



Durham
University



Durham

ISSUE 10

**THE MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND
FRIENDS OF DURHAM UNIVERSITY**

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Research with a lasting impact
Improving our understanding and
transforming lives



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**A second chance -
or good business sense?**
A fresh approach to prison reform.



Editors
Debbie Mayne | *Marketing Manager*
Lisa Shannon | *Marketing Manager*

Cover image
Dr Fiona Hill, Chancellor (left) and Pro-
fessor Karen O'Brien, Vice-Chancellor
and Warden in the residence of alumnus,
James Roscoe, Deputy Head of Mission for
the British Embassy, Washington DC.

Design
Kit Studio | *kit.studio*

Contact
Development and Alumni Relations Office,
The Palatine Centre, Durham University
Stockton Road, Durham, DH1 3LE

alumni.office@durham.ac.uk
durham.ac.uk/alumni

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A Welcome from our Vice-Chancellor



It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this edition of our annual magazine for our 230,000 alumni and supporters.

As a community, we have achieved a great deal in the last year, Globally, we are a top-100 university and in the UK, our ranking has increased to seventh in the recent Complete University Guide. We continue to attract the greatest minds and most talented students, irrespective of nationality, culture or background; and the benefits of our impressive wider student experience are reflected in the achievements of our students.

Our focus remains on transforming lives locally and globally through the provision of excellent education, groundbreaking research and by equipping our students with the transferable skills to help them face whatever challenges and opportunities they may encounter. We are so appreciative of the support that you offer them along the way.

We have undertaken a significant refresh of our University Strategy and taken the opportunity to update our purpose and values. Our mission remains constant from when we were founded in 1832: to enrich lives and change the world through the advancement of learning. Our Strategy, which was at the mid-point of its 10-year term, had anticipated some, yet inevitably not all of the global turbulence of the last few years. Along with many others, we have faced the disruption of a global pandemic, Brexit, high inflation and rising costs. The threat of a climate crisis is even more prominent and visible.

The refresh of our Strategy has enabled us to address the impact of these challenges and prepare for the challenges of the future. Sustainability will remain at the heart of everything we do. We are aiming for Net Zero by 2035 and biodiversity net gain by 2032. We will continue to widen access to Durham University, building on progress made to date in welcoming students from every background and walk of life. As part of this, we are relocating our world-leading Business School into the city centre in preparation for teaching in September.

In all this, we are very aware of our place, size and shape. We will do more to drive prosperity in North East England, supporting commercialisation of research, spin-out companies and innovation, for the economy of tomorrow. We are working with our city, county and region more closely than ever before. It was our pleasure recently to host the official signing of a trailblazer devolution deal giving our region additional control over transport, housing and skills.

We are a proudly collegiate university. Our colleges are the bedrock of our community. We will continue to support and nurture them, and we are embarking on an ambitious period of refurbishment. The first to benefit will be Hild Bede, which will move temporarily to comfortable, modern accommodation in Rushford Court ahead of the planned works.

You, our alumni and supporter community, continue to motivate us. Not only do you continue to achieve great things, you also continue to support and inspire those just setting out on their journey. You are our greatest ambassadors, and I am ever inspired by meeting you, hearing your stories and sharing your experiences. I continue to travel to meet more of our wider community. This year I have met groups of alumni in the USA, Hong Kong, Sydney, Malaysia and Singapore as well as Belgium. I look forward to meeting many more of you in the year ahead.

Thank you to those of our community who have contributed to this magazine. We hope you enjoy reading.

Professor Karen O'Brien, Vice-Chancellor and Warden

Durham news

Aug

2023 Renaming of Assembly Rooms Theatre

We've renamed our city centre venue, the Assembly Rooms Theatre, in honour of our former Chancellor and world-renowned opera singer, Sir Thomas Allen. The venue will now be known as the Sir Thomas Allen Assembly Rooms Theatre.



Vice-Chancellor with former Chancellor Sir Thomas Allen outside Assembly Rooms Theatre



Vice-Chancellor with alumni in Hong Kong

Sept

2023 Vice-Chancellor's trips to Hong Kong and Sydney

Professor Karen O'Brien travelled to Hong Kong and Australia to catch up with two of our thriving alumni communities and one of our strategic research partners.

When talking about these receptions and engagements, the Vice-Chancellor said:

"We have a younger and increasingly more global alumni community, and as I engage with them around the world, I observe that they are primarily connected with the ethical values that Durham represents. These values are particularly represented in our updated strategy, around sustainability, and around social inclusion and social purpose."

Alumni Hall of Fame induction

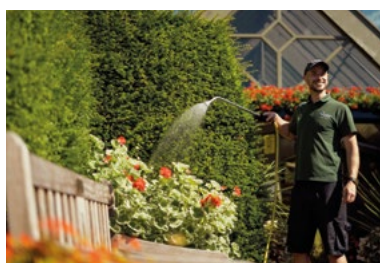
Two exceptional alumni were inducted into Durham University Sports' Hall of Fame. They are Sophie Hosking MBE, the Olympic Rowing Gold Medallist in the Lightweight Double Sculls for Team GB at the 2012 London Olympics and Holly Colvin, who represented the Senior England Cricket team an impressive 143 times, is a double World Cup winner and became England's youngest senior player at the age of 15.

Oct

2023

Botanic Garden Gold Award

Our wonderful Botanic Garden has been awarded Gold in the 'Best Tourist, Visitor Attraction and Country Estate' category of the annual Northumbria in Bloom competition. This is the seventh time the Garden has been recognised, adding to its impressive portfolio of awards and accreditations.



Botanic Garden



Tasha Stones



Vice-Chancellor with Gabby Logan

Nov

2023

Great British Bake Off success

Alumna Tasha Stones reached the semi final on the most recent series of The Great British Bake Off. In a journey of courage, creativity and 'star' bakes, Tasha made history by being the first deaf contestant on the show.

Alumna Gabby Logan meets our Vice-Chancellor

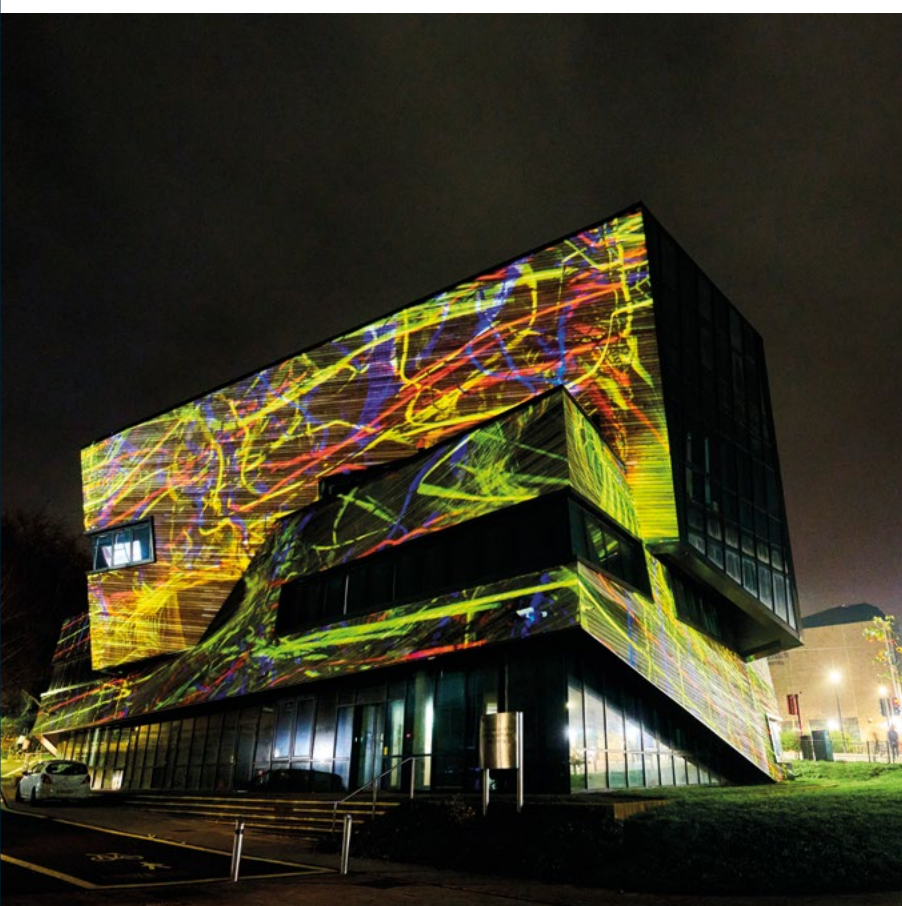
Professor Karen O'Brien met with sports presenter and television personality, Gabby Logan MBE, to share some aspects of her vision for Durham, and to hear some of Gabby's Durham experiences.

To view the full conversation, visit durham.ac.uk/alumni/news-and-events/latest-news/2023/12/gabby-logan-meets-our-vice-chancellor

Lumiere

Lumiere returned to Durham in spectacular fashion. Artists of three installations drew on inspiration from some of our ground-breaking research. Professor Carlos Frenk worked with Spanish artist Daniel Canogar, who used Professor Frenk's research and astronomical data to create his installation, 'Universal Loom', that was inspired by string theory. Professor Nicole Westmarland was involved in the piece 'On Blank Pages', by Spanish anonymous activist group Luzinterruptus, which explores the state of the UK justice system. The Durham Energy Institute (DEI) was part of the team behind 'Diamond Garden'. This piece drew on the DEI's expertise around energy use and sustainable energy solutions and ringing true to this ethos, was completely powered by solar, and made using rechargeable batteries and recycled materials.

Lumiere display on the Ogden Building





The Chancellor at Durham



Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global) in Asia

Nov

2023

Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global) visit Asia

New opportunities were forged and long-standing relationships strengthened in a trip to South East Asia in 2023. A delegation visited Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia. We expanded our global network and explored opportunities to strengthen our partnerships in the region. The delegation was led by Professor Karen O’Brien, Vice-Chancellor and Warden and Professor Claire O’Malley, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global).

The team engaged with regional partner institutions, national government agencies, and funding bodies to enhance and showcase Durham’s priorities for research and development. Durham University was a key sponsor at the QS Higher Education Summit Asia Pacific 2023 in Kuala Lumpur.

Dr Fiona Hill discusses regional development at Durham

This was the first opportunity of its kind for members of the University community to meet with Fiona and engage with her in academic discussion. She shared her thoughts on one of her areas of academic expertise ‘Regional Development: Lessons from Germany’. Fiona delivered an engaging and thought-provoking presentation that shared her recent research on the idea of “two Germanys”, the Ruhr and East Germany, and their very different experiences of regional redevelopment. Fiona drew on the parallels with our own region of the North East of England. She also highlighted the key lessons we should take away from Germany’s experience.

Durham wins Nature Positive Award at the 2023 Green Gown Awards

We won the Nature Positive Award for our Biodiversity Strategy at the most recent Green Gown Awards. The Nature Positive category champions those institutions who are taking action to promote nature on their campuses, in their operations, teaching and research as well as working in partnership with their local communities. Our ambitious Biodiversity Strategy has already delivered results, from identifying seven species of moth rarely recorded in 25 years, trialling different approaches to wildflower meadows, working to re-introduce Black Poplar, the rarest tree in the UK, and achieving ‘Gold’ accreditation from Hedgehog Friendly Campus.

Students Scarlett Spavin and Lizzy Pocknell





Our 'Class of 50'

Jan

2024 Welcoming back our Class of 50

As part of our Winter Congregation, it was a great pleasure to be joined by some of our alumni to celebrate 50 years since their own graduation. As this was the first such event since before the pandemic disruption, it was lovely to welcome representatives from Classes of 1971, 1972, 1973 and 1974 to join our new graduates at Durham Castle and then to one of the Congregation ceremonies in the magnificent Durham Cathedral. This was followed by afternoon tea at Hatfield College. Our Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Colleges and Student Experience), Jeremy Cook OBE, hosted the event, joined by several College Principals and colleagues from our Alumni and Supporter Engagement Team.

Dec

2023 Two in squad for the U21 Women's Hockey World Cup

Two second year Durham students, Scarlett Spavin (Natural Sciences, Josephine Butler College) and Lizzy Pocknell (Law, South College), were part of the England Under 21 Hockey squad who went to the World Cup in Chile. After wins against New Zealand and USA and one defeat to Japan, goals by Lizzy against New Zealand and Scarlett against USA helped the team to top their group. After winning their Quarter Final against Germany, the team finished a very respectable fourth after losing their semi-final against the Netherlands.



Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor in ceremonial robes

Mar

2024 Vice-Chancellor and Chancellor named in North East England's '100 most influential women' list

The list was compiled by the Newcastle-based publication Chronicle Live to celebrate International Women's Day 2024. The theme of the list is 'inspire inclusion' about which both Professor O'Brien and Dr Hill are passionate.

Feb

2024 Durham Global Week

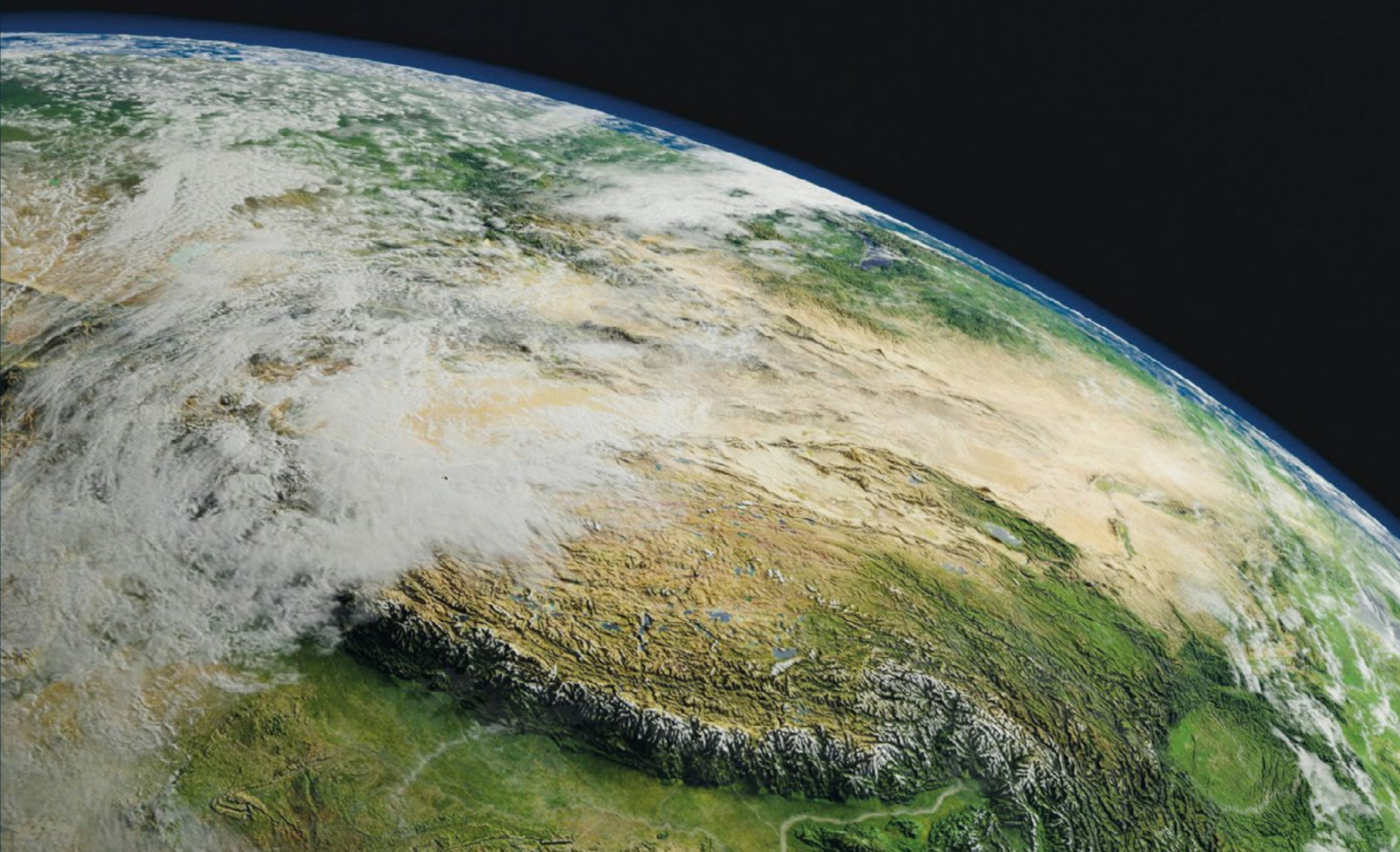
Durham Global Week 2024 ran from Saturday 24 February to Sunday 3 March, featuring more than 50 events for staff, students, and the wider Durham community. Global Week also saw the return of the Durham Global Awards, celebrating staff, students and alumni whose work and achievements have helped to strengthen Durham's global reputation and culture.



Durham research has a lasting impact – globally and locally

Our scientists, social scientists, business and arts and humanities researchers are working with partners all over the world to improve our understanding and transform lives.

From child development to the future of the planet; from the fundamental elements of life to seeing further into space and time than ever before; we are developing our knowledge and shaping the world, from the intimate to the infinite.



From local to global

Durham University's Public Policy Hub is responsible for building relationships with policymakers regionally, nationally and internationally to optimise the external impact of Durham's world-leading research. These relationships ensure that our research can improve lives – both at home as well as all around the world.

Recent research into health and wellbeing exemplifies the power of this collaborative approach and draws on all the disciplines and departments of the University.



World class research is for our immediate neighbours as well as contributing globally. Through our partnerships, outstanding facilities and committed students and staff, we are advancing the research capability and leadership to address global and regional challenges.”

Professor Charlotte Clarke,
Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Health)



Image credit: Rob Mank
Photography

Revolutionising approaches to infant sleep safety

In June 2023, the Durham University Infancy and Sleep Centre was one of six partners to publish 'Eyes on the Baby': multi-agency Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI) prevention for County Durham.

One of the Principal Investigators was Professor Helen Ball, Durham Infancy & Sleep Centre, Department of Anthropology, Durham University.

Here, Professor Ball speaks about how the research was received and what has happened since its publication. "The Eyes on the Baby report made twelve recommendations which included inviting all members of the local authority workforce who had contact with potentially vulnerable families to be involved, inviting input from families and community members to ensure their voices were heard in the development of the programme and to include a robust evaluation process in the roll out of the proposed programme.

"The initial roll out of the evidence-based training and implementation programme was in County Durham in 2023 and due to the positive response, we have now implemented the same training programme in Northumberland and are about to do so in Darlington.

"The purpose of the training and support is to equip those local authority

employees and health professionals, whose work takes them into the homes of new parents or who have interactions with vulnerable families, with the tools to minimise the risk of SUDI and put in place safer sleep practices. Following this project a fund has been set up by the County Durham Public Health Team to help families receive any additional equipment they need to keep their babies safe.

"Evaluation is ongoing, but what is clear so far is that the programme has a real impact on the lives of some of the most vulnerable families in the region.

"Given the success of the programme in North East England, if implemented nationally, Eyes on the Baby could have a real impact on changing awareness around SUDI in vulnerable families and ultimately save babies' lives."





Image credit: Boy Harjanto

Helping safeguard people living near active volcanoes

When volcanic ash falls on a community, immediate concerns arise about air quality and self-protection. Traditional health assessments take time, but swift decisions are necessary. Research led by Professor Claire Horwell, in our Department of Earth Sciences and Institute of Hazard, Risk and Resilience, has paved the way for global and community-specific advice to prevent breathing problems and other illnesses caused by a volcanic eruption.

Professor Horwell and her team developed a range of physicochemical techniques for rapidly assessing the characteristics of volcanic ash, so quicker decisions can be made to reduce exposure to harmful emissions.

The Health Interventions in Volcanic Eruptions (HIVE) project subsequently focused on effective respiratory protection for community use. Researchers tested the effectiveness of a range of cloths (handkerchiefs, shawls, hijabs), facemasks and respirators in providing protection for adults against volcanic ash, finding that industry-certified devices, such as N95 masks, provided the best form of protection.

As a direct result of this project, 75,000 N95 masks were distributed in Bali by Mt Agung Relief (a non-governmental organisation). The study findings were incorporated into public information,

co-developed with Indonesian agencies and endorsed by the World Health Organization, showing how people could protect themselves from inhaling ash and how to properly fit a facemask.

Additionally, the ash analysis protocols were incorporated into New Zealand governmental policy on volcanic eruption response and were enacted during recent eruptions on St Vincent and La Palma. Following on from the HIVE project, Professor Horwell is now working on a new UKRI Global Challenge Research Fund project on whether respiratory protection is suitable for reducing children's exposure to particulate air pollution.

These are just two examples of how our research addresses diverse issues that are critical to how we live in our world and the influence on our health and wellbeing.

We have launched a new Global Research Brochure where we shine a light on some of our incredible researchers.

Read more about our transformational research and its impact on our world:

[**Global Impact - Durham University**](#)



Toward a new global, and local order

Dr Fiona Hill became Chancellor of Durham University in late 2022. In her acceptance speech, she spoke of her deep affection for her childhood home, County Durham. It was clear that her pride and passion about her roots in the North East of England had been a contributing factor to her decision to become our Chancellor. In the eighteen months since then, she has represented Durham as a great ambassador for the University at significant events both in the UK and elsewhere. In two events recently, Dr Hill has spoken of what she describes as ‘our world in turmoil’.

In April, she delivered the prestigious annual St George’s House Lecture in the UK at Windsor Castle to an audience that included the Princess Royal, and in May, she joined our Vice-Chancellor, Professor Karen O’Brien, at the latest event in our Global Lecture Series in Washington DC.

Acclaimed as a globally influential expert on Russian and European geo-politics and as a former foreign affairs advisor to three US presidents, Dr Hill speaks of the complex issues facing world order and draws parallels in her own research between the experiences of her family and her early years, with some of the challenges we are seeing in post-industrial communities today, particularly in Russia, Germany and in the USA.

In a year that will see an estimated four billion people visit the ballot box across the world, her lectures give us a deeper understanding of the challenges to the established political order, both globally and domestically.

In her St George’s House Lecture, she spoke of major changes in global world order since World War Two and the

Cold War, and of the de-stabilising effect of three recent conflict situations: the war in Ukraine, the largest conflict in the world since World War Two, the ongoing situation in the Middle East and the potential of tension in the Indo-Pacific region between the USA and China over territory, most specifically, Taiwan. These three conflicts are all intertwined, Dr Hill spoke of the world facing a ‘pivotal moment’ with parallels to Pearl Harbour, where the actions and resolve of the international community, particularly the United States and its allies, are critical to maintain order.

“Every problem that we have today is intertwined...you can’t just look at one aspect of this in isolation” Dr Fiona Hill

Dr Hill cited the level of rapid societal change: technological, demographic, climate and economic as contributing to a sense of unease within communities, which in turn can lead to the emergence of populist narratives within society and mistrust in the established order.

In May, the latest in our Global Lecture Series was hosted

“
**Every problem
 that we have today
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 in isolation”**

Dr Fiona Hill

at the residence of alumnus James Roscoe (Politics, St John's College, 1995-8). James is Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy in Washington DC. In front of an audience of alumni and invited guests, Dr Hill discussed with our Vice-Chancellor, Professor Karen O'Brien, the shifting influences on domestic communities of rapid societal change.

Dr Hill referenced her own childhood in an area that was characterised by industrial decline and poverty, but that was also full of culture, cohesion and, importantly, generosity. The Durham coalfields and steelworks that were powerhouses of industrial Britain were closing, causing many people, including Fiona's own father, to feel that their identity was being eroded in a community that was experiencing rapid change.

However, Dr Hill benefited educationally from support from her local community, support she continues to recognise as transformative for her life. She remains a passionate advocate of the power of education as a conduit to social mobility and contributor to increased life expectancy, earning capacity, and political stability.

During their conversation, Dr Hill and Professor O'Brien drew comparisons between the social and political repercussions of de-industrialisation in the US, the UK and elsewhere, emphasising the social and cultural impact of industrial decline, as well as the economic. Drawing on her own connections to North East England and her first-hand experience, Dr Hill's research has deepened comparative insight into the experiences of multiple countries addressing fundamentally similar problems.

The pair considered the progress of major structural and economic transitions in geographies such as Germany and Russia, drawing on latest evidence to illustrate differences in the impact of government policy, and the historical trends contributing to this.

A clear narrative emerged of the dangers of over-simplified explanations which can influence public and political opinion. Both agreed that access to education was critically important counterbalance to populist narratives. Dr Hill emphasised the unequivocal imperative of education to social cohesion. In this context, both Professor O'Brien and Dr Hill agreed on Durham University's role not only as an educator, but also as a civic institution, bringing opportunity, hope, and aspiration.

“The essence of universities is trying to figure out how to be part of the solution. Identifying the problems and trying not to be part of them, but trying to identify the solutions.” Dr Fiona Hill.



Our Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor in Washington DC



Dr Hill delivering her St George's Lecture

Offering insights into global electoral integrity

Dr Juraj Medzihorsky is an Assistant Professor in our School of Government and International Affairs and part of the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project. The V-Dem project compiles and analyses data to offer a deeper insight into global democracy and the integrity of the election process.



Dr Juraj Medzihorsky

Although democracy is so much more than the process of voting in elections, there can be no representative democracy without them. Elections are at the very heart of democracy. They are fundamental to leadership selection and accountability, and must be deemed credible and fair. If credible, they will underpin the legitimacy of political institutions, but if not, they can undermine these political processes and democratic

institutions, and ultimately damage the concept of democracy. We know that elections can be as diverse as the countries holding them and there will inevitably be variations in who can vote for what, and by what methods.

V-Dem uses a global network of local independent experts to compile as complete a global picture as possible. Its guiding principle is “global standards through local knowledge”.

Compiling such a large quantity of submissions poses a challenge because the information can sometimes be conflicting, so to reconcile the data, technically complex statistical tools are used. In the interest of transparency, this data is freely available to interrogate online and is downloadable.

Amongst some 600 different indices, there are those that focus specifically on elections. The broadest is the Clean Elections Index (CEI), which monitors the integrity of the electoral process; it brings together eight specific indicators, measuring different aspects of electoral integrity.

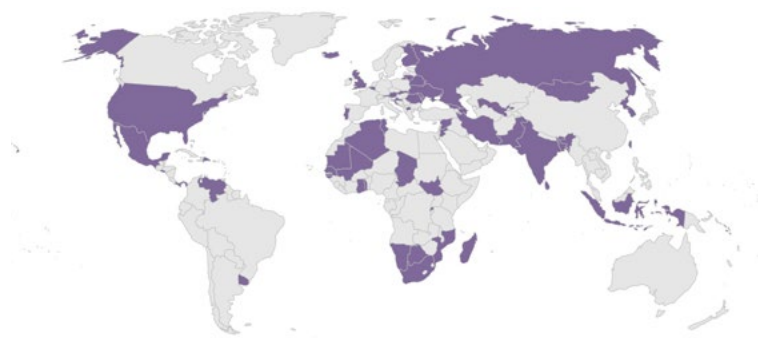
The trends from the CEI show that whilst the average electoral integrity has remained constant, South and Central Asia and the Middle East and North Africa have improved slightly. Whilst the average electoral integrity across territories is no worse than in 2000, the population-weighted average declined as some populous countries experienced downturns and some with low levels of integrity recorded population growth.

2024 is likely to be the world’s biggest year for national elections to date. Elections have either taken place or are expected in one in three countries globally, and some of these will inevitably attract a great deal of attention. These are not only those in the United States or Russia, but also India, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico and South Africa too. The number is not yet final – some of these elections may be postponed and others may be planned at short notice.

In this year of global elections with a record number of votes expected to be cast, Dr Medzihorsky shares some of V-Dem’s findings;

- 61 per cent of all deteriorations in the integrity of elections since 2000, are found in countries that are now classified as autocracies.
- However, the quality of elections is also increasingly worsening in some democracies, with the level of electoral violence and the free- and fairness of elections deteriorating the most.
- Autocratizing countries have dramatic declines on the Clean Elections Index, but democratizing countries show noticeable increases. Attacks on elections are thus part and parcel of the autocratisation process, and improving electoral integrity is critical for rekindling democracy.
- Over 60 countries are holding national elections in 2024. Of these, 31 are worsening on their democracy levels, while only 3 are improving.

In summary, V-Dem’s data tells us that whilst standards have improved in some cases, there is still substantial work required globally to support the democratic process. True democracy is not just a reflection of the governance in place locally, but an internationally recognised entity. The integrity of future elections must be a global focus, and projects like V-Dem continue to be invaluable to inform and track progress.



Shaded countries where elections are expected or have already taken place this year.

A network for life...

Kaal (second from left) and fellow scholars at a Scholars' Network event



“What’s the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word “scholarship”? For most people, it’s the financial aspect. But a scholarship is so much more. A scholarship is more than monetary aid - it’s career opportunities, it’s a support network, it’s industry insight - it’s a prospect.” Kaalkidan Sahele, recipient of the Coleman Scholarship (Computer Science, St Aidans College).

One of the enduring outcomes from the last few years is the value we place on our sense of community. No longer are relationships taken for granted; we all feel stronger and more empowered by the networks around us. As a University, community is at the heart of everything we do. Our collegiate network provides our students with support and guidance, and in the post-Covid period, we have invested heavily in student support services. Durham is committed to ensuring all who wish to study at Durham can do so,

are supported in making the most of their time with us and are enabled to go on to continued success.

Our community of scholars is increasing in numbers and diversity. We are seeing the most talented applicants being offered great opportunities, irrespective of their particular circumstances. These opportunities to support students are increasing, often as a result of the generosity of our alumni community.

Professor Gordon Love,
Kaal, Jess Smith,
Mark Coleman



A network of scholars

To recognise and celebrate this vibrant group of scholars, we are embedding a framework to encourage our scholars to support one another through their university experience and beyond. Our first annual 'Scholars' Network' event took place in June 2022. This event was an opportunity for our scholars to meet one another and to connect with members of the alumni and supporter engagement team. Feedback gathered from this pilot event was overwhelmingly positive, connections were made and one of Durham's newest communities was born. This successful event was followed by others, some open to all scholars, and some were subject specific events.

You are not alone

At one such event in November 2023, Kaalkidan Sahele, known as Kaal, shared her experience as a Coleman scholar. The Durham Inspired Coleman Scholarship for Computer Science is funded by alumnus Mark Coleman (Computer Science, College of St Hild and St Bede, 2000-03). Kaal explained to the group that she felt fortunate to have spent some time with Mark early in her university, and scholarship, journey,

"In my first year, I was very fortunate in being able to meet my donor when he was in Durham. Across the span of a three course meal, I was able to talk to him and to this day, I still follow the words of advice he gave me that day."

Kaal's message to her fellow scholars was one of community, of inspiration and of hope for the future "All of us. We're all scholars - that is a powerful sentence. One of the biggest realisations I had about being on a scholarship was that we're really resilient and really brave, but also, crucially, that we're not alone. There is an entire network of scholars at

Durham - an entire group of people that are full of potential and, now with this aid from donors, are on track to achieve such incredible things. It's these things that enrich your experiences and let you get the most out of your time here so that when we leave, we can be the incredible alumni making an impact in the world."

Giving and receiving

Mark has also found the relationship, and the experience, rewarding. He joined the networking event on video, explaining his motivation behind the scholarship and what it means to him "The reason that I set up the scholarship is because I went to Durham, and it's just such a fantastic place. I decided to set up the scholarship as a way to repay the incredible luck and generosity that I've experienced. I believe that if you are academically good and if you work hard, we should, as a nation and a university, find a way to make sure you can get the educational support that you need. Hopefully the scholarship is a very small way to make that happen."

But for Mark, it's not all about paying back, he is enjoying his ongoing connection with Durham, and his relationship with Kaal, "I came back to visit my old college, Hild-Bede, and had dinner with Jessica from the Development and Alumni Relations Office, Simon, the College Principal, and Kaal. We had a great time. I found out that Kaal spoke Dutch, so we could speak some Dutch together - or rather, I could speak some very bad Dutch! Keeping in touch with Durham, with the College and with the scholars just adds to the experience - if you are receiving a scholarship, or looking to apply for one, you should do so with an enormous sense of pride..." Mark Coleman.



I have always believed that education is the beating heart of opportunity. No-one needs to be defined by the circumstances of their birth. Education is both a privilege and a responsibility.”

Dr Fiona Hill, Chancellor of Durham University

A community of opportunity

Affection, gratitude and a sense of real worth are what connect our scholars, and through the fledgling Scholars' Network, opportunity and support can be shared. Durham takes great pride in the breadth of opportunities available to all students. Getting involved in sports, theatre or music helps develop performance or leadership skills, and lots of great opportunities can be shared through the network and are supported by the University. The Durham Leadership Framework is just one opportunity for up to 100 students that have shown leadership qualities, whether in college, society or networks like the Scholars' Network. The programme begins with a residential introduction, after which, each student is matched with a mentor, usually from our alumni community, who will guide and advise throughout the year – and often beyond – yet another way that our wonderful alumni support the next generation.

There is a programme of networking events available to scholars, ranging from small gatherings, subject specific ones, to ones open to all scholars. It's great for new and prospective scholars to catch up with the community and hear experiences – so if you would be interested in sharing yours, please contact us.

If you would like more information about our Scholars' Network or upcoming scholars' events, please contact lynne.reynolds@durham.ac.uk in our Development and Alumni Relations team.

The inaugural Scholars' Network event in June 2022



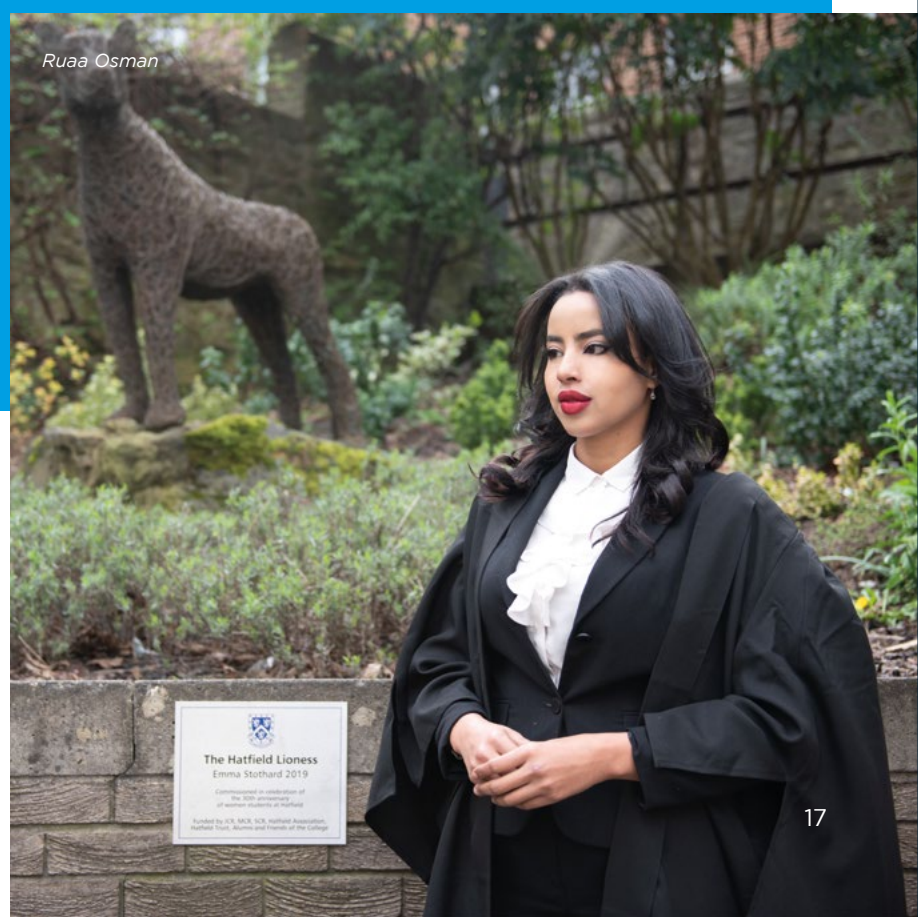
Enabling our scholars to make a difference

Scholarships take many forms – some are available through our colleges, funded by alumni donations. Often these can be life-changing – both for the scholar and the donor. The Lioness Scholarship is offered through our second oldest college, Hatfield, and will enable scholar Ruaa Osman to make a real difference to lives in her home country of Sudan by using her education to help rebuild the healthcare system.



As a 28-year-old medical doctor from Sudan, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for providing this invaluable opportunity, which I consider truly life-changing. The outbreak of war disrupted my education and forced me to flee my country, so this scholarship is a beacon of hope. My studies will enable me to return to Sudan and make a real difference.”

Ruaa Osman recipient of the Lioness Scholarship (MSc Global and Planetary Health, Hatfield College)



Ruaa Osman



Meet the Durham alumna who first broke the Post Office accounting story and exposed a huge miscarriage of justice

The prosecution of 983 UK Post Office workers accused of financial crimes due to faulty accounting software represents the biggest single series of wrongful convictions in British legal history, according to the UK's CCRC (Criminal Cases Review Commission). And Durham alumna Rebecca Thomson was at the forefront of exposing it.

Rebecca, who attended St Mary's College from 2001 to 2004, was a young journalist working for Computer Weekly magazine when she first reported on problems with the Post Office's accounting software, Horizon, back in 2009.

She spoke to seven sub-postmasters who, as her headline declared, faced 'bankruptcy, prosecution and disrupted livelihoods' due to alleged shortfalls in their Post Office accounts.

Over the following decade hundreds more innocent people lost their livelihoods, their reputations and their finances as they were wrongly prosecuted for theft, false accounting or fraud.

We now know that faulty software, not criminality, was responsible for the 'missing' money.

Now, 15 years after Rebecca first broke the story, the matter is finally getting the full attention it deserves.

This is thanks in part to a UK television drama 'Mr Bates vs the Post Office', watched by over 9million viewers this year.

The series' central character, Mr Bates, reflects the real-life Alan Bates who first appeared as a case study in Rebecca's original 2009 article.

Rebecca's early involvement in exposing the problems with Horizon is captured in the first episode of the prime-time ITV series where her character, played by actress Matilda Bailes, is shown interviewing Mr Bates in his home. The scene was created for TV as in real life Rebecca's interview with Mr Bates and research were done over the telephone and via email.

The short scene is followed by central characters reading out, and reacting to, excerpts of the article which was subsequently published in Computer Weekly.

A public enquiry is ongoing as Post Office workers seek justice, and Fujitsu, the firm behind the faulty software, has now apologised publicly for its part in the affair.

As the issue continues to dominate UK headlines, we caught up with Rebecca to discuss how it feels that the story she broke all those years ago now has the whole country talking.

Rebecca, you spent more than six-months investigating this story back in 2009, when did you first sense that this was a major miscarriage of justice?

As soon as I spoke to (postmasters) Alan, Lee and Jo I agreed with them that something weird was going on.

As we found more and more people experiencing accounting issues, I got the sense that if I had the resources or means to somehow reach every single postmaster in the UK, a sizeable proportion of them would be experiencing the same issues. But I just had no way of proving how widespread it was at that point.

A public enquiry is ongoing and the UK's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has announced the introduction of a new law so those wrongly convicted are 'swiftly exonerated and compensated'.

What was your assessment of the situation at the time of your reporting, and did you hope to see immediate action such as an investigation into the Horizon software?

We had no idea at that point in 2009 that over 800 people would be prosecuted as the prosecutions continued right up to 2015. At the time I was thinking there was a case for the

Post Office to answer - there were clearly issues around this technology.

I hoped that pressure from news coverage would force the Post Office to look into it, rather than just immediately assuming and insisting that the postmasters were lying. Unfortunately, it didn't turn out like that, partly because they managed to completely squash the story. I don't think I ever would have foreseen all that is happening now because the Post Office has spent so many years being slow to respond.

The ITV drama 'Mr Bates vs the Post Office' had the nation gripped, averaging 9.8m viewers and attracting 10.9m at its peak. Have you seen it, and if so, what did you think about it?

Yes, I saw a BAFTA screening of it in November and I thought it was brilliant. I found it really emotionally affecting. I thought they did a great job with it, but I did not foresee that there would be such a strong reaction to it.

How surprised are you by the public's response to the ITV drama and the subsequent attention in Parliament and mainstream media?

I was completely bowled over by the public response. I can't quite explain it. I think it was probably a confluence of a few factors, including the timing of early January when lots of people are watching TV at home.

There's always plenty to watch and plenty of things to be angry about and I think it's lucky that this touched a nerve. There's lot of scandals, like the infected blood scandal maybe, that never achieve this level of public awareness, so I was very pleased that it had the impact that it did.

You've now been widely cited in the national news as being the first reporter to break the story, you've featured in a BBC Panorama documentary, and you were briefly portrayed in the ITV drama. How does it feel to be thrust into the limelight now, more than a decade after you first broke the story?

It feels quite weird. There was a tiny bit of attention after the most recent Panorama documentary but nothing like the current scale of requests I'm receiving. Obviously, this is not over, only three people have received final compensation and none of them are coming out of this rich. People are probably still going to have to sell their houses to get through their retirement.

Compensation is the ongoing issue: people will continue to die without receiving any because it's taking too long. The way it's being administered has been described as a scandal within a scandal. I've tried to say yes to as many publicity requests as I can because I hope it helps to keep talking about it. For me, the main thing is getting compensation for the victims, and I want to help make sure that doesn't get forgotten.

Computer Weekly continued to pursue the matter after you left the publication in 2010, publishing 350 related stories over the last decade. But why do you think it took so long for the mainstream media to give it the attention it deserved?

I think there's a few things. It didn't help that the Post Office was lying at the beginning, telling editors that there was nothing in it. Also, it's a hard story to sell. It's difficult to tug on people's heartstrings when you have to include all this relatively dry detail about accounting software and legal issues.

Panorama and Private Eye covered it quite early, I think The Daily Mail was the earliest of the nationals. There's been a lot said about the nationals not picking up on it, but I think when they did, people weren't clicking on it, people weren't writing in about it, they just didn't get it.



We had no idea at that point in 2009 that over 800 people would be prosecuted as the prosecutions continued right up to 2015."

Rebecca Thomson

It's hard to make that leap from accounting software to suicide, financial ruin and people losing their homes. It's hard to understand the story at a glance, like why is accounting software leading to this? The media can only really do what they think their readers are interested in, in the same way that MPs are more likely to act on things their constituents are raising. But the press did pick up on it and the plugging away done by lots of journalists over the years helped make that ITV drama possible.

After you graduated from Durham in 2004 with a BA Honours in Economics, you completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Newspaper Journalism at Cardiff University. Did you always want to be a journalist and if so, why?

Yes, I pretty much always wanted to be a journalist or a writer. Being a journalist is a tough job, but you get to speak to so many different people and learn a lot about lots of different things. I loved writing and I think I was attracted to the idealism of holding power to account.

Durham University has a proud history of producing excellent journalists, not least the late Sir Harry Evans. How did your time at Durham influence or prepare you for a career in journalism?

Writing for Palatinate (Durham University's student newspaper) definitely influenced me. I was the editor at one point, although I don't think I was very good at it! I was a bit intimidated by Palatinate because the writers in the year above me were all amazing and I found them all really impressive. They definitely inspired me.

Palatinate is still going strong and the University supports the Sir Harry Evans Global Fellowship in Investigative Journalism for early career reporters. What advice do you have for any aspiring journalists studying at Durham right now?

Journalism is obviously not an easy career to go into. You tend to work very hard and there is always too much to do. A lot of people that go into journalism are value-driven. So think of the stories that are important to you and try to find an editor who can give you the space and the encouragement to work on those things.

If you're interested in investigative work and social justice stories, in many ways it's a better time than it has been for a while because there's places like the Bureau of Investigative Journalism offering opportunities to do that kind of work. There are so many different platforms now that you probably don't have to rely on the traditional journalism career path as much as I did.

Rebecca remains in journalism and is currently working as a freelance reporter based in London.



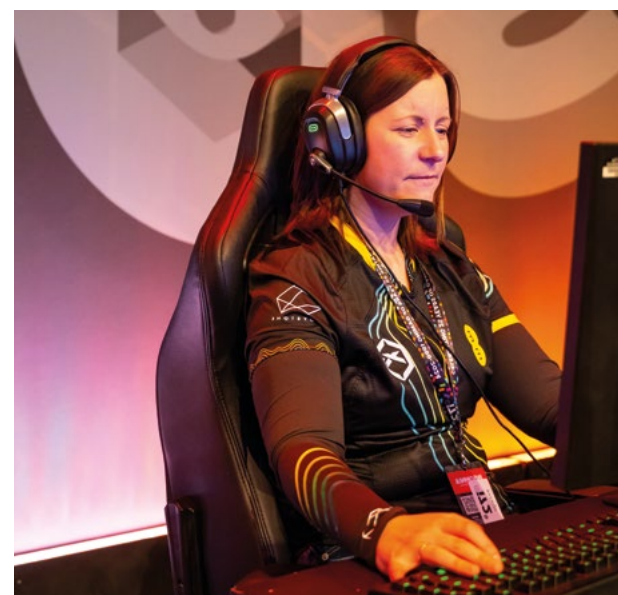
Rebecca Thomson

Building skills and networks for the future



All set; the new Esports facility to be opened in the Summer

Kylie Kendrick



One of the unique features about Durham is that our students do not just embark on a course of study, they become part of a community, or a group of communities. They are enrolled into a college and encouraged to join in.

'Joining in' can take many forms – it may be sport of all kinds - or getting involved in the performing arts – whether that's acting, singing or dancing – or directing, editing, or working with settings or sound. Many of our students get involved in volunteering, with the local community, or to support a cause – and many are involved in the college infrastructure, politics or entrepreneurship. Broad and unique opportunities can be found across all parts of the University. These include our academic departments, our unique and vibrant Colleges and more than 1,000 student-led clubs and societies.

These opportunities running alongside study will help to develop skills and abilities that go beyond a degree course. Teamwork, leadership, communication and practical project management skills are developed, alongside any specific to the activity. We caught up with some students, staff and alumni who are great advocates for Durham's exceptional range of opportunities available, either to enhance or to complement study.

Student Kai Heale and staff member Kylie Kendrick - Durham University Esports and Gaming

Esports at Durham is going through a period of rapid growth. Kylie Kendrick is the Technical Specialist behind the growth and her work has culminated in a dedicated Esports facility being created at our Sports and Wellbeing Park, due to be opened by our Vice-Chancellor in the Summer.

'It's fantastic to see the stellar support that the University is giving our Esports community. The level of skill involved is incredible - our players hone their teambuilding and communication skills, as well as developing great cognitive and mechanical skills, all whilst studying for

their highly valued degree at Durham.

Not only that, but there are also so many skills needed for roles that don't necessarily involve playing any games. Content creation, team management and nutrition and fitness are supportive and creative roles within the esports industry that continue to have valuable career paths,' advises Kylie.

Kylie is a keen gamer herself and was recently awarded the National Student Esports (NSE) 'Most Valuable Player' for October. This monthly award usually highlights students for outstanding behaviours, activities, achievements and going above and beyond within gaming and esports.

In a statement on NSE's website, they took this unprecedented move to *"shine a light on the amazing work that she has been doing at Durham University for the entire esports scene there"*.

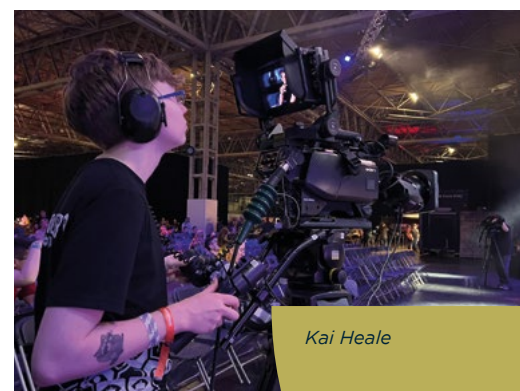
She has gone on to be selected to take part in the EE/GX Power Up Programme, which will help her further develop her esports skills and empower other women in esports and gaming to participate!

Final year Computer Science student Kai Heale (Computer Science, St Mary's College, 2020-24) has found that he can combine his Computer Science skills with his passion for esports for exciting career opportunities. Kai was a committed exec member of Durham University Esports and Gaming (DUEG) for 2 years, most recently serving as the President in 2022/23. His work included launching the first ever North East Esports Festival in 2023, and leading DUEG to their highest ever placement of 3rd place in the British University Esports Championship.

Kai currently holds a graduate offer to join PwC in Manchester as a Technology Consultant and has previously worked

as a Broadcast Engineer and a Software Developer.

"University has given me so many possibilities to explore my passion for esports. I've been able to apply my skills in ways I never could have imagined, such as operating cameras for Formula Student at Silverstone and volunteering at Insomnia Gaming Festival. It has been so rewarding seeing my initiatives for DUEG giving others opportunities as well and I look forward to seeing the future of esports at Durham University." Kai Heale.



Kai Heale



Alumna Finola Southgate (Modern Languages, College of St Hild and St Bede, 2015-19)

Finola balances her full-time role in Learning and Development at Deloitte in Brussels with her love of the theatre. Together with fellow alumna, Rosie Dart, she created Sister Sister Productions, whose first musical ‘We’ll Have Nun of It’ has recently been performed at The Other Palace Studio in London with a professional cast. The play follows the friendships of four final year students at a Convent School in the 1960s, and resonates with Finola, who values the connections that she made at Durham. The production team was mostly Durham alumni that Finola and Rosie knew through connections made from Durham theatre and music.

Finola told us how the opportunities in music and theatre at Durham really helped her to build the networks and skills needed to be part of a London production.

“Student Theatre and Music at Durham are what defined my experience whilst at university. During my time I took part in the Tone Deaf Theatre Company, Durham University Light Opera Group and Hild Bede Theatre both onstage and offstage as well as being in student bands and the University Gospel Choir. As choir Musical Director, we reached second place in the national University Gospel Choir of The Year. The number of Durham alumni who are popping up across the West End, Netflix and more is a testament to the artistic playground that Durham created and supported.” Finola Southgate.

This first collaboration between Finola and fellow Durham alumni Rosie and producer Francesca Davies-Caceres has led to a success at the Edinburgh Fringe and then on the London stage; a review in the Durham student newspaper Palatinate

described the show as “*nothing short of a masterpiece from start to finish*”. Finola is grateful for the network of Durham alumni for their support and advice. She is planning further collaborations for the future and recognises the benefit of her Durham experience, crediting it with learning how to give and take feedback in creative collaboration and beyond, the importance of teamwork and communication, how to plan and meet deadlines and the value of developing a professional network.

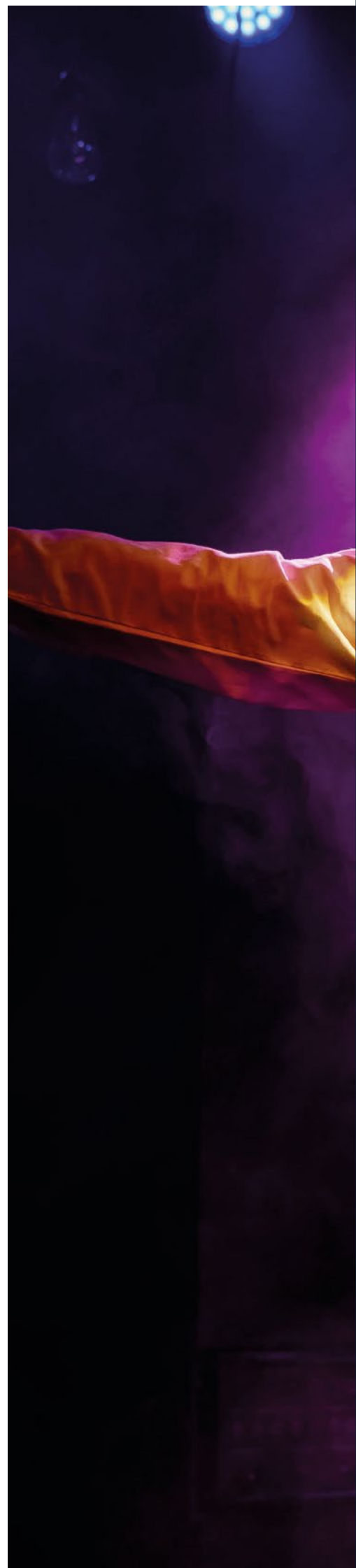
For more about ‘We’ll Have Nun of It’, check out Instagram or X (Twitter) (@sisterprods).

These are just a few of the many experiences shared by those right across our University community. The Durham experience is second to none. Our students will leave Durham with an excellent academic qualification and a set of personal skills that will help them to navigate a rapidly changing world.

If you would like to share your experiences with us, please email us at alumni.office@durham.ac.uk We would love to hear from you!



Juliette Artigala in ‘We’ll Have Nun of It’ in London



Finola Southgate and Rosie Dart





Colleges: a home from home

For many of you, Durham's colleges are at the heart of some of the fondest memories of your time at University. This isn't surprising, as our collegiate system offers a unique student experience, and our colleges will continue to be fundamental to our future.





From top left:
Hatfield College,
St Aidan's, Hild &
Bede South College,

In a recent interview with our Vice-Chancellor, alumna Gabby Logan was a great advocate of the collegiate experience at Durham. “For me, the nurturing offered by the collegiate system at Durham was the thing that stands out most in my experience of Durham.” (Gabby Logan MBE, Law, College of St Hild and St Bede, 1992-5).

The college experience is underpinned by three areas of focus:

Community
Enrichment
Support

Together, these three areas create a ‘home from home’ for our students, facilitating their transition from home to independent living.

Community

Colleges are more than just a place where students sleep and eat. Durham’s colleges give students an instant sense of belonging. Each college its own distinct identity and is a lively community bursting with diversity and warmth. Students from all walks of life come together, forming bonds that very often last a lifetime. From shared meals to late-night study sessions,

every moment is an opportunity to connect, learn, and grow alongside peers who quickly become their ‘Durham family’. It is because of these integral communities that we have an ambitious plan to develop and invest in our collegiate structure.

The first of these transformational projects will be the creation of new collegiate facilities at Rushford Court in the Viaduct area of the city. Rushford Court first opened as the County Hospital in 1853, closing in 2010. The site has been running as student accommodation since 2018 and it was previously used as the temporary home for the University’s John Snow College during the 2019-2020 academic year, while the University’s Mount Oswald development was completed, comprising both John Snow and South Colleges. This restored Victorian hospital will be upgraded to provide student and staff facilities including College staff offices and spaces for welfare and study. Building work will also deliver a new College Heart building which will house common rooms, study areas and a café-bar in addition to the facilities already on offer at the property.

This will, initially, enable the site to become home to the College of St Hild and St Bede, in support of planned refurbishments of the Leazes Road site starting in 2024/25. In the longer term, we hope that Rushford Court will become the site of the University’s 18th college.



Students in St Chad's College Library

As things stand, it is not uncommon that our students move out of college into local rental accommodation after their first year of study. They remain very much connected with their college when they move out, and some students will prefer to live independently. However, our plan is to increase the proportion of students to whom we are able to offer college accommodation to 40-45 per cent of our full-time student population.

Through mindfully growing our college numbers, we want to nurture the communities that have developed and ensure that students and alumni continue to connect with their college for generations to come.

Support

After a challenging few years for our students, including of course the COVID-19 pandemic, we have reviewed and improved the level of support offered within colleges, departments and our specialist support services. We have made some significant changes to ensure students receive first-class support and wellbeing provision during their studies. To this end, we are investing an extra £1.3 million each year in our student support services.

This has included increasing the support staffing within colleges, which has been supplemented by new Assistant Student Support Officers. In addition, each college has Common Room Welfare Officers, student volunteers who can provide information about available support services and how to access them.

Here are just a couple of examples to give a sense of the fantastic efforts that students are making to support their peers' welfare.

- **Stephenson College's JCR Welfare team** have worked with Guide Dogs UK to host 'doggy de-stress' sessions where students had the opportunity to meet guide dogs and their owners.
- **Trevelyan College's JCR Welfare team** hosted 'cake on the quad' where students could enjoy a sweat treat or piece of cake for free during their 'Stress Less' campaign to encourage students to relax during exam season.
- **St. Mary's College** have recently run a Body Acceptance Campaign, with the aim of supporting students with their body image and promoting support available within the University.
- **University College** have been running a Northern Lights campaign, celebrating Northeastern heritage and highlighting the beauty of the areas surrounding our University.



Students using the gym at Ustinov College



Enrichment

The college system enables Durham to provide exceptional opportunities to enrich student life outside the lecture theatre. More than 85 per cent of Durham students are involved in sport, music, theatre, volunteering or student enterprise; this is as far as we know the highest in the country, and is partly a result of the amazing range of clubs, societies and other opportunities available to our students through their colleges.

Gabby Logan spoke at length to our Vice-Chancellor about the benefits of sport to mental health, and the very important role that sport at college level can play in students' wellbeing. Gabby was particularly in favour of an infrastructure that encourages students of all abilities to get involved in sport and enrichment activities through the college network "It's great when looking at where to go, to know that whatever level of sport they're interested in, there will be something there for them. It's great if you're an elite athlete, Durham covers you off there, but also to have people who are more casual about their sport..." (Gabby Logan)

Quite often, those experimenting with an activity for the first time go on to excel. Notable recent achievements include our student a-cappella group, Northern Lights, who have reached the International Collegiate A-Cappella Final in New York for the second successive year in 2024 and our victorious team of students who won BBC's University Challenge in 2023.

We are keen to ensure enrichment is accessible for all students - some of the more established colleges offer financial support which is generously funded by college alumni. For example, St Cuthbert's Society offer the Student Development Award, and Hatfield College offers Hatfield Trust Grants.



Enrichment at Durham focuses on personal growth by challenging and enabling all students to expand their horizons, unlocking their potential and exploring their own ambitions and values in an inclusive and respectful environment."

Jeremy Cook OBE, Pro-Vice-Chancellor
(Colleges and Student Experience)

For those at our younger colleges, where there are less mature alumni communities, support is offered from a central fund, partly donor funded and an area that we are planning to grow further over time. In all these cases, funds can be used towards high quality, aspirational student development activities, including sports, arts, volunteering, research and career development.



Jeremy Cook OBE



*Ambika Mod (centre back)
in The Durham Revue*

Ambika Mod - one to watch!

From 'The BIG Durham Talent Show' to Netflix blockbuster - alumna Ambika Mod is 'one to watch'!

Alumna Ambika Mod (English Literature, St Mary's College, 2014-17) is currently starring in the recently released Netflix series 'One Day' and has been named by a national UK magazine as a 'woman to watch' in 2024. She has received extensive media coverage, including prime time UK TV chat shows.

One Day

Ambika stars in the remake of David Nicholls' award-winning cult classic 'One Day' alongside actor Leo Woodall. Based on the novel from 2009, the series follows the story of Emma and Dexter who meet at their graduation ball at Edinburgh University on 15 July 1988, and is told over the next twenty years on the same day every year. Emma and Dexter are an unlikely pair, but they fascinate each other from the start.

The series was released on Netflix on 8 February. Early reviews have been positive, with the Guardian describing the series as 'the poetry of day-to-day life and the power of nostalgia'.

This is Going to Hurt

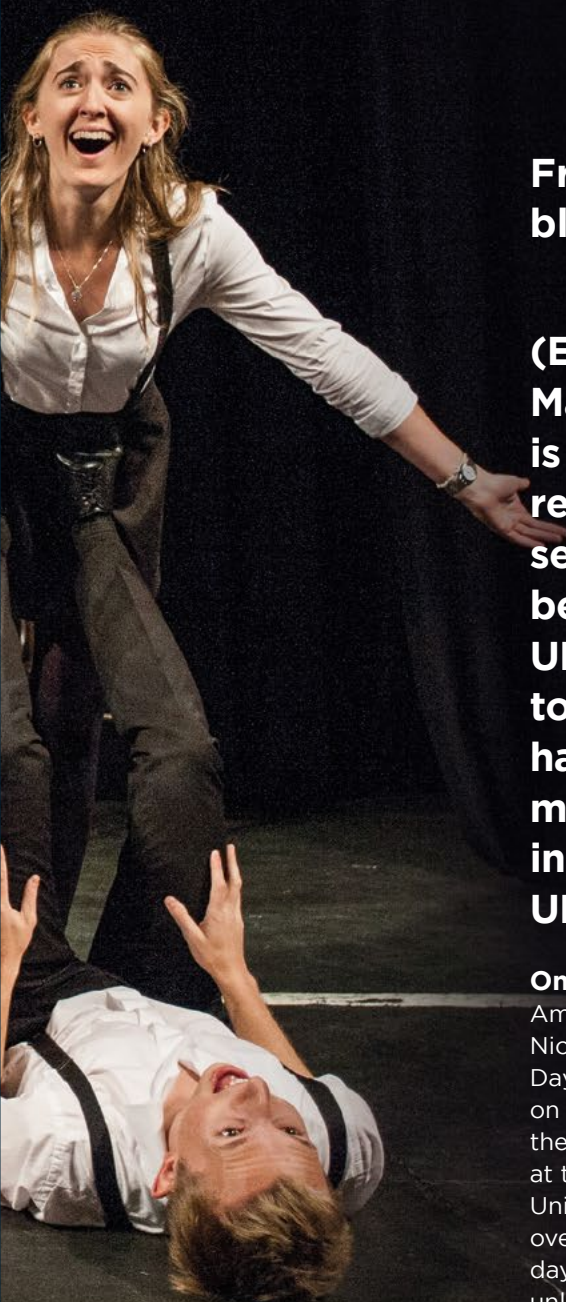
28-year-old Ambika's career is going from strength to strength. In 2022, she starred in BAFTA winning BBC drama series 'This is Going to Hurt', alongside Ben Wishaw. Ambika played junior doctor, Shruti Acharya, in the bittersweet drama that blends comedy with the hard-hitting realities of working in the NHS. Based on the diary entries of creator Adam Kay, the series follows a fictionalised version of the highs and lows of relentless shifts, 97-hour work weeks and the terrifying life-and-death decisions that must be made in the blink of an eye.

The Durham Revue

While studying at Durham, Ambika was keen to hone her comedy and acting skills alongside her studies. She took part in acting and sketch comedy through the university's Revue, performing at the 2015 Edinburgh Fringe Festival and serving as the society's President in 2017.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, Ambika helped to lift the spirits of our alumni community by presenting lockdown talent show 'The BIG Durham Talent Show' alongside her then comedy partner, Andrew Shires. Together they were the comedy duo 'Megan from HR'. The talent show ran through the summer of 2020 and was a huge hit with alumni.

We will continue to follow her journey with pride.





The Botanic Garden in the snow

The road to Net Zero

In the face of mounting environmental challenges, we have a responsibility to help in the drive towards a more sustainable world. With a commitment to helping achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we have established our university as a global leader in sustainability, taking bold strides to address the most pressing environmental, social, and governance issues of our time.

At the core of our sustainability efforts lies our pledge to deliver solutions for the Net Zero transition. We are aiming for Net Zero by 2035 through switching to renewable energy sources, minimising waste, and sustainable transport to name just a few initiatives. Through our multidisciplinary research, spanning all four faculties, the University is well-positioned to explore groundbreaking innovations in critical areas such as energy, food, health, social impact, and water management. The Durham Energy Institute is at the forefront of developing sustainable and resilient low-carbon systems tailored to diverse contexts, ensuring fair access to clean energy for all.

Our dedication to sustainability filters into our operations, from cutting-edge research to state-of-the-art infrastructure. Our newest buildings, including our Mathematical Sciences and Computer Science

Hub, our Teaching and Learning Centre, and our Sports and Wellbeing Complex, are constructed to the highest BREEAM specifications for sustainability, setting a benchmark for environmentally conscious design and construction.

To keep us on track, effective governance and engagement from right across our community are integral to our sustainability strategy. We have established a network of committees and working groups, such as the SDG Group, the COP Steering Group, and the Environmental Sustainability Strategic Planning Group, to coordinate sustainability initiatives across academic areas and ensure accountability at every level. These dedicated bodies serve as catalysts for change, driving our sustainability agenda forward through informed decision-making and collaborative action.

Winning Durham Enactus Team
(Image credit: Enactus
UK & Ireland)



Recognising the power of partnerships, Durham has forged strategic alliances with partners from academia, industry, further education, and government. These collaborations have yielded remarkable results. The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) Prosperity Partnership project has been shortlisted in the External Partnerships category of the World Sustainability Awards 2023. The £7.7 million partnership between the universities of Durham, Sheffield, and Hull and energy companies Ørsted and Siemens Gamesa has developed ways to make wind turbine generators more efficient, reliable, lighter and cheaper.

The commitment to sustainability inevitably extends into our student community. We have a culture of environmental stewardship amongst our students. Student-led societies

like Enactus Durham, Durham Climate Society, Durham University Sustainable Finance Society, Environmental Law & Climate Futures Society, and Sustainable & Ethical Fashion Society are at the heart of this movement, empowering the next generation of climate leaders through awareness campaigns, sustainable initiatives, and thought-provoking discussions. In fact, student-led team, Enactus Durham, have won the title of UK & Ireland Champions for Social Entrepreneurship in the national Enactus competition, for the second year in a row. The team showcased their dedication to social entrepreneurship and implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals through their project, Taka Taka Zero, a community-led impact enterprise empowering young people in Mathare, Kenya to use innovative technology to convert waste into energy.



Biodiverse environments on campus event in June 2022

Another shining example of Durham's dedication to sustainable technology is the Durham University Solar Car team, the longest-running solar car team in the UK. In 2023, this talented group of students achieved a historic milestone by becoming the first British solar car team to complete the gruelling Bridgestone World Solar Challenge in under six days, crossing the finish line in an impressive 11th position after navigating the harsh Australian outback. This remarkable feat not only showcases the team's exceptional engineering skills but also positions Durham as a pioneer in the field of sustainable transportation.

Beyond its impressive accomplishments, our journey is driven by a relentless pursuit of innovation and a deep-rooted commitment to leaving a lasting, positive impact on the world. The University's Memorandum of Understanding with Durham County Council, embodying a set of principles to work together, demonstrates this ethos. This partnership aims to raise the regional, national, and international profile of County Durham while accelerating the region's transition towards an inclusive, green, and sustainable future, aligned with the county's Economic Inclusive Green Strategy.

As the global community recognises the urgent need for sustainable solutions, we will continue to do our duty. Our multifaceted approach, combining cutting-edge research, sustainable infrastructure and student-led initiatives, is paving the way for a greener, fairer world. Our sights are firmly set on achieving net zero by 2035 and with bold action, collective effort, and determination we can indeed shape a brighter, more sustainable tomorrow for all.



The Durham University Solar Car Team finish line photo

Twice-round-the-world Triathlon: Durham alumni remember fellow students

Most people start a new year with resolutions to live more healthily, complete long-term projects, or make other positive changes to their lives. Participating in a Twice-round-the-world Triathlon isn't usually on most people's list.

In January 2023, alumnus Tom Hughes (Psychology, St Aidan's College, 1998-2001), together with 42 others from around the world, of which 33 are Durham alumni, decided to embark on exactly that journey. With a target of cycling, running or swimming 80,150km (the equivalent distance of twice round the world, or 1,541km each week) by the end of 2023, the participants had their work cut out for them.

In memory

The Twice-round-the-world Triathlon was launched as a vehicle to remember two late Durham alumni, Lieutenant Richard Palmer (Combined Social Sciences, College of St Hild & St Bede, 1998-2003), and Flight Lieutenant David Sale (Engineering, St Aidan's College, 1997-2001).

Whilst at Durham, Richard (known as 'Briggs') and David ('Jacko') were both involved in the University Hockey Club, where they crossed paths and were friends with a great number of the participants of the Triathlon. Upon graduating, both Richard and David headed on to military careers in the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards and the Royal Air Force respectively. In 2006, Richard died following a roadside bomb attack in Southern Iraq. A year later, David passed away in a helicopter accident in Catterick, North Yorkshire. They are both greatly missed and since 2008, various groups of friends, family and alumni have come together to complete sporting challenges to hold them close in their memories.

The Twice-round-the-world Triathlon was an extension of previous initiatives, and Tom adds: "the Triathlon was something that could be fitted into our lives a bit more easily. It's connected us around the world, with two of us in New Zealand, two in Uganda, four in North America, two in the UAE and other countries besides."

United by Durham sport and colleges

The Twice-round-the-world Triathlon had a goal to fundraise for two charities that are important to Richard and David's families - ABF The Soldiers' Charity, and the RAF Benevolent Fund. Donations are still welcomed, and Tom is delighted that the £5,000 raised has far surpassed the original target. Of the 33 Durham alumni, 28 knew each other by having participated in sport at Durham - mostly hockey, but also lacrosse. Other alumni were drawn into the challenge through college friendships. The remainder of the participants consisted of David and Richard's family members, school or Royal Air Force colleagues.

For Tom, the connections he formed through his college and sporting experiences, combined with those from his academic studies make for positive memories: *"My enduring recollections of Durham are the happy balance of involvement in the University sports teams, my college and my degree; three complementary, yet different, environments. And our friendships have endured."*

From ultra marathons to weekly walks and everything in between

With a roster of international participants, the Twice-round-the-world Triathlon has needed to navigate numerous barriers, including time zones, varying methods of communication, and motivation.

Tom explains how it all worked: "We set ourselves weekly targets at the start of the year (for one, two or three of the usual triathlon disciplines - running, cycling or swimming) and then sought to achieve them every week. Any intentional exercise that was completed primarily with health or fitness in mind was permitted. We submitted a Google form each week to log what we'd completed.

"We've had some remarkable contributions over the course of the year, with our most prolific team members in each discipline contributing 9,350km (on the bike), 4,224km (running), and 90km (in the pool). One completed the highly competitive ultra marathon Ultra Trail de Mont Blanc, and another tackled the notorious 70 mile Wall Ultra Marathon. Various marathons were also undertaken. But the story has also been one of consistency over intensity, and we equally valued those that achieved their targets, however big or small, every week of the year.

"On two occasions we permitted 'friends and family' to join in (as long as they exercised along with the participant), so we had some pretty cool examples of the challenge mobilising whole families to get out and about, in a lot of snow, rain and wind!"

An international collective effort

With one week remaining in 2023, the group were 2,500km short of reaching their target. Thanks to a last-ditch effort between Christmas and the New Year, and with 10 hours remaining on the clock, Tom and the team finally made it, completing the Twice-round-the-world Triathlon in the nick of time.

After some reflection, Tom draws the following conclusions: "It really has been a memorable year for us all. Achieving our weekly targets and 'doing our bit' to get to our 52-week target turned out to be important motivators, as was re-connecting with each other in Briggs' and Jacko's memory. Finding something to remember two lads that were central to such a formative time in our lives, but that has also been good for us and good for the charities we've raised money for, has made 2023 a year to remember."

For a full list of participants, visit [Twice round the world triathlon - Durham University](#)

Sarah Wylie



Lucy Klimowicz



A second chance – or good business sense?

A recent report from The Prison Reform Trust states that England, Scotland and Wales have the highest imprisonment rates in Western Europe – and the prison population has risen by 93 per cent in the last 30 years. However, in the year ending June 2023, almost half of these prisoners were sentenced to serve six months or less.

Employability and Prison Reform, 28 November 2023

In November 2023, St Cuthbert's Society hosted an event at which our Vice-Chancellor, Professor Karen O'Brien, joined University colleagues as well as representatives from local businesses, charities and prisons. The purpose was to highlight the significant progress that has been made in improving employability rates among ex-offenders and to encourage more local businesses to engage with experts in this area. The roundtable discussion was chaired by our own expert in the field, Tammi Walker and included three Durham alumni (see right).

The discussion was wide-ranging and explored many of the complexities surrounding this area, including the importance of regional context, gender, and the nature of a business on the impact that can be made. Tammi's own research and professional background in forensic psychology gave her a distinctive perspective that enabled her to guide and inform the discussion.

Professor Tammi Walker, Professor of Forensic Psychology and Principal of St Cuthbert's Society

Tammi is a Fellow and a Chartered Psychologist of the British Psychological Society, and a Registered Senior Fellow with Advance HE. As a Professor of Forensic Psychology all of her research focuses on adults, particularly women, in contact with prisons and forensic mental health services who have multiple long-term conditions, specifically, severe mental illness, physical health conditions and addictions issues.

The panel were;

- **Alumnus James Timpson OBE**
(Geography, Hatfield College, 1991-94), CEO Timpson Group and Chair, Prison Reform Trust and Professor in Practice, Ian Baggett
- **Alumnus and Professor in Practice Ian Baggett**
(Geography, College of St Hild and St Bede, 1991-99), CEO and Founder, Adderstone Group and former inaugural Chair of HMPs Northumberland, Low Newton and Durham Employment Advisory Board.
- **Alumnus Oliver Tress**
(Anthropology, Hatfield College, 1986-89), CEO and Founder, Oliver Bonas and Chair, HMP Belmarsh Employment Advisory Board
- **Darren Burns**
Director of Diversity and Inclusion, Timpson Group
- **Beverley Brooks**
Founder, The Recruitment Junction, member of Employment Advisory Boards for HMP Northumberland and HMP Low Newton and HMP Durham



(L-R) Oliver Tress, Darren Burns, Beverley Brooks, Tammi Walker, Ian Baggett, James Timpson OBE

Having worked with the prison service for over 20 years, Tammi has extensive experience of the challenges facing offenders, both whilst they are within the prison system and as they transition back into society. A consistent thread through Tammi's research is the need for effective rehabilitation and a supported structured release programme from prison to avoid repeat reoffending.

Her research findings have demonstrated that low-level offenders often become repeat offenders as a direct result of the challenges faced on release. Employment is typically difficult to secure with a prison record and frequently the ex-offender is without any support network, home, family or friends.

Tammi's research attests to the positive results of interventions from some of our manufacturing and retailing household names working with the prison network to support the transition back into society. Companies like retail specialist Timpson Group are working with the prison network to develop an academy infrastructure to help develop some of the skills required for a smoother transition back into society. The Timpson Academy is one of several companies to replicate typical working environments within prisons and offer training programmes as preparation for release.

Timpson Group - pioneering reform

"We can't keep locking up 85,000 people today knowing that hardly any of them will manage to find work and that far too many of them will be back in again within

a year of release. There are currently too many people in prison, and we have a system that seems to keep bringing them back time and time again-that has to stop. Prison reform means fewer prisons and better prisoners." James Timpson OBE.

Durham alumnus James Timpson's family business is the largest employer of ex-offenders in the UK. His work through Timpson Group over the past 20 years has been exemplary - one in every nine Timpson employees is an ex-offender and there are Timpson Foundation Academies in prisons across the country. Of these employees, 75 per cent remain within the Group, the others predominantly moving on to employment with different organisations. The vast majority do not reoffend.

James knows that his work in this area is not only a great way of helping people, but also a great way to gain great employees - he was joined on the panel by Darren Burns, himself an ex-offender, who leads on the recruitment activity Timpson do with prisons. Darren spoke of the difference this opportunity has made

to him and to many others employed by the company.

The Group ethos is to place the power for a long-term future in the hands of the individual, James explained "We offer work experience, placements on temporary release or in the prison-based Timpson Foundation Academies. Whilst there is no "guarantee" of a job, there is a guarantee of an interview for employment and a work-trial period."

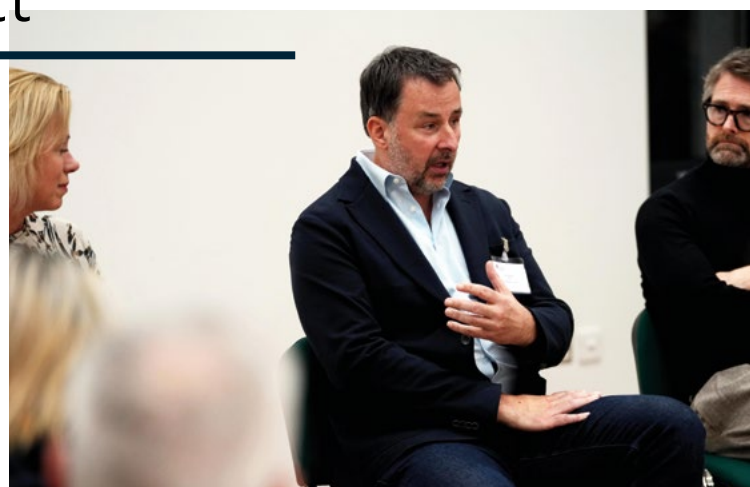
As Chair of the Prison Reform Trust and someone uniquely committed to reforming the prison system through rehabilitation and offering a future to ex-offenders, James been instrumental in the foundation of Employment Advisory Board (EAB) network across 90 prisons, connecting prisons with local employers to improve employment opportunities for ex-offenders upon release. Dedicated job experts have been recruited in every resettlement prison in England and Wales to help with job applications and interview training, so they are ready to find jobs in prospering sectors such as construction, haulage, and logistics. One-stop hubs

*James Timpson Durham University
Alumnus, CEO Timpson Group and
Chair, Prison Reform Trust*





The evidence does stack up. Everyone needs a job and a purpose in life. It's unbelievably rewarding to watch someone thrive on the back of a second chance.” Ian Baggett



Ian Baggett

where offenders can access career advice and support with tasks such as CV writing have also been established.

The Employment Advisory Board network

Backing the scheme, the Ministry of Justice joined HM Prison and Probation Service in issuing a press release in March 2023, stating; “bosses from top firms have been appointed as Employment Advisory Board chairs in 90 prisons. The Boards link prisons to leading business figures who can offer their expertise on the skills, qualifications and training needed to help prisoners re-enter the workforce. The initiative will play a crucial role in boosting the UK economy while tackling the £18 billion annual cost of reoffending. Getting more prison leavers into work helps to protect the public and the number in employment six months after release increased by almost two thirds between April 2021 and March 2022, from 1 per cent to 23 per cent.”

James' fellow alumnus and geography classmate, Ian Baggett, and alumnus Oliver Tress are both advocates of the Employment Advisory Board network. Oliver is CEO of retailer Oliver Bonas and Chair of HMP Belmarsh EAB. Ian, CEO of Adderstone Group, who also have a track record of employing ex-offenders, is former Chair of HMP Northumberland, Low Newton and Durham EAB.

Ian Baggett explains “the evidence does stack up. Everyone needs a job and a purpose in life. It's unbelievably rewarding to watch someone thrive on the back of a second chance. I'd encourage employers across the region to get involved and not just out of social responsibility. The vast majority of ex-offenders are extremely loyal, productive and hardworking so it makes great business sense.”

The Recruitment Junction – a connecting link

Joining them on the panel at the event was EAB member Beverley Brooks, whose charity, The Recruitment Junction, has placed more than 600 ex-offenders in jobs, and she has put her background in recruitment to work in making these opportunities available. The Recruitment Junction is the only specialist recruitment agency for people with prior convictions in the North East of England and was a 2023 recipient of a 'Centre for Social Justice (CSJ)' Award. The awards ensure that the voices of those working to tackle poverty around the country are heard by decision-makers in Westminster.

“We know our approach works and with the support of the CSJ, even more men and women will move into employment, becoming working role models for their own children and building families that can thrive.” Beverley Brooks

A long-term initiative

As our prison population increases, the responsibility for the solution has to sit with the whole community, not remain isolated within the prison system. Through the involvement of strategic partners, ex-offenders are offered an alternative to the cycle of reoffending, whilst employers are offered what Oliver Tress has described as “a true win-win situation”.

Former Deputy Prime Minister, Justice Secretary and Lord Chancellor, Dominic Raab concluded in March 2023 “We are already seeing the rewards with more prison leavers in work six months after release – helping them turn their backs on crime, contribute to society and saving the taxpayer money.”

Our community

Class Notes

So many of our alumni keep in touch with us and share updates from their personal and professional life. Through Class Notes, you can stay up to date with your peers.

Class Notes - Durham University

The King's Honours

On the announcement of The King's Birthday Honours in June 2023 and New Year Honours in January 2024, we would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and celebrate the fantastic achievements of the alumni, staff, students and friends who have been honoured.

Amongst those honoured is our Chancellor Dr Fiona Hill, Sir Amritpal Singh Hungin, founding Dean of Medicine at Durham University, Dr Arlene Holmes-Henderson, our Professor of Classics and Ancient History and The Most Reverend and the Right Honourable the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Portal Welby.

The King's Birthday Honours 2023 - Durham University

The King's New Year Honours 2024 - Durham University

Honorary Graduates

Honorary graduates exemplify the highest levels of achievement in their spheres of activity and reflect our inspirational Durham community.

Honorary awards are nominated by members of University staff and approved by our Senate and they are conferred at our Winter or Summer Congregation ceremonies. This celebration of our honorary graduates' achievements acts as a great example to our students as they set out on their own paths into the world.

The 2024 Winter congregation recipients were:

- **Dame Sarah Connolly.**
- **Ambassador Desra Percaya.**
- **Alison Gowman.**
- **The Lord Darroch of Kew KCMG, Kim Darroch.**

Honorary Degrees - Durham University



Sir Amritpal Singh Hungin



Dr Arlene Holmes-Henderson



*The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury
Image credit: Jacqui J Sze*

Study UK Alumni Awards

Hosted by the British Council, the Study UK Alumni Awards celebrate the outstanding achievements of alumni and highlight the impact and value of a UK higher education. They feature leaders in their fields who have used their experience of studying at a UK university to make a positive contribution to their communities, professions, and countries.

Our warmest congratulations go to Tanvir Ahmad who won the Social Action Award in Pakistan and Tara Subba who won the Social Action Award in Indonesia.

Study UK Alumni Awards 2024 - Durham University



Tanvir Ahmad (Engineering, St Aidans College, 2013-17)

Upon completing his PhD in 2017, Tanvir returned to become the Head of Energy Management and Sustainability at the US Pakistan Centre for Advanced Studies in Energy, pioneering an inclusive master's program.

His efforts extended to Afghan refugees, providing smart clean energy solutions, transforming lives and empowering families. Tanvir led installations of clean energy, benefiting schools and healthcare facilities, reducing emissions. Representing the UN post-2022 floods, he facilitated over \$10 billion in aid for Pakistan's recovery.

Studying at Durham provided Tanvir with clarity and belief in achieving social change. "Choosing Durham University for my doctoral studies has undoubtedly been one of the best decisions of my life. The opportunities were not only limited to study or research, but the multidisciplinary collaborative environment for working with industry, teaching opportunities, the outstanding sports facilities, support by the International Office for my co-curricular activities in Pakistan, everything made my journey so beautiful and a memorable one."

Tanvir credits his university education for his career trajectory, blending inclusivity, research excellence, global networking, and interdisciplinary focus. His multicultural experiences in the UK shaped his inclusive worldview, fostering warm memories and lifelong friendships.

"Entering the Alumni Awards was a natural choice as it allowed me to showcase the tangible impact of my UK education on my career and society, underscoring the importance of investing in global education for sustainable development. I aspire to motivate many more, that anyone, regardless of their background, can achieve success."



Tara Subba (Philosophy and Politics, St Mary's College, 2013-16)

Durham's rigorous academic environment and emphasis on holistic growth shaped Tara into a dedicated global change-maker. Her engagement with philosophy, politics, and economics, coupled with practical experiences like Amnesty International, prepared her for real-world challenges.

Further studies at Harvard, Columbia, and the Schwarzman Scholars Programme in Beijing broadened her global perspective and equipped her for impactful leadership roles. The programme supports up to 200 Scholars annually from all around the world for a one-year master's in global affairs at Beijing's Tsinghua University.

"Since graduating, I've lived in China, the US, Indonesia, Singapore, and Switzerland. Throughout my travels, I've appreciated the outreach team's excellent work in organizing alumni reunions worldwide. The last event I attended was in Singapore, where I had the privilege of meeting Vice-Chancellor O'Brien. Not only did we reminisce about many great memories from my Durham years, but we also discussed ways to strengthen the connection between Durham and the Schwarzman Scholars Program."

Returning to Jakarta, Tara founded The Collective Institute, focusing on sustainable development goals through social entrepreneurship. Her initiatives exemplify her commitment to social impact. As Market Intelligence Officer at The Gold Standard Foundation based in Geneva, Tara plays a central role in climate finance, contributing to shared value creation and carbon credit issuances worldwide.

In essence, Durham's influence on Tara's journey underscores the University's commitment to nurturing intellect and purpose-driven leadership.

Stay connected

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Visit durham.ac.uk/alumni or scan the QR code to update your details to keep up to date with all things Durham.



Development and Alumni Relations Office
The Palatine Centre
Durham University
Stockton Road
Durham
DH1 3LE

durham.ac.uk/alumni

Editorial Committee:
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-  alumni.office@durham.ac.uk

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