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QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST / LANYON MAGAZINE

Lanyon

This is what happens when the traybakes take centre stage – page 08.

Emer Maguire and Daisy Johnston



ISSUE

02

SUMMER

20
23

QUEEN'S
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ISSUE 02

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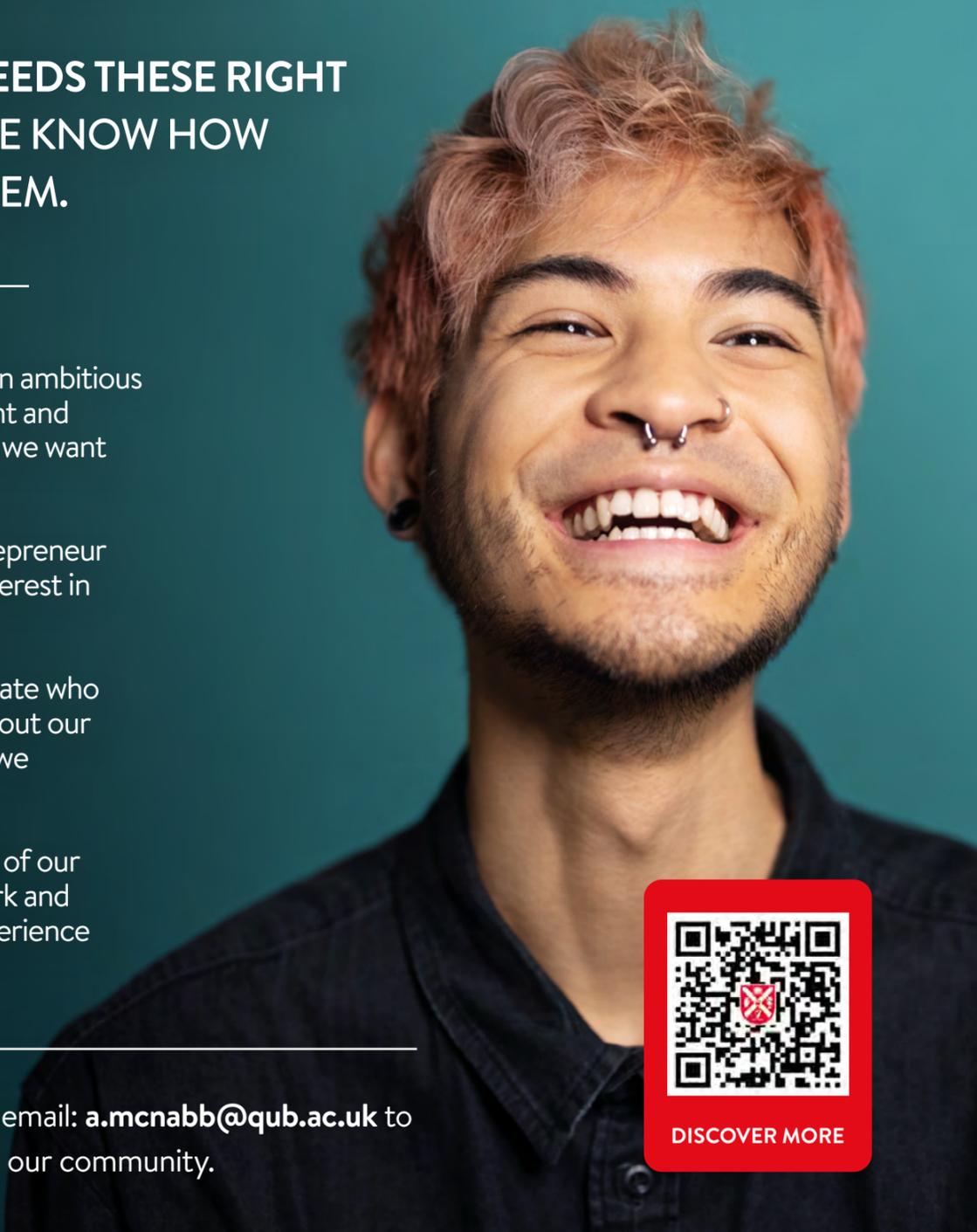
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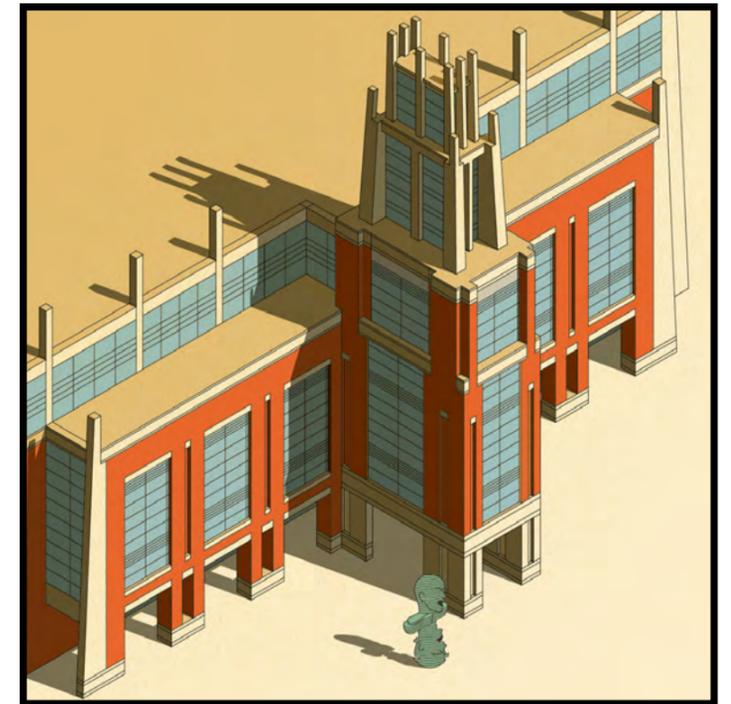
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Illustration: Irena Gajic. Cover photography: Angela Moore

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EDITOR'S LETTER

Nathalie Trott is the Director of Development and Alumni Relations.

Illustration Oriana Fenwick

This edition of *Lanyon* lands as we enter what I have always considered a season of hope, with the promise of summer just around the corner. Indeed, as we've worked on this magazine over the past few months, hope has been at the forefront of our minds. So we are honoured to have our Chancellor, Hillary Rodham Clinton, share her thoughts on the 25th anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement on page 11.

Hope is also something that drives much of a university's work – we believe that through research, knowledge and education we can make a difference. On page 32, you can read about the hope that we can beat cancer, and on page 12, how the very act of having hope can change everything from physical health to mental resilience.

Elsewhere, on page 20, we feature Dr Gareth Arnott's insight into what animals are really thinking – and why we're only just beginning to understand their inner lives.

I hope you find this edition stimulating and engaging – and that it inspires you to connect to the Queen's community and the work being done to shape a better world, locally and globally. And I would love to hear your thoughts on any of the subjects covered in this magazine – please email me at editor@qub.ac.uk.

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CONNECT

WRITE TO US

Keep up with the latest news and views – and share yours.

Illustration Mari Kanstad Johnsen



ON THE RIGHT PATH

The Pathway Opportunity Programme is a great programme for those who are not 100 per cent sure what degree/career path to choose. The programme gave me a taster of life at Queen's on the Law LLB course, helped me develop skills and network with others, and opened further opportunities for me. It was great to read about Carl Frampton in the last magazine and see someone like him supporting the programme. I really encourage those who meet the criteria to apply.

Hannah Lyttle LLB
(Law, 2021)

A GRAND REUNION

We recently held our 50-year anniversary for the medical class of 1971. It was postponed due to Covid, but was well worth the wait as we had more than 60 people attend from countries as far away as Canada, Kenya, Nigeria and Australia. It was fascinating to tour the new KN Cheung SK Chin InterSim Centre and see all the latest technical equipment and use of simulated patients – teaching has evolved so much.

We were students in 1966 when the 'old' Student's Union first opened, and we thought it was wonderful – all clean lines and concrete! Best of all, students from all faculties and years mixed, and the bands that came to the dances on Saturday nights were definitely an upgrade. It was the Swinging Sixties and Queen's was keeping up!

It was wonderful to see the facilities for students today at One Elmwood, with lots of spaces to socialise and easy access to the many services that Queen's provides. We were able to recognise some of the old areas that had been so cleverly reconfigured.

Thanks to Professor Stuart Elborn, Professor Gerry Gormley, Gillian Luke and Andy Nisbet Friel for helping to make this reunion such a success.

It was wonderful to come back and share memories of our six years of study, friendship and fun. We came away thinking that if only we were 50 years younger we would be applying to study medicine here!

Margaret Mark and Chris Corkey,
(reunion organisers)
(Both Medicine, 1971)

Stay in touch! Keep up with the latest news from the University as it happens, and share your thoughts and news on our Queen's alumni Facebook page and LinkedIn.

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ONE ELMWOOD

On One Elmwood (*Lanyon* Issue 1): I believe that the new Centre warrants even greater exposure and detail, in advising the full depth and range of services available both there and in the Student Guidance Centre. Queen's must have one of the most effective student services available in the UK and such articles will be good in marketing interest with school pupils.

Mike McConnell BSc, CEng FICE
(Civil Engineering, 1969)

Editor's note: Totally agree, Mike! The services and facilities offered at One Elmwood are exceptional, and a real selling point.

SUSTAINABILITY COUNTS

Before I open *Lanyon* magazine, can you please confirm the wrapping is recyclable? I trust it is, otherwise I will return it and refuse to accept any further issues.

Patrick O'Donnell BA
(General Degree, 1967)

Editor's note: Thank you for raising this, Patrick. We share your commitment to sustainability and have made sure the paper we print on is from sustainably managed forests, and that the plastic wrap is made from a fully compostable material. We will mark this on the sleeve from now on! You can also log into your Queen's account online and choose to only receive digital communications from us, rather than postal comms, as a preference.

CONGRATULATIONS!

I received *Lanyon* magazine in the post last week and really enjoyed the content and the design. Well done to everyone involved and I look forward to the next issue!

Siobhan Cullen LLB
(Law, 2004)

If you don't receive eGrad, our inside track update exclusively for alumni, you can sign up at daro.qub.ac.uk/signup. To read previous editions, visit daro.qub.ac.uk/publications

QUAD

News and views from campus and across the Queen's global community.



From left: Vice-Chancellor Professor Ian Greer; President William J Clinton, Senator George Mitchell, Chancellor Secretary Hillary R Clinton, former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, Ryan Feeney and Professor Richard English.

BELFAST/GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT

Major anniversary conference shines world spotlight on Queen's

The eyes of the world were on Queen's in April as the University hosted a major conference to mark the 25th anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

Global leaders, past and present, reflected on the success of the peace process, looking towards a shared future which focuses on delivering socioeconomic progress for everyone in this region.

During the conference, the University's Chancellor, Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton, launched the Clinton Scholarship Fund, designed to help students with international mobility, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The programme included key events with partner organisations, providing a platform for a range of discussions on the Agreement's impact on Northern Ireland and its place on the world stage.

The conference also provided the opportunity to focus on how Northern Ireland is a key region for investment, with a range of high-profile keynote addresses from Irish, British, European and US leaders. ■

THE NUMBERS

£3bn+

Our estimated annual impact on the UK economy

45%

The amount this impact has increased in the past five years

£8.20

The amount generated by the University for every £1 invested. The Russell Group average is £5.50

Source: The economic and social impact of Queen's University Belfast, London Economics, 2022.

IN BRIEF

REPUTATION Fifteen subjects at Queen's now rank in the top 100, out of just under 1,600 institutions across the world, according to the QS World University Rankings 2023. Pharmacy is ranked 39th in the world, the first subject at Queen's to be ranked in the top 40 by QS.

RANKINGS We have also been ranked in the top 200 universities in the world by the *Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2023* (we are positioned at 198 out of 1,799 institutions worldwide). The rankings are based on performance data across research, teaching, citations, industry income and international outlook.

PRIDE MONTH June is Pride Month and we are looking forward to celebrating the influence LGBTQ+ people have around the world, as well as here on campus. And on 29 July, we'll be at Belfast Pride Parade Day flying our colours for Queen's staff and students. Give us a wave if you are there!

MIND YOUR MOOD This year marks the 10th anniversary of Mind Your Mood – the student-led mental health campaign driving change at Queen's. Events are being held throughout the year to mark the occasion, and a website will be launched later in the year to make it easier for students to join the conversation.

SEAMUS HEANEY CENTRE

New campaign: Heaney Centre

An ambitious fundraising campaign will help fund a new home for the Seamus Heaney Centre at Queen's.

Work is underway to prepare a new landmark building for the Centre, which will include a permanent Heaney exhibition. Plans are also in place to appoint an International Chair of Creative Writing and to extend the Centre's reach into the wider community.

It is a fitting tribute to one of our most celebrated alumni, ensuring his legacy inspires the next generation of writers.





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SOCIETY

IT STARTED WITH A QISS

Celebrating culture with Queen's International Student Society.

Words Clare Thorp / Photography Bryan Zulkarnain



There aren't many Queen's societies where a night's entertainment might involve Bollywood dancing, traditional Irish music and a K-pop performance on the same bill. But, with members from more than 80 different countries, diversity is exactly what the Queen's International Student Society (QISS) is about.

Queen's has dozens of international societies, but QISS is the only one that brings together and celebrates the entire international student body. Its President, Chow Tze Ying, (BA Law and Politics, final year), who is from North Borneo, Malaysia, says that when you're thousands of miles from home, being able to connect with others in a similar position is important. "My brother was already a student at Queen's before me, so I had family in Belfast, which makes a big difference. But if your support system is thousands of miles away, that can be horrible. We want to make sure that students know we exist and we're here to help them in whatever way we can. Just knowing that there are people going through the same thing can really give that sense of comfort."

The society has more than 700 members, including lots of local NI students. "I always say we're open to everyone. As long as you want to learn and make friends, come join us." There are regular social events, such as pizza and movie nights, as well as a recent multicultural market tour in collaboration with the Singapore Society, taking students around the many international markets and food shops of Belfast. "To know that there's a place where you can get your home food, or buy the ingredients to cook your comfort meals, that's really helpful," says Ying. "Food is a really important link to home."

QISS's biggest event by far, however, is the annual Culture Shock, which began in 2018 and now has a separate committee dedicated to its organisation. "Culture Shock consists of two events: Culture Roadshow and Culture Night," says Ying. At Culture Roadshow, students and societies representing different countries are invited to set up stalls showcasing their culture - including traditional snacks, costumes and instruments. "It's a really good opportunity for societies to showcase what is so special and unique about their country." The roadshow is followed by the more formal Culture Night, a three-course sit-down dinner and evening of cultural performances for an audience of more than 400.

The event has grown each year: "Part of our core mission is to help people learn about different cultures," says Ying. "International students bring so much culture and so much diversity to the University. I think they deserve recognition for that." ■

GET INVOLVED To find out how you can support current students' activities, visit go.qub.ac.uk/annualfundnews



TRAYBAKES

LAUGH, GIGGLE, CAKE!

Comedian Emer Maguire and Music student Daisy Johnston talk Battenberg, mansplaining and why saying ‘yes’ can often be the start of something truly amazing.

Words Greer McNally
Photography Angela Moore
Our thanks to Richard Gaston (General Degree, 1988) at The Strand Arts Centre

Emer and Daisy shared traybakes and Top Hats at The Strand Arts Centre.
From left: Emer Maguire, musical comedian.
Top traybake: Top Hats.
Daisy Johnston, First Year Music student.
Top traybake: Fifteens.



“What’s the worst that can happen? You never know the really cool stuff that could come along.”



Whisper it quietly, but musical comedian Emer Maguire and first year Music student and singer-songwriter Daisy Johnston would be just as happy with Battenberg and crisps as they are with traybakes. And when they get together, they quickly find that’s not all they have in common – both have a deep-seated love of performing.

Not that either see it as anything like the easy road. As Emer reels off the names of people Daisy should contact to organise live radio sessions and gigs around Belfast, her big message is that if you don’t ask, you don’t get. “If you work in anything – like us – where your career heavily depends on people knowing you, then it’s more of a battle. You have to be talented, know that you’re talented and then know people who can help you as well.”

She should know. Since leaving Queen’s she has worked hard for her success in a variety of performance and presenting roles, including being hailed as an “indie Victoria Wood” – which, she says, is nice but weird, “because when I was starting out, I didn’t know who that was”. Her mixture of accessible humour and tunes are more reminiscent of Bill Bailey’s stage shows, leading to sell-out performances at iconic Belfast venues such as The MAC and the Ulster Hall.

Daisy, too, is no stranger to the microphone. She has performed at Belfast’s Oh Yeah Music Centre and has a series of recorded collaborations soon to drop online, citing Phoebe Bridgers and Sam Fender as inspirations for her singer-songwriting. “Doing any kind of recording session with Sam would be the best thing that could ever happen.”

As well as exchanging stories about mansplaining sound guys – “most are lovely, but you do get mansplained about sound quite a lot,” says Daisy – both return to the shared mantra of saying ‘yes’ often. “I mean, what’s the worst that can happen?” says Emer. “You never know the really cool stuff that could come along. I once wrote a song for Translink that went viral on TikTok.” Daisy agrees: “My mum always says, ‘What would you do if you weren’t afraid?’ I think she’s right. You have to dive in. There’s no time to be embarrassed.”

Each performer has a clear idea of who they are creatively, and it’s that power of self-confidence that they both talk about at length. “As women, we seem to get more confident as we get older,” muses Emer. “And I have no idea where boys get their self-confidence from. It must be their mummies telling them they are amazing and them believing it.”

Daisy says she draws her confidence from her love of musical theatre. “I’m so into musicals – and it definitely helps with my confidence. I give myself the character of Daisy Johnston when I’m singing and it informs how I perform. My class are always wondering: ‘Is Daisy going to make us cry again today?’”

And it’s not just about finding their voice – their audience has also been instrumental to both on their journey as performers. Daisy connects well with under-18s, while Emer has noticed that she is the youngest person at her shows. “It’s always women in their forties, fifties and sixties. Once an audience member actually got up during the performance and asked me what I wanted to drink. Then she went to the bar, came back and put the glass on the stage,” she says, laughing. “You only get that kind of confidence with age, I think.”

Although this is their first meeting, you sense it may not be their last. Maybe it’ll be on tour in five years – Daisy on the road with her own band or singing alongside Phoebe Bridgers; Emer the star of her own comedy tour complete with orchestra à la Tim Minchin. Anything is possible, after all, when you just say yes. ■

GET INVOLVED Check out Instagram to follow **Emer** (emermaguireofficial) and **Daisy** (_daisyjohnstonmusic_).

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The world needs NI to be a beacon of hope now more than ever, so I look forward to the day that 'hope' and 'history' rhyme.

UNIVERSITY MATTERS

Secretary Hillary Rodham
Clinton, Queen's Chancellor

Illustration Oriana Fenwick

At my installation as Chancellor of Queen's in 2021, I told the audience that peace is a process, not an event. That is why, on the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, we can celebrate this significant milestone with a sense of accomplishment and hope.

Children today enjoy a safety and security that those who lived through previous decades could only dream of. The longevity of the Agreement remains a triumph of diplomacy, and a testament to democracy's power to transcend divisions and deliver peace.

The world needs Northern Ireland to remain a beacon of hope, now more than ever. Because there is still work to be done resolving divisions and conflicts between peoples and countries around the world. And, for many people, including in Northern Ireland, there is still a struggle for progress and prosperity on a personal level. Poverty and unemployment, access to education, unresolved legacy issues and the trauma of intergenerational conflict still have a grip on too many communities. So along with celebration, this is also a moment to acknowledge continued injustice and suffering, and to recognise the sacrifices made by victims and survivors as the process of peace continues.

It is also a moment to remember those no longer with us - such as the formidable John and Pat Hume, David Trimble, Mo Mowlam and other colleagues who worked so hard to deliver the Good Friday Agreement to the people of Northern Ireland. And others like Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness who worked to implement the Agreement.

Let these moments strengthen our resolve to dig deep into the ground we have gained, to commit to finishing the journey. Through difficult times, Queen's has been - and continues to be - a shining light that puts NI on a world stage in so many areas of research, innovation and impact. Queen's not only contributes significantly to the local economy, but it offers itself as a place where conversation, debate and dialogue are actively encouraged. For the young people who study here, these opportunities to share with those from different communities and of different beliefs can be transformational.

In my installation speech, I quoted my friend and poet Seamus Heaney. As I write this, I am thrilled that the University is fundraising to ensure his legacy continues, through the creation of a wonderful new physical home for the Seamus Heaney Centre at Queen's. It will be a place where generations of bright young poets, writers, critics and literary minds can be inspired.

Supporting young people's creativity gives the next generation a voice to make their own change. And let me tell you, they are ready to be heard. The young people I have met at Queen's fill me with hope for Northern Ireland's future, and a better future around the world. I applaud everyone who has never stopped believing in non-violent paths to a peaceful, shared life for all the communities and traditions that reside here. I wish you all a prosperous future, and I look forward to the day when, as Mr Heaney wrote, 'hope' and 'history' rhyme. We may not have achieved that in its entirety yet, but after 25 years, hope and history sit very comfortably beside each other on this page. ■

GET INVOLVED You can follow Secretary Clinton on Twitter using @HillaryClinton



I hope young women, men and nonbinary people continue to find the power in their voices to combat discrimination

Roisin Keenan (History and International Relations, third year),
President of the Feminist and Equality Society.

HOPE

Words Kat Brown / Photographs Angela Moore

**WE ALL NEED HOPE.
SOMETIMES IT'S TO
BE FOUND IN THE MOST
UNLIKELY PLACES.**

I hope our sport attracts more recognition and respect, and that more opportunities arise as a result

Caleb Bowden (Product Design Engineering, fourth year), member of the GB Canoe Polo team.

“Walk on air against your better judgement,”

said the poet Seamus Heaney (English, 1961), while accepting his 1995 Nobel Prize for Literature. And as a maxim for life, it’s hard to beat: it encourages an adventurous spirit, to aspire to what Heaney called the “marvellous”, and it urges us to look up and not down. In short, it calls on us to have hope.

And hope is the strongest human emotion, above fear, joy and even love, says acclaimed artist and author Oliver Jeffers, a previous Fellow of the Seamus Heaney Centre. “Hope separates us from other animals, as it requires imagination about an unwritten future. But where is our current trajectory going to take us? What future are we composing? Where do we begin?”

Jeffers suggests that we are all just a collection of stories. “The most powerful tool at human disposal is our ability to change the stories we tell ourselves and each other. And now, it seems, more than ever, we need to change our collective story.

“One of the most obvious shifts we can make is in the stories we tell ourselves. To shift our motivation. I no longer ask people their desired outcomes when discussing world views, or current affairs. Instead, I ask them how they want to feel. Measuring how we want to feel might be a much healthier metric for a hopeful future.”

Asking people how they want to feel can have some surprising results. Take palliative and end-of-life care. It might seem like the last place you’d find hope. But for those facing terminal diagnoses, hope is a crucial ingredient, helping to set realistic expectations, keeping conversations going, adapting to new challenges – and helping people to look further into the future.

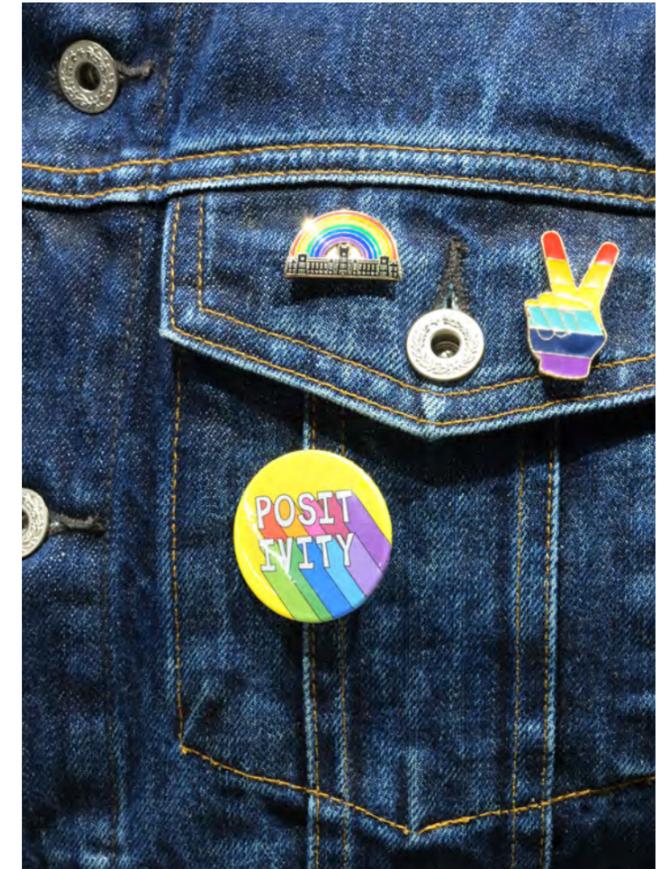
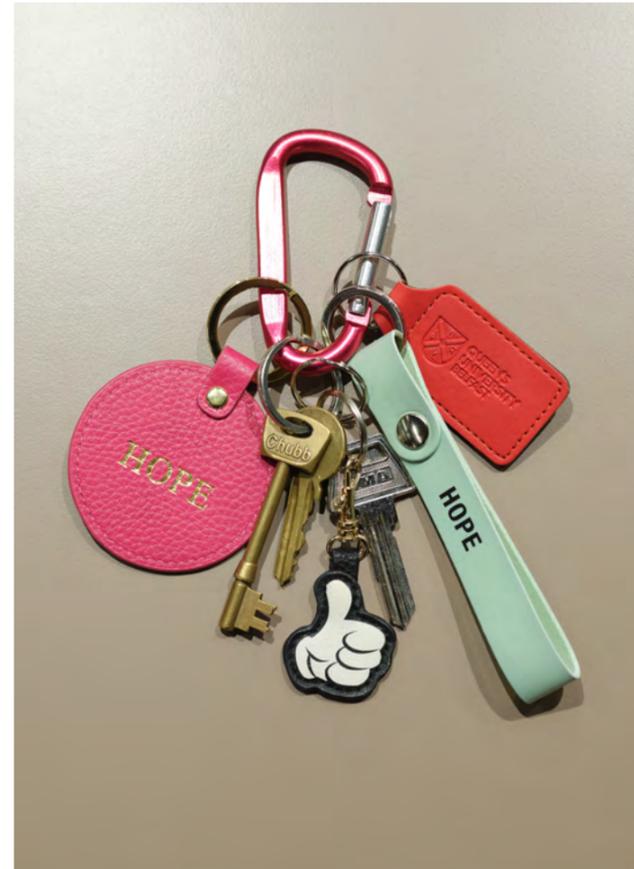
“To maximise quality of life, a person-centred approach is vital,” says Professor Joanne Reid, Chair of Cancer and Palliative Care at the School of Nursing and Midwifery. “What’s really important is that these things are individualised, as they can dynamically change over time. We need to keep having these conversations so that people are heard, seen and valued.”

Reid experienced a wholly unexpected phenomenon around hope while undertaking her PhD in cachexia, a complex and currently untreatable syndrome that causes wasting in people with chronic illness and affects about nine million people globally. The study didn’t offer any miracle treatments or promises: it simply asked people to share the impact that cachexia was having on them. “I found that taking part not only demonstrated altruism but also a strong hope that things could be improved for people affected by cachexia in the future. So just agreeing to be part of the study was a declaration of hope.” →



I find hope in education and activism – every step to alleviate the climate crisis today makes for a brighter tomorrow

Alena Romanovskaya (Architecture, third year),
Co-President of Queen's Climate Action Network



Palliative care has sadly been all too familiar to those with cystic fibrosis (CF) and their families. It's an inherited condition that causes sticky mucus to build up in the lungs and digestive system, leading to lung infections and problems with digesting food.

Before the 1950s, children with the condition rarely lived beyond the age of five. Now it's estimated that half of people born with cystic fibrosis will live to at least 47 – and beyond. And that doesn't account for the most recent advances in treatment, such as those pioneered by Professor Stuart Elborn who, alongside his world-class research into CF, is Acting Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

Elborn led studies of the first therapy to treat the underlying causes of CF, which was found to drastically improve and prolong the lives of around half of CF patients. But it wasn't just the therapy that was helping patients: it was hope. "I learned this graphically in a series of trials that we did," says Elborn. "All the hard, clinical measurements were great, and that was fantastic. But, actually, what the people getting these new treatments were telling me was: 'This has changed my life. I've got hope again.'"

Now, Elborn's patients were living their lives. They embarked on career changes. They started families – he recently met one patient who is now mother to twins. "The research we do is fundamentally attached to the hope that we can make things better," says Elborn. "We hope there's a better future. If we don't have hope, it's a pretty miserable situation to be in." And we need to →



I hope our society will continue to provide a positive work-life balance for students, and nurture a strong sense of community

Edward Devlin (Medicine, fourth year),
President of the Belfast Medical Student Association.

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keep hope alive for as long as we live, Elborn points out, highlighting the fact that social care needs significant improvement. “The way we treat our older people in more developed societies reflects a lack of understanding and respect. Flourishing shouldn’t just be for teenagers and 20-year-olds.”

Decisions on social care are often made in the political sphere, and here, too, hope plays a big part – not always in a positive way. “Hope that is not matched with careful study, reflection and planning can simply lead to disappointment,” says political behaviour expert Professor John Garry from the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics. “Crossing your fingers and ‘hoping for the best’ represents baseless optimism and will likely lead to unrealised potential.

“On the other hand, if a sense of hope is the result of rationally working out what your best option is, given the information at your disposal, and your careful understanding of the nature of the choice on offer, then this can be positive. Such hope would represent cautious, rational and grounded optimism.”

But how do you hold on to hope when it feels impossible? In 1984, Dr Gail McConnell’s father William was murdered by the IRA outside their Belfast home: her 2021 collection, *The Sun Is Open*, addresses his life and death. She stays positive, McConnell says, through quiet reflection: time that allows her to work through intensely difficult subjects and create art.

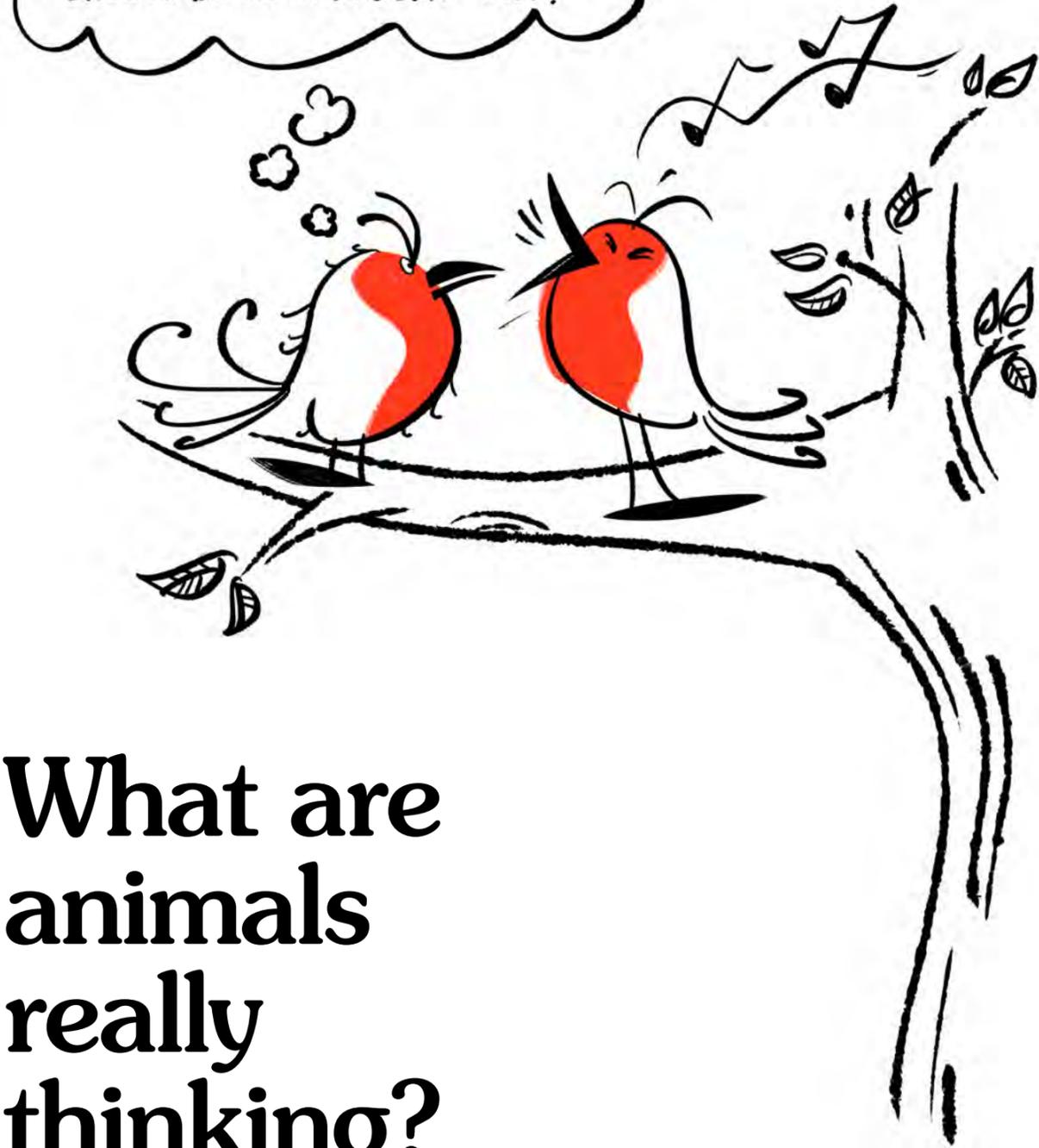
McConnell didn’t write a single poem for the first two and a half years of the pandemic, as she and her partner juggled full-time work with childcare, and she looked after her students. Staying hopeful while not producing is essential to future work, she believes. “Those periods are so vital and fertile in ways that you can never really understand. It’s easy to have hope when you have just won a prize for a book. But when you’re up to your eyes in Lego and student emails and you’re desperate to write a sonnet because you haven’t for so long – that’s when you have to hope.”

Giving students that space, she says, is why she loves her work at Queen’s. “What we’re giving our students is a chance to think and to write and to read and, ultimately, to have an altered perspective on the world that gives them a sense of hope. They have a sense of how they might bring about change, how they might make an impact in the world and how they might feel empowered.”

“In this hope of a newer and better future,” says Oliver Jeffers, “it is worth remembering that while the old stories may no longer be fit for purpose, if we can respectfully see and hear them, give them space, then perhaps we can get away from being right over wrong, and move towards being better over worse. As noted by John Steinbeck, ‘In spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the trait of hope still controls the future.’”

Hope, then, remains the crucial difference between holding on or giving up and, as Reid puts it, “turning one’s face to the wall”. Hope is at hand even in the darkest circumstances. The trick, it seems, is to watch out for it – and hold on to it when it appears. ■

FORGET THE SSE ARENA...
WITH HIS VOICE, THIS GUY
SHOULD BE IN MANDELA HALL!



What are animals really thinking?

Getting inside an animal's mind is crucial to understanding evolution, says Dr Gareth Arnott.

Words Victoria James / Illustrations Lalalimola

Stags locking antlers, bull elephant seals body-slamming, lions circling. Creatures engaged in combat is one of the most iconic spectacles of the animal kingdom – and the often-bloody highlight of many a nature documentary. We watch in awe as animals fight for access to mates or territory, to establish position within a hierarchy or, in the case of the hermit crab, simply for a rather nice shell to inhabit. But the career of behavioural biologist Dr Gareth Arnott, Reader in Biological Sciences, has been spent revealing how much more is going on in such combats – and in the minds of animals – than meets the eye.

“When I started out, the largely accepted hypothesis was ‘mutual assessment’ – that a fight is always about you and the opponent, with animals sizing up the opposition,” Arnott says. It may appear reasonable that animals assess whether their opponent is likely to beat them, he suggests, a judgement that will influence how long they stay in the fight, or whether they engage at all. But that’s to look at the matter through an anthropomorphising lens. “There’s good evidence in humans about our ability to measure dominance and aggression,” Arnott explains. “We are very capable at these comparative assessments. But scientifically that has clouded our judgement – we shouldn’t assume it is the case for animals.”

Arnott’s journey to unravelling the intricacies of animal contests began when he teamed up with Queen’s now-Emeritus Professor of Animal Behaviour, Robert Elwood, who was working on a simpler alternative to the widely held idea of mutual assessment – namely ‘self-assessment’, the idea that animals were aware only of their own ability in a fight.

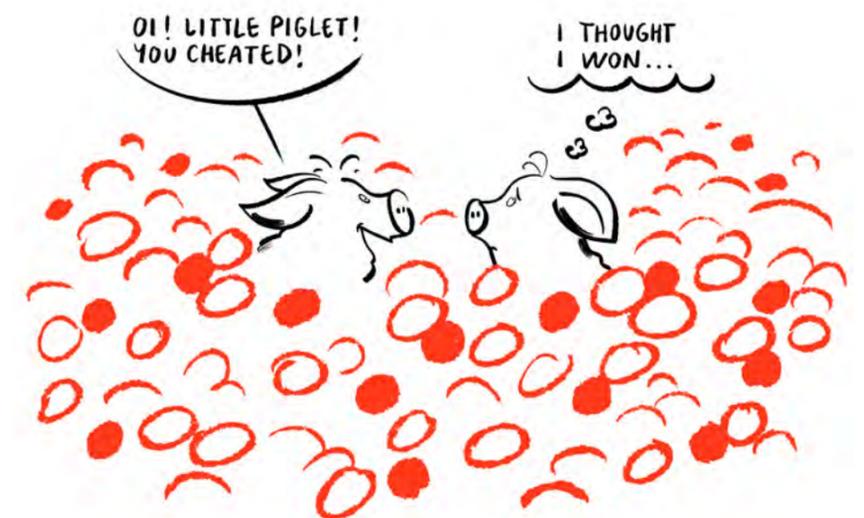
The two collaborated in 2009 on a paper that proved seminal in the field of animal behaviour. It laid out a framework for identifying and analysing self and mutual assessment in contest participants. “We put forward the idea that in terms of animal cognition, the processing, use and storage of information is key. We set out our hypothesis that self-assessment requires fewer cognitive abilities. It is a simpler psychological process than mutual assessment.”

Arnott says that we can never know exactly what animals are thinking. “But we can know about the information that they are gathering, and their decision-making.” One species that perfectly illustrates the complexities of animal cognition in contest situations is the humble hermit crab.

“The life of the hermit crab can be summed up as the quest for the perfect shell,” Arnott says. Shells may be discovered empty on the shore, but it’s a lucky crab that finds its new home this way. Most often, they fight another crab and take theirs. “Hermit crabs gather lots of information about the quality of the desired shell, including likely improvements, and change fight tactics accordingly,” says Arnott. “For significantly increased shell gain, they’ll fight more aggressively, or resume a fight more quickly.” But this information-gathering about the desirability of

Far left:
In spring, birds use song to show aggressiveness and to secure territory for nesting and breeding, but research shows that this is becoming tougher due to noisy conditions created by humans.

Below:
Pig aggression is a big welfare issue, says Arnott. He suggests that pigs that are socialised earlier in life are capable of resolving dominance contests faster and with less aggression when they are mature.



Far right:
In the quest to find the perfect shell, hermit crabs will change tactics according to self-assessment only, whereas defending crabs will engage in mutual assessment.

Below:
Experiments suggest that allowing dairy cattle to access pasture, rather than keeping them housed inside, can promote natural behaviour and improve their health and positive emotional state.

the targeted shell on the part of the attacker does not equate to an assessment of the fighting prowess of its opponent. The attacker appears to fight according to self-assessment only.

Not so the defender. “Defending hermit crabs seem to gather information about the attacker,” Arnott explains. The attacker will deliver bouts of “shell rapping”, causing the defendant to withdraw inside. Victory is achieved when the defender is removed from their shell and thrown aside, while the victor engages in a prolonged session of switching between both shells to decide whether to trade its current abode for the one it has just won. “If their opponent is really strong, the defender will give up quickly, but if it’s a weaker opponent, the defender is likely to persist for much longer. This suggests mutual assessment on the part of the defender,” says Arnott.

So complex is hermit crab behaviour, it is opening up even larger – and more controversial – questions about animal sentience. “The working definition of sentience is the capacity to experience feelings and this is associated with levels of awareness – for example, of our own future behavioural patterns,” says Arnott. “So even with a simple animal like a hermit crab, we’re now questioning whether invertebrates know more than we think.”

It’s a subject to which behavioural scientists are making significant contributions. Elwood has just published an article in the journal *Animal Cognition* exploring sentience, while one of Arnott’s former PhD students, Dr Andrew Crump, was an author on a recent report outlining evidence of sentience in decapods and cephalopods. Animal sentience is now recognised and enshrined in the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act which passed into law in the UK in 2022 and, as well as including all vertebrates, it also includes decapods and cephalopods based on the evidence presented in the report.

HIGH ON EMOTION

Animal welfare is a key factor in the acknowledgement of animal sentience. Standard scientific terminology speaks of negative or positive “affective states”, and Arnott’s current work explores whether consideration of animal “emotions” can improve welfare standards, from licensed, large-scale dog breeding to dairy farming. And one major current investigation, involving commercially reared pigs, marries Arnott’s long-term contest work with the emerging exploration of animal “emotion” and its importance for welfare.

“Pig aggression is a big welfare issue when animals are mixed together at various stages of the production cycle,” he explains. “They fight to establish dominance, which is a major stressor.” Initial work found that pigs that are socialised earlier in life, by mixing litters for play, for example, would be capable of resolving contests faster and with less aggression when they were mature.

The team has gone on to explore how animals’ “emotions” are affected by contest outcome, using an elegant experiment. Pigs are trained to recognise that if a bucket is put in one corner of their





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Above:
Arnett has studied the impact of a difficult birth on maternal behaviour, and the impact of breeding activity as a determinant of future welfare and "emotion".

Initial phases of Arnett's research, published in 2020 in *Proceedings of the Royal Society*, also float the question of how recent contest outcomes induce long-term moods. "So we've been on a journey from basic questions of self or mutual assessment in contests to marrying that with this exploratory research on emotion," says Arnett.

As academic lead of the Animal Welfare Research Network, a coalition of more than 1,000 scholars, Arnett has recently been appointed to the UK Government's Animal Welfare Panel, which he hopes will provide an opportunity to influence policy guidelines. Providing robust, cutting-edge scientific advice to Defra is crucial, he says, because researchers' ability to explore what animals might be thinking is growing all the time, with consequences for how we think about and treat non-human life.

"We now accept aspects of animal sentience that we would previously have assumed them incapable of," says Arnett. "All this research has shown that animals have a richer behavioural repertoire and thinking capacity than was accepted even just a few years ago, and we're now at the point where we have the tools to access that. It's incredibly exciting: we're learning more and more about the inner lives of animals – and what they're really thinking." ■



Forget raising your voice. To make your case, raise the quality of your argument.

Founded in 1850, the Literific argues that debate and discussion are a central part of the Queen's tradition – and society at large.

Words Jo Caird / Illustrations Christopher Brown

B

read-throwing. Mask-wearing. And... sword-waving. These are just some of the hijinks that have taken place in debates hosted by the Literific, Queen's first student society. Established in 1850, disbanded a little over a hundred years later, then resurrected in its current form in 2011, the Society is no shrinking violet. And its history is as much a part of Queen's as any other aspect of the University.

The debating group began life as the Literary and Scientific Society, a rather exclusive club whose members had to be elected, but which now welcomes all-comers and, says outgoing president Matthew Taylor (Philosophy and Anthropology, 2023), no longer takes itself too seriously. "But it still has that opportunity for debate and genuine competition," he says.

The original Literific was a paper-reading society, where students and guest speakers – who were often Queen's professors – read their essays aloud, either for other members at private meetings (where they would also be critiqued by their peers), or for a broader audience at public meetings. "Politics or religious polemics" were not allowed, though members often got round this rule by using papers on historical figures as an oblique criticism of modern politics. The equivalent today, perhaps, would be a veiled attack on neo-conservative elements in the current UK Government via a paper on Margaret Thatcher. ➔

It was only following an 1885 merger with the Junior Debating Society (itself formed out of the Literific in 1883) that debates, rather than paper-reading, became the Literific's go-to, and it has remained that way ever since.

The topics debated have evolved over time, of course. That first debate, back in 1885, was on "The comparative merits of Republican and Monarchical Government". There is still a rule in place against party polemics today, but you're now as likely to find members debating whether the Oscars are rigged and the impact of the rise of dating apps as you are to hear discussion of populism or the merits of a united Ireland. (Anyone interested in the arguments put forward in any of those particular debates should check out the very witty minutes of those meetings, which are posted on the society's website.)

Opening up topics of debate was a particular focus of Taylor's presidency. In the past, he says, the Literific has sometimes tended towards a split down party-political lines. "By bringing in debates that weren't just politics-related," says Taylor, "we hoped to create a more inclusive atmosphere, both at debates and at society social events." His reforms are paying off: membership has swelled from just 52 to around 250 members, around 100 of whom participate regularly, and during his term the society had the highest average attendance in a decade, with an average of 70-plus attendees a week.

The current success of the Literific recalls the Society's last heyday in the first half of the 20th century. After the merger with the Debating Society in 1885, the Literific went from strength to strength, with women admitted as members at some point during the 1880s (the society elected its first female president in 1918). Indeed, in 1907, the Literific was so highly regarded that the Chief Secretary for Ireland consulted members on whether to convert Queen's College into a university (which went on to happen in 1908). And right up to the end of the 1950s, the Literific attracted prominent guest speakers, drawing huge audiences.

Verner Wheelock (Agricultural Chemistry, 1962), who served as Treasurer for the Literific in the late 1950s, remembers the society as "one of the main centres of debate and discussion, where you could meet people from all sorts of different backgrounds". While other societies attracted a niche membership, the Literific represented a genuine cross-section of the university, says Wheelock.

For broadcast journalist and actor Denis Tuohy (Classics, 1959), who won the Queen's Debating Medal in his final undergraduate year, and was a London finalist in the *Observer* debating tournament, the strength of the Literific was that it was a broad church. "It was an opportunity for a wide range of subjects to be debated pretty freely from different perspectives," he says.

In the 1960s, however, the society found itself navigating bumpier terrain. First, in 1962, the Student Representative Council (the SRC, now the Student Union), banned the press and public from attending all society and club events at Queen's, fearful of provoking controversy. Then, in the 1964-65 session, the playwright John Antrobus, who was attending as a guest speaker, stripped off during a debate, leading to the Literific being disbanded from the SRC for several weeks.

In October 1964, the Society took the decision to move from impartiality in favour of an explicitly Irish nationalist position – but in 1967 was dissolved altogether. As Rory McShane, the student who proposed the dissolution, said at the time: "The Literific at present is not the best platform for debating at Queen's. There is obviously a need for a society where all members of the University can feel they can come and air their views." →



1885: The comparative merits of Republican and Monarchical Government 1933: Would you

fight for King and country? 1933: The advent of German refugees to this country is abhorrent

1938: The future of Great Britain should be strongly anti-fascist 1938: Demand for immediate

action against the persecution in Germany 1939: Fascist powers to be immediately boycotted

1942: Is peace preferable to honour? 1957: Are the English destitute of faith but scared of

scepticism? 1959: Is religion necessary to morality? 1959: Peace cannot prosper with sword in hand

2012: Music died when Elvis arrived 2013: Austerity isn't working 2015: Robin Hood had

the right idea 2016: Declassify transgenderism as a psychological disorder

It would be another 44 years before the Literific was able to perform that function again, when the founding spirit of the society – encouraging open debate from every political viewpoint – was its central feature once more. For Conor Houston (Bachelor of Laws; Certificate in Professional Legal Studies; Certificate in Advanced Advocacy, 2013), who threw himself into debating during his postgraduate law training in 2007-8, “there was still this sense of history and tradition” about the Literific, despite its decades in the wilderness.

Houston represented Queen's in the final of the *Irish Times* National Debating Championship in 2008 and, though he didn't win, “it was a real privilege and an amazing debate to be part of,” he says. It was this experience that inspired Houston to work to support debating at Queen's after the Literific was resurrected in 2011. Impressed by the energy of the debate in that period, as well as by the “really exceptional young people” involved, he became a trustee of the Literific Trust when it was created in 2013.

As part of his commitment to the renaissance of the Literific, Houston advocated for Queen's to host the final of the *Irish Times* Debate, which it did in 2013. This felt like a milestone in itself; the fact that a Queen's student, Adam Kydd (Politics, Philosophy and Economics, 2014), represented the University in the final was the icing on the cake. “It proved that investing in these things and creating the culture of debating reaps results,” says Houston.

“If you create the culture of debating, you breed that success.”

Marie-Louise Synnott (MEng Aerospace Engineering, 2016) joined in 2010, when the society was in its infancy of reforming. “At the time, debates were off the cuff, had four speakers, an audience of roughly five people and the odd guest lecturer as a Chair. We did have a good time at the bar afterwards as well!”

Debate topic choices were always a tricky thing to manage, says Synnott, who became President of the Society in 2015. “We sat for hours trying to come up with debates that were catchy, informative and controversial – but not too controversial. For the most part we did it. The challenging part was trying to make the title unbiased, but not so vague that you could have a lot of straw man arguments.

“One of the more memorable debates was on the Scottish Referendum: one speaker stood up and raised his glass to thank people for their contribution toward Scotland – Buckfast in tea cups. But it was a very clever, funny take on an emotive topic.”

Her biggest takeaway from the society is how inclusive it is. “Ninety-nine per cent of the time there would be a heated topic where you have all these polarising views debating, but afterwards it was just a group of friends in a bar. You could be anybody and make a group of great friends and contacts in the society. Attendance is on the rise, and there is a clear need and desire for a safe space to have an opinion. It was amazing to be able to be part of facilitating that.”

For Matthew Taylor, the real success lies in the Society's ability to develop outstanding qualities in its members. While he celebrates success in events such as the *Irish Times* Debate, he recognises there is a bigger picture to consider. “The competition is important to me,” he says, “but what's far more important is what it represents – confidence, eloquence and the ability to think on your feet. That is the Literific at its best – the ability to take a student who may be shy, with low self-confidence and turn them into a confident orator.” ■

KEEP UP TO DATE with the Literific @QUBLiterific and visit the website: literific.org

2017: Online dating is the death of romance 2018: Children are the property of the state

2019: Would you date a vampire? 2020: Pride should focus on protest over celebration

2021: Kanye is more influential than Shakespeare 2022: The Protocol has negatively

impacted Northern Ireland 2023: Margaret Thatcher saved the economy

Can Northern Ireland win the race to cure cancer?

Queen's researchers are leading on some of the most exciting work in cancer research. Now the world is beginning to take notice.

Words Lucy Jolin / Illustration Jimmy Turrell

Imagine a world where cancer is no longer a deadly threat, but just another disease you get treatment for and then get better. It might sound like science fiction but, for many, a cure for cancer is already a reality – and Queen's researchers and clinicians are on the front line of finding new ways to tackle the disease, in all its many forms. And the world is sitting up and taking notice.

"Right now, Belfast is a very exciting place to be," says Dr Robert Ladner, Reader at the School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences and CEO of the drug company CV6 Therapeutics. His company is about to launch the world's first human clinical trials of CV6-168 – one of the first cancer drugs to be developed in Belfast.

New cancer drugs are rare; new cancer drugs that come out of an academic startup even more so. But the evolving cancer research ecosystem in Northern Ireland has made it possible. "This could be a blockbuster drug," says Ladner. "If it is successful – and I can't say that it will be until we do our clinical trial – this is something that could really alter what's going on in cancer treatment. As a cancer scientist, this is a once-in-a-career opportunity." ➔





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Why is Ladner so excited? The new drug could be used to treat many different types of cancer. It works alongside an existing, well-established and common drug – 5-FU – which is already used to treat millions of cancer patients every year. While 5-FU works by stopping cancer cells making new DNA, meaning that they can't grow, when combined with 5-FU, CV6-168 attacks them on another front – by tricking them into thinking that they have been infected with a virus. “We're invoking the body's ancient mechanisms of identifying viral DNA in cells – causing the cancer cells to signal to the immune system and get it working,” explains Ladner. “Our hypothesis is that we are going to enable 5-FU – one of the most important drugs ever discovered – to work on a completely different level.”

REASONS FOR OPTIMISM

Ladner has made it his life's work to find a new way to treat cancer, first at the University of Southern California before moving his entire team to Queen's, and specifically to the Patrick G Johnston Centre for Cancer Research (PGJCCR), in 2015. The advantages of Belfast were significant, he says: generous grant support from Invest Northern Ireland, tax incentives encouraging research and development, a tremendously skilled workforce, affordable housing for his team and, of course, the cutting-edge facilities and expertise available at the PGJCCR.

What makes the research environment of the PGJCCR really stand out, says Professor Chris Scott, Dean of Research, is its close links with the Cancer Centre at Belfast City Hospital – almost a third of investigators at the PGJCCR are clinicians who also work at the hospital. “That's important, because it means we're answering the right questions. I'm a scientist. I'm not a clinician. I might come up with solutions to problems that, maybe, are not really that important. But if clinicians tell you where the current problems are, you're more likely to develop solutions or insight that are going to have impact in the clinic.”

One area that is getting a lot of attention at the moment off the back of the Covid pandemic is the generation of vaccines against cancer – and a new company, AilseVax Ltd, spun out from the Centre and Trinity College Dublin, is aiming to find one such vaccine. “We're very excited about where AilseVax will go, and how they can develop new vaccine technologies to train the immune system to eradicate tumour cells that could have less potential side-effects than current therapies,” says Scott.

And while work on a cancer vaccine is just beginning, there are also reasons for optimism in efforts to build on existing drugs as a way of getting new treatments to patients fast. Much of Dr Katrina Lappin's work, for instance, is focused on drug repurposing – discovering new applications for drugs that are already approved for clinical use. →

THE CANCER CHALLENGERS

Meet the experts dedicated to driving research forward



VISION:

Improve patient outcomes and train the next generation of scientists and clinicians

Professor Chris Scott
Dean of Research, Faculty of Medicine
Health and Life Sciences



VISION:

Discover new cancer treatments using drugs already approved for clinical use – so they get to patients quicker

Dr Katrina Lappin
Research Fellow, School of Medicine,
Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences →

OUR HYPOTHESIS IS THAT WE'RE GOING TO ENABLE 5-FU – ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT DRUGS EVER DISCOVERED – TO WORK ON A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT LEVEL

“Using an approved drug for a new purpose means you don’t need to do phase 1 clinical trials – you can go straight to phase 2 to find out how well the drug works,” she says. “A brand-new drug can take up to 15 years and millions of pounds to get to clinic. If you’re using a drug that has already been through the first stage, you halve that time.”

Her current work examines a genetic mutation known as SF3B1, which can make it more likely that you’ll get certain cancers. But the mutation could also be a way into targeting these cancers more efficiently. Lappin’s work has shown that cancer cells where SF3B1 is mutated are more sensitive to drugs known as poly-ADP ribose polymerase (PARP) inhibitors. These drugs stop PARP – a protein – from repairing cancer cells, which messes up the way they normally repair.

“There are multiple ways to repair a cell,” she says. “So, if a cell has a mutation that makes one way of repair impossible, it will rely more heavily on the alternatives. The PARP inhibitor can target this other pathway, giving the cell no option but to die. It should also more specifically target the cancer, reducing associated side effects as well.” And that matters, because for Lappin, it’s personal. “When I was five, my granda passed away with acute myeloid leukaemia,” she says. “He was diagnosed and died two weeks later. I love knowing that the work I’m doing might improve outcomes for patients.”

SURPRISING INSIGHTS

Of course, cancer research isn’t just about drugs – data also plays a key role. Professor Mark Lawler is passionate about using data to make a difference. “It’s not just about doing the research. What happens next? How does research develop into a change in cancer policy that means real things to real people?” His work on the impact of Covid on cancer found that 100 million people in Europe had not had cancer screening tests for breast, cervical and bowel cancer. Up to a million people may have had a missed or undiagnosed cancer. Surgery and chemotherapy dropped by 50 per cent.

Lawler’s data enabled the European Cancer Organisation to develop a campaign called Time to Act, which he co-led, with a simple message going out to patients: don’t let Covid-19 stop you from tackling cancer. It has been incredibly successful – cited by the European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Stella Kyriakides, and Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission. The work won the 2021 Royal College of Physicians Excellence in Patient Care Award and the prestigious 2022 European Communique Award, recognising its significant impact.

Now, Lawler and his team have turned their attention to another basic but vital question: are we doing cancer research in the most effective way possible? Their European Cancer Groundshot has been seminal, highlighting what needs to be done on the ground. ➔



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And his analysis of cancer research activity in Europe has turned up some unexpected insights. “For example, lung cancer is 21 per cent of the cancer burden,” he says. “But just four per cent of research efforts, resources and funding go on lung cancer. So, there’s a disconnect between the problem and what we’re currently doing to try and address it.”

But it’s not enough to just do the research. Lawler’s team have now produced a 12-step plan with supporting data showing that if their recommendations are followed, 70 per cent of cancer patients could live for 10 years or more by 2035. This ‘70:35’ vision is a hugely ambitious target, says Lawler, but when it comes to cancer, you have to think big.

And clinicians seeing patients on the front line are already beginning to see the real-world impact. Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed male cancer in the UK: about one in eight men can expect to be diagnosed with it in their lifetime. And it’s complicated. “It’s not one disease, so there isn’t just one treatment,” says clinical oncologist Professor Joe O’Sullivan. “It’s a spectrum that ranges from very aggressive lethal prostate cancers to prostate cancers that don’t need treatment at all.”

INCREDIBLE ADVANCES

At the newly created Prostate Cancer Centre of Excellence, O’Sullivan and his team are running crucial studies of new drugs and treatment combinations aimed at men with the most aggressive forms of cancer, as well as developing new diagnostic tests to help with better patient-specific decision making. Last year, they completed phase 1 of a world-first trial, known as ADRRAD, among men presenting with advanced prostate cancer that has spread to the bone. It combined hormone therapy, chemotherapy, highly targeted radiotherapy and six injections of a radioactive drug called radium 223. “So far, we’ve seen excellent feasibility and tolerability, and very encouraging efficacy or hopefully potentially life-extending ability,” says O’Sullivan. “When I first started treating prostate cancer, men with these cancers may have lived for two years. Now, we are expecting them to live six, seven, eight years and beyond.” The prostate cancer clinical research programme is part of Queen’s wider clinical trials programme at the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre, which has recruited thousands of patients over the last 20 years.

Those past two decades have seen incredible advances in cancer research in Northern Ireland – and this may be the tipping point, the dawn of a new world. A world in which cancer research funds are targeted at the cancers that need them most; in which, if you do get cancer, it’s diagnosed early; in which there are a multitude of effective treatments with few side effects, giving you not just a longer life, but a much happier one. It’s a world that may soon be right here. ■



VISION:
Use data to inform
rapid improvements
in cancer diagnosis,
treatment and aftercare

Professor Mark Lawler
Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor and
Professor of Digital Health, School of
Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences



VISION:
Achieve better outcomes
for prostate cancer
patients through a
clinical trial programme

Professor Joe O’Sullivan
Clinical Professor, School of Medicine,
Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences



VISION:
Prove that new drug
CV6-168 is an effective
cancer treatment

Dr Robert Ladner
Reader at the School of Medicine,
Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences,
CEO of CV6 Therapeutics

DATASET

PLASTIC PEOPLE

Professor Gosia Swadźba-Kwaśny and Professor John Holbrey have big ideas for recycling.

Words Peter Taylor-Whiffen
Photography Angela Moore



CONTEXT Our planet is in danger of being overwhelmed by plastic pollution. Plastics are amazing and useful materials that revolutionised all aspects of our lives, but the way we use them is broken. An item that may only be used for a matter of seconds can hang around for hundreds of years because most single-use plastics are not biodegradable. Seventy-nine per cent of plastic waste is sent to landfills or ends up dumped in the ocean, 12 per cent is incinerated, while only nine per cent is recycled. Finding a sustainable solution to its disposal is one of the most pressing environmental concerns of our age.

BACKGROUND Currently, plastic waste can be recycled mechanically by melting and remoulding its raw materials – the polymers – to create new products. “But this is a limited-time process,” says Professor Gosia Swadźba-Kwaśny from the Queen’s University Ionic Liquid Laboratories (QUILL) Research Centre. “The material’s mechanical strength and quality deteriorates every time it’s reprocessed – over just a few cycles a clear plastic bottle would become weaker and turn black.” So Swadźba-Kwaśny’s team is exploring how chemical rather than mechanical processing can recycle plastic consistently – and infinitely. “Our chemical process takes the plastic right back

to tiny molecules, cleans them and enables products to be made that are as good as, and possibly even better-quality than, the original ones,” she says. The goal is to keep atoms and molecules infinitely in use for rebuilding with the same quality – “like building a Lego model and then breaking it down to use its individual bricks again and again and again.”

METHOD Swadźba-Kwaśny is looking into waste polyolefin plastics that have been broken down into smaller fragments using pyrolysis (heating without oxygen), and designs ionic liquids that convert these smaller fragments into high-value products, such as oils and waxes. Her colleague, Professor John Holbrey, is leading research on recycling PET (polyethylene terephthalate) plastics through depolymerisation, the treatment of waste with a chemical reaction to break it down to its constituent monomers, which can be cleaned up and converted back to PET.

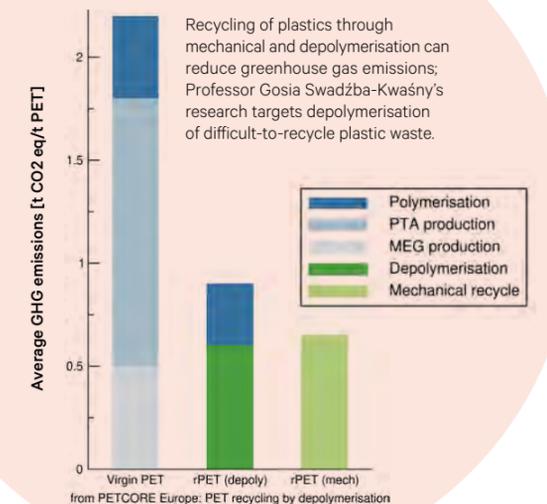
FINDINGS “We’ve found that at the usual temperatures you’d use to depolymerise PET, our catalysts have conversion rates that are 50 per cent better. That opens up the possibility of running the process at lower temperatures, making this form

of recycling cheaper and less energy-intensive. That offers a whole new world of possibilities,” says Holbrey.

OUTCOMES Crucially, the findings of both teams lead to forms of recycling that can be done on a smaller, more localised scale. “It is not sustainable to manage plastics with huge facilities,” explains Professor Swadźba-Kwaśny, “because it involves a lot of transportation and a huge carbon footprint. Our findings could be applied as different technologies in different places – cleaner, small, aesthetic facilities. The recycling process itself is helping the planet, but the possibilities it opens up bring an economic and environmental benefit that’s wider than just the product itself.” And the cross-disciplinary work she’s undertaking will, she hopes, improve waste movement across Northern Ireland. ■

Professor Gosia Swadźba-Kwaśny is the Director of the QUILL Research Centre (Queen’s University Ionic Liquid Laboratories, the oldest and most established centre dedicated to studying ionic liquids and their analogues). **Professor John Holbrey** is Chair of Green Chemistry and a member of QUILL.

Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions from virgin and recycled PET



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“If [people] don’t need poetry, then bully for them,”

the American poet Frank O’Hara once famously said. Poetry isn’t for everyone, not everyone needs it and not everyone deserves it. Yet as a poet, you’re still sometimes asked: “Is poetry still relevant?”

Whenever I hear this question, I feel the one really being asked is: “Is contemporary poetry of interest to lots of people?” And we know that’s not the case. Poetry is a specialist thing, and always has been. But is it relevant, or appropriate, or important? All these things are contingent. It’s relevant to people who like it and find something in it. Is it relevant to their mental wellbeing, their jobs, their identity, or sex, or income bracket? Well, maybe to all of those things, or maybe to none. If you’ve ever read a poem and it stirred something in you, if you’ve ever responded to a particular arrangement of words, then I’d say you found it “relevant”.

In the hierarchy of needs, of course, people don’t *need* poetry. They need clean water before they need a sonnet. But after those animalistic needs are supplied, what is left is art and community. For me, poetry is the most interesting of the arts, and also a means to form community. It is a way to commit to what’s deepest in our lives and to most fully inhabit ourselves. Ted Hughes said it’s about “trying to take fuller possession of the reality of your life”, and I’ve always liked that.

I was a lawyer for many years, and when you’re a lawyer you only see a client when something has gone wrong. And it’s the same for the poet – many people don’t think of poetry until something big happens, and then they call in the professionals, as it were. They go to the anthology and look up a love poem to send to the person they’re in love with, or in grief, find a poem about death to capture something of what they’re feeling. I’m often asked to recommend poems for funerals, and the elegy is a very old form that people have used for thousands of years. We seek companionship in grief through words. We turn to poetry at the junctures of our lives when our feelings need to be articulated but we don’t necessarily have the right words.

People like to make a lot of the Auden quote “poetry makes nothing happen”, which of course is true in many ways. But in other ways, it’s not true at all, and Auden knew that. The line comes from “In Memory of WB Yeats”, and later on in the elegy he talks about poetry being “a way of happening”, so he himself was in two minds about it, and I think we all are.

And what does “relevant” even mean? Its origin is a Scots legal term meaning “legally pertinent”, but people use it a lot these days when discussing art or books: “Oh, it’s not relevant” – the addendum being, “to me. I don’t see myself in it.” I believe that misunderstands the nature of art. There’s both a narcissism and a fear in the word “relevant” when used in this way.

Often, people have a response to poetry that isn’t founded in familiarity with poetry, but there are many ways into it and many routes through it. I think everybody should be doing it. It needs only pen and a piece of paper – it’s a democratic pursuit. With all its complications – its mix of imagination and emotion, thought and experience, with all of its humour or its deadly seriousness – poetry is the best method I’ve found to engage in making meaning of life. ■

Nick Laird, Seamus Heaney Professor of Poetry and recipient of the 2022 Forward Prize for Best Single Poem for “Up Late”, was in conversation with Victoria James. For events, writing workshops and all things literary at the heart of Queen’s, visit qub.ac.uk/schools/seamus-heaney-centre/

DARK HEDGES

PURE POETRY

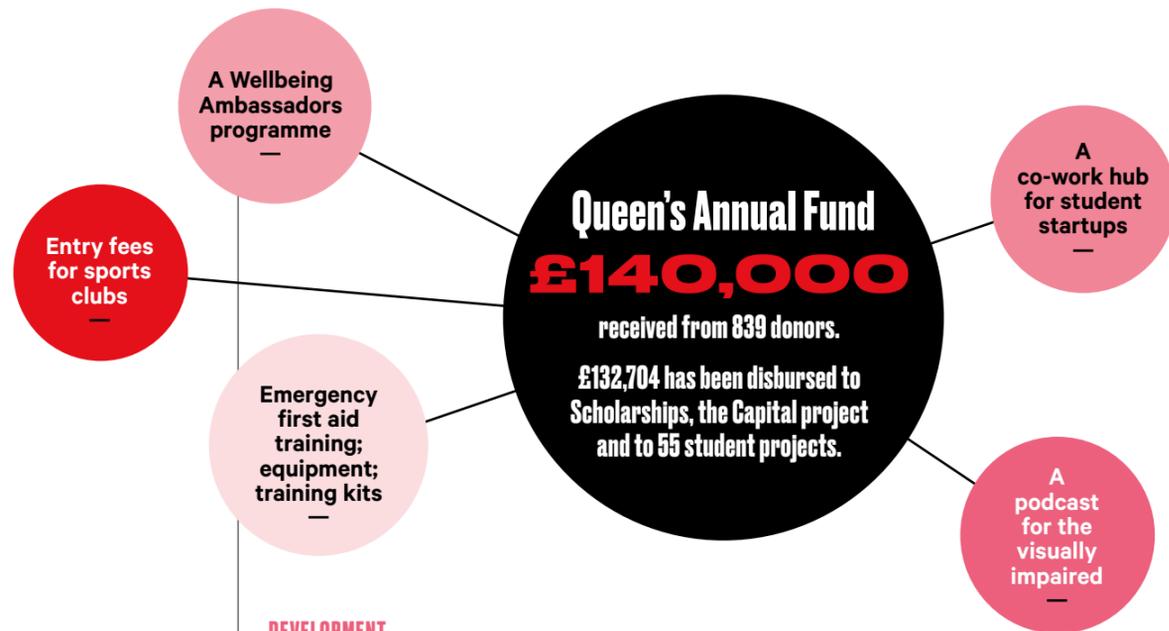
Professor Nick Laird says forget relevance – we need poetry to express and inhabit our own humanity.

Interview Victoria James
Illustration Stuart Patience

NETWORK

ALUMNI LIFE

Your directory of what's going on for the alumni community.



DEVELOPMENT

Annual Fund delivers impact

A podcast series for those with visual impairments; a Wellbeing Ambassadors programme; a co-work hub for student startups; equipment, training kits and entry fees for sports clubs – these are just some of the ways donors to the Queen's Annual Fund have been able to support students this year. In total, £132,704 was disbursed through the Queen's Foundation, supporting 55 student projects. Thank you to everyone who donated and thank you to the student callers who helped with our telephone fundraising campaign. By supporting the Annual Fund, you are enhancing the student experience at Queen's.

► For more information, visit go.qub.ac.uk/annualfundnews

DIRECTORY

BE PART OF IT! YOUR GUIDE TO ALUMNI LIFE

Social media

Stay connected to what's going on at Queen's and with each other by following us on our Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts.
► daro.qub.ac.uk/social-networks

Graduate career support

The expert Careers, Employability and Skills team are still here to support all graduates as they navigate the job market. Recent graduates can access an enhanced career support service for the first two years after graduation (MyFuture login will be required to access enhanced services), with all graduates able to access advice and guidance through the Careers website and social media accounts.
► qub.ac.uk/sites/graduate-support

Queen's associations

Queen's has an extensive network of associations and alumni chapters around the world, including London, Scotland, USA, Canada and Malaysia.
► daro.qub.ac.uk/qubassociations

Queen's Sport membership

Train hard and feel better. Graduates can make use of a range of membership levels, including all-inclusive, fitness and swim options. Prices range from £21 to £32 a month, with a range of peak and off peak rates. Benefits include the free Queen's Sport App, a free fitness consultation with gym staff, online bookings and... free car parking!
► queenssport.com

HITCHED AT QUEEN'S

Wedding belle!

Tom and I met on New Year's Eve in 2009. We were both studying at Queen's at the time (myself Nursing, him Law and Politics) and we had many of our dates over the next three years around Queen's.

"Fast forward nearly 10 years – we got married and had the most perfect day, with our reception in The Great Hall at Queen's University."

Sarah Armstrong



Tom Armstrong
(Law and Politics, 2011)
Sarah Armstrong
(Nursing and Midwifery, 2012)

EVENTS

31 MAY 2023

QUAL Golf Day
Beaconsfield Golf Club, Seer Green, Buckinghamshire

Queen's University Association London (QUAL) hold their annual Golf Day at the superb venue of Beaconsfield Golf Club. The outing is great value with subsidised green fees, a pre-game breakfast, a two-course lunch with wine pairing, and a prize-giving ceremony.

5 JUNE 2023

QUAL President's Summer Reception
Hurlingham Club, London

Queen's University Association London (QUAL) looks forward to hosting its summer reception at the exclusive Hurlingham Club in the Fulham area of London. Guests can look forward to an evening of networking over drinks and canapés.

6 OCTOBER 2023

QUAS Annual Lunch
Apex Waterloo Place Hotel, Edinburgh

Queen's University Association Scotland (QUAS) is hosting a combined annual lunch and lecture. The event consists of a three-course lunch and networking, followed by a lecture from Professor Linda Bauld.

10 NOVEMBER 2023

QUAL Annual Dinner
House of Lords, London

Queen's University Association London (QUAL) looks forward to hosting its centenary dinner at the House of Lords in the Palace of Westminster. This is a black-tie event, starting with a drinks reception and continuing with a formal meal.

24 NOVEMBER 2023

QGA Charter Day Dinner

The Great Hall, Queen's University
Queen's Graduates' Association (QGA) marks the creation of Queen's as an independent university in 1908, and celebrates with a formal, black-tie event. The Queen's Allstate NI Graduate of the Year Award and Alumni Volunteer of the Year Awards are presented on the evening.

To find out more about all upcoming events in and around Queen's, visit:

► daro.qub.ac.uk/ForthcomingEvents



RECREATION

HEADING TO TOWN

Current students Lauren King and Olcan McSparron take on the Lanyon Building, 1960s-style.

Photography Jess Lowe

Recreating this image from the archive are Lauren King (MA History) and Olcan McSparron (MLaw). Lauren is in Belfast for one year (she originally hails from Seattle, Washington) and Olcan is Chair of Queen's SDLP - but we know nothing about the original image other than that it was probably taken at some time in the 1960s (just look at those flares!). If you recognise yourself - or a friend - we want to hear from you! And if you fancy being recreated, get in touch at the address below. ■

► Have an image you'd like to be recreated? Send your suggestions to alumni@qub.ac.uk



Above: Lanyon main entrance, circa 1960s.
Left: Olcan McSparron and Lauren King.

NOW YOU'RE TALKING...

Jamie-Lukas Campbell talks great coffee, hidden art galleries and a passion for public affairs.



1 BEST PLACES FOR FUN

I'm from New York and I lived in Hell's Kitchen – the gay Mecca for New Yorkers. I miss it, so here I spend most of my time in Union Street, often at the Reporter Bar for its pub quizzes, art and open mic nights. Before it closed, Café 31 in town was one of the most gorgeous places during the day. It was really a hidden art gallery, with a piano that I definitely cannot play, and some of the best coffee I've had in Belfast. When I moved here, I had a really heavy period of stress and Café 31 was the place to go and meet new people.

2 FAVOURITE RETREAT

On campus I love the Law School's wellbeing room. It's on the ninth floor and I take loads of photos from there at night. I'll go up there and take a meeting or go at the end of the day to decompress and sort out my agenda for the next day. Having said that, one of my best friends says I never see Belfast, so he has started taking me to places like the shops on Boucher Road. It's only a 20-minute walk from Queen's, but it was only the second time I'd ventured that far. I'm a city person through and through and I'm satisfied with all the city centre has on offer!

3 WHY I LOVE QUEEN'S

Queen's made me feel like a person rather than a number. I often sit across the street from the Mitchell Institute and the Humanities offices, where there are folk – like Andrew Thompson, Richard English and Tom Hulme – whose brilliance is hard to comprehend. And these are thinkers who focus not only on significant global issues and take on tasks like decolonising the curriculum, but who ask the right questions. I'm fascinated by public policy, and the idea of public affairs in the space where you're influencing how people see and interact with the world.

4 HOME FROM HOME

I live in Queen's accommodation and the staff there are just brilliant, especially our Residential Coordinator, Debbie. A lot of international students can't afford to fly home for the holidays, and last year she spent extra time hanging out with us. One morning we all made pancakes. It was ridiculous and fun, and it shows the Belfast character. And if I'm not in the Graduate School, then the AHSS [Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences] social spaces are my go-to.

5 WHAT'S NEXT?

Back in the States, I worked with Secretary Clinton before spending a few years travelling with Mrs Obama and then-Vice President Biden, before moving into public affairs. Next year I'm running for QSU Union President – I'm interested in the othering of folks, how that influences government, and obviously the development and interpretation of knowledge – especially around global injustices and the structural exclusion against Black people, which I think the world has stopped discussing after the murder of George Floyd.

Words: Kat Brown Photo: Alamy

OUR ALUMNI **Jamie-Lukas Campbell** (MSc International Public Policy, 2022) is Postgraduate Student Officer.

mandela hall GIG GUIDE

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|----------|--------------------|----------|---------------------------|
| 25.05.23 | ERIC BIBB & BAND | 03.06.23 | DEA MATRONA |
| 15.06.23 | ROBERT CRAY & BAND | 16.06.23 | LEFTFIELD SOLD OUT |
| 28.07.23 | THE OLLAM | 06.09.23 | WILCO |
| 09.09.23 | EDDI READER | 06.10.23 | CHRIS KENT |
| 07.10.23 | KEVIN MCALEER | 25.10.23 | SQUID |
| 27.10.23 | DECLAN O'ROURKE | 28.10.23 | GEOFF TATE |
| 03.11.23 | TEENAGE FANCLUB | 10.11.23 | THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS |
| 16.11.23 | CLASSIC ROCK SHOW | 18.11.23 | EMER MAGUIRE |
| 19.11.23 | THIS IS THE KIT | 08.12.23 | HOTHOUSE FLOWERS |

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