

Keele
UNIVERSITY



FOREVER *Keele*

— Winter 2025/26 —

THIS IS KEELE



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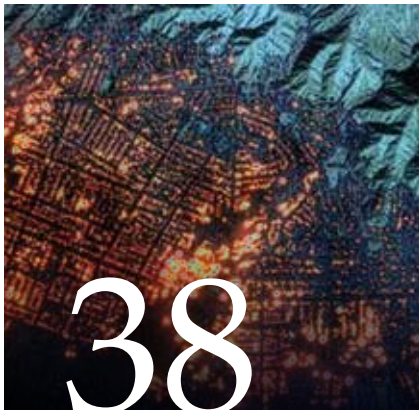
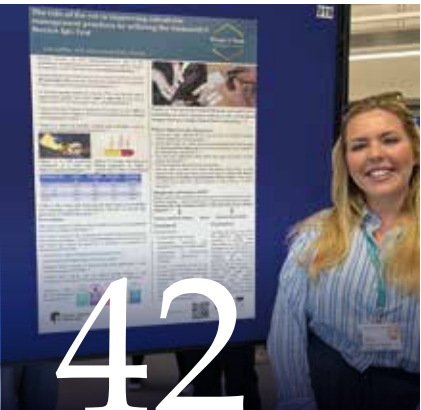
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KEELE NEWS AND UPDATES

Building the future Keele together

Professor Kevin Shakesheff, Vice-Chancellor

It has been just a few months since I joined Keele as Vice-Chancellor, and I could not have wished for a warmer welcome. From my first days on campus, I have been struck by the sense of purpose, openness, and pride that defines this University. Keele is a special place – one that brings people together from different disciplines, backgrounds, and perspectives to learn, think, and create in ways that genuinely change lives.

These early months have been both busy and inspiring. I have seen the best of Keele in our world-leading research, our dedication to students, and our deep-rooted commitment to community. Highlights have ranged from meeting students who speak passionately about their studies and their ambitions, to visiting research teams tackling some of society's most pressing challenges, to hearing from partners across the region who value Keele's role as a trusted civic anchor. Every encounter has reinforced my belief that Keele's strengths lie not just in what we do, but in how we do it – through collaboration, compassion, and curiosity.

Keele's founding ethos – to provide a broad-based, multidisciplinary education – feels more relevant today than ever. At a time when society and the workplace are changing rapidly, students need more than specialist knowledge. They need the confidence to think critically, the imagination to cross boundaries, and the resilience to adapt to new challenges. Keele's distinctive model of

education, rooted in breadth and integration, continues to equip our graduates with exactly those qualities. Our commitment is to ensure that every student leaves Keele not only well qualified, but also prepared to make a positive impact in their communities and in the wider world.

That commitment to students will remain at the heart of everything we do. It is seen in the care and attention given by our staff, in our strong record for student satisfaction, and in the culture of belonging that so many of you will remember from your own time here. As we look ahead, I want us to build on those foundations and strengthen the support, challenge, and opportunities we offer every Keele student – from innovative teaching and flexible learning pathways to an environment that nurtures wellbeing and ambition in equal measure.

I am now beginning work on a new University Strategy that will shape the next decade for Keele. My goal is for it to be **bold, distinctive, and true to who we are** – a strategy that celebrates Keele's interdisciplinary roots while setting out a confident vision for the future. It will highlight the ways in which we combine academic excellence with social purpose, and how we can make an even stronger contribution locally, nationally, and globally.

Our alumni and supporters will play a crucial role in shaping that future. Keele has always been a community built on connection – between disciplines, between ideas, and between people. The achievements of our alumni, across every sector and in every corner of the world, are a living reflection of the University's values. As we begin to develop our new strategy, I want to engage with our alumni network to hear your perspectives on what makes Keele distinctive and how we can make that distinctiveness even clearer in the years ahead.

I am enormously grateful for the many ways you continue to support Keele – through volunteering, mentoring, philanthropy, attending events, and staying connected through our newsletters and magazines.

Each of these acts, large or small, strengthens the community that makes Keele so special. Our alumni now span more than 160 countries, reflecting the diversity, creativity, and global outlook that define this University. Wherever you are in the world, you remain part of the Keele family.

Over the coming months, I hope to meet many more of you as we begin this exciting journey of renewal and ambition. Your ideas, experiences, and insights will be vital as we define what Keele should stand for in the next generation.

My commitment, as Vice-Chancellor, is to our students, staff, alumni, and partners: that we will build the future Keele together – a university that honours its founding vision of broad-based education, continues to put students first, and stands proudly as a place where ideas, people, and disciplines come together to make a difference.



KEELE NEWS AND UPDATES

Keele's first ever Giving Day

On 3 and 4 March 2026, we are asking alumni from around the world to come together to show support for the newly launched **Together Fund** as part of Keele's first ever Giving Day!

This 36-hour fundraising challenge will bring together the whole Keele community to celebrate and champion the **Together Fund**, which aims to:

- Provide an outstanding education for all, regardless of background;
- Deliver research with real-world impact;
- Enhance our beautiful campus to promote sustainability, wellbeing and community.

On these dates, you will be able to join us online and on social media where you'll find photos and videos from the day, opportunities to make a gift to support life at Keele, and challenges to help us unlock extra funding.

There are already a number of ways you can get involved before the Giving Day:

- **Please consider making a gift ahead of the day, so we're off to a flying start:** you can do this online (simply scan the QR code) or by returning the enclosed donation form during January and February 2026. Any donations received in this way will be displayed on our online Donor Wall as part of the Giving Day celebration. Whether it's £20, £200 or £2000, your gift will contribute to ensuring Keele is a place where every student has the opportunity to thrive.



together
we will

- **Set a challenge:** Your gifts are worth even more in the run-up to our Giving Day as they encourage others to give too. If you are interested in making a larger gift, e.g. £1000, you could encourage others to give too by setting an accompanying challenge. For example:

- "If 30 first-time donors make a gift to Keele's Together Fund, I'll give £1000"
- "If 20 alumni from the 1960s make a gift, I'll donate £2000"

If you are interested in creating a Giving Day challenge, please email the team on alumni.hq@keele.ac.uk.

- **Take part in our photo challenge:** We're asking all alumni to submit their favourite photo from their time at Keele, or their favourite written memory (less than 100 words) – simply email them to alumni.hq@keele.ac.uk. The competition is live from 1 January 2026. The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Kevin Shakesheff, will choose his favourite on the Giving Day and the winner will receive a Potteries-made Keele mug in the post.

- **Follow us on social media:** Search for the hashtag #KeeleGivingDay and track progress of the Giving Day over the 36 hours on 3-4 March! We'll be sending more emails than usual during this period so please ensure we have the best email address to reach you on.

However you choose to get involved, please join us – and Keele alumni across the globe – on 3 and 4 March for Keele's first ever Giving Day!

Give a *gift* today



Scan the QR code
to make a gift
keeleuniversity.givingday.co.uk



KEELE NEWS AND UPDATES

Keele Chapel celebrates 60th Anniversary of Royal dedication

Monday 1 December 2025 marked 60 years since the Chapel at Keele University was officially dedicated in the presence of the Royal Family – a proud milestone in the University's history.

With the campus blanketed in snow, the 1965 dedication ceremony drew hundreds of attendees, including Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother, her daughter and Keele's then Chancellor, Princess Margaret, and representatives from the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Church of England, and Free Churches. Before the service, Princess Margaret presented her mother – who had officially opened the University in 1951 – with an honorary Degree of Letters in a packed Walter Moberly Hall.

The Chapel was the first religious building in the country designed specifically for shared Christian worship, marking a landmark step toward greater unity among denominations. Before its construction, services were held in a temporary hut, though Keele's Founding Principal, Lord Lindsay, had always envisioned a permanent, multi-denominational chapel at the heart of campus.

Architect George Pace was appointed in 1958, guided by a 13-point statement developed by representatives from across Europe and the USA at the World Council of Churches. Construction began in 1959 and continued until 1965, funded by the generosity of thousands of donors. Early sketches imagined a sandstone building, but a gift from the Berry Hill Brick Company led to the Chapel's distinctive Staffordshire blue-brick design.

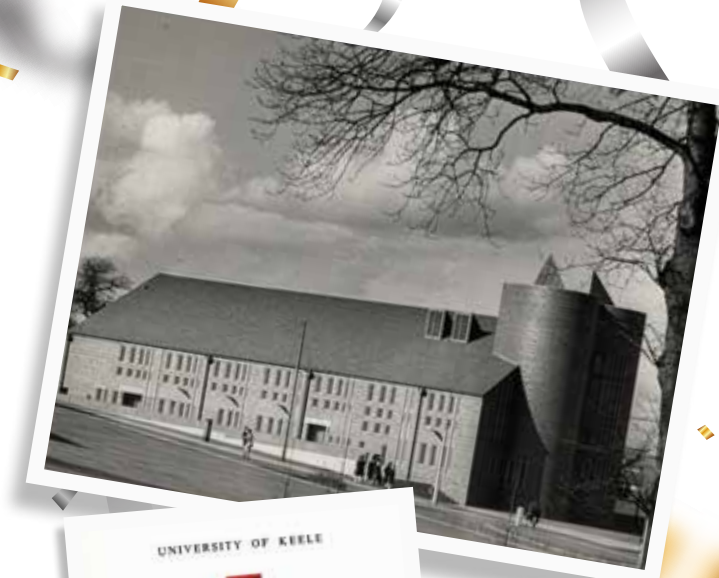
Stretching 136 feet and illuminated by more than 300 windows, the Chapel was built for shared worship, featuring a central altar open to all denominations. Two smaller side chapels – one for Roman Catholic services and one for Free Church Communion – were constructed at 45-degree angles, separated by a 6.5-tonne retractable soundproof screen that allowed simultaneous services, reflecting Keele's commitment to innovation and unity.



Credit: The Sentinel



The temporary hut where services were originally held



Now a Grade II Listed building (designated by English Heritage in 1998), the Chapel initially sparked mixed reactions – admired by some and criticised by others for its bold modernism.

The original cost estimate was £60,000 (just over £1 million today), raised through a major appeal that included £20,000 from the Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Free Churches, and nearly 2,000 smaller contributions from individuals, organisations, and local businesses. Rising costs and the need for furnishings eventually pushed the total to £111,000 (around £1.9 million today). At one point, the University even appealed directly to students' parents for support.

Historian John Kolbert later wrote that the Chapel “could never have been built had it not been for the strenuous efforts of the Principals and Appeal Committee, the support of all denominations, and the generosity of local industry and donors.”

Today, Keele Chapel remains a Local Ecumenical Partnership (L.E.P.), representing five major Christian denominations – Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, and United Reformed. It holds two services on Sundays, and the University has a full-time Chaplaincy team, including a Muslim Chaplain, who serve staff and students of all faiths and none.

Alongside being the venue for graduation ceremonies and musical concerts, the Chapel hosts multi-faith events such as the Langar and Grand Iftar, and serves as a space for worship, reflection, and community. It holds a small number of baptisms, weddings, and funerals each year.

“The Chapel is open all week as a peaceful place to pause,” said Lay Catholic Chaplain Niall Hammond.

“Students often come for quiet prayer, to light a candle, or simply to share tea and coffee – it's become a real home away from home for a lot of them.”

KEELE NEWS AND UPDATES

Breaking the Mould 2025

The winners of Keele University's Breaking the Mould awards have been revealed.

Around 200 guests attended the event in the University's Smart Innovation Hub, where awards were given out in more categories than ever before.

The awards shine a spotlight on the growing innovation-led organisations, businesses, not-for-profits and charities that have benefitted from the suite of innovative support programmes that are available from Keele University.

This year's awards were hosted by Keele alumna and College of Fellows member Manali Lukha, who works for ITV News and is head of the Millbank Studios in the heart of Westminster.

The winners include:

- **GivEnergy**, winners of the Sustainable Futures award, sponsored by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust;
- **Concentric Solutions**, winners of the Student Placement and Project Provider of the Year, sponsored by RSK;
- **Hollie Franks (More Than Just Design)**, winner of the Placement Student of the Year, sponsored by Concentric Solutions (highly commended – Ishraat Bhuiyan, Toyota Motor Engineering);
- **Biocomposites**, winners of the Partnership of the Year award, sponsored by British Business Bank.

Since launching in 2019, the awards have now recognised more than 100 businesses, organisations and individuals for their innovation, ingenuity and success, celebrating the creativity and collaborative spirit of the area's business community.



Scan the QR code for a full list of nominees and winners
keele.ac.uk/breakingthemould



KEELE NEWS AND UPDATES

The future Engineered

Keele University is expanding into Engineering with a suite of new degree programmes launching in September 2026.

The courses will include:

- Engineering
- Chemical Engineering
- Civil Engineering
- Electrical and Electronic Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering
- Mechatronic Engineering

Designed to equip students with practical skills and professional attributes, the new programmes reflect Keele's commitment to supporting regional strengths in manufacturing, green energy, and digital technology.

Professor Mark Ormerod OBE, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, said: "This milestone will attract students from across the UK and internationally, while driving research and innovation to grow the local economy and societal impact."

**Read more:**

keele.ac.uk/about/news/2025/october/engineering-courses/new-engineering-courses.php



RESEARCH

Researchers working with farming community to improve farmers' mental health

Keele researchers are working with farmers and healthcare professionals to improve mental health and resilience in farming communities – a sector facing one of its biggest crises.

Long hours, isolation, and financial pressures have contributed to rising stress, anxiety, and depression, with suicide rates alarmingly high.

A new study led by Professor Carolyn Chew-Graham and Dr Tamsin Fisher aims to identify existing support, barriers to help-seeking, and ways to make mental health care more accessible. The team is engaging farmers and rural healthcare workers to understand what help looks like for these communities and how to encourage appropriate support.

“Almost everyone we’ve spoken to knows someone affected by mental health conditions or suicide,” says Dr Fisher. “We want to find practical solutions that work for farmers.”

**Read more:**

keele.ac.uk/research/researchnews/2025/october/farming-community/mental-health-research.php



RESEARCH

Weather radar data reveals alarming declines in insect populations

A research team including Keele's Professor James Bell has made a breakthrough in monitoring insect populations using UK weather radar data.

Traditionally used for tracking storms, these radars now help scientists monitor the movements and numbers of flying insects such as bees, moths, and flies.

The study, published in *Global Change Biology*, analysed radar data from 2014-2021 and found that while daytime insect numbers remain stable or have increased in southern regions, nocturnal insects – especially moths – have declined, particularly in the north. Light pollution and intensive farming were linked to lower insect activity, while woodlands and urban areas showed higher abundance.

Professor Bell said the approach offers “an unprecedented opportunity” to understand insect biodiversity and inform conservation strategies.

**Read more:**

[keele.ac.uk/about/news/2025/october/
weather-radar-data/declining-insect-
populations.php](https://keele.ac.uk/about/news/2025/october/weather-radar-data/declining-insect-populations.php)



CAMPUS NEWS

Keele celebrates new European campus in Athens, Greece

Keele University has been granted a licence to open a new European campus in Athens, Greece – making Keele one of only four international universities authorised under new legislation.

The campus, supported by Metropolitan College, will deliver UK degrees from 2025 in state-of-the-art facilities featuring labs, innovation hubs, and collaborative spaces. Initial programmes include Bioengineering (Regenerative Medicine), Psychology with Neuroscience, English Language and Literature, Law, and Forensic Science with Policing.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Kevin Shakesheff said: “This milestone reflects our commitment to delivering world-class education beyond the UK and creating opportunities for students to thrive in a truly global learning environment.”

**Read more:**

keele.ac.uk/about/news/2025/september/european-campus/keele-university-greece.php



CAMPUS NEWS

First cohort of Nursing Associate apprentices begin studies

The first cohort of students has begun a new Nursing Associate apprenticeship delivered by Keele University and Telford College, following a landmark partnership with NHS partners to boost healthcare skills in Shropshire.

The programme, approved by the Nursing and Midwifery Council, combines practical training at Telford College's Clinical Skills Centre with expert-led sessions from Keele. Graduates can also complete an 18-month "top-up" to qualify as registered nurses.

Marie Doherty, Head of Nursing and Midwifery at Keele, said: "This programme reflects our shared commitment to expanding healthcare education and workforce development in Shropshire."

Keele University and Telford College are committed, in partnership, to developing the skills of local learners and to fulfilling the future needs of Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin's community

TELFORD COLLEGE Keele UNIVERSITY

Welcome to the healthcare suite

Working in partnership

TELFORD COLLEGE

Keele UNIVERSITY

NHS
Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin



Read more:

keele.ac.uk/about/news/2025/october/nursing-associates/first-cohort-begin-studies.php

ALUMNI STORIES

Inspired by Keele: a celebration of alumni art



“Keele Forever” linocut

Ruth Tillyard

**Biology & Geography,
Class of 1974; Geography,
Class of 1976**

“I decided to make this linocut, the first I have done for about 5 years, to take as gifts to 3 friends who came to Keele for a year over 50 years ago, on exchange

from the University of Michigan. I then gifted copies to my British “gang” of Keele friends when we assembled to dedicate a tree at the Keele Arboretum to one of our number. Thus, it is meant to depict what we think sums up our memories of the Keele campus and friendships past and present. I selected a variety of features as well as trees with personal significance and worked up the images into a design which I printed in a variety of colours.”

Clockwise from the top left: a lanterned gateway to Keele Hall – it and its lovely landscaped area beyond I didn’t discover (and meet up with the genial elderly Reverend Sneyd) until a postgraduate student; a generic flower to reflect the memorial tree arranged to be planted; the Staffordshire Knot from the University’s coat of arms, derived from the Sneyd coat of arms and, I discovered, an ancient symbol possibly going back to Celtic times; plums for the memorial tree we are about to dedicate; the Observatory with

someone using a telescope – I have to admit that I never went there as a student but some of my friends remember doing so; the Chapel – the first building I wanted to depict and still I think the best bit of campus architecture, the interior of which I remember chiefly for concerts by the resident Lindsay Quartet and a performance of Macbeth which used the pulpit for the three witches and their glowing cauldron; an “M” from the University of Michigan’s logo; a branch of Atlantic Cedar from the tree we planted for one of our gang in 2008 across the first lake from Keele Hall; the Forest of Light sculpture by Diane Maclean in the middle of campus which postdates our time at Keele but is now a significant feature of a visit; Square Forms sculpture by Barbara Hepworth in the Chancellor’s Building which we passed daily on our way to the wonderful daily Foundation Year lectures we were so privileged to have provided for us; the Library Clock – are you late for your 9am lecture?



David J Jeremy

**English & History,
Class of 1961**

**Professor Emeritus at
Manchester Metropolitan
University**

“In response to your request for copies of artwork made while a student at Keele, I offer a copy of about the only sketch I made at Keele. It shows the boiler house which was the view out of my window in 1960. As a work of art, it violates the simple rule that you should not split your painting into two halves. In my defence, I was recording what I could see out of my window.”

**Sue Smallwood
(née Vines)**

**American Studies & English,
Class of 1971**

“I have always been grateful for Keele’s holistic approach to education which gave us permission to be ourselves and to be whimsical as well as serious.

Herbert the dragon, like me, was a long-term resident of Hawthorns, although briefly stolen (or liberated like library books?) by the Lindsay lot.

So, on retiring to Somerset, a beautiful county steeped in mythology, I was delighted to find that the Somerset flag depicted another rampant dragon, inspiring me to indulge my (Potteries induced?) love of ceramic and sculpture.

His name isn’t Herbert, we are not on first name terms, but rather more long winded. I present for your perusal and edification ‘The Lesser Spotted Zummeretillian Gurt Worme’. Hope you approve, Herbert!”



**Find out more about Keele’s
mascot, Herbert the Dragon:**
[keele.ac.uk/thekeeleoralhistoryproject/
keelesdragonmascot](http://keele.ac.uk/thekeeleoralhistoryproject/keelesdragonmascot)



Professor Shaughn O'Brien

**Clinical Medicine,
Class of 2008**

**Professor Emeritus Obstetrics
& Gynaecology, Keele
University School of Medicine**

“Following my long and fulfilling career in academic and clinical medicine, I transitioned into the visual arts at the age of 70. Until retirement, I was Consultant in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Royal Stoke University Hospital and led Keele University’s academic department in the same specialty – both for three decades.



Challenges for Man: Life-size, in plaster of Paris. Awarded First Prize in 3D at the Medical Art Society Annual Exhibition, Royal Society of Medicine, 2022.

Shortly after my valedictory, I enrolled at the Heatherley School of Fine Art in London to undertake their Diploma in Figurative Sculpture. This marked the beginning of a new phase of creative practice, now based at my Oxfordshire studio, Studio@The OxBarn.

I exhibit reasonably regularly; this year at the Royal Society of Medicine, then Hampstead School of Art (both Medical Art Society Exhibitions) and Chelsea Arts Club.

The sculptures presented here span the period immediately before and just after retirement”.



Resolution: Bronze on Grindhill Stone, nearly life-size. Influenced in part by the work of Brancusi.

Further work and details can be found on Shaughn’s website:
shaughnobriensculpture.co.uk



Fragile Resilience: Jesmonite, 150cm including base. Winner of the 3D First Prize at the Medical Art Society Annual Exhibition, Royal Society of Medicine, 2024. Jesmonite, developed in Shropshire, is widely used in architectural and sculptural contexts. A bronze casting is planned, pending funding!



Equus en Pointe: Limited edition bronze (2/9) on granite. Inspired by Nic Fiddian Green’s monumental equine sculpture on Park Lane.



Mim Brigham (née Gray)

**Psychology & Biology,
Class of 1979**

“This is a piece of glass which was inspired by my time at Keele. Whilst studying Biology in 1975 I had to draw a cross section of a blade of Marram Grass. Many years later I returned to education with a degree at Arts University Plymouth to study Glass. I came across the picture whilst decluttering which inspired me. The piece shown was produced by initially pulling molten glass into canes which were subsequently cut and then fused into the design. My website is MBM-Glass and work has been exhibited in a number of different galleries”.



Meghan Kingsley- Walsh

**Economics & Mathematics,
Class of 2020**

“This is a piece of digital art I created to encompass a snapshot of my time at Keele. It now hangs in my kitchen”.

Joff Culverhouse

**Geography & Geology,
Class of 1968**

“I’m not sure if this qualifies on a number of counts. Firstly, it’s not my own work and secondly, like the portrait of the Duke of Wellington in Dr No’s lair, it was stolen! Having said that, it is an artwork and it is Keele-inspired, with a little help from the Sneyd Arms. Out with the lads after some refreshments one evening in 1964, I chanced upon this now iconic advert displayed at an Esso garage near Newcastle. It has been in my cellar for the best part of 60 years, never having seen the light of day for fear of an appearance at the local magistrates’ court. I am only now allowing it to be seen for the first time because, having just turned 80, I’m surely too old to go to jail!”



ALUMNI STORIES

Research by Keele alumnus improves outcomes for children with rare type of brain tumour

Groundbreaking research led by Keele graduate Dr Matt Clarke has transformed treatment for children with a rare and aggressive brain tumour in children. Thanks to his research, around 15-20 children each year across Europe can now access targeted therapy.

Dr Clarke, who studied Medicine at Keele and trained at Royal Stoke University Hospital, made the discovery during his PhD at the Institute of Cancer Research. His team found that high-grade gliomas in infants are biologically distinct, often driven by a single genetic change – one that can be treated with an existing drug. This breakthrough led to a new clinical trial and inclusion in the WHO classification of brain tumours, enabling clinicians worldwide to offer effective treatment and, in many cases, achieve cures.

Soon to become Clinician Scientist and Consultant Paediatric Neuropathologist at Great Ormond Street Hospital, Dr Clarke says: “Collaboration is vital for progress, and this achievement is the result of a global team effort. There is still much to do for others facing these devastating tumours.”

**Read more:**

keele.ac.uk/about/news/2025/november/keele-alumnus/brain-tumour-improved-outcomes.php





ALUMNI STORIES

Keele graduate scores dream role with professional football club

Just three months after tossing his graduation cap in the air at Keele University, Cade Leonard has already begun a dream career at a professional football club, where he is helping to boost the team's performance on the pitch.

Cade, aged 23, has taken up the position of First Team Strength and Conditioning Coach at Eastleigh FC, who compete in the National League, the fifth tier of the English football league system.

In his role, Cade is responsible for designing and delivering comprehensive strength and conditioning programmes aimed at boosting players' athletic performance and minimising injury risk. He works closely with the first-team squad and coaching staff to develop players' strength, speed, agility and endurance, while also leading warm-up sessions before training and on matchdays.

Alongside performance enhancement, Cade also plays a key role in overseeing injury prevention and rehabilitation strategies to keep players fit and match-ready throughout the season.

Cade, who graduated with a first-class honours degree in Rehabilitation and Exercise Science in July, said: "I remember in my first week at Keele, everybody was asked where they wanted to work after they graduated, and most people, me included, mentioned football. So, to be here now means I am literally working in my dream career, and I'm loving every minute of it."

Before he had even graduated, Cade secured an internship with the Hampshire-based club as a Sports Scientist for the 2025/26 season, following a successful interview. His professionalism and strong work ethic quickly made an impression, and when the previous First Team Strength and Conditioning Coach moved on to a new role, Cade was offered the opportunity to step up into the position.



"The club has been brilliant to me, and I'm so glad I accepted the internship," said Cade, who grew up near Blackburn.

"I'm still young and I feel like I'm learning so much every day, not just from working alongside the staff here but also the players. Some of them have played at Championship level before and they have so much experience, and I take in as much information as possible from them."

Cade admits he was initially uncertain about going to university, but now credits Keele – and his degree – with having a lasting impact on both his personal development, confidence and his career.

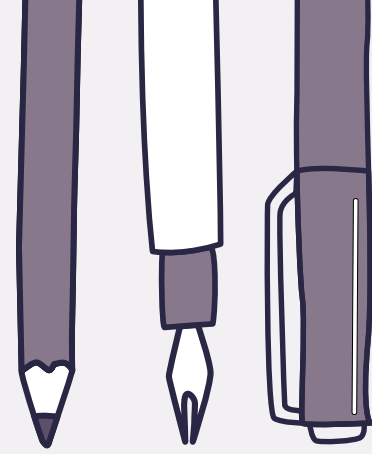
He said: "The University and course helped me gain knowledge, understanding and confidence to take the next step in my career. I was unsure about going to university at first, but now I'm so glad that I did and I wouldn't be where I am without it. I developed as a person at Keele, and the version of me who left was very different to the one who arrived."

"The course and lessons were always so engaging but the best thing was always the lecturers, who were so supportive and easy to talk to, and always on hand to help. It was a brilliant environment to be educated in, and what I learnt at Keele is essential to the job I'm doing now. The additional qualifications you can gain at Keele were also priceless, from my personal trainer and gym instructor qualifications to a Microsoft Office course – all of that has helped me massively."

"I'm incredibly grateful to the club and the staff for trusting me with this responsibility, and everybody at Keele who has played a part in my journey so far."



ALUMNI STORIES



Turning the page – Keele graduates and their published works

From time to time, alumni get in touch to let us know that they have become published authors. Sometimes the works are related to Keele, sometimes academic in content, and sometimes fiction to be read for entertainment... we have included some recent authors who have been in touch below. All books are available to buy online.

Our congratulations to all our published alumni!

Dave Lee

**Education & Mathematics,
Class of 1982**

About the author: This is Dave Lee's 14th book. He spent his four years at Keele watching gigs in The Ballroom, being editor of Concourse, and being the worst Ringroad performer ever. After getting his degree he later made a career of writing and put together The Keele Gigs Volume 1 in 2021. The book only covered his 4 years (1978-1982), so he was encouraged to produce the new Volume 2 to cover all of the 1960s & 1970s.

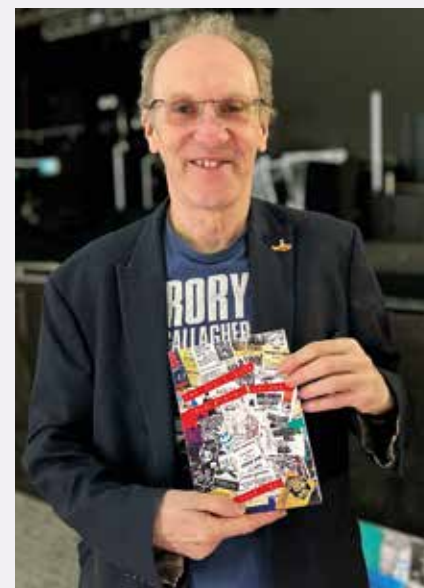
Thankfully he only lives around the corner from Keele, making it easy to access the archives. Now The Keele Gigs Volume 2 is published. It's got lots of pictures of "stuff" in it, and it weighs more than he thought it would. Loads of great stories, and a few surprises.

About the book: The Keele Gigs! (The Classic University Concerts Volume 2 – The 1960s/1970s)

Return to the days when: Pink Floyd, Dire Straits, Thin Lizzy, Julie Felix, The Buzzcocks, Fairport Convention, Jethro Tull, Simple Minds, Al Stewart, XTC, Cockney Rebel, Ultravox, The Moody Blues, Mott The Hoople, Annie Lennox, and circa 500 more, played Keele's Student

Union Ballroom stage in the 1960s/70s.

Available from the website www.impossibledreamers.co.uk or eBay.



Dr Robert Hume

**History & Psychology,
Class of 1978**

About the author: Born in 1955, Robert Hume grew up in Beckenham. At Keele he read History and Psychology, before researching the history of education for his M.A. and Ph.D. It was at Keele where he met his future wife, Anna.

In 1982 he began his teaching career at the Chaucer Technology School, Canterbury, before moving to Hillview School for Girls, Tonbridge. From 1988 to 2010 he was Head of History at Clarendon House Grammar School, Ramsgate where he was voted 'Kent Teacher of the Year', 1992. That December, he was invited to give lectures on Christopher Columbus and emigration on board the QE2.

For many years, he managed the school football teams and ran the Scrabble club which won the U.K. Schools' Scrabble competition in 1999, the first Scrabble tournament in the world to be broadcast live over the internet.

Retiring from teaching in 2010, he now writes features for the Southern Star, Irish Examiner and BBC History Magazine.

The inspiration for writing The Hidden Lives of Jack the Ripper's Victims, his thirteenth book, comes directly from his Year 9 students, who wanted to know more about the poor women killed by Jack the Ripper.

About the book: The Hidden Lives of Jack the Ripper's Victims

For nine weeks during autumn 1888, the Whitechapel Murderer brought terror to London's East End, slashing women's throats and disembowelling them. London's most famous serial killer has been pored over time and again, yet his victims have been sorely neglected, relegated to the simple label: prostitute.

The lives of Mary Ann Nichols, Annie Chapman, Elizabeth Stride, Catherine Eddowes and Mary Jane Kelly are rags-to-riches-to-rags tales of the most tragic kind. Ignored by the press and overlooked by historians, it is time their stories were told.

Published on 7 October, it made the top spot in Pen & Sword's bestsellers chart.



Stephen Anthony Brotherton

Gerontology, Class of 2001

About the author: Stephen graduated from Keele in 2002 with an MA in Gerontology before returning in 2015 to complete a couple of modules of an MA Creative Writing. It was this creative writing time that motivated him to write his first novel, 'Fractures, Dreams and Second Chances', published in 2021.

Since then, Stephen has had two short collections published and his second novel, 'Borrowed Time', was published in November 2025. Borrowed Time is the first book of a trilogy – the second book will be published in 2026.

Stephen was a social worker for over three decades and currently works for the NHS. His stories explore the nature of vulnerability – from birth to death and beyond. He lives in Shropshire with a schnoodle called River and is a long-standing member of the Bridgnorth Writers' Group.

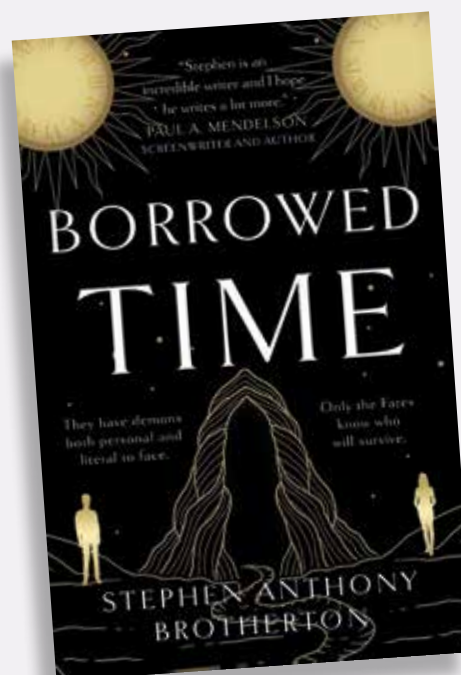
Brotherton turns to Greek Mythology for his latest gripping novel, exploring love, loss, and redemption.

About the book: Borrowed Time

Rico, Mary, and a gangster named Fats find themselves on the run beyond the veil of death, caught in a deadly game of power and revenge.

Their fates lie in the hands of Octavius and his embittered daughter, Livia, who can never forgive her father for gambling away her mother to the devil, Wrath.

As the game unfolds, long-buried questions surface – about destiny, fulfilment, and the true nature of the soul. With demons both personal and literal to face, only the Fates know who will survive.



Dr Sibani Roy

Ethics of Cancer and Palliative Care, Class of 2000

About the author: Dr Sibani Roy studied her MA at Keele in the Ethics of Cancer & Palliative Care. Originally from Calcutta, currently known as Kolkata, Sibani has now made North Wales her home, where she came as an international student, and fell in love with the place and people. She has also been the Mayor of Colwyn Bay. With the kind support of her local MP, she founded The Network for World's Awareness of Multicultural Integration. Her great regret is that, coming from Calcutta, she knew nothing about South Asian Indentureship when thousands of people were recruited as indenture labour and shipped from Calcutta port to sugar plantation fields of British colonial countries. She is now determined to learn and tell people the history of South Asian Indentureship, a dark side of British Indian administration.

About the book: The History of Indentureship and South Asian Slavery

Scattered throughout the remains of the British and French empires in Africa, Southeast Asia, the West Indies and the Pacific, are today found long-settled people of Indian origin. Most of them are descendants of Indian indentured labourers who were exported continually from India beginning in 1834 to meet the shortage of labour on European plantations caused by the abolition of slavery.

Altogether, some one million Indians were thus transplanted. Many did return to India; but, for the majority, the intended sojourn was transformed into permanent displacement. The life and struggle of these labourers in the colonies have bequeathed a legacy whose full implications have yet to be grasped.



Ros Kane

Politics & Applied Social Studies, Class of 1967

About the author: As a parent, grandmother and psychotherapist since leaving Keele in 1967, Ros has a longstanding fascination for how children are raised. At the play therapy charity Carefree Kids, it seemed obvious that many emotional problems could be prevented if every new parent had been well-prepared.

So, they started 'Before Becoming a Parent' charity (patrons include Sir Richard Bowlby, Sue Gerhardt and Dr Rowan Williams) and delivered a few courses in East London schools. They soon realised that by putting all their experience, and that of many others, in a book, anyone anywhere could be inspired to do the same.

About the book: Nothing More Important

Vol 1: Teaching parenthood in schools: Five centuries of heartfelt advocates.

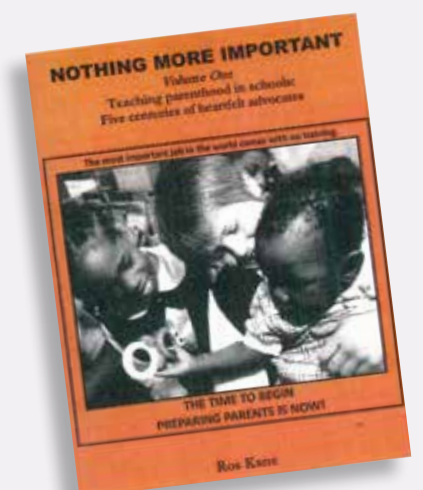
Vol 2: How to prepare children and young people at school to be good parents.

'I don't usually like working, do I, Miss? But I could have worked on that forever.' Student after parenting lesson.

This is the first publication worldwide to describe in depth and detail all the projects (known to Ros) which prepare, or have prepared, children from infant school to sixth form about the many realities of parenting, the emotional needs of babies, children, teenagers and parents, and how best to meet them. It argues that imaginative, experiential, memorable parenthood education needs to be a core curriculum subject in every school.

It also discusses the reasons for resistance to this idea, problems doing research, and what schools should be for. We hope it provides an invaluable guide for anyone working in schools, colleges or youth offender institutions.

The book is available from Ros: £10 for one, £15 for both volumes including postage. Send cheque to 15 Matcham Road, London E11 3LE. roskane@btinternet.com



Please note none of the authors or published works referenced within this article have been officially endorsed by Keele University.

ALUMNI STORIES

Celebrating our Rising Leaders

Vice-Chancellor Professor Kevin Shakesheff and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) Professor David Amigoni hosted a wonderful evening for some of Keele's Rising Leaders at the home of one of our valued partners, the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust.

Guests represented a range of degree and career journeys, showcasing the incredible diversity and impact of Keele alumni. Discussion focused on the power of collaboration and explored the ways in which our graduates can support our current students.

It was an evening full of inspiration and a powerful reflection of the amazing difference our alumni are making in the wider world. Here are some of the individuals whose impact was celebrated.



Joe Dance

Director, Strategic Ecologist, Savills (Biology & Psychology, Class of 2013)

Joe landed a job as an ecological consultant

straight out of Keele after a bit of good fortune volunteering with his eventual employer. Since then, Joe has progressed into more senior roles, culminating in managing a team of 50 staff. Joe is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management with over 11 years' experience in working in the environmental planning sector in relation to ecology.



Rachael Bose

Senior Associate, Browne Jacobson (Law, Class of 2014)

Rachael graduated from Keele University with a Law degree in 2014. She went on to complete an LLM in Medical Law and Bioethics at Lancaster University focussing on reproductive rights. She then qualified as a solicitor-advocate with higher rights of audience.

Rachael is now a Senior Associate at Browne Jacobson and has built a specialist career in maternity cases, with extensive experience working at the forefront of society's biggest issues defending high value, complex and high-profile maternity claims for NHS bodies. In addition to managing claims, she supports the NHS and its staff following devastating maternity incidents by advising on public inquiries and safety investigations. Working with NHS Resolution's Early Notification Team, she helps shape national learning from birth injuries and delivers training that drives safer maternity care across the NHS.



Nina Collins

Person-centred Counsellor (Psychology and Counselling, Class of 2023; Counselling and Psychotherapy, Class of 2025)

Before studying at Keele, Nina developed a keen interest in supporting individuals who experience mental health difficulties. Beginning her journey at Keele in 2019, Nina studied a foundation year which allowed her to progress on to an undergraduate degree in Psychology and Counselling. In September 2023, she was delighted to begin her MSC course in Counselling and Psychotherapy which allowed her to follow her dreams and qualify as a Person-centred Therapist.

Since qualifying in July this year, Nina has continued to volunteer for both of her placement organisations and plans to begin her private practice by early 2026.



Dr Alexandra Hay

National Teaching Fellow, Senior Lecturer and Programme Lead for BA Education, Manchester Metropolitan University (Education, Class of 2021)

Dr Alexandra Hay is a policy and educational sociologist and inspirational educator, with a Doctorate in Education from Keele awarded in 2021. Following a decade spent as a teacher and leader in a rural secondary school in Staffordshire in 2019 she moved to Manchester Metropolitan University as Senior Lecturer, becoming Programme lead for BA Education in 2022. In 2025 she was awarded the highly prestigious National Teaching Fellowship (NTF) in recognition of the reach, value and impact of her leadership work transforming undergraduate student outcomes. Only 55 NTFs are awarded nationally each year, making Alex's win highly impressive given the relatively short time she has worked in the HE sector. To find out more about Alex's work please visit: advance-he.ac.uk/ntfs/dr-alexandra-hay



Archie Davies

Senior Director (Digital, Data & Tech), Starcom (Marketing & Psychology, Class of 2021)

Archie Davies is a senior digital transformation leader with 15+ years' experience delivering data-driven marketing and CX strategies across paid media and owned channels. Specialised in identity-led activation, AI optimisation, and scalable digital solutions, driving growth and maturity for global brands in automotive, luxury, and FMCG through cross-functional teams and strategic delivery.



Frances Keenan

Planning Manager, Spitfire Homes (Geography, Class of 2015)

Frances is a Planning Manager for a housebuilder based in the West Midlands called Spitfire Homes. She was the National Young Planner of the Year (2024) and part of the West Midlands Young Planners Committee. Following her graduation from Keele in 2015, Frances worked in Recruitment for 2 ½ years before changing careers and taking a Graduate Planning Officer role with Rugby Borough Council (RBC) in 2018. Whilst working at RBC, she undertook a part-time master's degree at Birmingham City University in Planning Built Environments where she graduated in 2020. Frances later left RBC in 2022 and joined Carter Jonas as a Senior Planner before joining Spitfire Homes in August 2023.

You can read the full list of Rising Leader biographies here



Read more:

keele.ac.uk/about/alumni/alumni-events-and-reunions/past-events/rising-leaders-2025/

ALUMNI STORIES

A reunion of Keele Social Work alumni

Nick Hammond (Applied Social Studies & Sociology, Diploma in Applied Social Studies, and Certificate of Qualification in Social Work, Class of 1977) writes...

"At a 70th birthday party last year which included several Certificate of Social Work alumni who were at Keele 1973-77, the idea came for a reunion of our year. Of the 17 who completed the course, 10 were contacted with assistance of the Alumni Office, of which 12 (including two from the year above), planned to meet at St Albans."

"From the mandatory Foundation Year followed three intense years studying alongside placements in social work settings. Graduating with a BA in Social Studies & Sociology, a Diploma in Applied Social Studies, and a Certificate of Qualification in Social Work enabled us to work straight away. Strong friendships were formed due to the nature of the course plus campus life but, with jobs all over the country, managing work demands, and the usual family and personal changes, some friendships and contacts were lost."

"The opportunity to meet up to catch up at this stage in our lives and share our experiences was important."

With the interest of Alumni HQ, who also sent us Keele Forever Magazines and Keele pins, we also thought that this was an opportunity to recount and record some reflections. We were a distinctive group of alumni who, with a professional qualification on graduating, went straight into a variety of demanding roles – in Social Services, in Probation Service and in the voluntary sector. Between us, we have hundreds of years of knowledge and direct experience of some of the most challenging societal needs social work addresses. Meeting together has been an opportunity to reflect on both our personal and professional lives. Members provided some thoughts on 'paper', on what they would have liked to have known before starting a Social Work course, how good Keele was at preparing them for their careers, what job has given them most

satisfaction, what has changed in their respective fields since starting, and any advice for students entering the profession."

We've included a few of these thoughts here, but the full interviews can be found here:



keele.ac.uk/about/alumni/alumnicommunity/socialworkreflections

Nick said: "The reunion was most enjoyable. Challenging and rewarding careers were reviewed, and friendships were rekindled, with plans to meet up again at our Class' 50th Anniversary in 2027 at Keele."

What do you wish you had known before you started your social work training?

"An appreciation of how challenging and demanding a career in social work would be. Social work placements once we were at Keele provided the necessary reality check."

Nick Hammond

"The huge extent to which computerisation would transform being a social worker. How regularly I would work a 40+ hour week."

Roger Carruthers

How well did the Keele social work course prepare you for your first job and later career?

"In many respects I think that the combination of the course and placements equipped me fairly well for my first job. The emphasis on continued learning and supervision – and the fact that I received the latter to a high level in both placements and then in my first two posts – was a massive help. I count myself fortunate in this and recognise that not everyone's experience may be so positive. A career-long commitment to continued learning and to supporting less experienced colleagues through teaching and mentoring has stayed with me."

Shelagh Beckett

"In the seventies, there were only a few unis offering this integrated course. Keele was my first choice, and I never looked back. The course prepared me well for work as a generic local authority social worker, with work including child protection, mental health and adult care. Although in my first post I was not prepared for being 'on call' and being woken in the middle of the night by the police and taken to assess someone in custody! Key to this for me, was the breadth of placements completed on this course [...] The support and encouragement of Carole Holder, a course leader and Warden, at 'Thorns contributed significantly to my success."

Jean (née Blagden) Maddox

Which job or role during your working life has given you the most satisfaction?

"Consultancy and expert witness work – I have enjoyed the variety, rigour, challenge and potential to make a difference. Being asked to do witness work after both practitioner and management roles gave me a new opportunity to hone my skills in communicating with highly vulnerable children. Communicating with children is one aspect that I don't recall being addressed substantively during my training and arguably this work is still not accorded the priority it needs. My passion for working effectively with children also led, in part, to me becoming a consultant to many documentary programmes including BBC series such as Protecting our Children."

Shelagh Beckett

"Following graduation in 1977, I enjoyed a range of jobs and roles in different organisational settings in England and overseas. Took advantage of two great development opportunities, gaining a Postgrad Diploma in Business Research and MA in Change Management. In 2022, I retired from my final job as Head of Service in the Ministry of Defence. I'm continuing a level of activity in my dual-hatted voluntary role as a Fostering Panel Member and an Adoption Panel Member in the North East."

Sheila Owens-Cairns

Do you have any advice for people entering the profession?

"Do everything you can to get good support especially in the early stage of your career. Never be afraid to acknowledge what you don't know – an openness to learning formally and informally will make for a richer career. Making a difference does matter. Take good care of yourself."

Shelagh Beckett

"Understand and accept that while politicians will always change the criminal justice system, that you can make a difference and important contribution to society and the protection of the public. It remains a worthwhile career and certainly never boring."

Nick Hammond

"People have often said to me, 'it must be a very rewarding job'. Well, to be honest, you don't get many rewards, just small ones now and again, but it is very challenging and interesting and never boring. Despite often now working from home, keep strong boundaries so that work does not take over. Make sure you have plenty of rest and interests out of work and keep a good work/life balance. Take advantage of any training opportunities to progress and diversify."

Mary Lou Lang



ALUMNI STORIES

Story spotlight: wildfires

Keele alumni couple's home devastated in the California wildfires

Warren Skidmore (Astrophysics PhD, Class of 1998) and Isabelle (née Owen, American Studies & French, Class of 1999) met at Keele in 1997 and married in 2002, moving to California soon after, where Warren was working for the Thirty Meter Telescope project. They set down roots in Altadena, a suburb outside of Los Angeles nestled at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains, buying a home in 2005 and raising a family, 2 daughters – Hannah (born 2006), and Tessa (born 2008).

Their family life was upturned when, on 7 January 2025, they lost their home – along with over 6,000 other families – to the Eaton Fire, a wildfire that swept down from the mountains due to excessively strong winds, engulfing the town and being driven through the urban area because of the weather conditions.



The fire claimed the lives of 19 Altadena residents and destroyed more than 9,000 homes and businesses, making it the 5th deadliest and the 2nd most destructive wildfire in California history. More than 100,000 people in the area were evacuated. The fire came after more than 230 days with no rainfall, with lots of dry vegetation on the mountains. Altadena routinely sees high wind events in the winter months, called 'Santa Ana Winds', but not as strong as seen on January 7th. High winds and lots of dry vegetation led to an impossible situation. The cause of the ignition of the fire is still under investigation.

The family was alerted to the fire just after 6pm on the night of January 7th. Having lived through wildfires before, while they were cautious, they didn't think it was any different to what they had previously.

Warren said "Wildfires have become so commonplace that at times we've even sat on garden chairs on our patio and watched as the water-bombing fire planes drop Phos-Check on the fires before our very eyes. We've evacuated our home before, in 2009, with the Station Fire which burned 160,000 acres directly behind our home and the Bobcat Fire in 2020 that burned 116,000 acres. But this fire was different. This time the winds were blowing down from the mountains at 90+ mph, fanning the fire and pushing it into the town of Altadena.



"Initially the direction of the wind meant the fire was moving away from our house and our concerns were for our friends in neighbouring Sierra Madre. Evacuation orders were being given for areas to the east of us, but we decided to move to safety early and we were feeling confident that our home would be OK."

Having packed up important documents and a few changes of clothes, the family headed to Warren's office to shelter for the night. Soon the entire town of Altadena was under emergency evacuation, and hotels were filling up all the way to the coast, 40 miles away.

Warren continues "At 3am we received messages from our neighbours that law enforcement was clearing them from their homes, and they sent photos of the fire just tens of yards from the back of our neighbourhood. We spent a very restless night listening to updates and fearing the worst. Dozens of messages were being shared on social media by people, our friends and neighbours, evacuating through flames as their houses burned. Palm Trees were turning into Roman Candles – setting ablaze and then sending their burning palm fronds traveling through the air on 90mph winds, only to land and set new neighbourhoods on fire."

Around 7am, Warren tried to drive up into Altadena but turned around as all around was burning, high flames and smoke covered the area up to their house and burning ash was raining down.

Warren remembers "At 8am the next day, our fears were confirmed. Our neighbour had managed to get up to our neighbourhood and called us in tears after finding his own home and almost every home in the area was completely burned. Our home of 19 years, where we'd brought our daughters home from hospital, the only home they'd ever known, full of treasured memories, was gone.

"The devastation was absolute, no plastic or wood survived, all was reduced to ash. All glass; all aluminium was melted. Only broken concrete, bricks and distorted brown steel husks of the microwave, cooker and washing machine remained.





"We've been lucky. We've been able to find long-term rental accommodation not far away while we begin the lengthy and overwhelming process of rebuilding our home."

"The range of emotions is quite unexpected; rebuilding is uplifting of course, but even though the old house has gone, it is very sad to be covering over the ground where our happy home was for so many years."

"We have a few artifacts from the old house, some broken kitchen tiles, a few house bricks, and a couple of the old metal house numbers that we found in the ashes, so we'll make some items that remind us of our old happy home and bring them into the new house."

"And while we have experienced this terrible loss and turmoil, we have also experienced the power of community and felt the love of friends and strangers alike from near and far. Organisations have come together to help in any way that they can, from food drives and mattress giveaways to gym memberships and organisations to replace lost musical instruments. Our own neighbourhood community has found new strength despite being dispersed by the fire. It has been incredibly healing and everyone is supporting each other as we all face similar unknowns and problems."

Some months on, Altadena homes and businesses have almost completely been cleared by the Army Corps of Engineers, and people have started to submit their rebuilding plans. It's a slow process, but Altadena is moving forward, demonstrating its resilience and supporting the members of its diverse community."

Warren and Isabelle hope to move in during summer 2026.

Keele's Dr Sarah Taylor discusses fire ecology

Sarah L. Taylor, Lecturer in Ecology, Keele University

My first contact with fire ecology was during my Level 2 NVQ in Environmental Conservation, which I undertook at Newcastle-Under-Lyme college from 1994 to 1996. Our studies included practical days, some of which took place on the Keele estate. We were using fire as a conservation management tool in the battle to control rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*).

After cutting back the large shrubs, the brash was carefully burned to prevent it from setting root. I was always keen to volunteer for fire duty! One day I noticed smoke coming out of the ground about 10 metres away from the fire. The organic matter had burned underground, enabling it to slowly advance out of sight until the smoke found an exit point. That day I found out firsthand why you always have a bucket of water to hand!

I went on to study BSc (Hons) Biology and Geology at Keele University where I met Dr Peter Thomas who was running a project on the impact of prescribed fire management on the status of Prickle pear cactus (*Opuntia fragilis*) in the prairies of Peace River, Alberta, Canada. I was very lucky to gain funding to go out and be a part of this study in 1998, after I graduated.



I worked alongside Peter, and Prof Ross Wein at the University of Alberta. The ranchers were using fire to remove the cacti, but the survey showed that fire was encouraging it, demonstrating the importance of an evidence-based approach to conservation management. Fast forward a few years and these experiences were most useful in 2005 when I became a sessional lecturer at the University of New Brunswick Canada, covering my PhD supervisor's forest fire management module while he was on sabbatical. It showed me how firsthand knowledge gives a level of authenticity to content and how stories can be used to convey technical aspects in a more accessible way.

This ethos is embraced in the "Wildfires" lecture I give on the Year 2 module 'Current topics in biology' at Keele University. The module aims to critically discuss the breadth and depth of the biological challenges facing society. The lecture opens with a discussion on wildfire headlines in the news (Figure 1), before going on to review the history of wildfire and critically examining the potential drivers of record wildfires in recent years.

For this coming academic year, a follow-up tutorial coordinated by my colleague, Prof Toby Bruce, will hopefully include a live Q&A session with the Skidmore's, enabling our students to delve beyond the headlines even further.

Image below: A slide from my Wildfires lecture showing how the Los Angeles fires were represented in the news, alongside images captured by Keele alumni.



ALUMNI STORIES

Vet student celebrated as emerging leader within the veterinary industry

Leah Griffiths, a third-year student at Harper & Keele Veterinary School, has been recognised as one of the veterinary profession's rising stars in the 2025 Vet Show 30 Under Thirty initiative. The programme celebrates young professionals shaping the future of the industry.

Leah's passion for calf welfare has driven her career journey from veterinary nursing to farm practice and leadership roles, including serving as National President of the Farm Animal Veterinary Society. Her work has spanned research, outreach, and creating training plans to improve youngstock health and welfare, earning her a place among Wynnstay's Top 3 'National Calf Rearer of the Year' in 2024.

Reflecting on her achievement, Leah said: "I want to make a meaningful impact on the way British agriculture views calves and youngstock."

Professor Matt Jones, Head of Harper & Keele Veterinary School, added: "Leah's story shows the diversity of routes into the profession and the impact vets in training can have."

The VS30 Class of 2025 will be celebrated at the London Vet Show in November.


Read more:

harperkeele.vetschool.ac.uk/news/1270/vet-student-celebrated-as-emerging-leader-within-the-veterinary-industry



In memoriam

You can read the full tributes to all alumni remembered here on the 'in memory' web pages: keele.ac.uk/inmemory



Stan Beckensall

ENGLISH & HISTORY
& EDUCATION,
CLASS OF 1954

Stan Beckensall sadly passed away on 1 October 2025, aged 93, in Hexham, Northumberland. Part of the university's founding class of 1950-1954, Stan graduated with a First Class BA (Hons) in History, English and Education. He led a full and rich life as a dedicated family man, educationalist, historian, archaeologist, playwright and poet. After teaching stints in Sussex and Malta, he settled in Northumberland in 1966, where he developed strong interests in ancient rock art and place-names, publishing books about them in the 1970s and 1980s.



After retirement as Head Teacher of Rothbury Middle School, in 1989, Stan expanded his research interests. More books followed on ancient rock art and place-names, but he also included in his repertoire books on various aspects of Northumberland's archaeology, history and landscapes, Hexham, and poetry. In all, he published about 40 books. He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by Newcastle University in 2004 for his contribution to rock art studies and an MBE, in 2017, for a 'Lifetime of voluntary work of recording, safeguarding and sharing information on pre-historic rock-art and local history in Britain.'

He is survived by Jane, his wife of 69 years, four children, Sonia, Sylvia, Julian and Rachel, seven grandchildren and five great grandchildren. He was much loved and respected in Hexham and around Northumberland and is going to greatly missed by his family, friends and all who knew him.

Written by Dr Aron Mazel



Chris Oliver

CHRISTOPHER
BROOKES OLIVER

PHYSICS & MATHEMATICS,
CLASS OF 1957

15 November 1934 – 22 June 2025

Chris was born in Solihull and spent much of the first few years of his life in hospital, having been born with club feet. During the war, when bombing began on Coventry and Solihull, his mother took her three children to Ilfracombe, in Devon, where they stayed, until the aircraft factory in Solihull, where his father was working, was bombed. The family then spent the remaining years of the war in Yorkshire, where the aircraft factory moved to.



On their return to Solihull in 1945, Chris returned to primary school and went on to grammar school and then to the 'new' University at Keele, one of the fourth-year pioneers, intake in 1953.

Chris met his wife Marina in their first week at Keele University and married in 1958. They spent the next 70 years together, celebrating their 65th wedding anniversary in August 2023, a few weeks before Marina's death. Chris and one of his daughters, Cindy, attended the pioneer celebrations for the 75th anniversary of Keele in April 2024, which he enjoyed very much.



Vernon James Smith

MATHEMATICS & PHYSICS,
CLASS OF 1966

15 July 1944 – 12 August 2025

Vernon Smith grew up in in Southend-on-Sea. He attended Keele University from October 1962 to June 1966, graduating in Physics and Mathematics, along with a Diploma in Education. It was at Keele that he met his future wife, Carol Hancock and they were married at Keele Chapel on 27th July 1968.

Spending his career in education, Vernon taught Science at Adams Grammar School, Newport, Shropshire for 7 years, and Garibaldi Comprehensive School, Forest Town, Mansfield for 24 years. He retired early at the age of 53, after which he invested in property.

Vernon's Christian faith was central to his life, and he was deeply involved in community and faith-based initiatives, including being a Gideon, and the trustee of a Christian Bookshop. He was active in the Christian Union at both school and university.



James David Jones

MATHEMATICS & PHYSICS,
CLASS OF 1961

James David Jones, known as “David” or “Dave” (1939 – 2025) was born into a North Staffordshire mining family on 19 March 1939. He grew up in Little Chell, Stoke-on-Trent, which as luck would have it connected him to a bus route on High Lane where his future high school was located. David attended the Stanfield Technical High School, where in the 6th-form he excelled in Mathematics. He and two of his school classmates, from different Jones families, qualified to attend the then new Keele University (at the time University College of North Staffordshire) in 1957, each following different areas of science study.

David graduated with B.A. Honours in Mathematics and Physics in 1961 from the about to become University of Keele. Looking back, it seems amazing that staff members at Keele took such an interest in the futures of their students. In David’s case a maths professor from Keele accompanied by the Headmaster of the West Bromwich Grammar School visited David’s home for a meeting including David’s parents. Out of that meeting David was offered a maths teachers position at West Bromwich Grammar School, which he took up immediately following graduation.



Julian Comer

ENGLISH & FRENCH,
CLASS OF 1971

7 July 1947 – 16 August 2024

Julian Comer died peacefully on 16 August 2024. Though unwell for some time, nothing stopped him from engaging deeply with his world of books and music, keeping in touch with his Keele friends, and above all, remaining devoted to his family – enriching it in countless ways that were uniquely his.

Just before leaving Bristol Cathedral School, Julian attended a retreat at Lee Abbey with a group of young Christians. It affirmed his sense of belonging – to the world around him and to God – and led to a year’s VSO placement in Cameroon, teaching English at the French-speaking School of Lebamba. His memories of that time stayed forever vivid.

Julian’s years at Keele were among his most treasured memories. He lived first in the Hawthorns and later, in his final year, in the coveted ‘O’ Block. These years forged a life-long circle of friends, one of whom he married in 1973.



Timothy Doyle

EMERITUS PROFESSOR
OF POLITICS AND
INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS

Sadly, Timothy Doyle, Emeritus Professor of Politics and International Relations in the School of Social Sciences, passed away in Adelaide on Thursday 9th October 2025, after a long illness.

Tim was a prolific and internationally-recognised scholar in the study of international environmental political economy. He served as Professor of Politics and International Studies at the University of Adelaide in Australia. He was a Distinguished Research Fellow at the Australia-Asia-Pacific Institute (AAPi), Curtin University, Western Australia. Additionally, he was the former Chair of the Indian Ocean Rim Association Academic Group and the Chief Editor of the Journal of the Indian Ocean Region.

Hedley George Martin

PHILOSOPHY &
MATHEMATICS,
CLASS OF 1954

Hedley Martin passed away on July 16, 2024, at the age of 93. He will be remembered for his intellect, humour, and diverse passions that spanned academia, the workshop and the stage.

His love for the theatre began early at Keele University, where he was a driving force in the Drama Society, directing and acting in many productions. He often reminisced about his memorable turn as the comic Sir Andrew Aguecheek in Twelfth Night.

After Keele, his academic pursuits led him to Trinity College, Cambridge, for his doctorate. This time was paused for National Service in the Navy at Abbotsinch in Scotland, where he met his wife-to-be, Sheila Rutherford, a Wren at the time. They married in 1959.



Hedley Martin at Keele Lake.
Pictured left

If you would like to include a tribute to a loved one in a future edition, please get in touch:

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