He graduated in 1986, I followed in 1988. We married in May 1989, with a best man and chief bridesmaid - our fellow Keele graduates - and have been together ever since.

"This photo was taken on the day Simon did his last final exam, so lots of celebrating by the chapel where we sat them. We both look very emotional! The friends around us include our later best man, and all 3 were at our wedding and future christenings, and we remain in contact with them all, although we haven't been physically together for many years! Simon seems to be clutching a celebratory bottle, I am wearing the yellow top. It was a very happy time."



**Sharon Barker, née Young (Latin & History, Class of 1975) and Phil Barker (Law & Psychology, Class of 1974)**

"I suspect our story is very similar to many but Phil and I both met outside the Latin department in Keele Hall when we were both looking for our timetables. At the time he was but a newly arrived Foundation Year with a bad haircut while I was an 'established' Year 1 student in a bright red coat. With Foundation Year successfully behind me, I had decided that I would be more outgoing in the new academic year and with this in mind took Phil under my wing, introducing him to the joys of the bus into Newcastle-under-Lyme and eating meat pies in the High Street, buying tins of baked beans WITH sausages, last minute Foundation Year essays in the library, concerts and ceilidh dancing and watching Star Trek and football in the student union, curries and chilli con carne and all the excitement of being away from home for the first time. We became good friends, but it wasn't until the middle of his year 1 that we realised we felt much more than friendship for each other. We were married in November 1975 and had a wonderful life together, blessed with one daughter, until sadly he died of cancer in 2010 at the very young age of 56. We were never apart after I graduated and that friendship with which we started was the strong foundation on which we built the rest of our life. I cannot imagine a life in which I never met my soulmate - and that was down to the chance that took us both to the same place at the same time at Keele."

**Gabby Burton (History & English, Class of 2017) and Olly Atkinson (Computer Science, Class of 2018)**

"I met my fiancé, Olly, at Keele University Swimming Club in 2015 when we were both elected to the committee as Treasurer and Social Secretary. I was won over by his Yorkshire charm, and he was impressed with my Essex accent, so we got together and have been 'two peas in a pod' ever since. Two years ago, we bought our first house and this summer we got engaged on our trip around Latin America.

We'll look forward to becoming a proper 'Keele Kouple' in a few years' time."



**Jennifer Owen (Law and Psychology, Class of 1979) and Guy Owen (International Relations, Class of 1978)**

"My husband Guy and I met at a Keele Halloween (and birthday) party in Barnes in the 70s and subsequently married in 1982. Our daughter was also a Keele undergraduate, studying English and Education, Class of 2011. She married a man from Stone and now lives on the housing estate at the Hawthorns, pretty much on the spot where my room was in G Block. When she had her first child, Guy and I decided to move back to Keele so here we are again after over forty years of marriage. We have made great connections with friends who stayed in the area after their graduations, and we would welcome contact from any alumni who are visiting Keele or living locally."

## FOCUS ON ANIMAL WELFARE

# New veterinary teaching hospital opens on campus

A new 24-hour veterinary teaching hospital opened at Keele University this autumn.

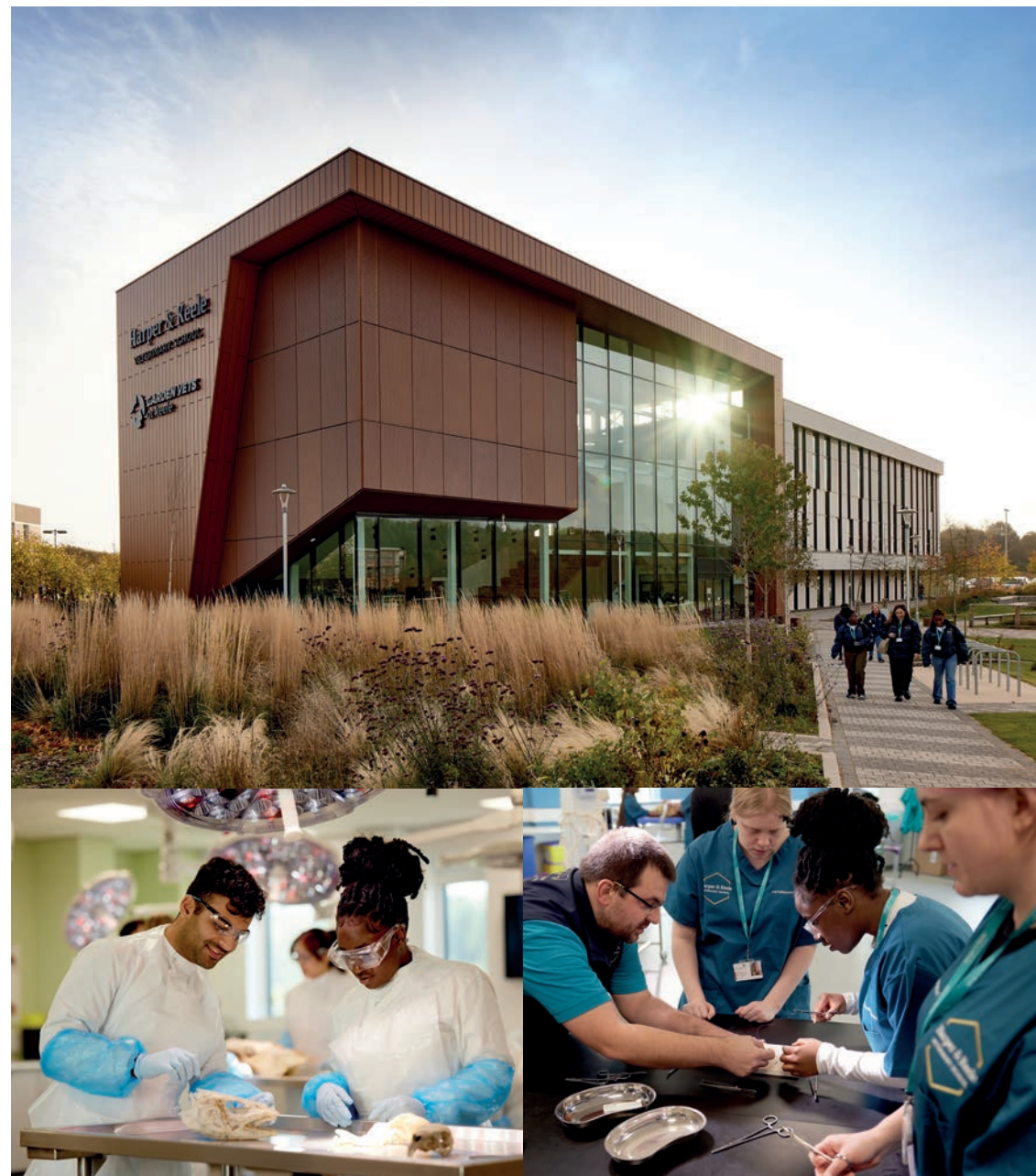
Founded by leaders in innovation and veterinary care, Garden Vets are working in partnership with the University with a new 20,000 sq. ft. independent primary care-led veterinary practice and teaching centre on the Keele campus.

The new hospital – Garden Vets at Keele – will feature state-of-the-art technologies and equipment that will allow the majority of care for small animals to be coordinated on-site. The Garden Vets business model launches with a revolutionary approach to pet care which aims to alleviate the worries of unexpected costs by offering a comprehensive, all-inclusive pet care subscription service, affording clients the security of knowing all aspects of their pet's health care is covered under one monthly fixed cost.

Working alongside a team of veterinary experts, students studying the five-year Veterinary Medicine and Surgery degree at Harper Keele Veterinary School will gain extensive clinical professional experience in the new facility, acquiring valuable skills and experience to take into their future careers.

Professor Matt Jones, Head of the Harper Keele Veterinary School, said: "This is a unique development in that it has been fully designed to a contemporary educational and research specification through close collaboration between the Vet School and Garden Vets at Keele. Students will be fully embedded in the clinical and business operations of the centre and are going to further benefit from advanced experimental learning and research through technology such as virtual reality and immersive simulations.

Dr Sheldon Middleton, CEO of Garden Vets, said: "The opportunity to lead Garden Vets at Keele is incredibly exciting. It is not just a new facility in a new building but also a new concept in the profession. The business is being built around the people within it ensuring they are at the heart of what we do."





## FOCUS ON ANIMAL WELFARE

# Pet Theft Reform

Dr Daniel Allen, Lecturer in Human Geography at Keele, focuses his research on human-animal relations in policy and practice.

Daniel has recently spoken about his research on animal companionship and pet theft on two podcasts, discussing how it has informed evidence-based animal advocacy, science-policy communication, and government and non-government decision-making.



**LISTEN TO DANIEL HERE AS HE DISCUSSES HIS RESEARCH (WHILE ON A WALK AROUND CAMPUS!)**



**YOU CAN ALSO HEAR DANIEL TALKING RECENTLY ABOUT THE TRAGEDY OF PET ABDUCTION ON 'POSITIVELY DOG TRAINING - THE OFFICIAL VICTORIA STILWELL PODCAST'**





## FOCUS ON ANIMAL WELFARE

# Keele University achieves Platinum Hedgehog Friendly Campus accreditation

The Hedgehog Friendly Campus scheme recognises and rewards universities for their efforts to make their campus more nature friendly. Keele University is one of just two UK universities and colleges to achieve the highest tier possible in a scheme designed to encourage biodiversity on university campuses.

Alana Wheat, Sustainability Engagement Officer at Keele University, said: "I'm pleased to have been able to support the Hedgehog Friendly Campus campaign for another year and to create a 'real-life' example on campus. It wouldn't have been possible without the collaborations and partnerships with students, staff, the on-campus residential community, the University Estates and Grounds team, the SU, and many other university departments. A special thanks to Science Park tenants Nurture CIC and Ellie-kay Dawe for giving their time and motivation. I look forward to seeing the site grow and evolve over the next year and beyond."

Professor Mark Ormerod, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost and institutional lead for sustainability, added: "Keele University has a very strong institutional commitment to being sector leading in sustainability across our education, research and knowledge exchange, external engagement and partnerships and our campus and community - and we strive to embed sustainability into all aspects of our campus, operations and community. The biodiversity of our campus is very important to us, and our work with the British Hedgehog Preservation Society in this respect is an important element of this."

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



## FOCUS ON ANIMAL WELFARE

# Charity founded by Keele alumni celebrates 30 years of caring for otters worldwide

Paul and Grace Yoxon (née Gaspar), both Geology (Class of 1979), met at Keele where their final year field trip was to the Isle of Skye where they continued to return on holiday. In 1981, they married and moved to the island permanently. Initially Grace worked in the Broadford Police Office and Paul worked offshore in the North Sea.

In 1985 they started the Skye Environmental Centre to provide activity holidays in wildlife, geology and archaeology. During those early days, people started to take injured birds and animals to them as they knew they had an interest in wildlife. They worked with their local vet, Donald John MacLennan, who had previously cared for the otters of Gavin Maxwell, the author of Ring of Bright Water. And so, their love for otters began.

In 1993, they set up the International Otter Survival Fund (IOSF), with the aim of conserving and protecting the 13 species of otter worldwide and their habitats.

Now, 30 years later, IOSF has grown into an internationally-recognised organisation supporting people working in all aspects of otter conservation – habitat protection, research, education, and care for orphaned and injured otters. There are now approximately 160,000 supporters from 39 countries, and IOSF has supported projects in 98 countries. Their specialist otter hospital has helped care for 245 otters and, worldwide, has helped 175 cubs.

Education is a major focus of IOSF, particularly through its 'Team Otter' children's programme which has clubs worldwide including Nepal, Guyana, Tanzania, Laos, and, of course, the UK. The aim of the programme is to reconnect children with nature, wildlife and the environment and ignite a passion that will last their whole life. IOSF also initiated "World Otter Day" which has now become a major event worldwide to raise awareness of otters and their importance to the environment.

Dr Paul Yoxon said: "The conservation of otters is not a sentimental luxury. They are at the top of the food chain and use both the water and land and so both habitats have to be in pristine condition. This is essential for all species, including man. Caring for the individual otter and holding it in your hands focusses your mind on the bigger picture of the threats to otters from pollution, loss of habitat and hunting. Today more than ever, otters need our help, and we will never let them down."

For further information, contact:  
[enquiries@otter.org](mailto:enquiries@otter.org)  
[otter.org](http://otter.org)



## ALUMNI UPDATES

# High Commissioner of Maldives returns to Keele

On 18 October, Keele was delighted to welcome her Excellency Dr Farah Faizal, International Relations (Class of 1989), to give a talk on 'Small States at the Crossroads: does Maldives matter?', as part of the Global Challenge lecture series.

Dr Faizal was the High Commissioner of Maldives to the United Kingdom and the non-resident Ambassador of Maldives to France, Ireland and Spain before retiring from the foreign service in November 2023 and resigning from the post of High Commissioner.

During her trip to Keele, Dr Faizal had a chance to meet current International Relations students as part of a workshop to share her expertise and experiences:

"I was delighted to deliver a lecture as part of the Global Challenge lecture series organised by the Institute for Liberal Arts & Sciences in Keele University. It's always wonderful to return to Keele, my happy place, and have some wonderful conversations with the current students and enjoy the awesome hospitality. Took me back to my teenage years!

"I was truly touched by the genuine warmth and hospitality extended to me by both the faculty and the students. It is evident that Keele University cultivates an atmosphere of intellectual curiosity and innovation.

"It is only when I was working as a diplomat that I realised how much the International Relations course at Keele was tailored to give you an excellent stepping stone for a career in diplomacy and deal with the wider issues within the international community. Keele was indeed an excellent choice for my first degree and, even if I could go back in time, I wouldn't choose a different university."



**YOU CAN WATCH  
A RECORDING OF  
DR FAIZAL'S TALK HERE**





## ALUMNI UPDATES

# Keele-based business gives Keele graduates space to shine

Written by **Kate Douthwaite**,  
Marketing and Media (Class of 2022)



Mondrem Group moved to Keele University's Science and Innovation Park in September 2019, and has taken an innovative approach to recruitment that focuses on Keele's talented students.

In February 2020, Chief Executive Mike Astbury and Senior Consultant Lucy Gibbs employed Mondrem CIC's first four interns through the University's internship programme, in partnership with Santander. This marked a pivotal moment in our company history: four awards, three new companies, and a sustainability-based project at the heart of campus later, the connections we have built with local students, alumni, academics, businesses, and charities continue to shape our business.

I joined Mondrem in February 2020 as a content creator in the first year of my Marketing and Media degree. From interview, I recognised Mondrem to be different: Mike and Lucy asked more about my interests, passions, and talents than my formal work experience. I had not planned to become a student, beginning my Keele journey as a Business Administration apprentice a year earlier. Finding a work-life-study

balance was not always easy, but the Mondrem team were incredibly understanding and gave me the time, support, and flexibility to develop professionally and academically. Having gained confidence over those years, I have grown into the role of Marketing and Design Lead at Mondrem, graduated from Keele with First Class Honours and three academic awards, and been inspired into a Master's degree. Having recently won Young Employee of the Year in the Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce Business Awards 2023, I am incredibly grateful for others' belief in me. Working with Mondrem alongside my Social Anthropology course and youth advocacy with girls' and children's charity Plan International UK has shaped who I am today.

Alexis (Geography, Class of 2023) joined Mondrem as part-time Nurture CIC Projects Co-ordinator in July 2023. A recent graduate, Alexis found the next step in her career uncertain.

As former Geography Society President with a passion for sustainability, she sought a career enabling her to effect positive change. With this mindset, Alexis has shaped her role beyond her initial responsibilities, developing into our full-time Sustainable Projects Lead and Business Support. Mondrem challenged Alexis' concern about having little work experience in the business and sustainability sectors, giving her responsibility rather than task, and the space to develop projects she finds fulfilling – including coordinating volunteers to work on our Woodmeadow Walk project on campus and embedding more sustainable consumption practices. Now, Alexis challenges us to be our best by keeping a keen eye on our sustainable practices and business operations. Having the freedom to shape her role into something professionally rewarding to her continues to support Alexis' personal and professional growth.

Ellie-kay (Geology & Physical Geography, Class of 2022) joined Mondrem in June 2021 to lead Nurture, then a Mondrem community interest project, alongside her Geography and Geology degree. Her upbringing inspired a keen interest in nature and the outdoors, sustainability, and its public purpose, underpinning the direction of her career. Ellie-kay had an extraordinary journey from intern to Nurture CIC Co-Director while studying at Keele, playing a key role in developing our first sustainable 'place of happiness', The Woodmeadow Walk, improving biodiversity and wellbeing on Keele campus. For Ellie-kay, facilitating collaboration was key for the project's success, working hard to source funding from local businesses, gaining specialist advice from charities like the Woodmeadow Trust, liaising with Keele Estates, and contributing to Keele's Platinum Hedgehog Friendly Campus accreditation. With Ellie-kay's support, Nurture has grown into a CIC of its own, providing CSR as a service by helping organisations contribute to sustainable projects.

She is grateful to have an important role in the company's transformation and has gained transferable leadership skills supporting her personal and professional growth. Since graduating from Keele with First Class Honours and six additional awards, Ellie-kay continues to oversee Nurture's operations alongside her full-time role as an Environmental Scientist at Wardell Armstrong.

"Students and graduates are essential to Mondrem Group's journey. We talk about bringing kindness to work and helping others to shine - that's how we create workplaces where early careers employees can thrive. We give our interns lead responsibility for key elements of the companies' work and the freedom to shape their roles into professionally satisfying ones. In return, they deliver enormous value to us personally and professionally. We have supported many students on their career journeys and continue to maintain rewarding relationships with them. Kathy England and the Keele Careers team have helped us to grow meaningful connections across the University. It's a great service and we are incredibly grateful for their support."

**Mike Astbury, Founding Chief Executive, Mondrem Group**



## ALUMNI UPDATES

# My journey from misspent youth to Dean of Student Activities

Written by Phil Dust,  
Biology & Geology (Class of 2000)

Having something of a misspent youth, I joined Keele off the back of the burgeoning Access to HE certificate. I chose Keele because I had no idea what I wanted to study; I just knew I wanted to learn. As the first person in my extended family to even go to university, I had no understanding of what to do but the Foundation Year, offering pretty much every subject in a university-level breadth and depth, seemed perfect.

I graduated in 2000, at the age of almost 29. Studying as an adult student, and single parent, meant I got to know the crèche almost as well as the library! I then went straight into a PGCE in secondary science at Keele and became a teacher just one month before my 30th birthday. It seemed a reasonable trade to get into as a single parent, but I quickly found out I was really good at it. I think being able to associate with, and sympathise with, extremely challenging teenagers meant my youth wasn't so misspent after all.

I quickly gained promotion, becoming Deputy Head of Science after just a year and a term, followed by Head of Science two years later. It was here I really learned the power of education. Working in a highly multi-cultural school, massively underperforming, I was part of a team that raised the school from 10% below targets to 25% above. Suddenly, students who were like I was were able to go to university, and I realised what a difference I was making. I took on the role of international links coordinator, gained funding for two separate projects aimed at



increasing cultural awareness, ran field trips to South Africa & Mozambique for underprivileged children and started links with schools all over the world.

After this, I became Assistant Vice Principal, before realising the international bug had really hit. I decided to quit full time work so I could study an MSc in Development Management with the Open University. Most amazingly, I took a part time job lecturing Access to HE. I had come full circle and was now ensuring more people like me got their second chance. In amongst this roller coaster ride, my son, who had gone to Keele Crèche every day for three years whilst I was a student, graduated with honours in Computer Science from Keele, exactly 16 years after he left the crèche for the last time. Definitely one of my proudest moments.

Photo: Phil Dust

The international bug, along with my absolute love of all things extra-curricular, now sees me as Dean of Student Activities at an elite international school in China.

Expanding the horizons of students who will go to the top universities in the world is not something anyone who knew me from my youth would ever have guessed. This isn't a job. It's a vocation. For me, every day is a holiday. I literally feel like I get paid to be on holiday. Without the immense support and guidance I had from Keele, as I embarked on a degree I was really under equipped to deal with, I would never have found my vocation. I will be eternally thankful for the opportunities the University gave to me.



## ALUMNI UPDATES

# Turning a passion for fighting corruption into a career

**Vickram Ragnath,**  
Accounting & Criminology  
(Class of 2014)

Vickram shares an update about his current career as a National Programme Officer for Anti-Corruption at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and how Keele helped him get there.

The story of how I ended up in Cow Hill (origins of Keele's name, look it up!) are quite a strange series of coincidences. Instead of doing A-levels or the national Malaysian pre-university programme, I studied the Australian Matriculation. Halfway through that course, I learnt that we could apply to UK universities too, so I applied for courses involving accounting.

As I looked for courses that combined accounting with other subjects, Keele was an obvious choice - where else can you combine Criminology with Accounting or even Accounting with Forensic Science? I chose Keele as I did not want to study finance, law or something "safe", even though I had a knack for accounting. I did not want to be stuck behind a desk preparing numbers and reports for clients and sales targets. I was either interested in fighting corruption and fraud, or in audio visual for live events.

Funding my studies was another issue, I couldn't afford to pay for full time studies overseas, so after receiving my unconditional offer, I worked part time in a marketing office while applying for scholarships. It was a true blessing to receive a government scholarship from the Securities Commission to pursue my studies in Keele! Throughout my course, I made it a point to take one free-standing elective each year of my study; Audio Electronics, Entrepreneurship, and Psychoanalysis. I also took advantage of Greek language classes offered by the language department.



My favourite places in Keele were the Library and (oddly enough) the cemetery in Hawthorns (now a part of Keele Village, along Quarry Bank Road). I sought solace and refuge in these spaces and spent a lot of time reading there. I was a member of Keele Hitch Society, where we raised money for Link Community Development by organising hitchhikes to Croatia or Morocco. Hitchhiking sparked a thirst for travel that I am still experiencing today. I am so glad that I made the most of events while I was at Keele. Coming from Southeast Asia, things like headphone parties, freshers' fair and mid-autumn festivals may sound weird, but they were the best way to meet people, create memories and learn from each other.

When I graduated from Keele, I returned to Malaysia and served the Securities Commission of Malaysia as an Investigating Officer for seven years, investigating cases of fraud, financial scams, and money laundering. Currently, I am working as a National Programme Officer for Anti-Corruption at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. My job involves implementation of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption and supporting government and other stakeholders with capacity building, policy advice, and knowledge products related to governance, anti-corruption and integrity. I am passionate about building a lifelong career in criminal justice and I hope to further my studies in this area soon. My time at Keele exposed me to various lectures, ideas, organisations, and books that have shaped my career and philosophy. Keele is home to many memories and life-long relationships, and it taught me to be resilient, resourceful, kind and above all, patient.

Photos: Vickram Ragnath

## ALUMNI UPDATES

# Law graduate becomes youngest qualified solicitor at Law firm

**Victoria Zinzan,**  
Law (Class of 2019)

At 24-years-old, Victoria Zinzan became one of the youngest qualified solicitors her firm had ever seen. The average age of a qualifying solicitor in the UK is believed to be around 29 years old, but high-flying Victoria is ahead of most.

Victoria, a solicitor in the Medical Negligence department at Irwin Mitchell, puts part of the early success in her career down to Keele University, her lecturers, and the opportunities she was given during her degree. She said: "I was originally planning to go to another university and Keele was my second choice, but looking back, I'm so glad I came to Keele. It started me on the path to get to where I am today and gave me opportunities that I don't think I would have got elsewhere."

As well as meeting her now fiancée on her second day at university, one of the first things that Victoria remembers about Keele is being impressed by how active its Law Society was. She said:

"They ran many events, both educational and social, and I knew they would look brilliant on my CV, so I got involved straight away. One of the key skills you need as a junior lawyer is networking and the events were a great way to begin interacting with professionals such as barristers and solicitors, learning real social skills in a new environment.

"I thought my degree and the standard of teaching was absolutely brilliant. I'm still in touch with some of my lecturers now and they check in with me to see how I am getting on. More recently I have been invited back to speak at the Keele Law Society Legal Dining event. It's really nice to still have that connection with Keele, and that the University continues to recognise the achievements of its alumni."

During her final year at Keele, Victoria was accepted onto the Legal Practice Course (LPC) at the University of Law. She also applied for a training contract at mfg Solicitors, in Worcestershire, and showed initiative by reaching out to the company's HR Manager on LinkedIn. She said: "I knew mfg had previously sponsored a graduation award at Keele, and they had an existing relationship with the University. The HR manager responded to say he was actually attending a careers fair at Keele the following day and asked me if I wanted to meet. I am incredibly grateful that Keele was one of the universities which hosted an annual careers fair as this provided me with an opportunity to meet the HR manager in person, putting a face to the name on my application form. Shortly after I was invited to interview and then got offered a training contract.

"I started the LPC a few months after graduating in 2019, and then started the two-year training contract in September 2020. I qualified as a solicitor in September 2022 and moved to Irwin

Mitchell upon qualification. Irwin Mitchell is one of the biggest criminal negligence law firms in the UK and I'd always been interested in medical negligence as an area of law. At Keele there were several medical law modules available, such as healthcare law and mental health law. I focused my dissertation on medical negligence so it's great to be working in that field now. I find myself doing something different every day at work, whether that be going to court, taking a witness statement or drafting correspondence to clients and medical experts. I work on a whole variety of cases and building up relationships with medical experts is an important part of my job. The skills I gained at Keele, including all the networking I did, have been useful as I grow in my career."

The next step Victoria strives for is to become an associate, but her ultimate goal is to make partner in the firm. She added: "Keele played such a big role in getting me to where I am today and I'm so proud to be Keele alumni."





# In memoriam



## Plaque unveiled in memory of Keele's first Japanese student

A plaque honouring the first Japanese student at Keele has been unveiled on the University's campus by her daughter. Professor Fumiko Yonezawa studied at Keele from 1963-64 and went on to become the first female President of the Physical Society of Japan. A distinguished scientist, Fumiko received the L'Oreal-UNESCO Award for Women in Science for her pioneering theory and computer simulations on amorphous semiconductors and liquid metals in 2005. She passed away in 2019, aged 80.

Her daughter Rumiko, who unveiled the plaque on the University's Cherry Tree Walk, said: "It's quite an emotional moment, especially to think my mother was actually here almost 60 years ago. She loved being surrounded by people, so this is a perfect place for a plaque to commemorate her, with lots of people walking past it every day and numerous beautiful cherry blossoms on either side. The plaque is not just a celebration for my mother and the family but the whole community of female scientists, and also the connection between Japan, Keele and the UK."

She arrived in Keele as a research student at the end of September 1963, and started her study in theoretical chemistry and physics – regularly studying in the campus library until the early hours of the morning.

Rumiko said: "She often spoke fondly of her time at Keele, and what a great opportunity and exciting time it was. At that time it wasn't very common for Japanese students, particularly females, to be studying in the UK.

"She had lots of interesting and exciting memories she used to tell me about. One time her mother-in-law sent her a big box of dried instant ramen noodles and she cooked those for her friends in her halls and everybody loved them. They used to have big noodle parties every now and then which she used to tell me about and had fond memories of.

"This is my second visit to Keele and I think it's a beautiful campus. The fact that Keele has lots of science and medical courses here is very exciting and I think the University has a huge future. I am really grateful that my mother had the opportunity to study here."

## Judith Rowley

ENGLISH & AMERICAN STUDIES & EDUCATION, (CLASS OF 1965)

On 24 May 2023, a group of Judith Rowley's friends and family gathered in the Keele Memorial Garden to dedicate a tree in her memory. Present were Katie and Richard Martin, Linda Hallett (née Whitwam), Julia Whybrew (née Baird), Kathy (née Baily) and Roy Lowe, Linda (née Bibby) and Dave Dwelly and Jacqueline (née Chandler) and Alan Diffey.

The tree, a *Prunus Incisi Watanbe*, was sadly not in flower but still looked very good in glorious sunshine under a cloudless sky. A toast was made to Judith, Kathy read 'Loveliest of Trees the Cherry Now' by Housman and a plaque was unveiled dedicating the tree to Judith.



Afterwards, a long lunch was enjoyed by everyone at the Mainwaring Arms where the wine and the Keele reminiscences flowed freely. The group sent thanks to Lucy Welch and the Keele grounds staff and to Tasha and John Chinn and Holly for helping to make a bittersweet event so memorable.

Judith has left the gift of a legacy to Keele to benefit current students.

## Rosemary Waterson

ENGLISH & PHILOSOPHY (CLASS OF 1955)

Rosemary was born in Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire in 1933. Her mother Gladys came from Breconshire and her father Kenneth's family from Norfolk. Rosemary attended a convent-run junior school followed by Sutton High School for girls. From school, Rosemary went up to the Keele University, attracted by its beautiful 600-acre campus and its early educational aspirations.

After graduation, Rosemary went to work first for the BBC in Birmingham, including a stint on early editions of *The Archers*. With her lifelong love of books, Rosemary made a career change to librarianship. This took her to great and small libraries but terminated when she decided 'enough' at a rowdy technical school. Rosemary made another career change, to become Head of English

in a large Birmingham girls' school where she worked until early retirement allowed her to enter a world to which her gentle nature was well-suited and develop her interests in painting and the arts.

Long before popular air travel, Rosemary was a committed explorer within the UK and abroad. As a young woman, she learned to speak Russian and made an adventurous journey to that country. Taking her parents to Poland was more enjoyable, but Greece by train was very tiring. More comfort was to be had in France, the USA and in her extensive exploration of the UK.

The death of Rosemary's father in 1989 left her and an ageing mother living 300 miles from her brother and his family, so it came about that in January 1992 they moved to Kirkmichael, Ayrshire. In Kirkmichael, Rosemary seemed to find the life she wanted, and until the problems of age became restrictive, she was an active member of several local and national organisations. Here was an environment of which she felt part and where she was truly at home. To a large extent, this feeling was because of her neighbours, family close by, and the many friends she made locally.

Rosemary passed away on 2 July 2022 after a short illness leaving a legacy to Keele University in support of the Humanities Department.



## Mary Garratt (née Skellern)

MATHEMATICS & PHYSICS  
(CLASS OF 1964)

Mary always said that Keele was the university that she wanted to go to. She was soon among friends and living in one of the 'huts' before moving to the halls a year later. She quite often caused chaos in the labs but was grateful for the Professor's help and understanding.

Like many graduates, she got a job in Newcastle-under-Lyme, was married the following year and moved to various places, had three children, gave many talks on different items but made sure that Keele was always mentioned.

Mary was a keen writer, and her family were kind enough to share some of her poems with us, including the one on the right.

### Life After Keele

Thirty years or more  
Since I left Keele,  
A young girl full of dreams,  
In '95, as I look back  
How long ago that seems.

What have I done?  
Which dreams fulfilled?  
What plans have I today  
-In middle age, a wife and mum,  
"Retired" as well, some say.

My health has not  
Been of the best.  
That gives me time to write  
When other people are asleep  
In quiet hours of night.

Letters to keep in touch  
A postcard for a friend  
To say "Hello", or maybe  
"Thanks"  
-Their kindness does not end.

And in the day  
I now have time  
To visit, or to 'phone,  
To call for coffee and a chat  
With other ones I've known

Who may be ill  
Or on their own.  
By telling of a tale  
Of times gone by and  
deeds long done  
Each other we regale.

My brain I keep alive  
With research into the past  
Of a panorama there at Keele  
-Shall I write a book at last?

Some quips and quotes I write  
To publicise my town.  
So many things I never thought  
On days I wore my gown.

When I studied Maths & Physics,  
Pondered the universe  
And never once imagine  
My daily life - in verse!

To those at Keele who taught me  
I raise my glass and drink -  
Though plans and dreams  
Change through the years  
You taught me HOW TO THINK -

In bringing up my children  
A skill most valuable.  
And thirty years from Keele days,  
My life is never dull.



## Peter Humber

HISTORY & POLITICS  
(CLASS OF 1961)

Peter was born in Battersea in 1937 and attended Sir Walter St John's Grammar School before studying at Keele. His time at Keele had a profound effect on him and he always spoke fondly of his time there, reminiscing about the army huts, the local women who came up from the village and 'cleaned' for them and 'looked after them', not to mention the Rolo family. Peter babysat for them and on at least one occasion went on holiday with them to help look after the children. It was a very happy time for him.

As a subsidiary subject at Keele, Peter chose Chemistry. In later years he, the Deputy Head, was known to enter chemistry classes and, much to the delight of the pupils and dismay of the teacher, utter the words, 'I did subsid chemistry at Keele'. He then went on to describe his practical classes,

the mistakes, and left. Such was the rapport and respect, Peter always got away with these disruptions.

In 1959 he spent a year at Reed College, Oregon, USA and the memories of that year at Reed and his travels in the USA remained with him throughout his life as did friends made there.

After graduating he planned to enter the Civil Service but soon realised that was not for him and he drifted into teaching, starting as a supply teacher, quickly moving on to Housemaster, Deputy Head and a short spell as Head. One hears of teachers who changed lives. For many young people, Peter was that teacher, whether in school or on the hockey or cricket pitch. He was inspirational and the influence he had on so many young people cannot be over emphasised. Many pupils stayed in contact throughout his life.

He was a Liberal Democrat Councillor on West Somerset District Council. The other Councillors, whatever their political persuasion, listened to him and respected him. Sadly, Peter did struggle with his mental health and throughout his adult life suffered from bouts of depression and anxiety. At such times his golden retrievers sat with him and his beloved garden was his refuge.

## Patricia Preston

ENGLISH & POLITICS  
(CLASS OF 1961)

AND

## Roy Preston,

CHEMISTRY &  
MATHEMATICS  
(CLASS OF 1962)

Memorial provided by Karen Hayon, Alison Preston, and Nick Preston.

Our mother, Patricia Preston (née Hesselgreaves), sadly passed away in August 2023, and our father, Roy, Preston, in June 2012.

They were proud to be some of the first students at the University College of North Staffordshire. Mum went on to be a teacher and counsellor and dad worked as a computer systems analyst. Both were active in local politics for many years.

Our parents met at Keele just after they had graduated, attended reunions over the years and always spoke extremely fondly of their time there. Keele was very dear to their hearts.





## Edward Lee Spencer Jr

FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR  
(CLASS OF 1954)

Edward Lee (E.L.) Spencer, Jr., longtime Auburn, Alabama civic and business leader and generous benefactor to the community, died at home on 12 October 2023 at the age of 93, surrounded by his beloved family and care team.

Born in Loachapoka on 8 September 1930, to Edward Lee Spencer and Florence Rowell Spencer, his family moved to Auburn in 1932 when he was two. As a child, he worked at his father's sawmill and helped at the family farm, milking cows twice a day.

He enrolled at what was then Alabama Polytechnic Institute and became its first Fulbright Scholar when he graduated in 1952 with a degree in Business Administration. He earned a regular commission in the Air Force, serving from 1952-56.

He participated fully in student life as a member and president

of ATO fraternity and worked for the betterment of Auburn through his membership in Spades Honorary Society.

While studying as a Fulbright Scholar in 1952-1953 at Keele University, he married Ruth Priester, a marriage that would last 70 years. Returning to Auburn, he joined his father in the family business, Spencer Lumber Company.

Not long after taking over the lumber company, he became involved in providing low-income housing for minority Lee County residents, an enduring passion for the rest of his life. He financed loans with no downpayment and over the years, hundreds of homes were built and there was never a foreclosure, which speaks well to his business acumen and his judge of character.

He was asked to join the board of what was then Auburn National Bank, now Auburn Bank, in 1975. At the time the bank had assets of \$28 million. When he retired from the bank in 2017 after a 42-year career as a director (1975-2017), president/CEO (1990-1998), and chairman of the board (1980-2017), the bank had assets of \$780 million. When he joined the board, the bank was in one building; when he retired it had eight branches including two in Opelika.

Auburn Bank now has assets over \$1 billion and was recently named one of the nation's top 100 community banks, the only bank in Alabama so designated. At the time of his death, he was still serving the bank as director emeritus.

He attributed his success and the bank's success to treating its customers the way he would want to be treated. "If it's good for the customer and the community, it's good for the bank," he often said.

He received the Auburn Chamber of Commerce's inaugural Bill Ham Lifetime Impact Award (2020), the Boy Scouts of America's Distinguished Citizen Award (1996), and the Auburn Alumni Association's highest honour, the Lifetime Achievement Award, in 2016.

He was elected to the Alabama Business Hall of Fame in 2011. To be eligible for selection, a person must have made a significant impact on the state by promoting the free enterprise system and entrepreneurship; by demonstrating civic leadership, and by their philanthropy and humanitarianism toward their fellow citizens.

The cancer centre at East Alabama Health in Opelika is named the E.L. Spencer, Jr. and Ruth Priester Spencer Cancer Center in honour of their continuing efforts for improved healthcare for the citizens of East Alabama.

Ed is survived by his wife, Ruth Priester Spencer, children E.L. (Spence) Spencer III, (Kim), Steve Spencer (Starla), Sandra Spencer (Darren Chamlee), grandchildren Lt. Colonel Justin Spencer (Ellen), Jordan Lee Hill (Peyton), Jeremy Spencer (Katy), twelve great grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews.



If you would like us to commemorate a former Keelite in a future Forever Keele issue, please get in touch:  
[alumni.hq@keele.ac.uk](mailto:alumni.hq@keele.ac.uk)





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