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St Leonard's College

News from the postgraduate community
2017 - 2018



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Welcome



Senior Vice-Principal and Proctor

It’s a pleasure to welcome you to St Andrews for the start of this new academic year. As the semester gets underway, I hope you will make sure you become involved in as many St Leonard’s activities as possible, helping to strengthen and enrich our intellectual and social community. I’m looking forward to meeting as many of you as possible this year, and hope very much to hear that you are enjoying your studies in our lovely corner of Fife!

Professor Lorna Milne
Senior Vice-Principal and Proctor



Provost

Welcome to St Andrews. We’re delighted to have you with us here as a student in St Leonard’s College and we look forward to meeting you over the course of your time in the University. Look out for the programme of St Leonard’s events over the course of the year and do come and speak to me, either at one of the College events or during my Provost’s office hours.

Professor Andy Murphy
Provost of St Leonard’s College



Postgraduate President 2017-2018

I am the Postgraduate President for 2017-2018. Currently in the second year of my PhD in medical cancer research, I did my Bachelor in Toulouse, France and started my Master’s as an Erasmus student in Budapest, Hungary. It all started there, my craving for an international life. Therefore, after I came back home to finish my Master’s, I decided to look for opportunities anywhere in the world and I ended up in St Andrews. I don’t regret it even one second! I have been involved with the Postgraduate Committee since I started my PhD. I remember when I first saw Aline (President at that time), presenting the society at the PG Essentials. I was so impressed and thought I would never be able to do something like that. I was initially a member without portfolio then Events Convenor (2016-2017). I had a great time doing that, it is rewarding when Postgraduates enjoy events you prepare for them. I met many people this way, I opened up and gained confidence thanks to this experience. Suddenly, it felt natural to run for President. Here I am! I also sit on the Student Services Council (SSC) that supports and leads the activities and events of the Students’ Association. My aim for this year is to improve Postgraduate integration within St Andrews students’ life and make them feel even more part of the community.

Jennifer Bre



Pro Dean (Taught Postgraduate)

As the Pro Dean for Taught Postgraduate programmes, I would like to welcome you to the University of St Andrews, and to the town of St Andrews also, if you have not studied previously at the University.

To benefit fully from the opportunities available to you, it is important that you make a quick start. Unless an event or society is intended explicitly for undergraduate students, you will always be made very welcome. There are a great variety of choices available, to suit all tastes, whether you wish to travel and explore Scotland or engage in sport or get involved in other social activities. Try at least one new one, just to see if you like it! Although your time in St Andrews is relatively short, in comparison with undergraduate students, I hope you make full use of it to interact with your fellow students and teaching staff, both in academic and non-academic activities. To help improve your taught postgraduate student experience, please also get involved in student representation and providing feedback.

I look forward to meeting you.
Best wishes

Dr Martin Campbell
Pro Dean (Taught Postgraduate)



Pro Dean (Research Postgraduate)

Welcome to St Andrews! Each postgraduate journey is unique and we look forward to being part of yours with you. I have been the Pro Dean dedicated to research postgraduates since 2014 and I am committed to ensuring that the University helps you to get the best out of your time with us. Our Schools and Institutes are world-leading places to pursue excellence in research at all levels, and it is together that we make the most impact. There will be many challenges for you, but we are a community, and we offer extensive training and social support to help you get the best out of your time here. The University has much to offer you beyond work, too, with its excellent sports facilities and lively Students' Union. St Andrews is a special place with a long tradition – and I hope you soon find your own place within it.

Dr James Palmer
Pro Dean (Research Postgraduate)



Postgraduate Development Officer

Welcome to St Andrews, everyone. I am Mizuki, your Postgraduate Development Officer for 2017–2018. I am responsible for liaising with all services that relate to non-academic and non-social parts of postgraduate students' lives in St Andrews, such as Accommodation, CAPOD, Registry, and Student Services. To represent postgraduate students, I meet monthly with key staff and discuss issues relating to the above mentioned services and I am also involved in Student Representative Council (SRC) in the Students' Association. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or issues. I will do my best to support and ensure all students' voices are heard to the University.

Academically, I am a second year Neuroscience PhD student studying how stress affects brain ageing. I first arrived in St Andrews in 2010 as an undergraduate studying the same subject and stayed here ever since. I want all postgraduate students to have a great experience and enjoy their time here as much as I have.

Mizuki Morisaki
Postgraduate Development Officer



Postgraduate Academic Convenor

Welcome to the University of St Andrews! I'm the Postgraduate Academic Convenor for 2017-2018. In this role, I'm responsible for representing Postgraduate students for all academic matters and work as a link between the Student's Association and the University. On the University side, this means sitting on various committees like the Learning and Teaching Committee and the Postgraduate Research Committee. Within the Student's Association, I'm a member of the Postgraduate Society committee and the Student Representative Council. In addition to these committee duties, I'm also the point of contact for Postgraduate class reps: I organise their training and keep in contact with them through smaller meetings and the Postgraduate Executive Forums. I hope that I'll help improve your experience here by making sure postgrads know about the University's plans concerning postgraduate study, and equally making sure that the University knows about your opinions, needs and perspectives.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any ideas or comments, or get involved yourself – there are plenty of opportunities from being a class rep to joining one of the many societies in the University!

Fanny Empacher
PG Academic Convenor



Designing a PhD Landscape

by J E Hinrichs



The beginning of a PhD programme is much like the beginning of a long-distance hike. I might be biased in this view since I'm smitten with wilderness trekking, but I think the construct of a PhD Trail is useful for any new PhD student.

At the start of a hike, or a PhD, you have no idea what lies ahead of you. You only *think* you know. You've read reviews, interrogated current PhD students, and read the programme information on the University's website to prepare yourself for the highs and lows of this adventure. In truth, however, you don't know what awaits you until you are progressing on the PhD Trail itself.

At the start of your PhD you may already be thinking of the journey's end. It is tempting to get caught up in The Destination – the completed thesis. However, it is important to combat this kind of narrow vision. Just like with a long-distance hike, a PhD is also about the landscape you go through on the way to your destination.

When I started out, I actively reminded myself to look around at the landscape this journey was taking me through and to not fixate on the distant, hazy horizon line. I knew I'd need to intentionally seek methods to enable myself to *pause* and to make the 'way there' enjoyable and enriching.

I found that notion of 'Designing a PhD Landscape' a helpful metaphor

for doing this. In other words, while working on your thesis, there are a many ways you can add enhancing topography to your PhD Landscape, designing it to be something uniquely your own. On a literal long-distance hike, enhancing topography materializes as things like conifer forests, fields of wildflowers, sightings of snow hares. When trekking down the PhD Trail these things materialize as creative outlets, hobbies, and friendships.

These have been three main ways I've been designing my personal PhD Landscape:

1. Creative Writing

Most of my PhD work entails reading and writing. However, I've found that doing some creative writing outside of my academic work enhances my ability to do my research. This peripheral writing comes in the form of journaling, poem-writing, social media posts and blogging. I carry a pocket notebook with me everywhere

and a camera with me too, always ready for a creative opportunity. Vapid though it may sound, sharing thoughts and photos with friends and family enables me to carry them with me on this journey. I also keep a regular blog. I post on my research and on what I'm learning about myself while travelling down this PhD Trail.

Sometimes creative writing is as simple as posting a quote I read on Tumblr or writing a snail mail (yes, it still exists!) to a pen pal. These little creative breaks are a means of hitting the 'refresh' button on my brain to better accomplish my academic writing.

2. Fresh Air

Depending on what your PhD subject is, most of your time will be spent indoors – in a library, lab, or office in the embrace of journal articles, datasets, books, and the glow of the computer screen. I'm a bigger book nerd than most, but even I know it is important to schedule in literal breaths of fresh air. I personally am very taken by the act of exploring the outdoors on foot. Fortunately, St Andrews has a great variety of options for

walking and running routes that give you a taste of nature not too far from home – the Lade Braes path, the Fife Coastal Path, and the footpath along the golf course. I've joined student societies which go on outdoor adventures to more far-reaching outdoor spaces and I am also part of a local Ramblers group to see parts of the Fife countryside. Participating in the Scottish habits of rambling and Munro bagging has helped Scotland

feel more like "home". I also schedule periodic "walking dates" with friends in the afternoon. This bit of outdoor air with a wee pumping of the legs provides some distance from my research, clears my head, and truly refreshes my entire person.

3. Community

You are talking to the Monarch of Introverts here – but even I will readily admit that having a sense of community during your PhD programme is *essential*. I know how easy it is for me to bury myself in books and squirrel myself away in my hermit hole. So, I built in features of community into my PhD Landscape from the very start. First, I chose to live in a five-person University flat in my first year. This has helped me meet other students outside my discipline who are fantastically kind and interesting people. Even the simple guarantee of periodic conversations in the kitchen fosters a sense of 'belonging' during the PhD programme. Second, I invested in department engagement. I have periodically gone to seminars,

social gatherings, skills trainings, and also have a desk in the PhD office of my department. The engagement with others from my discipline has helped me feel part of a department "family". Third, I joined a church and a Bible study group. This allowed me to meet people of all ages, from all over the world, with a commonly held belief system. It helped me engage with the local community of St Andrews beyond the University community. I realize that religious practice isn't for everyone, but I think it is advantageous to find a way to connect with individuals outside of the University, it will make St Andrews feel more like a home than an academic bubble.

Here is the secret beauty: the landscape your PhD Trail is winding through is of *your* own making. You have a choice to do or not do, to add or not add items. So, make your PhD Landscape authentically yours – no 'shoulds' or 'musts' are entailed. It also helps to remember that being a PhD student is a rare privilege, and learning how to balance your work with your passions is good training for life in general. Being on the PhD Trail is not a pause button on life, not a chapter which you escape into and then emerge from. It is one trail on the Map of Your Life, one path through the ever-changing landscape of your own design. So take time to enjoy this section of that landscape and make it your very own.

Public Engagement – It's All About

You

by **Mhairi Stewart**, Head of Public Engagement

The National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement defines public engagement as:

“The myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public”

Among these myriad ways you could participate in festivals and fairs, host a cookery class that demonstrates research methodology, do stand up comedy based on your work or create a science activity based on art or an arts activity based on science. You might even ask your chosen audience how they would like to interact with you.

That's only the first part of the definition however. The second, and arguably the most important part reads,

“Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit”

All too often the benefits of engagement activities to the academic, their work and their career are never considered.

There is no doubt that public engagement is ‘a good thing to do’. It should also be as entertaining and fun for you as it is for your audience. A common misconception is that it's all about school kids. But it doesn't need to involve school children at all. In many cases you don't even need to meet the public (e.g exhibitions, podcasts or radio plays).

So how do you benefit from engaging with the public? Let's start with the obvious: communication skills. The capacity to inform, to listen, and to take the views of all stakeholders into consideration is a skill highly prized in academia and beyond.



Other less obvious skills or opportunities include:

- time, project, budget and even people management.
- grant writing (and winning) and reporting skills.
- raising your personal profile, including invitations to sit on committees.
- networking opportunities
- transformative insights into your research.
- new collaborations and partnerships from meeting researchers at events.
- raising the profile of your research and research area.

Moreover, the heads of the doctoral training programmes at the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council and the Wellcome Trust have said that when applying for fellowships 90-95% of researchers are inseparable by academic CV alone. They actively look for public engagement experience showing evidence of transferable skills. The following is a quote from David McAllister, the Head of Skills and Careers from the BBSRC:

“Applicants for research fellowships are largely short-listed due to their scientific outputs and track-record. However, with success rates of most externally-funded competitive fellowships being low, anything people can do to make their CV stand out from the crowd is essential. Demonstrating scientific and personal impact is one way of doing this. Public Engagement shows fellowship committees (and other interview panels) a broader interest in your research, an ability to manage and plan multiple projects, to talk to a range of people about your research, and that you are an enthusiastic ambassador for your research, your department and your institution. Additionally impact continues to be a very important policy direction for funders, and anything you can do to generate high quality impact case studies will be welcomed by departmental leadership”

A couple of common excuses for not engaging with the public include lack of confidence and time constraints. But neither of these need to be an issue. Regarding confidence, there are many ways of getting involved in tried and tested activities in ‘safe’ environments before designing your own activities. There is training provided by CAPOD and help is always on hand from engagement professionals in the university. Comments from students who have been involved recently include:

“People sometimes need a push but it's so rewarding once you're pushed off that ledge, out of your safety zone and inspiring people”

Liz King, PhD student, School of Chemistry

“I would have liked to have known that it is not actually that scary! In fact it helps remind me why I love research”

Faith Jones, PhD student, School of Biology

In terms of time constraints, activities can take as little as an hour, up to an internship that may last a period of months. You can choose what suits you.

“Not all PE requires a large investment of time or resources. Lots of opportunities require very little commitment whereas others are ‘premade’ and simply require you to present them or help people work through them. No designing or planning required! Other PE will require more effort, but can be an amazing chance to show off skills”

Frances Entwistle, PhD student in the School of Biology

Finally, here are a very small selection of events you could take part in.

- **Three Minute Thesis:** This is an annual international competition with an adult audience.
- **XX Factor:** Would you like to be a female role model for 12-13 year olds? The kids get to decide who is the most inspirational speaker on the day.
- **Cell Block Science:** This project brings informal science learning to the learning centres of the Scottish Prison Service. We bring researchers into the prisons to talk about their work and deliver activities.
- **Explorathon:** European Researchers' Night in Scotland. We have a myriad of events from school talks to research fairs and live dog cognition research in the park. In 2016 this event engaged with over 950 people. Applications to take part will open in April 2018.
- **Being Human Festival:** This is a nationwide festival of the Art and Humanities. You are encouraged to develop your own events, funding is available.

There are many more opportunities for developing, funding and participating in public engagement. Please get in touch with Mhairi, our Head of Public Engagement (ms313@st-andrews.ac.uk) to talk about how you would like to get involved and keep an eye out for opportunities on the StAndEngaged Twitter (@standengaged) and Facebook (/standengaged) accounts.



My Time with the Postgraduate Society Committee

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by **Scott Schorr** (pictured holding an ice cream), Postgraduate President 2013-2014
Postgraduate Society Committee Member 2012-2016
Presently starting a Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur visa sponsored by the University of St Andrews

Who are you?

I've been a postgraduate (PG) student at the University of St Andrews since 2012-13, and have recently concluded my studies. I'm an old timer, but when I reflect upon the 600+ year history of the University of St Andrews, I have only been around for about 0.67% of that. Very cool to think about.

During this period, I have completed postgraduate degrees in the School of History and School of Computer Science. While time has passed far too quickly, I have found the academic experience here rewarding, the friendships made during my courses long-lasting, and the intellectual exploration of my studies fascinating (and fun!).

When I reflect upon my experience at St Andrews in the coming years, the first things that will pop into my head won't be articles read, lectures attended, exams taken, or dissertations written (although all of these were enjoyable, except for the exams); instead, I will think back to my time and involvement with the Postgraduate Society.

The PG Society fills your weekly inbox, hosts frequent events, and may on occasion invade your Facebook newsfeed, but what is the Postgraduate Society and who are the people behind it? This article is meant to provide a 'behind the scenes' look at the Postgraduate Society, and explain why, how, and when you can get involved to help lead it.

What is the Postgraduate Society?

The St Andrews Postgraduate Society is a sub-committee of the St Andrews Students' Association, and we work closely with staff from St Leonard's College. Both the Postgraduate Society and St Leonard's College share similar goals of improving the postgraduate student experience, and we work together frequently as partners to achieve these aims. This has been the case since the re-launch of St Leonard's College in 2013.

As a research or taught postgraduate student, you are automatically a member of the Postgraduate Society, Students' Association, and St Leonard's College. There are no membership

fees, and by virtue of studying here you are part of our community. Within the Students' Association, there are twelve sub-committees, including us, along with over 150 student societies. Sub-committees include those such as Mermaids (our student performing arts fund), Debates, and Wellbeing. Student societies range from Foreign Affairs to Fine Food & Dining to Disney. For a full list of sub-committees and societies available to join, please visit the following website: <http://yourunion.net>.

There are many opportunities to get involved, and as postgraduate students, the doors to all of these sub-committees and societies are open to you, whether you're looking to explore and meet new people, get involved with a cause you care about, or attend events to de-stress after a long day in the lab or library. Most sub-committees and society committees have postgraduate positions on them, this isn't meant to be a secret, so do take advantage of these. It's a way to directly embed yourself within student life, and go a step beyond attending single events.

The PG Society is uniquely entrusted by the Students' Association with the responsibility to provide a positive contribution to your postgraduate student experience in St Andrews. We approach this by actively listening to your ideas and responding to your expressed needs with the creation of new programming, and by sustaining the existing hallmarks and traditions of our social calendar (e.g. Freshers' Week, our graduation ball and summer ball, formal dinners, bus trips, etc). We are granted an annual budget by the Students' Association to achieve these goals, and have historically focused on planning a wide range of events for you and your friends. These events are organised by the Postgraduate Society Committee, which I now openly invite you to join.



“These experiences have truly augmented my degrees, and provided me with an invaluable education in teamwork.”

“When I reflect upon my experience at St Andrews in the coming years [...] I will think back to my time and involvement with the Postgraduate Society.”

Why did you decide to join the Postgraduate Society Committee?

When I first arrived, I was immediately stunned by the aesthetic of the town, impressed by the knowledge and creativity of my course mates, and desired to get as involved as possible with being a postgraduate. I had attended all of the Postgraduate Society Freshers' Week events, which I had been following on Facebook during the summer before arriving. After meeting the Postgraduate President from 2012-13, Dani Berrow, she encouraged me to get involved with the PG Society. I started by attending a few weekly committee meetings to learn more about what the PG Society does, and eventually I joined the PG Society Committee, assuming the role of Development Officer / 'ideas wizard', which entailed being a combination of a web developer, helping out where needed, and proposing new event ideas and critiquing existing ones. Everyone on the Committee was very friendly, and I remembered thinking how wise all the veterans were as terms, names, and ideas were flying around the room as quickly as new events were being planned and old ones passed by.

Flash forward four years later, and I am still on the PG Society Committee. Following 2012-13, I served as Postgraduate President (2013-14), Ball Convenor (2014-15), and my present role which consists of helping out where needed, similar to my original one, only this time without a formal title.

I have seen the PG Society experience many successes, an occasional failure or two, and witnessed how it evolves, troubleshoots problems, addresses new challenges, and grows from year to year. On a personal level, I have learned how to collaborate with great and friendly people from literally every discipline in the University, how to effectively communicate in committee meetings or in postgraduate-wide emails, and how to coordinate with people, groups, and units across the Students' Association and University. These experiences have truly augmented my degrees, and provided me with an invaluable

education in teamwork.

One time I joked with a fellow Committee member that we should write a memoir one day about our experiences as, at least for us, they have been filled with excitement, drama, breakdown (e.g. that movie projector), triumph (e.g. that movie projector), and the occasional ounce of comedy. Perhaps the most rewarding part of being on the Committee, has been watching how others have grown and made the same transition I had undergone from starting as a newbie to becoming part of a new generation of leaders. This has occurred on multiple occasions, and it is perhaps the major reason for my continued involvement, as it is rewarding to see on all sides beyond description. The Committee has truly been a family to me during my time here, and for that I want to thank my fellow PG Society Committee members from 2012-17.

What ways can I get involved with the Postgraduate Society Committee?

Whether you are here for one year doing a taught Masters, or planning to stay for four years for a PhD, there are roles for you and ways to get involved.

The Postgraduate Society Committee has weekly meetings, presently every Tuesday at 5pm in the Meeting Room located in the Students' Association building, also known as 'the Union'. During these meetings, we run through an agenda with individual reports and hold open discussions to plan our upcoming events.

In 2014, a Postgraduate Executive Forum was created and class representatives for both taught and research programmes were established and promoted in all academic Schools. This is another area available for you to get involved, if you're interested in academic matters within your School and programme, and provides us with an open channel of communication with the University.

I hope you enjoy your time with the Postgraduate Society Committee as much as I did.

The Postgraduate Society

– Who Does What?

by Scott Schorr

The Committee functions together as a team; each member having different tasks. If you join you will learn about all of the roles and can help out across all remits during your time with us. The Postgraduate (PG) Society President, Postgraduate Academic Convenor, and Postgraduate Development Officer are elected, for a one year term, during the Students' Association University-wide elections every March and then take on their roles in July after having a hand over with their predecessor. Our Treasurer and Marketing Officer are elected annually during our AGM, typically in April. All other positions are elected annually during our EGM, typically in October.

Postgraduate Society President:

- Provides the postgraduate community with student leadership by directing the annual strategy and vision for the PG Society.
- Chairs weekly PG Committee meetings and delegates tasks to members.
- Communicates postgraduate news to all postgraduate students by authoring a weekly newsletter.
- Attends the Student Services Council, one of two Councils in the Students' Association.

Postgraduate Academic Convenor:

- Represents all postgraduate academic matters.
- Attends a variety of high-level University committees including Academic Council, Learning & Teaching Committee, and Postgraduate Research Committee.
- Responsible for leading the Postgraduate Executive Forum, a body of elected postgraduate student representatives across all academic Schools, held three times annually.
- Attends the Students' Representative Council, one of two Councils in the Students' Association, and the Education Committee.

Postgraduate Development Officer:

- This evolving role is responsible for representing postgraduate student interests with all support Units across the University that deal with postgraduate matters. This occurs through convening a monthly postgraduate development group of representatives from University support units such as CAPOD, the Careers Centre, Student Services, Registry, etc.
- Attends the University's Library Strategic Advisory Group and Martyrs Kirk Review.
- Active in the planning of PG orientation activities.
- Attends the Students' Representative Council, one of two Councils in the Students' Association, and the Wellbeing and Accommodation Committees.

Treasurer:

- Manages the financial records of the PG Society and ensures that everything is within budget.

Secretary:

- Provides administration for the Committee and for committee meetings.

St Leonard's Liaison Officer:

- This role contributes to the long-term evolution of St Leonard's College and, through working with the St Leonard's College Administrative Officer, ensures that there is a strong collaborative partnership between the PG Society and St Leonard's College. The Liaison Officer facilitates St Leonard's College activities such as the St Leonard's Dinners.

Event Convenor:

- This role is responsible for our small to medium scale events held through the course of the year, including PG Society events and collaborative ones planned with partners (e.g. DRA wine receptions). Our events under this remit have included bus trips, pub quizzes, wine and cheese nights, whisky tastings, speaker events, movie nights, coffee mornings, and our ever-popular Scottish ceilidh dance evenings.

Ball Convenor:

- Plans and organises our annual formal balls, which traditionally occur around St Andrew's Day (for postgraduate graduation) and in July. This entails liaising with external entertainment, lighting, catering, venues, and suppliers, and coordinating a unique theme.

Marketing Officer:

- Creates marketing material for our events, and maintains our social media presence.

Two Members without Portfolio:

- Two formal positions that can help out the Committee as requested in areas with a large amount of work. For instance, taking charge of leading a particular event, or being keen for #pgbanter with the PG Society Twitter account.

St Leonard's College

Research Lecture Prizes

by Rebecca Hasler

I was excited to be awarded one of this year's St Leonard's College Research Lecture Prizes, which gave me the opportunity to deliver a series of three talks on 'Fake News in Early Modern England'. In doing so, I was able to connect a widely commented-upon contemporary phenomenon with my own PhD research, which concerns the style and genre of early modern pamphleteering. I discussed a wide range of topics, encompassing horoscopes, escaped dragons, and spontaneous combustion.

Fake news today is surprisingly similar to the news accounts and satirical commentaries that were written four hundred years ago. Both were the products of a changing media landscape. Just as printing revolutionised early modern news, social media has changed the way we talk about current affairs in the twenty-first century. In my thesis, I explore the development of 'documentary' and 'mockumentary' in Elizabethan

and Jacobean literature. The authors of satirical pamphlets were torn between a desire to document society and to mock its absurdity, and consequently produced books that straddled the line between news and fiction; fake news, as we might call them today.

Delivering this series of lectures has been an invaluable experience. As well as indulging (and justifying) my procrastinatory tendency to read the news when I should be working, the lectures further developed crucial skills for a career in academia. First amongst these is the ability to make one's research accessible. The process of contextualising and communicating my research to an audience of postgraduates, undergraduates, and academics from the School of English and across disciplines, as well as members of the public, made my writing more clear and concise. This has also had the effect of clarifying ideas in my PhD thesis. Given the increasing pressure on academics and

postgraduates to make their research engaging beyond the academy, the St Leonard's Lecture Series has helped to broaden the horizons of my research.

In addition, the lectures greatly improved my confidence in public speaking. I was delighted to have an interested and communicative audience, making the post-lecture questions a thought-provoking and informative affair. Delivering the lectures has been an immensely enjoyable experience. I have grown in self-confidence, I have gained new insights into my research, and I have been able to discuss what I do with people who would not otherwise have known about it. I would certainly recommend anyone who is interested to apply for next year's Lecture Prize.

Finally, I would like to thank the staff in the School of English, who provided a great deal of support, and who facilitated what I found to be a fantastic series.



Collaboration, conflict and compromise: Living like a meerkat

by Helen Spence-Jones

My choice of lecture topic was a little unusual... For my PhD I am looking at phenotypic plasticity and evolution in sticklebacks – which is about as far as you can get from social behaviour of a desert mammal!

Fortunately it does make sense: before I came to St Andrews, I spent two years working as a research assistant for the Kalahari Meerkat Project. I thought it would be interesting to give a talk about some of the things I worked on out there, as well as what life can be like for a field research assistant in a very remote place. Meerkats are famous for their cooperative-breeding social structure (a dominant pair breeds, and the other group members help to raise the pups), and the theme of cooperation and conflict within and between groups feels quite topical at the moment; it's interesting to look at parallels with humans. And, of course, it helps that meerkats are a very photogenic study species – and that two years in a field site gives you a fair number of crazy anecdotes about life in the field!

I think science communication is a really important (and sometimes neglected) part of being a researcher, so it was great to have an opportunity to hone my lecturing skills. As someone who had never given a presentation longer than fifteen minutes – or as part of a series – it was quite a challenge to find enough to say. Preparing the lectures definitely took longer than giving them! I had to really think about the structure and weaving enough of a narrative in to keep people interested, and about linking each lecture in the series together.

Fortunately the topic lent itself to that quite neatly; first off, an introductory lecture on meerkats and the field site, and then the two sides of social living: conflict and cooperation. Within that, I tried to look at the more general theory of social behaviour, specific examples from meerkats, and then parallels with how people behave. It's surprising how many aspects apply to both the meerkats and the humans on the field

site (although fortunately not all – I don't think anyone would be happy if the field manager started violently evicting volunteers...!)

Far from the Kalahari, my current work is more focused on evolutionary physiology: I'm looking at salinity tolerance in different populations of stickleback. I have quite wide-ranging interests, so it's hard to see where I'll go next; I enjoy research, but I also love science outreach and communication. Giving the lectures reinforced that – they're a good opportunity to work on teaching and communication skills, and it's also nice to stay in touch with my behavioural ecologist side!

Overall I really enjoyed the experience. Hopefully, my audience enjoyed it as well – or at least appreciated the pictures of tiny fluffy meerkat pups!



Reaching beyond The Bubble:

How my fieldwork in South America brought my research to life (and enriched me along the way)

by Isabel Seguí

I came from Spain to St Andrews to undertake a PhD in the Department of Film Studies. My research is on women's participation in the making of political cinema in the Andes, from the 60s to the 80s. Conducting research on a culture that is not your own can often involve problems of legitimacy. One of the best ways to ensure that your work is rooted in reality is to make sure that you know first-hand the culture to which you are referring. In that regard, the knowledge that you acquire from academic literature is insufficient. It is necessary to travel, to coexist and to immerse yourself in the diversity of people, landscapes and habitats of your research. You must also feel passion for your subject, respect for the human groups you are studying, and keep the critical spirit as sharp as possible. It is a humbling activity because through this journey you become more aware of what you do not know.

My investigation focuses on film production practices and has a feminist approach. This implies that to answer the research questions that will help me to contribute to a more inclusive and accurate Andean film historiography it is necessary to find the practitioners and ask them difficult questions. Typically, I need them to remember their involvement in processes where issues of gender and power were at stake, although probably not in an open way. This sort of dialogue requires time and a climate of trust. To build it, I use tools from other disciplines (such as social anthropology or oral history) that help me establish an affective, and for my purposes more effective, academic relationship.



For example, on a research trip to Bolivia, I met the renowned Bolivian sociologist and filmmaker Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui. She did not open her home to me to provide a structured interview, but to help her with the cooking because she had an injured hand. She is a wise teacher, who does not separate life, research, and teaching. Our conversations, in the kitchen or the food garden, were very juicy. Topics ranged from disciplinary discussions and reflections on her cinematic practice to dialogues about our personal lives. In every encounter, we were breaking the dichotomy between public and private.

This is only one example. I stayed for days or weeks in the houses of filmmakers, and other cinematic actors in Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador. These people have a place in my heart, but it is also evident to me that this kind of engagement allows for better scholarship. I do not mean that it is easy to bring information collected in this way into academic writing (even worse when English is not your mother tongue). However, in every doctoral thesis, you need to innovate. It is challenging, but it is also the most creative part of the process.

My research trips, which will allow me to contribute to Andean Film History, have been supported by grants I received from different institutions such as the Department of Film Studies, Santander, and the Society for Latin American Studies. Moreover, the University of St Andrews has offered me an excellent environment for writing: first through the quality of the supervision that I am receiving from Dr Dennis Hanlon and Dr Leshu Torchin, but also through the training programme in the Department of Film Studies and the Centre for Film Studies.

Although I have emphasized how important fieldwork is to a topic like mine, it is also crucial to have adequate access to academic sources. The University Library at St Andrews does its best to ensure that academics have a firm theoretical foundation through access to electronic materials and physical collections. Also, I must thank the library staff (a special mention to Kim Bennett) for their effort in getting me books from remote South American publishers or buying non-commercialised films directly from their authors.

I could go on and on describing the advantages of doing a PhD at St Andrews. However, I would like to end by saying that I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to do my doctorate here. I hope to repay society in the form of a publication that contributes to making women's work, in film and general, more visible and valued; in the Andes and everywhere else.



Interview with Principal Sally Mapstone

conducted by **Hannah Lawrence**



Sally Mapstone assumed office as the University of St Andrews' new Principal and Vice-Chancellor in September 2016. Some of us have perhaps seen her around St Andrews or heard her speak, and most of us will have heard the buzz around her arrival. But few of us know her personally. So she agreed to sit down with us in March 2017 and discuss her academic and professional journey to her current post, her perspective on the future of the postgraduate programme here at St Andrews, as well as some exciting plans, practical advice, and personal insights. This interview, then, works to give current and incoming postgraduates a deeper understanding of their new Principal and Vice-Chancellor, her priorities, and her character. I believe I speak for all postgraduates when I say (albeit a little belatedly), 'Welcome to the University St Andrews, we look forward to working collaboratively with you on our quest to continue developing and evolving the postgraduate programme here at St Andrews'.

What did you study as a postgraduate?

I did my postgraduate degrees at the University of Oxford. I did a Masters (MST) in Research Methods in English in the period 650 to 1550; and after I got a Distinction in that – I went on to do a DPhil in Medieval Scottish Literature. I was supervised by a chap called Douglas Gray.

Can you tell us a little about your experience as a postgraduate student?

I went into postgraduate study at Oxford. I was at Oxford as an undergraduate but after I completed my first degree there I didn't go directly onto postgraduate study – I worked in publishing as an editor at a publishing house for three years. That was quite a decisive time in my life in the sense that I worked out that I wanted to write my own books as opposed to editing other people's. The great thing about having had a job in a very busy London publisher was that it really professionalised me. By the time I went back into academic work as a graduate student – and it was slightly unusual to have that sort of break 30-40 years ago – I took a very professional and business-like approach to graduate study. The approach I took was a very business-like one in the sense that I was very organised about my work and I wasn't distracted by the things that can distract you as a graduate student if you've never been anywhere else. I think this is probably why I was successful at it – because I knew how to use my time. I'd learnt that to some extent as an undergraduate at Oxford but working in business made me really learn it. So when I came back to be a graduate student I was entirely committed to academia and I loved it – I absolutely loved it. Frequently I say to graduate students, either do your graduate studies at a different university than the one you went to in the first place or have a break – do something else – even if it's only for a year. Go and travel or go and intern somewhere but do something else – give yourself that break because you will mature a bit. And you will approach your graduate studies more focused and more pragmatically.



As an academic who has gone on to have an illustrious career in academia and academic administration, do you have any advice for postgraduates looking to make the most of their time here at St Andrews?

My advice would be that your work has to come first – you can do lots of other things but you have to stay on top of your work. That's very, very simple advice but the view that I took when I was a graduate was get the work done and everything else falls into place. Of course that can be more challenging when you're a graduate student doing a Doctorate because the work never ends with a Doctorate – there's always something else you could read – there's always another article, there's another book – you know Dr Johnson said, 'one book leads to another'. And that's absolutely true, so knowing when to stop and when to get that work-life balance and do other things is quite a challenge. But when you prioritize the work you know when you can stop doing it and do something else. The other thing that I would say is, doing graduate work – particularly research work – is one of the few times in your life when you can dedicate yourself completely to getting on top of the subject and really mastering it. You should make the most of that. And you need to be curious. Some of the discoveries that I made when I was a graduate student were because I went a bit further and read the extra book.

And I didn't rely on what books said, I went and looked at the originals myself. This can be as true of science as it is of arts – you have to be prepared to ask some questions. You should challenge received disciplines and received views. You need to go make the subject your own and that's hard.

The other thing that I would say to any student doing graduate work is that it is a lonely business. Sometimes it has to be and you should just accept that. I can remember spending a month on something that didn't eventually go into my Doctorate. I think probably because I was a slightly more grown-up person that I didn't panic about that. About five years later that piece of work was incredibly useful for something I did postdoctorally. So, nothing was wasted but you have to appreciate that there will be times when it is very lonely and it is just you and your computer – and that's hard.

Even if you're a scientist I think the same thing happens because ultimately you have to own the work. So you have to put up with the difficulties – there must be difficulties in order to make new things happen. But there is also the exhilaration of when you've finished a chapter and you think 'oh that's fantastic'. So there will be ups and downs, but life is like that anyway so I think I would say you have got to make the most of it but you have got to take the rough with the smooth as well.

Also, sometimes you can feel that

you and possibly your supervisor understand what you're doing and you rapidly realise that other people, astonishingly, don't find your subject as interesting as you. You start telling them about it a bit like the ancient mariner and they're desperate to escape. When you're finishing the Doctorate you will find this – one becomes completely obsessed in the very last stages and it's all you can talk about and unless someone has written a Doctorate themselves, they don't always appreciate the significance of that. But I think St Andrews is brilliant from the perspective of what it offers because you know if things get too much you just go out of the door and go for a walk or a run. I think there is something very recuperative about the environment here. Apart from all the things you can do socially, the setting is just so good for bringing some of that balance back.

What do you think of the postgraduate provisions here in comparison to your previous academic locations?

I think they are pretty good here actually – I think because we are a small university and we handle our student numbers very carefully and we have enough staff to provide supervision and tuition for Masters students in a way that is good for them and good for us. And I think the facilities here are generally very good. I think there is an interesting question – could we do more for our graduate students in terms of offering them somewhere to go together, as it were, as in a student association? I think this is something that we need to think about but I think we give people a very stimulating academic environment as well as a very supportive and refreshing social environment. We are not a big city but we don't make claims to be and don't have pretensions to be so I think we are very well set up for graduate students.

Are you setting any new priorities concerning postgraduates and the postgraduate programme here at St Andrews?

Well the University itself is in the process of doing that so we have just been reviewing our PGT provisions and we have also brought in a new Director

of the Graduate School who will focus specifically on PGT provisions – so that is something that is happening anyway. And we are also looking to see if we can generate some more interdisciplinary programmes at the Masters level. And that is something, institutionally, that we would be very interested in – and something I am extremely supportive of. The area where I think that we ought to do even more than we are doing at present is the scholarship provision for both Masters and Doctoral students. Having a scholarship is obviously what makes a difference between whether you can come and study at a university or not – at the undergraduate but also at the postgraduate level – so that for me is a real priority in terms of fundraising. And raising funds externally is essentially how we are going to need to fund more scholarships. So that is a big priority for me as well.

The past and current administration of the University of St Andrews has aimed to strengthen our postgraduate programme and bolster our research output through increasing PG student numbers. Do you align with this effort? If so, what do you think a larger PG student base will mean for St Andrews and future postgraduates?

Yes, I do align with that because I think we will up the quality of our research even further if we have more Doctoral students who feed into research work. I also think our graduate numbers are a bit smaller than a university of this size might expect at both PGT and PGR level. I would say that I think we don't make enough here of the possible transition from PGT to PGR – from Masters to Doctorate. I think we quite often see the Masters as something free standing here whereas I think we should also be thinking about ways in which doing a Masters here can lead to doing a Doctorate for those who want it. So, I would think having a larger graduate community would only be a good thing for St Andrews. I think it would be good for staff and good for students, and we're thinking very carefully about the numbers – so this is something we have in our strategic plan. We're going to grow those numbers carefully and strategically, and you have to remember that PGR students are going to be around for quite some time so you have to make sure that we've got the facilities to look

after those students – and that we've got the resources to support them as well. So yes, I am supportive of the initiative but I am also concerned to make sure that in growing our numbers we continue to keep the quality of the student experience.

In light of the success of your 'Women of Achievement' lecture series as well as your Ad Feminam mentoring programme at the University of Oxford—do you intend to continue your efforts at St Andrews toward empowering women in academia and spotlighting their achievements?

Yes, so empowering women will always be a high priority for me. You mentioned those initiatives – and I have done others throughout my career because I don't think we yet have full equality or parity between women and men so I think women need to be encouraged and empowered. One can do it by example or one can do it by intervention and initiatives. The mentoring programme that I sponsored and ran in Oxford was very successful and we are looking to roll out something comparable for senior women in St Andrews. This is my intention and I am in the process of doing the preliminary work, then run-up work, for launching a scheme next year dedicated to mentoring for senior academic women – as a means of saying we want more women doing really well as they make their way through their careers and that the institution will help them to do that. I always want to support initiatives in the University by and about women. So, I showed my face at the International Women's Day celebration a couple of weeks ago and I am delighted when those sorts of initiatives are run by women themselves and I will always turn up and support them when I can. People should have no doubt that this is really a priority area for me – for the simple reason that I think you improve the quality of the place when you bring to it the best people from whatever backgrounds they come from. And anything that holds people back – you should try to overturn and resist effectively. And I think there are all sorts of things that can still hold women back and we have a duty to make sure that that doesn't happen too much here.

The Bubble in the Burgh

by Gillian Jack



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Scotland and the National Records of Scotland, there is a variety of smaller, less famous, collections belonging to various institutions. So any St Andrews postgraduate student living in Edinburgh need not feel cut off from adequate research resources.

As for study space, Edinburgh is bursting with cafés and coffee shops. It's far easier to find a quiet corner to drink a pricey coffee and write your thesis in Edinburgh than St Andrews. Although the city can be busy (especially during the summer and the Fringe Festival in August), there are simply so many places that you're sure to find a study nook, tucked away out of sight of the hordes.

Beyond studying, Edinburgh boasts a huge array of facilities in comparison to St Andrews. There are various cinemas, from multi-screen and IMAX venues to small independents showing a more unusual selection of films. You can watch the newest 3D films on a giant screen, independent and foreign cinema at small venues, or even attend a weekend-long showing of every episode of *Twin Peaks*. To help you recover from binge-watching and over-indulgence in coffee and doughnuts, the city offers a variety of gyms and swimming pools (from refurbished Victorian baths to the Olympic-sized Commonwealth Pool) to help you feel human again. In addition, Edinburgh is also a great base from which to explore the rest of Scotland. There are buses and trains to most of the rest of the country. And flights from Scotland's busiest airport will take you to the islands, Europe, and beyond.

Of course, there are inconveniences about studying in St Andrews and living in Edinburgh. Commuting is far from convenient. You can drive, but you sacrifice the opportunity to work while you travel. You can take the bus, which is cheaper and takes you from the centre of one town to the centre of the other. Unfortunately, buses are only once an hour and won't get you into St Andrews for an early start.

There are no proper tables on which to put your laptop, and there may be

no loo. The train also has pros and cons. If you travel outside peak hours, it's usually quiet enough to get a seat, and if you book in advance it's not too much more expensive than the bus. However, the bus between Leuchars and St Andrews is not the most reliable and is astonishingly expensive (at least for Edinburghers who are used to getting anywhere on the bus for £1.60). For tutors, the weekly commute can be tiresome. I try to line up my tutorials on the same day, which saves on time and costs of travelling, but it can make for a long day (and I absolutely do not recommend three tutorials back-to-back: I barely knew my own name by the end of the third tutorial, let alone anything about enlightened absolutism).

The University provides some facilities for commuter students. Hidden away under the ASC, there is a lounge and showers, and if you join Townsend, the commuter students' society, you can get a locker, and all the tea and coffee you can drink. The commuter room is a particularly valuable resource: somewhere to take a break, have a chat, and meet a diverse range of students.

Importantly, it can be difficult to feel a sense of community with other scholars when living away from the University. This is especially true in the earlier years of a PhD, and can feel very isolating. It's easy to miss out on opportunities and feel out of the loop. Daily, casual contact with other PhD students, and staff, can be hugely beneficial, especially through the inevitable darker periods. It can be difficult to sustain these relationships when you don't have an office in the department, and are there only infrequently. Events like reading weekends can help with this a great deal, and I strongly recommend commuting students take advantage of those.

These pros and cons will stack up differently for each of us. Though I am conscious of the inconveniences, the benefits of living in Edinburgh outweigh them for me.

What do you most look forward to in your role at the University of St Andrews?

The simple answer is continuing to get to know the University. In addition to doing the things that I do already, I have visited every single one of our 19 Schools and I am in the process of visiting every single one of our 23 Units – I want everybody to think that I am an approachable Principal. But I also really want to get to know this place really well so that when I'm talking about St Andrews – I want to feel that I can talk about it with authority and conviction. So there is no opportunity off limits for me. I walk around muddy fields to look at some of the land that St Andrews owns. I have visited the Living Links facility in Edinburgh. I have visited the stores in the Estates Department here – it was fascinating to see how many lightbulbs we have. I have done all of those sorts of things because that way I kind of build up a sense of the institution. The best way I can really convey it is as a research project. I'm still a graduate student at heart...

Just so the PG community can learn a little bit more about you – what are some of your hobbies/interests/or ways you spend your time outside of work?

Good heavens! How do I spend my time outside work? Well I spend my time outside work working; that's probably the simple answer. My biggest hobby is reading – reading is just a complete

fact of life. I can't live without reading. I'll read anything essentially. Non-academics find this unusual but reading is my form of relaxation. I love reading and I am always reading something – and not just work things. I read huge amounts of poetry. I find poetry incredibly therapeutic and beneficial. Also – music. Both my husband and I love opera and we also love going to concerts. Just recently we were at the conservatoire in Glasgow because James MacMillan was conducting two of his compositions. That was a great pleasure.

And walking and running – I've always run. I haven't done as much running here as I would like to but the pleasures of getting that kind of exercise I really enjoy and I believe very strongly that you function better as a person if you're reasonably fit. Sadly I can't say that playing golf is one of my recreations but I do enjoy watching golf. It's an acquired art but I quite enjoy it.

Lastly, what have you enjoyed most about your move to St Andrews? Or what do you enjoy most about St Andrews itself?

I love the size of the place. I like the compactness – the sense that you can go out into the street and you can always see someone you know. It has that sense of a place that is small and friendly and stylish and full of quality, I really like that. And actually Oxford's very different – you can go years without seeing people, even though you know they're around

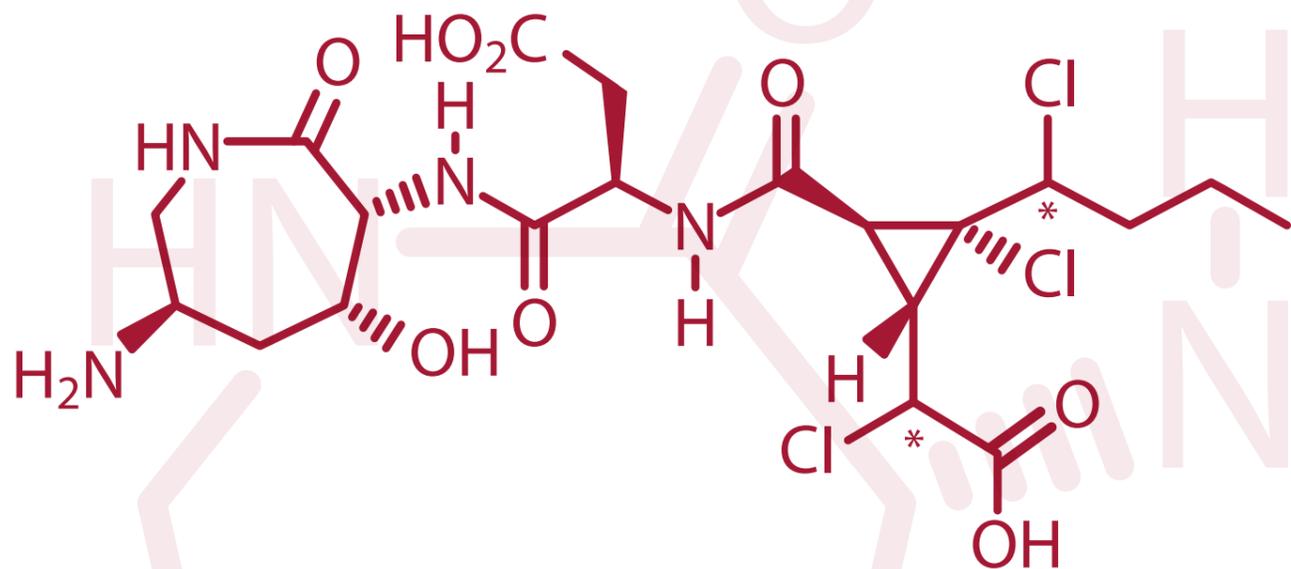
somewhere. But here there is a very strong sense of community – and it's a happy place. That's one of the really striking things about St Andrews – it's a happy place. Of course I know there are periods when people are unhappy. I just think dominantly there's a sense in the community that there is kind of a positive and happy one. And I really like the mix – I love the international quality of St Andrews. It's a very Scottish town but it also feels very international. And a lot of that comes from the amazing character that our students bring to the place. I find that wonderfully exhilarating and invigorating and inspiring in terms of what I want to do. I've been coming here for 20-30 years and the town has changed. Now there are lots of places to get a cup of coffee – and you can buy clothes now, which 30 years ago was more or less impossible.

A message for postgraduates:

You have made the right decision in coming to St Andrews. You'll be very happy here. Make the most of your time. Work hard because the harder you work the more results you'll get. The harder you work, the more the rest of your life will fall into place. And this is a great place for achieving balance – what we've been talking about essentially. The complementarity of the place to what we do seems to be an ideal environment for graduate students.

When Chemistry is an Art: St Andrews wins Retrosynthesis Competition 2016

by Stefania Musolino



Chemistry has been my passion since youth; I was 17 when organic chemistry caught my imagination and my interest for this branch of chemistry has only increased with time. Two years ago, I left Italy to begin my PhD at the School of Chemistry at the University of St Andrews. My PhD programme is within the Centre of Doctoral Training (CDT) named "CRITICAT", which is a four-year PhD with a focus on catalysis (examining how reactions can be made more efficient and how the outcomes of a chemical reaction can be controlled). I have found the University of St Andrews to be the best place to carry on my work as a chemist; it provides a stimulating, multicultural environment.

My research involves a combination of organic chemistry and catalysis. For those less familiar with chemistry this might sound boring. However, chemical research allows us to merge knowledge and creativity to convert plans scribbled on paper into reality. Of course, it is not easy. In 1835 Friedrich Wöhler expressed that organic chemistry gave him the impression of a primeval forest full of the most remarkable things, a

monstrous and boundless thicket, with no way of escape, into which one may well dread to enter. He was one of the pioneers of organic chemistry and, in a few words, he gave the idea of what most passionate researchers feel about this discipline. Personally, when I feel discouraged about my work, I keep in mind the words of the great scientist Marie Curie:

"Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less"

Here in the UK, there are excellent researchers in chemistry and in order to stimulate their passion for their field (and maybe even for fun) the Royal Society of Chemistry and the Society of Chemical Industry has organised an annual National Retrosynthesis competition since 2012. The challenge

is to deconstruct a complex molecule (e.g. a potential drug molecule) into different, smaller parts (commercially available chemicals). After, we need to propose a forward synthesis solution considering all the problems that could be found during the actual synthesis (for example possible side reactions). All the suggested steps must be supported by references. For example, imagine a picture of a big castle built from Lego bricks and someone asks you to imagine all the possible ways you can break it down and Lego pieces that you need to put together to build the whole castle. Envisioning this process is all hypothetical, nothing is tested in the lab, but you need to create an elegant plan, which needs to be explained sensibly. It is not just science but art as well.

In October 2015, our team of seven people (Aileen, Claire, Kevin, James, Ross, Tom and me) decided to take part in this competition. It was a perfect opportunity for us to display our abilities as synthetic chemists and to have fun. To us, this was a challenge, not just a game. The competition was based on two rounds. For the first



round, we were required to devise a retro and forward synthesis of Corianlactone, a complex molecule isolated from the *Coriaria nepalensis* Wall. plant. This round was based on a presentation to be sent to the organisers.

Our team met every week and came to a general agreement on the possible disconnections we could have made, so we started deep and careful research on possible routes to undertake for the synthesis. It was quite tough to consider the possible weaknesses of our proposals. The ability to critique your own work will help you improve. Personally, the first round was the most difficult for me. It was my first attempt and we did not have a lot of time. We had to find time for meetings during working hours, and during the rest of the week we had to think what ideas to propose; it was a good exercise for our minds. Fortunately, the team worked very well together and all the members were essential.

In December, our team "Totally Disconnected with Base" nervously submitted the proposal. Then in January 2016, the RSC and SCI announced the finalists for the second round. Out of approximately 40 teams who entered the first round, we were chosen with nine other teams from universities and chemistry based organisations and industries. We were proud and excited for our new challenging opportunity. The second round was based on preparing a new

proposal for the retrosynthesis and synthesis of the as yet unsynthesised natural product Peritoxin B. This time the teams were invited to present their ideas in front of a judging panel at the headquarters of the Royal Society of Chemistry.

We had less than two months to create a possible synthesis of this natural product. We had many ideas though we had difficulty finding the right solutions. The different synthesis routes need to be supported by reported data and uncertainty could make us start all over again with new combinations, new problems, new errors, new ideas, highlighting the importance of sharing research data. In the last few weeks of Round Two, we worked through various obstacles until ultimately we had our synthesis. We were the only Scottish team that year. We considered this a chance to demonstrate our creative abilities as synthetic chemists (at least on paper!).

We competed in March 2016 and were nearly the last team to present. All the presentations were questioned by the audience, judges and rival teams ready to destroy the other presentations with potential issues. It was fun, but intense work. Most of the teams proposed interesting and detailed

strategies for the synthesis of that complex molecule. In the end, it was amazing to see how a single molecule can be fragmented and synthesised in various routes. There were similar ideas, of course, but all of the syntheses had their own originality.

After a full day of tension, chatting, and hours of chemistry, our team won the competition! We were followed by the AstraZeneca and Oxford University teams. At first, we could not believe it, though it was true! We came back to St Andrews full of pride with a glass trophy that is now in the School of Chemistry. I hope our adventure will inspire future enthusiastic chemistry students to give it a try. Never give up, enjoy chemistry!



Bright Club: Where academia is a laughing matter

by Maneesh Kuruvilla

I'm not particularly funny, charismatic or quick on my feet with witty tweets or Facebook posts. If anything, I would be best described by people who know me as quiet, serious and averse to large social interactions (or any sort of social interaction). Perhaps it is for this reason that my involvement with Bright Club will always be one of the highlights of my time as a postgrad at St Andrews.

The basics

Bright Club is part of a larger public engagement push aimed at disseminating research findings to a lay audience. The basic premise of Bright Club is that it allows academics (postgrads, researchers, lecturers, professors etc.) the chance to perform an eight-minute stand-up-comedy set based around their work. This may include specific research findings or the frustrations, quirks and processes surrounding these findings. A standard show consists of six academic sets with an interval half through and a professional MC/comedian introducing each performer and getting the audience hyped. The audience consists of non-academics and academics alike who want to know more about an area outside of their own echo chambers but in an informal environment. There are numerous Bright Club events hosted throughout the UK,

with varying frequency. In Scotland alone, you can perform at Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen. The St Andrews addition was founded in 2014 by Dr Kate Cross from the School of Psychology & Neuroscience and is now run by Emmie Bryant, a PhD student in the same School. Bright Club St Andrews typically happens once a semester in either Sandy's Bar or The Byre Theatre in front of 60-70 audience members. The wonderful thing about the Bright Club Network is that you can perform the same set at different venues if you get bitten by the comedy bug. In fact, Bright Clubs hosted by Edinburgh, Glasgow and Newcastle take place at the legendary Stand Comedy Clubs where some of the top British comedians have performed.

My first experience

Having completed an undergraduate degree in Economics and Psychology, I decided to remain in St Andrews and pursue a PhD in Psychology & Neuroscience. I often wondered if I was choosing the safe option by doing this. The psychologist in me was keenly aware of my ability to rationalise the decision to stay in the bubble. And so, what initially motivated me to give Bright Club a go was the desire to prove that I was still capable of putting myself in situations that were uncomfortable

yet rewarding. I signed up for the Bright Club training session hosted by CAPOD and run by professional comedian Susan Morrison. I took two important lessons away from that session. The first was that each of us in the room not only doubted our ability to be funny but also could not comprehend how our research interests would be a potential source of comedy material. It was liberating just hearing others express what I had been feeling. The second lesson came when Susan mentioned that, while professional comedians rely on standard sources of material like personal anecdotes, relationships and politics, researchers have a unique archive of information that can be refreshingly hilarious. Finding the humour in what we do takes time and it often comes while exploring our research at tangents. This might involve thinking back to the stories or complaints we typically share with peers and family about the postgraduate experience and fusing that with our own personality and culture.

The lead up to my first set was far from perfect. With a few days to go before the big show, I was still struggling to find what I was going to write about. During rehearsal, there was one joke at the start of my set that seemed to work. I decided to use my limited guitar and singing skills to

write a song that revolved around that joke of me being an Indian student and having a back-up plan of working at a call centre if the PhD failed. The song was called "How May I Assist You?" and was a spoof of Coldplay's "Fix You." In between the opening joke and the song, I included some topical information about my supervisor's contribution to our research area that was being picked up by mainstream media at the time.

Bright Club and beyond

Since my first show, I've had the fortune of writing four more sets and performing 11 times including at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and Glasgow International Comedy Festival. I've added two original songs to my collection – "The Episodic Memory Song" and "Thinking of Postdocs." The experience I've gained from Bright Club has also helped me prepare for public engagements competitions. For instance, at FameLab 2016 (the academic equivalent of The X-Factor) I made it to the UK Finals with my song "Amazing Place," an explanation

of the neuroscientific discovery of place cells and a humorous take on the hymn "Amazing Grace." However, my most memorable experience of performing will always be at that first Bright Club show in St Andrews. The Halloween-themed event was attended by my supervisor, Dr Jamie Ainge, and three of my colleagues dressed as the components of episodic memory ("what," "where" and "which"). During the set, as I introduced my supervisor's work, I removed my hoodie to reveal a T-shirt with his photograph on it. I then proceeded to share his work email and phone number with the audience in case they had questions about his research. My supervisor took the joke very well although he has never attended another one of my shows, which is probably most telling.

You would expect that trying to get people to laugh about your research for eight minutes should make delivering academic presentations quite easy. However, I personally haven't experienced that crossover. There is something still quite terrifying about having to prove your worth to experts

in your field. Where I have noticed the benefits of Bright Club, though, is in identifying spaces in my talks where I can inject one or two light-hearted moments. I've certainly become more aware and confident about adding humour to my presentations and the advantage this can have in keeping your audience, experts or not, focused on the key points.

If you'd like to get a feel for what Bright Club is all about the easiest way is to search "Bright Club St Andrews" on YouTube. Samples of my previous songs and Bright Club sets are available on my website www.ourmemoriesourselves.com/stand-up-comedy. I'm always happy to be contacted directly (mk542@st-andrews.ac.uk) if you have any specific questions. If you'd like to perform or help with organising you can get in touch with Emmie (elfb2@st-andrews.ac.uk) or Kate (cpc2@st-andrews.ac.uk).

Facebook: @brightclubst-andrews
Twitter: @BrightClubStA



Business Start-Ups:

How a business idea can be developed within a university setting

by **Bonnie Hacking**

Many students undertake postgraduate study because they enjoy their subject and would like to enhance their career prospects. However, during their studies, some postgrads discover they want to start their own business rather than pursue an academic career or work for an organisation.

Is there any support for starting up a business?

Bonnie Hacking, Enterprise Adviser in the Careers Centre is available to meet with students to discuss an idea or business. She runs the Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur visa scheme and can give details on how this operates.

Can your postgraduate study influence business ventures?

Kate Matveeva, MLitt (Erasmus Mundus) Crossways in Cultural Narratives; Scott Schorr, MPhil Computer Science, MSc Computing and Information Technology and MLitt Modern History; and Alex Ward, PhD Physics share their insights and experiences. Their different areas of study have influenced their chosen business ventures.



Ekaterina (Kate) Matveeva

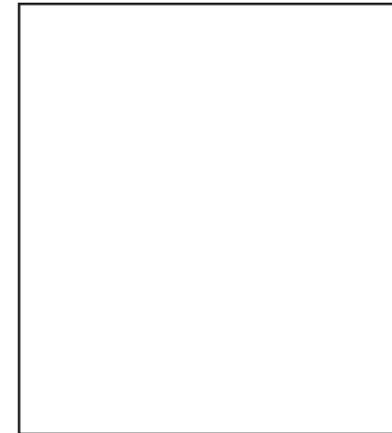
Founder and CEO of Amolingua, MLitt (Erasmus Mundus) Crossways in Cultural Narratives <http://amolingua.com>

Kate is a self-confessed polyglot, who speaks eight languages and loves complexity. For ten years, she dreamed of starting a language school, where languages would be taught in a new way. Amolingua is the realisation of that dream and a lot of hard work and effort. Amolingua empowers learners to learn at an accelerated pace, enhancing memory skills and public speaking and can turn their lives into a global adventure. At the end of the course learners are fully equipped to travel, move to another country or conduct a presentation for a foreign audience.

At times, getting Amolingua going has been a heavy burden, but Kate enjoys the variety of every day. Kate's advice to any postgraduate thinking of starting a business is: "If you are accustomed to certainty, the degree of uncertainty is very uncomfortable, but you know your quality of life depends on embracing uncertainty to make it work. So you just do it! If you fail, do it again. Failure means have another attempt."

Kate has won a number of awards for Amolingua, most recently: World's Top 200 Growing Start-ups of 2016 (WebSummit); UK Business Woman of the Year 2015 (GradFactor); 20 of the World's Hottest Start-ups of 2015 (CNBC).

The University sponsored Kate for the Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur visa, to enable her to start Amolingua in the UK.



Scott Schorr

Founder of ideaQuad, MPhil Computer Science, MSc Computing and Information Technology and MLitt Modern History

Scott enjoyed studying history and found his work on transnational history (focused on the founding period of the European Space Agency) drew him closer to his technical side. He also enjoyed coding as a hobby. When he went on to study computer science, he realised there was an opportunity to improve how researchers collaborate with each other and how people communicate virtually within a university. ideaQuad is an interactive web-based social collaboration platform for researchers and university staff to perform and share academic work which improves institutional workflow efficiency. This is done through an online virtual community and a unique set of software features, spanning research groups, disciplines, universities and countries.

Scott explained how his postgraduate study prepared him to start a business. "Through my history degree I learned to think critically and examine things a layer deeper. When applied to social networks in an institutional context, my curiosity about how they are formed, why they function and how they are structured gave me important insights into developing ideaQuad. The social puzzle of academia is just as complex as the technical puzzle of software."

And according to Scott, the best thing about running a business is "transforming a hobby into something that pays the bills." He also enjoys the freedom of not being constrained by a corporate hierarchy and finds it exciting to work with people who may have different backgrounds, but share a common enthusiasm and have complementary skills.

Scott's advice: "Join the Postgraduate Society Committee. It's a great place to meet extremely intelligent people from outside your own discipline who are very savvy AND it's fun! Be open to discussing an idea and if you find something that clicks go for it!"



Alex Ward

Founder and Managing Director of Razorbill Instruments, PhD Physics

Jack Barraclough, Founder and Technical Director of Razorbill Instruments, PhD Physics <http://razorbillinstruments.com>

Alex had a good experience during his Masters research project. He liked research and was good at his subject so continued his studies with a PhD. During his PhD, he was in the right place at the right time to do something entrepreneurial. He met a staff member who had an idea, but wanted to stay in academia. This idea was Razorbill Instruments. It provides research tools to scientists and laboratories around the world. Alex was an RSE Enterprise Fellow, fully funded for one year to start the business. During this year he received training and mentorship.

He says that when starting a business there is a very varied set of aspects you have to think about – from finding customers, to making sure you have enough funding, to meeting people and networking. There is a lot of freedom, but if you haven't had any investment it can be tricky at times. Personally, he's found running a start-up can make it harder to do things like get a mortgage.

Alex's advice is "Be as critical as you can. How many people around the world are there who might benefit from your idea? How much would they pay? How viable is it really?" He suggests that entering business competitions is important – they help to hone your plan and give you access to training and a support network, as well as a chance to practice speaking about your idea.

In 2014, Alex and Jack were winners in the Idea Explosion competition and came third in the Converge Challenge competition.

Advice from St Andrews Alumni

by Hannah Lawrence

Being a postgraduate isn't always easy. And it shouldn't always be. But sometimes in those moments of trial, it can feel like we are treading water – working hard to go nowhere fast. But all great undertakings feel like this at one time or another. And we'd do better to acknowledge this rather than shun the thought – as if to avoid the thought makes it untrue.

Yet, in these moments, it is useful to be reminded that many have come before us and are living proof that our postgraduate experience at St Andrews is something that will go on to positively shape our lives and careers that lay before us. So, St Andrews alumni Dougal Dixon, Sheila Watson, and Micheal Berry have taken some time to briefly share some advice regarding their postgraduate experience for current St Andrews students.



Sheila Watson

Sheila Watson is a priest in the Church of England. Since graduating in Classics and undertaking a research degree, both at the University of St Andrews, she has gone on to hold religious office in a variety of capacities, usually as the first woman in each role. Significantly, following her post from 2002 to 2007 as the Archdeacon of Buckingham, she became the first woman to hold the position of Archdeacon of Canterbury and to enthrone the current Archbishop. Currently she is Preacher at Lincoln's Inn and a non-residentiary member of Chapter at St Paul's Cathedral.



“Having been brought up in a small Scottish town, coming to St Andrews as an undergraduate, with its red gowns, pier walks and all sorts and conditions of people opened my eyes to new opportunities and new ideas. Returning as a postgraduate, research on St Augustine taught me a great deal about Augustine, but it taught me even more about the need for patience and persistence; for believing that new slants or discoveries are possible; and for learning to communicate (my supervisor rightly called the style of a first draft 'constipated').

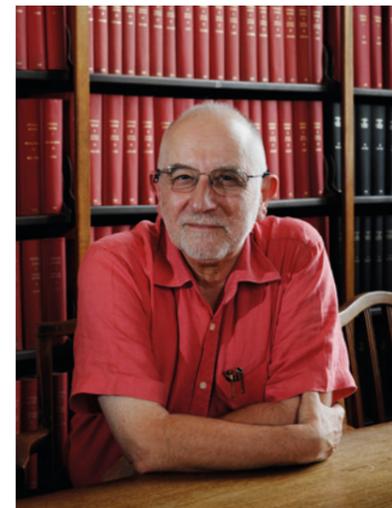
A life in the Church of England, and reaching one of its senior appointments, as in most organisations, has required patience, persistence, a belief that things can change and a touch of colour and imagination. All qualities which I learnt almost without realising it in St Andrews. Why were they needed? As Archdeacon of Canterbury in 2002 I was the first woman in the post. It had come from Wulfred in 798. Likewise when I take up my appointment as the Preacher at Lincoln's Inn, I will be the first woman to succeed John Donne. Breaking new ground in any area of life needs the qualities which research teaches.”



Dougal Dixon

Dougal Dixon is a palaeontologist, geologist, and author. Since graduating with his degree in geology and palaeontology from the University of St Andrews, he has made a name for himself in writing award-winning books about prehistoric life forms and speculative works on 'life forms of the future'. He is considered the father of the genre of speculative evolution.

“Do not underestimate the influence of chance. I graduated with BSc and MSc in Geology from St Andrews in the early '70s, but I had a background that was firmly artistic - and this proved to be a totally unemployable combination. However, after two years of wilderness and irrelevant jobs, I happened to see an encyclopaedia company advertising for an earth scientist for a visually based publishing project. The resulting position opened a whole career in science communication for me. Had I not been scanning the small ads in that newspaper that day...”



Sir Michael Berry

Sir Michael Berry is a mathematical physicist. Since graduating with his degree in Theoretical Physics from the University of St Andrews, Berry has found great success in advancing knowledge of the physics of waves. Significantly, he discovered a geometric phase in quantum physics, that has found many applications in different areas of science.

“Don't rush, but when your dream becomes clear, seize every opportunity to follow it! When I arrived in St Andrews in 1962 to start a PhD, I was attracted by theoretical physics but largely clueless about the associated technicalities and indeed research generally. My supervisor, Professor Bob Dingle, patiently inducted me into the mathematics of my chosen craft, in a way that pointed me in a tempting but not very well-defined direction. But a lecture in London, that I attended by chance during a family visit, ignited a passion: to combine the physics I heard there with the mathematics of Dingle. For more than half a century, this flame has sustained my research – quirky and eccentric at first, when I pursued it alone, but soon branching in many directions, still thriving, and the source of many rewards both public and private.”

<https://michaelberryphysics.wordpress.com>

CAPOD Development Opportunities

M skills

M-Skills, which stands for Masters' Skills, is an extra-curricular programme for all taught postgraduate (Masters) students at the University of St Andrews.

It brings together Masters students from all Schools and disciplines to help equip them with a range of useful skills and experiences for their year at St Andrews, and beyond!

PGT Mentoring

There are mentoring schemes running in Management, History and Computer Science to help incoming Masters students to network and ask questions of Masters students graduating in 2017 and 2018.

GRAD skills

GRADskills combines the expertise of St Andrews' own academic and support staff with that of external consultants and training professionals to provide a diverse and interesting programme of generic skills development opportunities, courses and events. We seek to include a broad range of inputs from sector bodies and national organisations such as Vitae, the flagship national training and development organisation for researchers.

Online training resources

We realise that you will not always be able to attend face-to-face workshops and events. For that reason, in order to give you access to development opportunities at a time and place that suit you, we have a range of online training courses and other resources available.

For more information:

www.st-andrews.ac.uk/capod/students/pgresearch/onlinetrainingresources

Postgraduate X-Change seminars

The X-Change seminars provide a great opportunity for postgraduate students from all Schools and at any year of study to present their work to an interdisciplinary audience. This is a fabulous chance to get used to public speaking and building your confidence for engaging with your peers. It is useful to consider how other people may think about your research.

Every seminar is followed by a free networking lunch from 1-2pm for all participants (including the audience).

For further information:

www.st-andrews.ac.uk/capod/students/pgresearch/gradskills/x-change

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What researchers say about GRADskills

All of it was very beneficial, very well structured and pertinent.

The presenter made the topic very interesting and relevant. Terrific!

Gets one thinking about one's career path and how to better prepare for that 'dream' job.

What last year's M-Skills students said...

I found the Kickstart Your Masters workshop to be a great introduction to Masters study. Some of the information was invaluable and I found some real gems of advice.

M-Skills has been very helpful in developing my writing skills ahead of my dissertation, and allowing me to meet students from outside of my area of study. I really recommend taking part in the programme.

GRADskills Innovation Grant and Postgraduate Conference Fund

The GRADskills Innovation Grant and Postgraduate Conference Fund are a means by which research postgraduate students are encouraged to think more creatively about ways in which their transferable skills development can be facilitated. This can either be via innovative projects to develop training resources or activities that can be made available to postgraduate students through the GRADskills programme or via organising a conference for other postgraduate students.

- Funding up to £2,000 is available for Innovation Grant projects.
- Matched funding of up to £1,000 is available to support postgraduate conferences.

Applications are invited from research postgraduate students and staff at the University of St Andrews for funding: www.st-andrews.ac.uk/capod/funding/innovation

Tips and experience

- If you are organising a conference / workshop, have an organising committee and work as a team; work should be delegated between committee members.
- Use colleagues with a range of skills and expertise. You will need to communicate, project manage and organise logistics.

- The committee will gain valuable skills and experience from planning and hosting the events. It will look good on a CV or resume!
- Early on you will need to fundraise and write a funding application.
- You will also need to advertise through various social media, ideas for this include hosting photo / logo competitions to peak interest. If used effectively social media will maximise awareness of the conference and therefore increase

attendance.

- Attendees appreciate an equal balance of male and female researchers for the guest speakers and workshop hosts.
- Presenting at a conference is a valuable experience.
- Talks and workshops help provide specialist knowledge and training on specific research techniques and analytical approaches.



MedMat: Encountering the Material Medieval Conference

The Research Skills Innovation Grant funded a postgraduate, early career and senior academic conference which encouraged out-of-the-box thinking about both research presentation techniques and about historical research matters. The two main goals of the event were to encourage a more diverse range of presentation techniques and to set up a landmark conference series on medieval materiality. The delegates participated in a variety of types of research presentation (read-out papers, 'stitch-and-bitch', virtual reality tours, interaction with material artifacts or with digital tools), and even some straight forward papers included some form of material handling (re-enactment

kit, 'pestilence powder' created using a medieval recipe, tablet-weaving). The delegates at the small conference came from the UK, Poland and Norway, and from academic, alt-academic and non-academic fields (re-enacting, museum, doctoral researchers, librarians).



Biophotonics North Conference

The Research Skills Innovation Grant helped fund a conference targeted at PhD students and early-career researchers working in the field of Biophotonics. It was specially designed for the target audience as a unique professional development opportunity. From 2-5 November 2016, the SPIE Student Chapter of the University of St Andrews hosted the Biophotonics North Conference (BPN)

in St Andrews. Following on efforts that spanned over months – from early March 2016 when the project began and through the summer when it blossomed and attracted support from various institutions and companies – the organising committee was happy to welcome some 50 people for this Early Career event. With keynote addresses before each of the 4 plenary sessions given by Professor Gail McConnell, Dr Lynn Paterson, Professor Malte Gather and Professor Mark Leake, the attendees enjoyed learning about the latest advances in the field of Biophotonics by leaders at early and advanced stages of their career. Delegates also had the great opportunity of presenting their work through talks, posters and countless discussions. As no event aimed at early career researchers can be good without professional, career and working advice, three workshops and two Q&A sessions were organised to facilitate conversations on topics such as gender balance, publishing in academic journals, or academic career scaffolding.

You can read all final project reports from the CAPOD webpage: www.st-andrews.ac.uk/capod



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St Andrews

Hannah Lawrence, editor of the 2017-18 PG magazine, would like to formally extend gratitude to all the magazine contributors who have been willing to share their experiences with the PG student body. Additionally, she sends thanks to Tamara Lawson for her support and guidance. Generally, Hannah is deeply thankful to all those involved in the development of this magazine who have put up with her incessant emails.

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Cover photograph Spencer Bentley.

Designed by Print & Design, University of St Andrews, September 2017.

The University of St Andrews is a charity registered in Scotland, No: SC013532.