

ISSUE 01

RISE

The meteoric ascent of

Craig Callum

LEGO® designer extraordinaire

Coventry
University



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Vice-Chancellor's welcome

I'm delighted to introduce your brand new alumni magazine Rise

Coventry alumni are talented, driven individuals who make things happen – in their communities, their professions, and in many cases on the world stage.

As a reader of this magazine, you will be among them. And so I'm proud that you've taken the time to reconnect with us in what I hope will be a life-long relationship.

A glance through Rise proves how many alumni are making a global impression in fields ranging from engineering to the arts. The successes featured here - such as Craig Callum, whose LEGO designs light up millions of young minds - are already inspiring the next generation of Coventry students.

That's why we need to hear from many more of you. Telling the story of your professional and personal journeys in this magazine and online, will help grow our community of former students, keep you connected and informed, and motivate those following your footsteps.

We want to keep you at the heart of Coventry life because your continued achievements represent everything Coventry University stands for.

That's why we have a new alumni team, dedicated to creating new ways to help you interact with the university and with each other, starting with this magazine, which complements our Facebook and Twitter pages.

A new alumni website is launching, which will feature the latest alumni and university news, profile features, events information and careers.

We will continue with our events and workshops, but the offering will be expanded. We already have plans in place for events next year in Hong Kong, Ghana, Nigeria, Dubai, Malaysia, Singapore and Oman, with more planned for the UK and the rest of Europe.

Keep an eye on the new alumni website and the alumni social media pages for more information about all of these events. We will also let you know about coming webinars and when you'll be able to view new videos featuring our alumni.

With this in mind we are looking for global ambassadors to work with us and our alumni community of over 170,000 former students who are based all over the world.

The programme aims to turn the Coventry University Alumni Association into a network that benefits alumni throughout their lives.

If you are interested in applying to become an Alumni Ambassador, or to get in touch about your story please email alumni-communications@coventry.ac.uk.



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Celebrating 175 years of Coventry University

Next year Coventry University will celebrate its 175th anniversary, with 2018 marking the founding of Coventry School of Design in 1843. We would like to invite you to join us in the festivities.

To mark this significant milestone, we have a year-long series of activities and events planned.

We will celebrate our strong connections with communities in Coventry, and across our network, by telling the story of how the University and city have grown together over nearly two centuries - and reveal the successes today which have come from it.

Throughout the year we will share how we are moving forward as a university and how we have developed to be a key institution in Coventry's growth and development – a city well-known for re-invention and innovation.

Our activities will highlight how the university has shaped Coventry and our region. In addition to marking 175 years in the city, we are celebrating the Faculty of Arts and Humanities' 50 years of teaching and exhibiting art and design in the Graham Sutherland building, and 50 years of teaching business at Coventry. Events will include exhibitions and a gala alumni dinner at Coventry Cathedral.

Stay in touch with us this year to see what's happening and how to get involved.

We are particularly interested in collecting your stories of your time here – whenever you studied with us - which we will include on social media and in Rise.

Please look out for 175 on our social media channels, or get in touch with us at **175celebrations@coventry.ac.uk** to join the celebrations.



Coventry School of Design opened.

Coventry School of Design became Coventry School of Art.

Coventry Institute established.

Singers F.C. formed.

Rover produced the first 'modern bicycle' – the Starley Safety Bicycle. Invented by John Kemp Starley, it was the first bicycle with equal-sized front and rear wheels.

Coventry Institute merged with the new Technical Institute. Coventry School of Art transferred science classes to the Technical Institute.



The first British motor car was made in Coventry by Daimler Motor Company Limited.

Singers F.C. changed their name to Coventry City F.C.

Coventry School of Art became Municipal School of Art and the Technical Institute was renamed Technical College.



The William Morris building started life as a factory and was named after the founder of the Morris car company who used this building as part of its engine production unit. It was converted for use by Coventry University and is now occupied by the Faculty of Business and Law.

Coventry Council House was officially opened by HRH the Duke of York – later to become King George VI.

Rugby College of Technology and Arts was established.

Most of the city centre and Coventry Cathedral were destroyed during World War II in a massive German bombing raid during the night of 14th November. The attack saw 568 people killed, 4,330 homes destroyed and 75% of factories damaged.



The Charles Ward building was constructed and is used mainly by the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences. The building was named after a university governor, who became vice chair of the board of governors in 1982.

The James Starley building was also constructed in the late 1950s. It is home to the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences and was named after the father of the bicycle industry.



Built in 1958 the Graham Sutherland building is used by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, predominantly for the design and visual art students. The building was named after the painter and print maker who created the tapestry Christ in Glory which hangs in Coventry Cathedral.

Lanchester College of Technology starts, to complement Technical College. Work is divided between Lanchester College of Technology and Rugby College of Engineering Technology.

The George Eliot building was constructed. It is used solely by the Faculty of Business and Law. George Eliot was the pen name of the novelist Mary Anne Evans, one of the leading writers of the Victorian era.

The new Coventry Cathedral opened next to and incorporating the ruins of the old cathedral.



The Alan Berry building was constructed and named after the director and chief executive for the West Midlands Engineering Employers Association.

1843

1852

1855

1883

1885

1888

1897

1898

1902

1910

1920

1929

1940

1950s

1950s

1959

1960

1962

1963



The Prior building was built in 1964. It is occupied by the Cambridge Education Group, who run their Foundation Campus from there. They offer University Pathway courses for foreign students who wish to gain entry to UK universities.

The Italian Job's car chase scene involving Minis was filmed in huge sewer pipes at Stoke Aldermoor in Coventry.

Monty Python performed live for the first time at Belgrade Theatre.



Lanchester Polytechnic established.

The Armstrong Siddeley building was constructed and named after the Coventry based engineering group that operated during the first half of the 20th Century. They were renowned for the design and build of cars, aero-engines and aircraft and were absorbed into Rolls-Royce in 1966.

The Sir John Laing building was built and named after the knighted British entrepreneur in the construction industry. The building is primarily used by the Faculty of Engineering, Environment and Computing.



The Jaguar building, sponsored by the Coventry based car manufacturer, was opened in the late 1970s. It is home to postgraduate students and researchers within the Centre for Business in Society (CBIS).

Named after the political journalist and Labour politician who represented Coventry from 1945-1974, the Richard Crossman building was built in 1971.

The building is used by the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences and includes a mock theatre ward and operating theatre.

Wolverhampton School of Occupational Therapy transferred to Coventry Polytechnic.

Chuck Berry's biggest-selling record Mr Ding-a-Ling was recorded live during the Lanchester Arts Festival at the Locarno Ballroom.

The Maurice Foss building was built and named after the former deputy director of Coventry Polytechnic, who is also one of the University's Honorary Life Fellows.

Coventry F.C. win the FA cup.

Lanchester Polytechnic becomes Coventry Polytechnic.



The Rugby site closed and was renamed as Coventry (Lanchester) Polytechnic.

The Sir William Lyons building was built and named after the co-founder of the Swallow Sidecar Company, which subsequently became Jaguar Cars Limited.

Coventry Business School established.

The Polytechnic becomes Coventry University.

Merger with Coventry and Warwickshire College of Nursing and Midwifery.

John Lennon's widow, Yoko Ono planted two Japanese trees in the Coventry Cathedral gardens.

The Bugatti building funded by the Bugatti Trust was built in 2002 and provides a valuable space for the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.



The Frederick Lanchester Library was completed and was named after the Coventry-based designer of the first British petrol-driven car.



Originally built in 1880, the Elen Terry building, a former cinema, underwent a major refurbishment in 2000 and is used by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, specifically for the performing arts, media and music students. The building was named after a leading Shakespearean actress.



The Hub, a modern, hi-tech building for students opened. Facilities include a doctors' surgery, a multi-cultural faith centre, employment services and the Student's Union offices.

Construction was completed on the student centre, which is home to some key student services as well as the International Office.



The £55m Engineering and Computing building was completed in 2012 and is used solely by the Faculty of Engineering, Environment and Computing. Facilities include a high precision wind-tunnel, a £3m high-performance engineering centre, a Harrier Jump Jet, three flight simulators and the UK's largest magnet.



The new Science and Health building opened. The building cost £59m and features state-of-the-art facilities including an ambulance, running track, Olympic-grade fitness equipment and professional standard laboratories.



The new Chancellor of Coventry University Margaret Casely-Hayford was appointed. She is the first female to hold this position.

1964 1968 1970s 1971 1971 1972 1978 1980 1987 1988 1990 1992 1996 2000 2001 2002 2005 2006 2011 2012 2017



Margaret Casely-Hayford
Coventry University Chancellor

I've met people who looked at a black person and could never trust that they would ever amount to anything, which is such an awful thing to experience on one hand. But on the other, it made me want to go out and prove them wrong.

"I'd describe myself quite simply as a feminist. That means I want to see equality for everybody. It's not just about women."

Margaret Casely-Hayford makes an instant impression when she arrives on campus to speak for the first time. She is Coventry University's newest Chancellor - the first woman to hold the role 20 years after she became the first black woman to make partner in a City law firm.

Her step into higher education is already causing stirs of excitement and her impressive background in entrepreneurship and education makes it a far cry from a tick-box for diversity. Her commitment and passion is quite simply, inspiring.

Margaret is chair of Action Aid UK, which strives to educate women and prevent child marriages in some of the world's poorest countries. She advises budding entrepreneurs from all backgrounds, is a trustee with the Radcliffe Trust for heritage arts and music projects, and is behind a diversity review for the Carnegie and Kate Greenaway literary awards.

She is former Black Business Person of the Year and a non-executive director of NHS England. She's also sat on the boards of the Young Vic theatre and Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital Charity.

Look behind it all and Margaret has years of experience in law, spending 20 years as legal partner at Dentons and eight years as legal director at John Lewis Partnership. Now retired from the profession she even co-manages a rap artist.

"It's important for young people to see different sorts of people coming into top and diverse roles and that gender and race don't need to be a barrier," she says.

"Of course it comes with a bit of a sadness that we have to celebrate my being the first anything. There's a long way to go but we are making huge strides."

Just a few weeks into the ambassadorial role and Margaret is wasting no time to show how clearly aligned her passion is with Coventry's vision. She has come from a meeting at Buckingham Palace to get young people into STEM (science,

technology, engineering, and maths) and is keen to hear how Coventry's new bursary to encourage men into healthcare will address under-representation from both sides.

She also wants to know more about the University's business links across the West Midlands and its growing impact of work-based training.

"Opportunity is everything", she says, "but the challenge is how to make sure those opportunities are there and to not underestimate the power of precedent. For everybody who gets an opportunity it means there are people willing to take a chance, and that is such a powerful message.

"I was given chances because people believed I was doing a good job and that I could add value. That is the essence of diversity, if you perceive a skills gap and there's someone who can fill it - it doesn't matter what colour their skin is or what gender they are."

Margaret's huge ambition, she agrees, is in no small part down to her family. Her grandfather worked as a barrister, politician and journalist, her father as an accountant, and her grandmother was a pioneer for women's education in West Africa at the turn of last century. In 2008, her generation of Casely-Hayfords were named the most influential black family in the UK.

Even as she talks about her work to encourage diversity on executive boards and entrepreneurial training in schools, her passion for transformation through higher education and its graduates is clear.

"It is so important to recognise the value of inspiring our young people and students," she says. "All those people who have graduated and gone on to be leaders in their field will help shape the future of education. They are our ambassadors every day.

"It all comes back to opportunity and unless we keep pushing for this diversity in opportunity, what good can we say we are doing as a world leader in education?"

Credit: Daniel Kennedy

Keeping things real

The writer and former performing arts student Paven Virk pulls no punches, as she sits down to talk to Rise.

"My storytelling started off raw and in your face - what you see is what you get."

This overwhelming honesty sums up Paven and is at the core of her writing, which often showcases the grittier side of life. She attributes this to her childhood in Stoke, a predominately black and Asian part of Coventry, where she and her family lived before her dad moved them to an area that had a "better school and better opportunities".

"We lived in Stoke, a deprived neighbourhood," she explains. "As kids we were always playing out in the streets meeting all sorts of different nationalities, but also being chased by skinheads to school. I remember living opposite a house where we'd see different women going in and out. That was my first encounter with a women's refuge.

"I remember knowing something wasn't quite right in that house and that they needed help and support. Later, when I wrote a play about a women's refuge, it took me back, and I realised the idea for the stories in the play had stemmed from much earlier on in my life."

Paven has been writing since she was in her teens, when she set up the Second Generation Theatre Company and co-produced two plays with Multi Arts Nation and the Belgrade Theatre.

"I was in youth theatre at the time and they were looking for plays for a studio festival. They were interested in one I'd written at drama school, but I needed to have a theatre company in order to produce it. Hence why I set up Second Generation."

She honed her craft at the Belgrade Youth Theatre Company in Coventry and the Sylvia Young Theatre School in London, which she attended during the summer and at weekends. Although looking back, she admits the two were poles apart in how they approached drama.

"The Belgrade Youth Theatre was full of dysfunctional kids trying to find a way of saying

something in life, and using drama as a tool. Sylvia Young was very much acting, dancing, singing, ready to perform, agent, money. It was showbiz. Both taught me different ways of belonging in the arts, but because of my roots it had to be the Belgrade Youth Theatre way. It's where I fitted in better."

She says this ability to express herself freely was a highlight of the performing arts course she undertook at Coventry.

"It was like a mini-fame school and I loved it. The main focus for me was on writing, acting and directing, but you got to try a bit of everything and were given the freedom to experiment. I took so much away from Coventry. You didn't have to be perfect at that place, you just had to be yourself."

Before focusing on writing, Paven was a working actor, appearing on stage and on television, but it was her role as Bubby in the 2002 film *Bend It Like Beckham*, which was her biggest success.

"The thing with *Bend It Like Beckham* is that it comes with the showbiz lifestyle," Paven explains. "I had to choose between living here and going to America. I had to question whether to become the artist who is recognised on the streets, or carry on storytelling and be less out there. At the end of the day, I wanted to write."

In 2009, Paven was offered a commission with the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry and at that point, she decided to get a writer's agent. It was not long before she was in writer rooms for television shows like Channel 4's *Skins* and *Ackley Bridge*, and working on screenplays, including a film she co-wrote with Kidulthood's Noel Clarke. She will write her first radio play this year for the BBC, and return to Coventry to write a short play as part of a Coventry Cathedral and Belgrade Theatre collaboration 'Meet Me In The Ruins'

Over the years, Paven's work has also appeared at Hampstead Theatre, Belgrade Theatre, the National Theatre and Tricycle

Theatre, to name a few. She was named as one of Screen International's Stars of Tomorrow. Her first feature film, *Punjabi Soul*, is due to start shooting later this year, with another, *Muslim Girls*, scheduled for next year, and her latest play *Save Our School Dinners...Jamie!* has been met with critical acclaim.

"It's about a group of dinner ladies from all over the world living in the Midlands who are trying to save the only school in their small community. I realised early on you can write about something authentic, which is meaningful and can also entertain."

Despite the success Paven is determined to stay true to her roots, and continues to deliver dialogue-led stories filled with characters who might not normally be heard.

When we met Paven she was collaborating with the Women and Theatre Company and working with a group of women who had all been victims of verbal or physical domestic abuse.

"I'm collating stories with these women to create a play. It's not their direct stories, but we're creating something around the experiences they've had. It'll be performed at the Midlands Art Centre and these women will perform in it.

"I want to continue doing my community work alongside my commercial work. It inspires me. I also need to give something back, I need to keep who I am as an artist.

"I think the richness in character of the area I grew up in and the struggles that people were having made me the writer I am today. I wouldn't want that to change.

"Both my parents were writers. I still work alongside my mother Jasvir Kang, an inspiring voice of her generation. My father was a political writer. My dad's view was never write for money, always write because you want and need to."



“I took so much away from Coventry. You didn’t have to be perfect at that place, you just had to be yourself.”

£59m spent on ground-breaking new Science and Health Building

The new Science and Health Building – which features state-of-the-art facilities including an ambulance, running track, Olympic-grade fitness equipment and professional standard laboratories – opened its doors to students this month.

It has been designed to ensure all the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences' practical and simulation facilities are under one roof for the first time.

Key to the development of the building has been giving students access to 'real world' health and life sciences environments so they receive the preparation they need for their future careers.

Students will be able to train to care for a patient at every stage of their medical experience: from paramedics arriving at their house, to their stay in hospital, through to their discharge and rehabilitation.

A mock operating theatre, high dependency unit, patient ward, consulting rooms, birthing suite and orthotics laboratory for trainee occupational therapists will replicate life in a real hospital.

Also incorporated into the five-storey building are two fully furnished terraced houses, where students will have access to the latest assistive technology and 3D virtual reality systems.

Sports scientists will have the opportunity to put theory into practice using a range of hi-tech equipment, such as an athletics track surrounded by cameras and a 3D motion capture system, as well as the fully equipped sports therapy clinic; open to staff, students and members of the public.

The new super lab, Lab+, is the first industry-grade education-based laboratory of its kind in the country and can host more than 250 students, including undergraduates, postgraduates and researchers.

The building will also play a role for the wider community, hosting seminars and events.

And it is hoped its lasting legacy will be the impact on the students trained within it when they go on to be the next generation of health and life science professionals.



Archive of a 'genius' unveiled

Celebrating the life and works of Britain's own Leonardo da Vinci, the Lanchester Interactive Archive opened its doors for the first time earlier this year.

Work on the archive, which has been established to preserve and disseminate the heritage and astonishing achievements of Dr Frederick Lanchester (1868-1946), began four years ago.

Helped by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) with a grant of £466,600, the Lanchester Interactive Archive, which is open to the public, will engage people with heritage through the physical archives as well as a truly digital platform, bringing the story to life with augmented reality and games.

Speaking at the official opening Alan Taylor from the HLF said the archive was the heritage of a genius.

"Frederick Lanchester was a polymath, his life is worth commemorating," he said. "This is not just about history, it's about his ideas that work with current applications. The project has excited us and it's a project we're delighted to have supported."

Coventry University Library is home to The Lanchester Collection, the biggest source of Frederick Lanchester information in the world. This collection features Frederick Lanchester's work in notebooks, photographs, blueprints, patents and correspondence.

Students join support team at World Transplant Games

Coventry sports therapy students travelled to Malaga to support Team GB going for gold at the World Transplant Games in June.

The final year students, researchers and staff members from Coventry University formed part of the medical team supporting athletes from Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The Games take place every two years for competitors aged from four to 80 years old who have undergone some form of transplant including heart, lung, kidney, pancreas, liver and bone marrow. The medical team were on hand to offer sports massages, strength and conditioning advice, and a range of tailored exercise support to help athletes get through an intense week of competition

Mental Health First Aid

A project training students in Mental Health First Aid is being rolled out across all healthcare courses at Coventry University.

The scheme provides people with the ability to spot the vital warning signs of mental health issues and help steer the person towards the right support.

About 300 nursing students were given the training as part of a pilot programme which launched two years ago to ensure all nurses fully understand the subject of mental health and emotional well-being.

Now Coventry University is leading the way in Mental Health First Aid training by offering the course to students on all healthcare disciplines, including occupational therapy, paramedic science, and dietetics.

It is part of the University's drive to raise awareness of mental health issues, which has also seen 200 academic personal tutors and professional services staff undergo the training.



Coventry University ranked second in national league table for student nursing placements

Coventry University has come second in a national league table showing students' satisfaction with their nursing placements.

The table is based on new analysis of the National Student Survey by the Nursing Times which asked students if they agreed with six statements about their placements.

These included if they had received sufficient preparatory information, been allocated a suitable placement for their course, and had received appropriate supervision.

The survey also asked if students felt their contribution to the clinical team during placements was valued, if their mentor understood how their experience was related to wider requirements of their course and if they felt they had opportunities to meet practice learning outcomes.

Responses from Coventry University students scored an average of 95.8 per cent and ranged between 93 per cent and 97 per cent.

Professor Guy Daly, executive dean for the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, said: "We are proud to be investing in placements for our students to prepare them to become the healthcare workers and leaders of the future and to help overcome these difficulties.

"Placements are a vital core element of our nursing courses, and we work hard to ensure that our students get the best out of them."



Revolutionising vehicle manufacturing

A collaborative faculty project between Engineering, Environment and Computing, and Arts and Humanities to design and create a two-seater sports car with commercial potential – Sparrowhawk - could revolutionise the way vehicles are manufactured.

The industrial project, which is the brainchild of Mike Dickison, associate dean, enterprise and commercial at Coventry University's engineering faculty, set students the task of creating a road-worthy vehicle which meets both performance and legal requirements.

Designed from the bottom up, the new car platform will dramatically reduce the initial outlay required for niche vehicle production, enabling cars to be developed at a fraction of their current cost.

Mike explained: "With electronic and autonomous vehicles set to play a key role in the UK's industrial strategy, our Sparrowhawk concept is ideally placed to help niche original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) lower production costs.

"While Sparrowhawk began life as a project that was designed to encourage cross-discipline teamwork as well as the importance of cost control, it's been so successful that we're now looking to commercialise the idea."

Over 50 engineers have worked on the car and around 70 student projects have been completed around various aspects of the Sparrowhawk challenge. The car is expected to be on the track in around two years.



Creating a connected, intelligent transport environment

Experts from Coventry University's Centre for Mobility and Transport are working on a £7m government-backed project which will establish how new advances in technology can improve journeys, reduce traffic congestion and provide in-vehicle entertainment and safety services through better connectivity.

The University's efforts are focusing on one of the most complex factors associated with advances in automotive technology - human behaviour and how we interact with this new equipment.

Making use of the centre's state-of-the-art driving simulator, researchers are investigating the impact of connected vehicle technology on drivers' behaviour, the infrastructure capacity of such technology, safety implications and cybersecurity issues.

With trials also taking place in real-life conditions on public roads, the work will accelerate and refine the development of connected and intelligent automotive technology, helping to pave the way for the widespread introduction of autonomous vehicles in the UK.

YuMi Robot unleashed at AME

The latest robotic technology is being used at the Institute for Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering (AME) after a £50,000 investment in a robotic co-worker.

Graduate engineers at the Institute for AME have been working alongside YuMi, a small parts assembly robot, and are amongst the first in the UK to be trained in the technology.

The UK's first 'Faculty on the Factory Floor' is a joint collaboration between Unipart Manufacturing and Coventry University.

"YuMi is a vision of the future and has the potential to change the way we think about assembly automation," said Andy Hind, AME manager.

"It's fantastic that we are one of the first organisations in the UK to implement it in our course and the wider Unipart Manufacturing operation.

"It is one of the most advanced collaborative robots on the market, offering dual arm, flexible hands, camera based part location and state-of-the-art robot control."

Each of the engineers will receive over 25 hours of training, as well as participating in real life research and development projects, including teaching the robot to complete lightweight assembly work for electronics and automotive components.

50 years of law celebrated at Coventry

Alumni and staff from Coventry Law School came together last October to celebrate 50 years since the first law degrees were handed out at Coventry University.

The event, which welcomed over 130 alumni and staff members and included a dinner at Coombe Abbey, was described as “a huge success” by head of Coventry Law School Dr Stephen Foster.

“We were delighted to welcome back so many former students and staff to see how Coventry has evolved,” said Dr Foster.

“A great deal has changed since 1966, and indeed since I arrived in 1977.

“Since that time we have become Coventry University, witnessed fundamental changes to our legal system, our law and legal technology, and have seen a massive shift in the demographic of our students and the way law degrees are delivered.

“But one thing that has not changed is how we pride ourselves on teaching and our ability to educate our students in the essential skills of learning and applying the law.

“I hope that the next 50 years at the Law School are as rewarding and exciting as these have been.”

Lord Mayor appointed

Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Business and Law, Tony Skipper has become Coventry City Council’s Lord Mayor.

The Coventry University lecturer and city councillor said: “I’ve always enjoyed serving the people of Coventry and the council all these years. However I am really looking forward to serving the city in a different way.”

Finance student reaches final award stage

Finance and investment student Alexander Johnston reached the final stage in the Chartered Institute for Securities & Investment (CISI) Educational Trust awards and won £1,000.

The awards celebrate excellence amongst undergraduate and postgraduate level students and recipients are selected based on university projects or examinations.

As part of the process, Alexander spent a day at the Educational Trust, where he was interviewed by members of the trust and also met several prominent people working in the financial sector.

Mooting success for Coventry

Success at the inaugural Lanchester Rose Mooting Competition between Coventry Law School and the University of Reading in March went to Coventry.

Jean Pierre Jauffrineau and Wendy Barnes from Coventry University faced George Skinner and Mohammed Shabbir from Reading in Coventry's purpose built moot court. They were challenged to address a moot problem based on an appeal to the Supreme Court.

Judges from Temple Row Chambers, Senate House Chambers and Wright Hassall Solicitors deemed Jean Pierre and Wendy worthy winners and the Lanchester Rose trophy was presented to them by the head of Coventry Law School, Steve Foster.

Back to school

A former law and international studies student has returned to teach at Coventry University 16 years after he graduated.

Professor Dr Umut Turksen followed his Coventry degree with an LLM in International Law and a PhD at the University of the West of England, Bristol (UWE).

"I worked at UWE for 13 years and became an Associate Professor there," he told Rise.

"In January 2016 I accepted a chair at Kingston University, London and subsequently joined Coventry as a professor in April 2017."



Bear-illiant art

Since leaving his full time job earlier this year to become a freelance creative designer, artist and content creator Amrit Singh (aka MrASingh) has been in high demand.

Alongside becoming a social media phenomenon - he is currently one of the top live streamers in the UK on Periscope - the former graphic design student has also come to prominence for his collection of hand drawn intricate ink art, under which he has founded the brand InkANIMA.

One of his projects that recently came to a close was The Big Sleuth, an initiative launched by Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity and Wild in Art. So called because 'sleuth' is the name of a group of bears, this has been the region's largest ever free public art trail. It featured over 100 bear sculptures in Birmingham's streets, museums and parks, which were covered in creative designs using an array of colours, textures and ideas from a number of celebrities and artists.

"After looking at the Big Hoot two years ago, which featured owls, I definitely wanted to be part of it this year," said Amrit. "Every artist was given three months to complete their bear, I gave myself seven days to get it done and documented the whole process through photos and video content."

The Big Sleuth auction held in October at Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum, saw all 91 bears auctioned off and raised £257,300 for Birmingham Children's Hospital charity.

Amrit, who is also the founder of NowHumanity, an initiative that uses social media to highlight humanitarian issues around the world, was recently recognised for his outstanding work when he won Birmingham's Future Face of Art and Culture award.

The awards, organised by Future Faces - the young professional's arm of Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce - recognise individuals aged 35 and under across seven different categories.

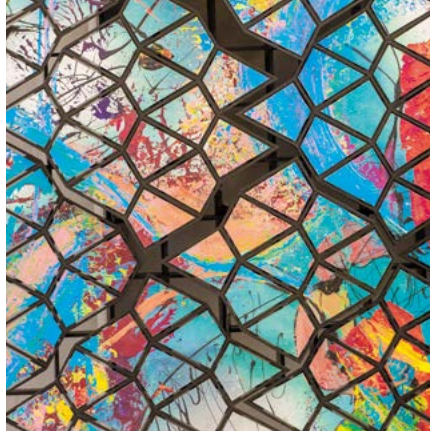
Theatre students' award-winning Shakespeare project

Coventry University students have been performing Shakespeare alongside Finnish students 1,129 miles away using a specially designed, wall size 'Shakespeare portal'.

This allows students from Coventry and the University of Tampere to share a virtual rehearsal space. They can make eye contact and see and speak with their fellow performers with virtually no delays.

First tested through the Coriolanus Online project, the immersive rehearsal room uses a mix of stage and video conferencing technologies mirrored on both sides of the North Sea. The pioneering technology has already made an impact and was a recipient of an international Reimagine Education Award in December.

The project continued in February and March this year with the groups of students working together in online rehearsals before the Coventry University students flew out to Finland to stage a version of King Lear using a repurposed Elizabethan stage.



Outstanding creative talent highlighted at Degree Shows

Students from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities spent a busy summer showcasing their work as part of this year's Degree Shows.

The annual event celebrates and exhibits the original work of the latest crop of creative talent over several weeks at various venues in Coventry and beyond.

Final year undergraduates in visual arts, design, music, fashion, dance, drama, media, production and photography showcased their work to the public and potential employers at an industry night, and to family and friends at an event celebrating their achievements.

This year's programme featured 16 exhibitions and 12 theatre

productions as well as all-new displays from the University's humanities departments. These included film documentaries from history and sociology students who were taking part in the Degree Shows for the first time.

After exhibitions in venues including Coventry's creative quarter, FarGo Village, a selection of the Coventry shows were then packed up and taken to London to exhibit at prominent graduate art and design exhibitions.

Fashion students had their final collections on the catwalk at Free Range in the Old Truman Brewery and students from automotive and transport design, fine art and illustration, illustration and animation, illustration and graphics, interior design and product design had stands at New Designers Part 2.



Interested in being part of the 2018 Coventry Degree Shows? Contact marketing.fah@coventry.ac.uk for further information.

“In effect I am a mercenary. I am a hired gun.”



Honorary graduate

Courtenay Griffiths

For nearly 40 years, Courtenay Griffiths QC has worked as a barrister across a number of high profile cases and has been described by the BBC World Service as “one of the most influential people in British law”.

Specialising in criminal defence work, he has been involved in cases that have made national news headlines. These include the first murder trial examining the case of Damilola Taylor, the ten year old killed in Peckham in 2000 and the trial of those behind the Brighton hotel bombing at the Conservative Party conference in 1984.

Despite his position and the path he took to get there (Bablake School, followed by the London School of Economics to study law), it would, perhaps, surprise many people to learn that he does not advocate studying law straight out of school. He goes so far as to say if he'd known any better he would never have studied the subject at university.

“Personally, I don't think that law needs to be a three year degree course. For me, if I was setting up a route for legal qualification I'd have students do something else as an undergraduate degree, and then do the law degree in one or two years,” he explains.

“As a barrister, and having done this job for almost 40 years, the skills you require in court are not necessarily legal. When you're cross examining a witness for example the skills are ones which you learn on the job.”

So what are the skills you need in order to gain the outstanding reputation he has over his prominent career?

“When someone you've never seen before comes into the witness box, and all you've got is a statement in black and white on a page, you need to be a psychologist, you need to be a psychiatrist, you need to be a sociologist. You need to know what the contemporary issues are that people are concerned with. Those are the skills you need in that environment. The law is the least important weapon in your armoury.

“I would encourage all students to do a subject at undergraduate level which they enjoy, rather than thinking about a profession, then make the decision that you want to do law.”

Courtenay says his saving grace at the London School of Economics, which is where he studied law, was that he was good at taking exams. That combined with expectations from his parents and family stopped him from dropping out. “I did a law degree because I didn't know any better. I found it exceedingly boring. I always knew what I wanted to do as a lawyer and the area I wanted to be in though, so once I completed the degree and started practicing it was well worth it.”

With such interest from the media and the public over the cases he deals with, Courtenay is only too aware of the scrutiny he falls under. So how exactly does he prepare for a case which he knows will draw huge media attention?

“The first thing is to appreciate you're going to be under a lot of scrutiny. You can't afford to make any mistakes. You've got to be on top of your papers and thoroughly prepared before you step into court.”

“It's also important to anticipate how you and your client are going to be perceived in the media.”

And does this bother him?

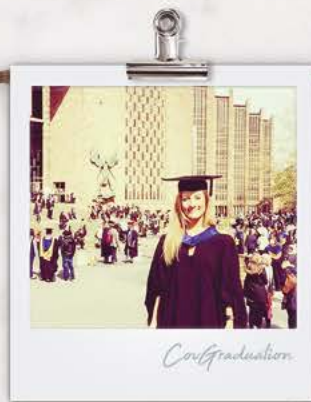
“No it doesn't bother me. My first priority frankly is doing the best job I can in the courtroom. And although I've got one eye on how the trial might be perceived in the media, that is not my preoccupation. My preoccupation is what is going on in court; that comes first and foremost.

“Even in the most notorious cases that I've done, my view is I'm not there to judge the morality or indeed the criminality or guilt of my client. That's not my job, that's the jury's job. I'm there to present a case. In effect I am a mercenary, I am a hired gun. That's what I'm there to do.

“My conscience is not engaged in any way and I approach the case with total detachment. One of the things you learn with experience is to avoid getting involved emotionally with your client.”

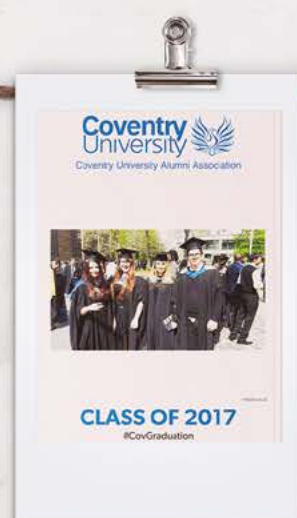
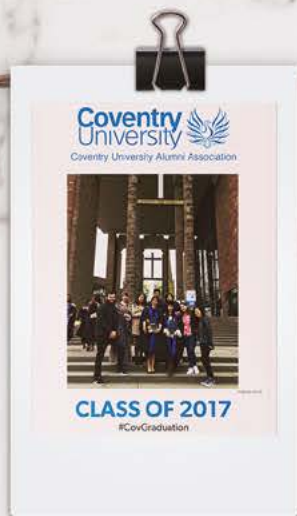
Although he knows what he wants to do when he retires, painting, turning some of the cases he's worked on into a novel and watching a little more cricket, he's not planning on stopping what he's doing for the foreseeable future.

“As long as my brain remains alert, and I still enjoy the job, which I do, I'll go on for as long as I can.”



Graduation snapshots

April 2017







Mr LEGO®

Craig Callum

Rise headed to Denmark to chat with one of the design stars at LEGO® about Speed Champions, old cars and dream jobs

"It's a place most kids love hanging out because it's colourful, friendly and full of toys." So media relations manager Jan Christensen tells us shortly after we arrive at LEGO HQ in Billund, Denmark.

Normally, when you visit the headquarters of one of the world's best-known brands, you expect to be given what's commonly known as the "corporate pep talk". This normally takes the form of a series of "dos" and (mostly) "don'ts".

But as Rise prepares to meet design manager and Coventry graduate Craig Callum at the main LEGO offices, we can't help but notice how friendly everyone is.

"I've been nine years at LEGO," continues Jan. "Looking at statistics, if you've been here more than four years you're likely not to get out. It sounds like a sentence, doesn't it?"

"The last work day before Christmas, we bring our kids to work," Jan continues. "When I started, my youngest was two years old, but he still wants to come here. Even my 16 year old daughter does. They find it very cosy; that's the type of place you have here. It's family friendly, and we make things for kids."

"There's a lot of values around the fact that people working should also have time to go home and be parents. How can we make great products for kids if we're not living those values ourselves?"

Jan signs off with: "Okay, that's the corporate bit done. Enjoy your day."



That was the corporate bit? We hadn't even realised we were being given the official line. Whilst listening to, probably, the loveliest corporate communications spiel ever, Craig has brought 24 Speed Champions vehicles into the room, including what he refers to as "the holy trinity", also known as the Porsche 911, the Ferrari LaFerrari and the McLaren P1.

Speed Champions is the unbelievably successful range of LEGO cars that Craig has been working on since 2014 and was the result of the first LEGO free building design week.

"We say to the designers, do whatever you want," Craig explains. "They can be creative, they can get inspired and they can put

together something they've been thinking of for a long time. It was the first time we held this design week that the Speed Champions concept came out."

It was Craig, however, that put forward the idea of working with real car partners after recognising there was a gap in their portfolio for this type of project.

"In the first year we had to prove the concept because we hadn't done it before. The biggest challenge for us was trying to explain to people what this was going to be and why it was a good thing."

"Everyone knows LEGO, but we were still approaching Ferrari and saying 'we want to do this line. We're going to replicate your cars, but they won't be perfect replicas, they're going to look a bit blocky, they're going to look a bit weird, but this is going to work'."

The range has taken off so well companies are now approaching LEGO asking to be a part of the Speed Champions range.

"We work really closely with our partners. It's the most amazing thing to be trained as a car designer and then be working with all of the brands at once."

"We're just heading into our fourth year on Speed Champions now. We did the holy trinity first, so we worked with Porsche, Ferrari and McLaren to do the three big supercars."

With the first year turning out to be highly successful, in the second year Craig and his team started thinking about the other vehicles they could add to the range that kids would find fun and appealing. They began introducing iconic vehicles, including muscle cars and hot rods.

"Because LEGO was such a big thing for me, I can see the effect this has on children. It was why I proposed this line in the first place. I wanted kids to be given the opportunity to be inspired and build and create, and have that fun with a product that as a kid I would have been all over."

The whole process from start to finish (with the products on shelves in shops) on each car is around a year and there are now 30 cars in the Speed Champions range. In the four years since they started, Craig says the cars have become much more detailed and a lot closer to the real car. All of the cars are made using standard LEGO bricks, apart from a few tiny differences.

"When we started the line, we developed a new wheel and tyre and a wheel arch, just because we wanted to be able to support the vehicles and make them look a little closer to the real thing. So we developed these three new elements at the start, but other than

that every single element in these cars is a standard Lego element.

"We want to retain the identity of the LEGO brand, that's the thing for me, we're not making die-cast cars. You can go and buy a die-cast car for a dollar. It doesn't make sense to try and make it look perfect. What really works and the reason why you buy this is because you can build it out of LEGO bricks, and it does still look like it's built from LEGO bricks. You have that pride of creation you don't get with other vehicles."

"I think that's the thing as a designer, being aware of brand identity so when we make the Ferrari it looks like a Ferrari but retains the identity of LEGO as well. A few parts on the cars are really weird. The spoiler on the P1 for example is just a snowboard element. Remove it from the car, add a LEGO man and it's just a snowboard, but we use it as the wing on the McLaren P1 because it fits perfectly. And that goes for all of the cars. Everything is something else, because in a kid's imagination it's something else too."

As the cars have changed and become more detailed, the design process has also changed. Designing the latest Speed Champions vehicle, the McLaren 720s, was certainly a little different.

"We worked with the McLaren design team before that car was released or announced, or any images were released. So we're working in the design studio with the designers at the same time. It's really cool to get their input on what we're working on and make sure they're happy with it. They have more detail and can give the key part of the design, and that's a dream for me."

"When I was thinking 'I'm going to be a car designer in the future', you're usually thinking you will be in one studio. But now I get to work in multiple design studios around the world, and that's a big part of my job."

"I get to spend a lot of time with the real car when we're designing the new models. But having the built LEGO model alongside the full sized racing car is amazing."

It's easy to see why Craig isn't thinking of leaving LEGO anytime soon, if ever.

Craig was just five when he decided he wanted to be a car designer, and only 10 or 11 when he set his sights on attending Coventry University to study on the transportation design course after visiting the International Auto Show in Birmingham.

"I found out that Coventry University did this transportation design course, and I was like, I don't know what that is, but it sounds cool, and I want to be a car designer, so that's what I'm going to do."



“This is not where I saw myself, but it’s definitely where I see myself now.”

From that point on Craig says everything he did was aimed at getting into Coventry University. He succeeded but found his time at university hard, fitting his studies in around the three jobs he took on to support himself during his course.

"I'd been through quite a lot before I went to university, and then I suddenly realised I needed to support myself through all of this. I didn't go to university and party and enjoy the city. I just got my head down, and did whatever I could to get through it."

In the third year Craig secured a much-needed paid internship with MG Rover.

"A paid internship was very rare, I was lucky they chose me. At the time MG Rover was an awesome brand doing some cool stuff. But, the day I was due to start the whole place went bust and just shut down."

Luckily for Craig, he then managed to secure an internship with Gibbs Technologies (now Gibbs Amphibians) working on their amphibious vehicles.

"When you say you're designing amphibious vehicles, it sounds like you're Q from James Bond. It wasn't quite to that level, but it was fun. My internship job was working on the design of the Quadski, which was seen on Top Gear a few years later.



"After that it was back for year four. In transport design, year four is all work, all the time. I enjoyed being there definitely, I mean it was an experience but if I could have made it just a little bit easier then I would have."

After university Craig went back to Gibbs for six months, before landing a job at Renault Trucks in France where he worked on interiors.

"This was a lot of fun. Designing interiors for cars is a lot about packaging, making sure everything fits in, and styling and brand identity. When it comes to trucks it's like a whole extra level because it's a real practical space. Truck drivers spend their whole lives in that thing, so the design is even more important."

Craig was with Renault for just under two years before taking a break, which he spent snowboarding and mountain biking in the Alps. "I'd never really had a break. Everything since I was 10 or 11 had been about going

to uni, to do this one course, and then I went straight into work."

After a couple of years, Craig joined LEGO on a freelance basis as the product designer for LEGO Mindstorms.

"After freelancing for a year, I thought, this team is amazing and the design team is pretty cool, so I applied for a permanent job. My first job was designing ninja weapons for NINJAGO" - which as any 10-year-old will tell you, is another hugely successful LEGO line.

"I was like, this is a toy company right? I was literally sat down sketching how to create crazy ninja weapons, but trying to make them more fun and less aggressive. It was still about ninjas battling, but we did fun things like putting bananas on the end of nun chucks.

"Then came Speed Champions. I saw an opportunity to turn a dream job into *my* dream job."

Craig's job on Speed Champions involves a lot of travel, most often to events where he has the opportunity to meet with race drivers and teams. These include the Le Mans 24 Hours race, Formula 1 races, Goodwood Festival of Speed, and the Nurburgring 24 Hours endurance race.

"Goodwood Festival of Speed is just fantastic. Every year it gets more and more crazy. As a car fan, these are the sorts of events I'd be at anyway, so to be able to go for work and take part in the event rather than being just a visitor is amazing.

"The thing that really gets me is the joy that LEGO brings to people I meet at these events. When you start talking about what you do, and bringing out the LEGO bricks and models, it is super cool."

Cars feature pretty heavily away from work too. Craig is a vintage car enthusiast and when he can, and the car is up to it, he races his Ford Model A Hot rod 'Old Red' in various locations in Germany and Denmark. His Ford Model A dates back to 1930 and was originally from 30km away from where he lives now, a fact Craig loves.

"It's the heritage thing," he explains. "I like that these cars have stories and something behind them. Old Red is a local car, which was owned by local people. It was here when Denmark was completely invaded by the Nazis during WW2. My car was just running around like a normal car. The thought of that is just fantastic.

"I love the joy it brings to other people when they see it. Because, you can have a new flashy car and it's just another one, but you turn up in Old Red and people are genuinely amazed. It's not because I'm vain and want people to see me, it's more the memories

and joy Old Red evokes for others because of similar cars they've had a connection with.

"I also love cars that have their original paint and their battle scars. Signs that they've been used and have experienced life. When a car is restored it loses all that, it becomes the car it was when it left the factory. That's great, but it loses that time when it dragged itself down a wall or a deer jumped out in front of it. Old cars can carry off those little scars and tell a story."



When he's racing Old Red, Craig is keen to point out that it is amateur grass roots driving that he's involved with. "It's not quite the same set up some of my race driver friends have," he jokes.

"In Denmark we have a couple of races where we race on the beach head to head, and that's all in pre-1948 cars. There's no modern tuning allowed, no modification to these cars that isn't before 1948.

"I think the thing there is that it's just much more pure fun. Rather than out-and-out competition and trying to improve your driving style or anything like that, you just hang onto the car and you're grinning all the way to the finish line. Whether you're first or second or last, you're still just grinning.

It's not just old cars Craig is passionate about. He is currently in the process of gradually renovating a beautiful 200-year-old house in the middle of the countryside about five miles outside of Billund.

"It was owned by an 80-year-old woman who'd lived here pretty much her whole life. It didn't have electricity or water. The water came from the pump outside the front of the house. They slowly modernised it and got everything working. When I bought it, all my neighbours thought I was going to knock it down and build a house on the hill. And I was like, no this is the perfect house, why would you ever knock it down. It was pretty lucky.

"I have nice neighbours. I encouraged some of my friends to move in just down the road. It's a nice place to be. With all the travelling I do, it's good to come here and escape. There's very little noise and hardly any cars."

It seems like life is really pretty sweet for Craig, and he has absolutely no plans to make any changes anytime soon.

Q&A

If you could have any car, or could have worked on any car what would it have been?

That's a really hard question for a car person. I've never had a favourite car. I don't think I do favourite cars. Although I was lucky enough a couple of years ago to drive a Jaguar C Type and I think if I could travel backwards in time and maybe be part of the team that developed that, that would be good. Is that okay? Am I allowed to travel back in time for this question?

In terms of modern cars I have a lot of respect for what McLaren are doing, but I think I'm a bit of a vintage car person. If you're asking dream scenarios, yeah, I'm going to travel back in time.

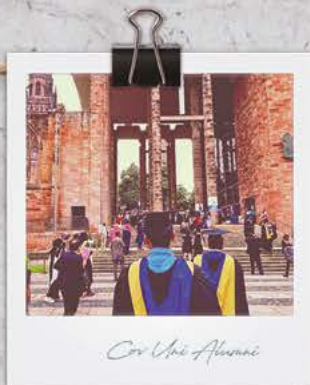
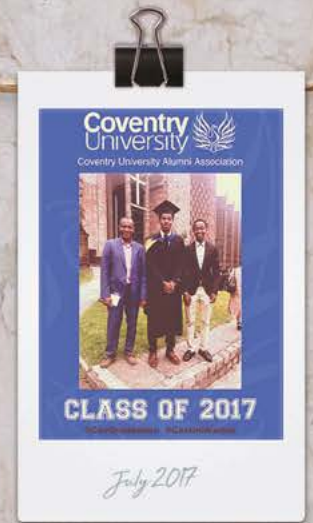
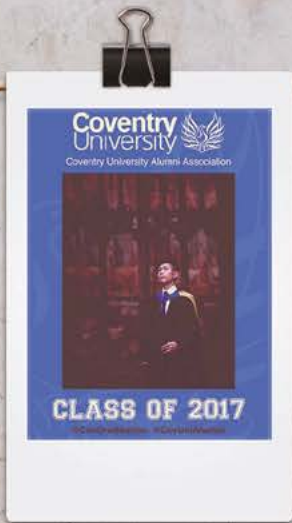
What's your favourite place at LEGO HQ?

We have an open building area at LEGO, which is really cool because there's always someone around just building something crazy. We have a place where all the LEGO elements are, it's basically a library of all the LEGO elements and lots of building tables. It's kind of inspiring so maybe that.

What is your favourite LEGO set ever?

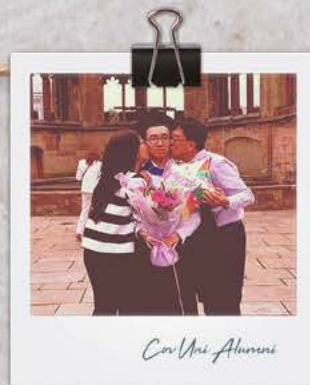
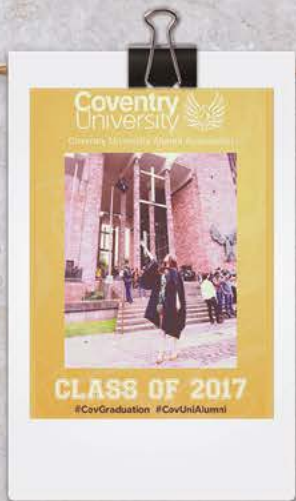
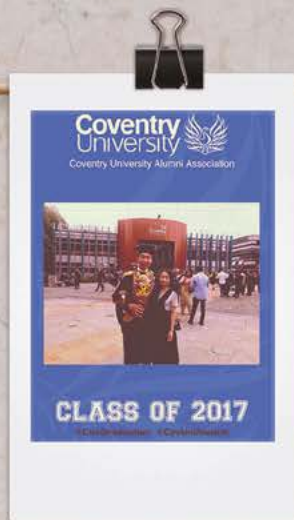
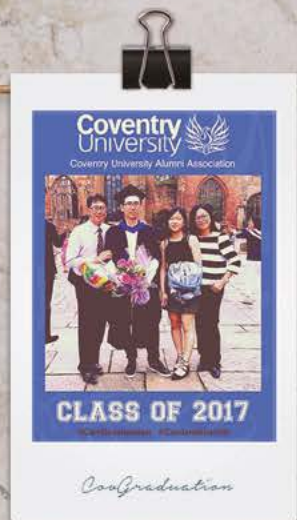
I had a lot of LEGO sets, but my favourite LEGO set ever is the black shark pirate ship - the Black Seas Barracuda. I just remember I had it as a kid and my pirate ship was one of the sets I built and then never took apart. I used to like the design but I would try to add a bit of flair to it with extra details from other sets.

“Working for LEGO and designing cars for LEGO is a dream job. Why would I work anywhere else? Why would anyone working here work anywhere else?”



Graduation snapshots

July 2017





“The charity, which celebrates 36 years in November, has provided equipment to over 60 hospitals, maternity units, NHS Trusts and ambulance services.”

Honorary graduate

Judy Ledger

A charity that started out as a “sanity plan” has raised over £10m, is providing vital equipment to hospitals, and is helping to train thousands of medical staff to deal with premature and traumatic births.

Baby Lifeline was founded by Judy Ledger after she tragically lost three babies at just under 24 weeks, 26 weeks and 28 weeks over a handful of years.

“It was quite traumatic. I just felt devastated in every way,” Judy tells Rise. “I’d already thrown myself back into work as a staff nurse, but I needed something else to focus on, and something to keep me positive, so I set up Lifeline.”

Judy, who now has three grown up children, and has just become a “Nanna” for the first time, started out with providing some equipment for Coventry’s maternity hospital, then expanded to Warwickshire, before gradually going “a bit further”, as she phrases it.

The charity, which celebrates 36 years in November, has provided equipment to over 60 hospitals, maternity units, NHS Trusts and ambulance services.

“I had to have every bit of medical care going with my pregnancies. That, and my clinical background, were really in my mind in terms of providing practical help,” says Judy, who was awarded a Pride of Britain Award for her services to fundraising in 2010.

“I remember being called to London to see a consultant who had heard of the charity and thought what it was doing was amazing. He said equipment is vital, but what should go with it is specific, continuing professional development training. “He showed me reports which had findings from confidential inquiries including how many babies died around childbirth, how many were still births, how many mothers died, and various aspects of care. One that struck me was called CESDI (Confidential Enquiries into Stillbirths and Infant Deaths) and it showed that on average a baby a day was dying through human error. The findings showed that a multi-disciplinary training approach and better communication was needed. The problem was, there was no funding available for maternity safety training.”

In 1994, after working with leading professionals, Judy created a number of courses that brought multi-disciplinary groups together for training at the same time, including midwives, obstetricians, and obstetric anaesthetists. She also launched the BIRTH series - an innovative educational series of nine videos, which have been distributed worldwide. In 2014, Baby Lifeline launched the second BIRTH Series, after a report from the NHS litigation authorities revealed the staggering amounts of money being paid out through maternity claims.

Following a welcome funding announcement from the Government in 2016 for maternity safety training, the Royal Colleges contacted Judy.

“We were asked to submit information about what we’d been doing in terms of delivering training, how it had been evaluated and what our findings were. A couple of months later I got an email telling me I was in the catalogue from Health Education England as a preferred training provider and that trusts had been applying for funds from the Government. In January this year the phones were bouncing off the wall and I had to bring a whole team in to work with me. In five months 5,500 professionals from across the country, including midwives, obstetricians, obstetric anaesthetists, paramedics and GPs, have asked for training. It’s completely overwhelming.”

To put this into perspective, between 2004 and 2014 Baby Lifeline trained 15,000 professionals, and between 2014 and 2016 a further 4,500.

With a growing team behind her Judy, continues to fundraise and organise events. Corporate brands are working with the charity including The Entertainer stores, Cosatto and Peppa Pig, and in September the charity will be promoting their MUM (Maternity Unit Miracles) Awards on Mumsnet.

Not one for resting on her laurels, Judy also launched the £5m Monitoring for Mums appeal in 2016.

“At times I’ve come close to thinking I can’t carry on because there’s been no funding. And now I’m just about to present to the Health Minister about what we’ve achieved. I finally think people are listening to what we’re doing, and I truly believe we can achieve great things.”

To find out more about Baby Lifeline, or to donate to the £5m Monitoring for Mums Appeal, which aims to raise funds, region by region, for important training and technology for the care of pregnant women visit www.babylifeline.org.uk



Life in the *fast* lane

Focused. Determined. Passionate. Ambitious.

The list of words to describe the CEO of the Dubai-based supercar company W Motors is extensive.

But without his focus and drive to achieve his dream, Ralph Debbas probably would not have designed and produced the world's first Arab supercar, which has attracted global attention, or be on the verge of launching a fleet of cars in China.

Rise caught up with the international businessman to find out more about how he broke into the supercar world.

Within seconds it is clear to hear the passion Ralph has for his business, which he set up from scratch after graduating from Coventry University.

The car designer received offers from numerous universities, including Pratts in Manhattan, but he knew where he wanted to gain the skills he needed to achieve his dream.

"When I received my offer from Coventry my mind was made up. Everyone dreams of going to New York to live, but it was a no brainer," Ralph explains.

"I said to myself 'Coventry is one of the best universities in terms of automotive design, and now I need to focus on my career rather than on where I want to live'. It was a quick decision and it was the best decision."

Ralph originally signed up for a four-year course, but switched to three because he was so keen to start his business.

"The whole purpose of my course was to learn more about the industry and learn more about design, so that I could start cooking in my mind the right way to start my business. As soon as I was ready I just wanted to go and do it."

Ralph describes his time at Coventry University as "a great experience", his teachers as "top-notch quality", and the system of teaching as "a fantastic way of helping him to learn".

"I needed to adjust to the English education system, but the ability to adjust to anything is in my DNA," he says.

"At Coventry you were told what you needed to do, how you needed to do it, and then you were told to go off and do it."

"I learned how to do 3D modelling myself, learned how to do the engineering myself, and how to present a number of projects. My degree was more an exercise of self-building rather than just going to class and writing some notes. It was a great experience.

"During his time at Coventry, Ralph travelled to motor shows in Paris, Geneva and Frankfurt and met a lot of key people and companies in the car design and engineering world, including "one of the biggest engineering companies in the world" - Magna Steyer.

It was this company Ralph signed with to undertake the engineering on the Lykan HyperSport in 2010.

The deal didn't happen overnight and Ralph worked hard to realise his dream. "Before, I didn't know how I was going to do it. But I knew I was going to build the car with my own DNA, my own design," he explains.

"When you're creating your dream you have to make sure there are no mistakes in what you do. I was hands on with everything. Trying to get the financing, trying to engineer it, design it, build it, and at the same time building up a supplier chain and partners around the world. It wasn't easy. I was young, I was from the Middle East, I was trying to build a supercar and I had no background whatsoever in building cars. It was almost an impossible task. But all I wanted to do was build the car."

Signing with Magna Steyer turned things around for Ralph. "Indirectly they were my suppliers but they were my mentors as well.

They guided me and showed me what I needed in place and what I needed to do."

Three years later Ralph had his dream car on the road. It is easy to see why Ralph's first supercar has attracted such attention. The Lykan HyperSport is a ridiculously beautiful car. With its sleek lines, unique attention to detail, diamonds in the headlights and holographic controls, the car looks like it belongs on the big screen. Perhaps it is this film star quality, which convinced Universal to strike a deal with Ralph to use his car in the seventh instalment of the Fast and Furious film series.

"We negotiated with Universal for a month after they got in touch. We ended up making a deal that had never been done before, which saw them paying us, rather than us paying them."


The deal was for 10 cars to be built and delivered in eight weeks; all of which were wrecked during the making of the film.

"It wasn't a great feeling at first watching the cars being destroyed but after the fourth time it got a little easier."

"Universal asked us to be their official partner for the film. We went to launch events around the world and in 24 hours our car became the most famous car in the world. It was incredible."

But one supercar is never enough and his second, the Fenyr SuperSport launches this month. The company also has an SUV due for launch in two years. But that isn't all his company has been working on.

"Recently, we surprised the world at the Shanghai Motor Show with a secret project we've been working on for the last three years - the first line of electric mass production cars for the Chinese market. This is the first electric car of its type going to China."



When you're creating your dream
you have to make sure there are
no mistakes in what you do.

A life full of supercars and movie deals might sound glamorous but the bulk of Ralph's time is spent on the road, travelling around China, the US and all over Europe.

"It's tiring, but part of what I need to do for work. It's part of my lifestyle. Over the next few weeks I'll be in Italy, Detroit, Frankfurt and then China.

"I don't have much of a life at all. When I'm not travelling, which is rare, instead of going out all I want to do is spend time with my wife and son in our little cocoon."

Looking at how hard he has worked and at everything he has achieved, nobody would begrudge Ralph Debbas a little privacy and a little time to rest.



Research

As an ambitious and innovative university, we're aiming for our research to make a tangible difference to the way you live.

Multi-million pound design centre launched

The unveiling of a mural created by Jaguar director of design Ian Callum and a keynote speech by racing driver, model and TV presenter Jodie Kidd helped launch the multi-million-pound National Transport Design Centre in style.

The state-of-the-art research and development facility - which opened in May - aims to inspire the next generation of vehicle designers, explore new areas of transport design research and find different ways to use existing equipment and create new technologies.

It has been launched through the University's Centre for Mobility and Transport and focuses on collaborative research projects, postgraduate education in transport design and support for the manufacturing sector and its supply chain.

Among the facilities at the NTDC are a six-metre power wall which allows users to explore detailed design and engineering concepts in virtual reality, advanced clay milling machines for creating physical models up to six tonnes in weight, and a projection mapping system which can cast digital images onto 3D objects - helping designers to assess multiple options on full-scale models.

The 17 x 10m mural, which was inspired by the flow of an object through air and represents the movement of a vehicle carrying people, was unveiled by Mr Callum.

Sexual activity in the over 50s linked to improved brain function

More frequent sexual activity is linked to improved brain function in older adults, research has suggested.

The study found that people, aged over 50, who engaged in more regular sexual activity scored higher on tests that measured their verbal fluency and their ability to visually perceive objects and the spaces between them.

The research, led by Dr Hayley Wright, from the University's Centre of Psychology, Behaviour and Achievement, made headlines around the world - from the front page of the Times newspaper, a discussion on Sky News in the UK and articles in all the country's national newspapers, to features on websites in India, Australia, America and Canada.

"We've demonstrated that sexual activity in later life may have measurable benefits that stretch beyond pleasure-seeking," said Dr Wright, who worked with colleagues in Coventry and at Oxford University on the study.

The 73 participants, who were aged between 50 and 83, filled in a questionnaire on how often, on average, they had engaged in sexual activity over the past 12 months and also took part in tests to measure different areas of brain function, as part of the research.

But Dr Wright said there is still further research needed to fully understand the relationship and whether sexual activity is causing better cognitive function or if other factors are involved too.

Terrific Scientific

Young scientists ate kale every day to show that children's taste buds can be trained to like certain foods.

They took part in the experiment for the BBC Learning's Terrific Scientific season, under the guidance of researchers from the University's Centre for Technology-Enabled Health Research (CTEHR).

The children, aged between nine and 11, were separated into two groups, with half asked to eat a piece of kale every day, while the other half ate raisins every day.

The study found that, overall, the children who ate kale regularly liked the vegetable more after 15 days, whereas those who ate the raisins did not.

But it also found that 'supertasters' - who have more fungiform papillae, which carry 'taste buds' on their tongue - did not increase their liking of kale.

Approximately 25% of the UK population may be supertasters, which makes them far more sensitive to strong-tasting food such as olives, bitter coffee and grapefruits.

As part of the Terrific Scientific project, Jackie Blissett, professor of childhood eating behaviour at Coventry University, hosted an online lesson broadcast on the BBC website to classrooms across the country in January.

App launched to build bee knowledge

An app allowing members of the public to record sightings of bumblebees in their gardens is aiming to help build a national picture of the insects' habits.


It was developed by the Blooms for Bees project, led by the University's Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience (CAWR).

People are encouraged to observe bumblebees on the flowers growing in their gardens and allotments and then submit their findings via the free Blooms for Bees app.

The information is then used by the Blooms for Bees team to improve their knowledge of which bumblebee species visit gardens and allotments, and which flowers are most attractive to them.

Data from the research will be shared with the National Biodiversity Network, giving other organisations around the UK valuable insight to be able to build on and enhance knowledge of bumblebee populations.

To download the app visit: www.bloomsforbees.co.uk



Improve your wellbeing through yoga

Meditation, yoga and Tai Chi can 'reverse' the molecular reactions in our DNA, which cause ill-health and depression, according to a study.

The research, by the universities of Coventry and Radboud, reviewed more than a decade of studies analysing how the behaviour of our genes is affected by different mind-body interventions (MBIs) - such as mindfulness and yoga.

The universities' experts concluded that, when examined together, the studies revealed a pattern in the molecular changes which happen in the body as a result of MBIs, and how those changes benefit our mental and physical health.

The researchers focused on the way that genes activate to produce proteins which influence the biological make-up of the body, the brain and the immune system; a process known as 'gene expression.'

They found people who practise MBIs exhibited a decrease in production of the molecule NF-kB and proteins called cytokines.

An increase in cytokines can cause an inflammation at a cellular level which if persistent leads to a higher risk of cancer, accelerated ageing and psychiatric disorders, such as depression.

However, the researchers found the decrease seen by those who practiced MBIs led to a reduction in the risk of inflammation-related diseases and conditions.

Lead investigator Ivana Buric from the Brain, Belief and Behaviour Lab in Coventry University's Centre for Advances in Behavioural Science (CABS) said:

"Put simply, MBIs cause the brain to steer our DNA processes along a path which improves our wellbeing."

The study was published in the journal *Frontiers in Immunology* in May and received widespread media coverage nationally and around the world.

Leading the way in railway research

A project to collect masses of data about the country's railways in the hope of reducing train delays and network problems has been launched.

The research involves trialling sensors fitted to passenger trains to record data about the vehicles' journeys.

Analysis of this data will give important information about the condition of the infrastructure and flag up any potential problems that cause delays or safety issues.

It is hoped this greater understanding of the data will mean rail network problems can be predicted and prevented in advance.

Researchers and the rail companies working on the project believe this will help to make the train network safer and more reliable, leading to benefits for business and industry.

Dr Alexeis Garcia-Perez, from Coventry University's Centre for Business in Society (CBiS) said:

"This firmly positions Coventry University in the group of academic institutions leading railway research in the UK."

CBiS announced it was collaborating with Network Rail, Virgin Trains, Serco, Alstom Transport, ID Computing and Oxford University on the project this spring.

Your association

We want our alumni association to offer as much support and influence for you, as it does for the University. To support this relaunched association and provide you with something unique from the Coventry University Group, Open Badges will be introduced in the coming year.

These badges will provide verifiable information about your skills and achievements, which are recognised within Coventry's global network of individuals and organisations. You will be able to unlock opportunities by sharing

collections of badges which represent your skills and turn them in to new collaborations, jobs, internships and richer connections between lifelong learners.

Alongside the badges, we will also be launching a set of 'online communities', which will be accessed through our brand new website launching soon. These communities will provide a space where you and fellow graduates can share interests and experiences, both professional and personal. The communities will be updated regularly

with webinars, podcasts and other exciting offerings from across the University group. The website will also feature news, profile pieces and videos, and will be the place to find out about careers and mentoring opportunities, and our programme of upcoming international events.

Please keep in touch, or get back in touch, to stay up to date with everything the alumni association is up to.

E: alumni-communications@coventry.ac.uk

Competition

To celebrate the launch of your brand new alumni magazine, we're offering you the chance to win £200 worth of hotel vouchers to use around the world.

Perhaps you fancy the Hilton in Honolulu, set amongst a tropical landscape covering 22 acres and boasting Waikiki's most spectacular white sand beach, or the Mandarin Oriental in Malaysia, set in the heart of the city in Kuala Lumpur, between the flowering gardens of the KLCC Park and the dramatic heights of the Petronas Twin Towers.

Or maybe the Hotel du Vin in Harrogate with its luxurious rooms, fine dining and sublime spa is more your cup of tea. Wherever you fancy, this competition will help you enjoy your dream getaway.

To be in with a chance of winning £200 of hotel vouchers, simply answer the following question (the answer can be found in the magazine):

Who is described as "Britain's own Leonardo da Vinci"?

Email your answer to
alumni-communications@coventry.ac.uk

The winner will be picked at random after the closing date of 31st January 2018.

CU London

Doors open at CU London

CU London opened its doors to students last month in the heart of Dagenham.

Based at the stunning Grade II listed Civic Centre, which underwent a £4.5m renovation, the new campus will offer award-winning degrees via the CU non-traditional style of university education teaching and learning.

It joins CU Scarborough and CU Coventry in offering education which is flexible, fits around the students' life and gives them the practical knowledge and qualifications employers are after.

"CU London is the latest offering from the Coventry University Group, delivering more vocationally based courses with no end of year exams," said John Dishman, chief executive officer and director of CUC Ltd.

"It will not only be more accessible, but also more affordable. Rents and living costs in Barking and Dagenham are much lower than in many areas of the capital and yet it is only 30 minutes from central London, so students will get the best of both worlds."

The relationship between the CU campuses is like no other. Students have the opportunity to move between each campus after completing an academic year. This means they can study in London, Coventry or Scarborough.



Highlights

New campus welcomes education minister

During a whirlwind tour of the seaside town of Scarborough, Secretary of State for Education Justine Greening visited Coventry University's campus by the sea.

The MP spoke with staff and students at CU Scarborough to find out about career-focused degrees, links with industry and how the University is helping students fulfil their ambitions.

"We were delighted to welcome the Education Secretary during her visit to Scarborough to meet our students and staff and learn more about the career-focused higher education we offer at CU Scarborough," said Provost Craig Gaskell.

"Coventry University opened the campus to help address the low number of graduates in the Yorkshire coast area, as Scarborough is recognised as an area where high quality education can be transformational to the local community and economy.

"This visit allowed us to showcase the partnership we have with local employers and the boost this will give to Scarborough and surrounding areas."



Theatre legend visits Scarborough

Staff and students at CU Scarborough were paid a visit by award-winning playwright Sir Alan Ayckbourn, who regaled them with stories about his career.

Sir Alan, who has just completed his 81st play also discussed what has inspired him over the years, the world of theatre and the vast amount of careers that are available in the industry.

The talk, organised by business and management tutor Geoffrey Proudlock, was one of the extra-curricular activities on offer at CU Scarborough.

"CU Scarborough is still relatively new to the town, so it was a true privilege to welcome Sir Alan – someone who is synonymous with Scarborough – to our campus," said Craig Gaskell, Provost of CU Scarborough.

Overseas trip benefits vulnerable children and adults

Vulnerable adults and children in Romania benefitted from a week-long visit in May from CU Scarborough early years and health students.

The visit to Oradea in Western Romania saw the 12 students visiting a homeless project, a state-run orphanage and one of Romania's first all-inclusive schools.

CU Scarborough is keen to expand its international offering to students by providing opportunities to travel abroad to enhance learning.

"Health students need to have an understanding of how social, environmental, cultural, economic, political and structural factors influence public health," said Claire Barwick, Tutor in health and social care.

The visit enabled the students to deliver aid to vulnerable adults and children, share their skills and gain valuable experience.

CU Coventry

CU Coventry celebrates International Women in Engineering Day

CU Coventry welcomed more than 60 girls from Barr's Hill School and Stoke Park School for an Engineering Awareness Day.

The event was held to mark International Women in Engineering Day and to celebrate the achievements of females working in the field. It also gave the Year 8 pupils an insight into the subjects they could study to progress into a career in engineering and the variety of roles available in the sector.

Daze Osuide, of CU Coventry, said: "Our Engineering Awareness Day was held to inspire girls to consider a career in engineering and give an overview of the options available to them."



Nursing training returns to Scarborough after 23 years

CU Scarborough has had approval from Coventry University and the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) to deliver a BSc Adult Nursing degree.

The decision makes CU Scarborough the only provider of nursing training on the Yorkshire Coast and the first institution in the town to offer this course in 23 years.

CU Scarborough will work with healthcare partners, including York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, other local NHS Trusts and GP practices to deliver the course which will include 50 per cent theory and 50 per cent practical work through a number of placements.

Mike Proctor, deputy chief executive, York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation said: "Students of today become our future workforce, so delivering high quality education, placements, preceptorships and ongoing development is vital.

"The Trust is delighted with this new collaboration which will help us sustain the nursing and care workforce for the future on the east coast."

Coventry University London

Students' Union launched at Coventry University London

Coventry University London has increased its offering and support to students with the launch of a Students' Union on campus.

Head of marketing Guillaume Richard said the Students' Union was set up after recognising students were ready for something new and challenging.

"I am delighted that Coventry University London is working with Coventry University Students' Union (CUSU) to bring our students in London more opportunities to engage with various events, societies, sports clubs and volunteering opportunities," he said.

"CUSU's involvement will ensure that we deliver an even more exciting social and extra-curricular activities calendar for students, giving them a well-rounded experience of studying in one of the greatest cities in the world. The feedback they bring to Coventry University London will also ensure an improved experience for current and future students."

Highlights

The first campus officer to be elected, Adam Benjema, added:
"Hopefully we can all work together to make our university a better experience. I am determined to work hard for the improvement of Coventry University London."



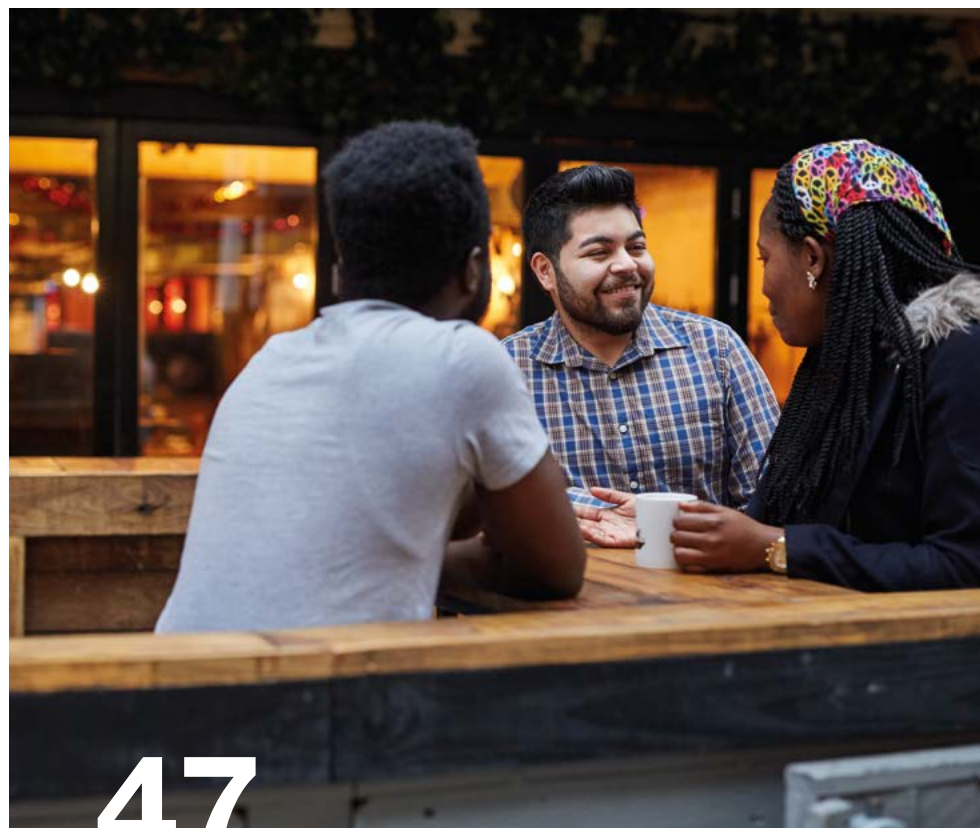
Modernised facilities on offer to London students

Facilities at Coventry University London have been enhanced following feedback from students.

The third floor has been turned into an open-plan space encompassing a larger and improved library. This includes two study group areas, additional study space, computers for student use and a laptop self-service unit.

A training room for the provision of IT and computer skills courses, and a combined student service desk, providing student information, IT and library support, have also been introduced, along with two pod areas where students can receive advice away from the desk.

Leisure facilities have also been upgraded. A large student lounge features table football, table tennis, social and working space areas, and a Coffee Express. The new Students' Union will also be based on the third floor.



International

New \$15m Campus launched

Partner Institute PSB Academy in Singapore has opened a new \$15m city campus located in the Marina Square shopping mall.

The 100,000 sq ft campus includes industry standard film and radio studios, and an 'innovation sandbox' to explore the use of new techniques in teaching, such as virtual reality and augmented reality.

"With our expansion into Marina Square, we are taking PSB Academy's unique brand of industry-ready education to the heart of Singapore's city centre," said Derrick Chang, chief operating officer, PSB Academy.

"Our new campus is a destination that will offer a fun and enriching education experience for our students. The future of learning needs to be one that is fully attuned to the needs of the future economy, and a campus experience that is reminiscent of a continuous adventure of learning, one which inspires students to make connections, collaborate and co-create.

Law student helps families fleeing ISIS

A Coventry University student from Iraq is helping thousands of survivors fleeing from ISIS - all while studying for an international business law masters.

Zinah Mohammed began collecting and distributing life-saving donations of food and warm clothing to thousands of Syrian refugees who fled their homes for safe camps across Iraq in 2013. The 26-year-old set up the Shine Together charity team and with support from 20 young volunteers has since sent lorryloads of food and clothes to displaced families, and helped provide nappies, milk supplies and medical treatment in the camps.

"In our vision as a Future Academy, we, along with our world-class partner universities, will be breaking new ground into more areas of academic teaching and student learning as we continue to gear up our graduates with an industry-ready education to thrive in our smart nation and beyond."

Coventry University's MSc Engineering Business Management degree is available at PSB with March, July and November start dates. Visit coventry.ac.uk/international for more information.

10 year anniversary event

UC Leuven-Limburg will be holding a 10-year anniversary event in 2018 and is looking to connect with alumni to participate in the celebrations.

If you are interested in attending or getting involved email alumni-communications@coventry.ac.uk



"Keeping up the work while studying has been a challenge, but I am in constant touch with the volunteer team back in Iraq to make sure we carry on," she said.

"I want to leave a mark of positive change, regardless of where I am."

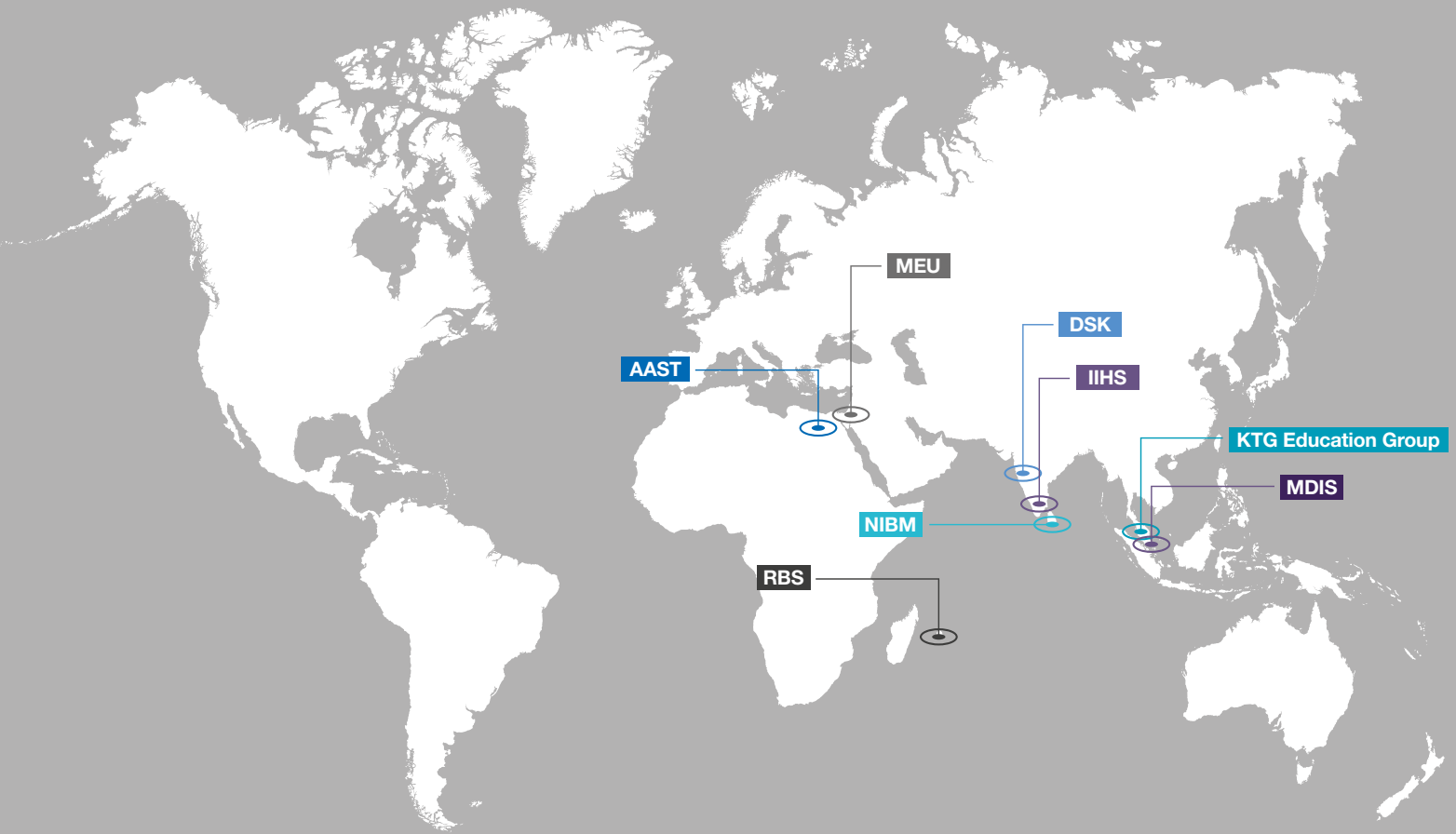
Her efforts saw her chosen as one of 54 international delegates through the Prince's Trust International Leadership programme - a year-long scheme for young people with the potential to make positive change in their communities.

Coventry Law School course director Terry Braithwaite said the University was proud to have a Prince's Trust young leader studying with them and described Zinah as "an inspiring example".

"She is working incredibly hard to make a difference to the lives of others in desperate need, and we hope that everything Zinah learns with us will help take her even further in her dedication to doing good right across the world," he added.

New partners welcomed

During the last 12 months Coventry University has linked up with eight new partners. The result? There are now more places to study and gain a Coventry University accredited degree around the world.



AAST

Arab Academy for Science, Technology & Maritime Transport
Egypt

DSK

Design Schools
in India

MDIS

Management Development
Institute of
Singapore

IIHS

Indian Institute
for Human
Settlements
Sri Lanka

KTG Education Group

Malaysia

NIBM

National Institute
of Business
Management
Sri Lanka

MEU

Middle East
University
Jordan

RBS

Rushmore
Business School
Mauritius

Overseas alumni discount on offer

Coventry University is offering a £1,000 alumni discount to overseas students for the first time in a bid to offer the same privileges offered to UK based students.

The discount is in place to encourage undergraduates to progress onto postgraduate programmes to further broaden their skills in response to increasingly competitive workplaces.

To be eligible, students must have completed a Coventry University accredited degree in the UK or at one of our partner institutions, and must enrol onto a postgraduate programme to be studied at Coventry University in the UK. As an added bonus, the £1,000 discount can be combined with other discounts and scholarships.

Refer a friend scheme launched

CU launched the refer a friend scheme in Spring 2017, which will see applicants, enrolled students and alumni rewarded for any successful recommendation to a CU Coventry, Scarborough or London undergraduate course.

As a token of appreciation, everyone who recommends a successful referral will receive £50.

Contact cuc@coventry.ac.uk for more information.

Competition

Enter this fantastic competition and win the chance to experience the extraordinary capabilities of a Land Rover first hand. With nine experience centres in the UK and a further 21 scattered across the world, this really is a global opportunity to challenge yourself behind the wheel of a Land Rover and find out just what this iconic vehicle is capable of.

The prize up for grabs is a half-day experience at the centre of your choosing. Whether it's the grouse moors of Perthshire, or the natural woodland in the outstanding East Devon countryside. The Tracer Trail, which winds through bamboo and tea fields in China, or the frozen shores of Katumajärvi Lake, where specialist snow and ice driving instructors will take you through your paces....the choice is yours.

To be in with a chance of winning a half-day driving experience voucher, send your best memory of being at Coventry University – along with some pictures (if you're brave enough) to alumni-communications@coventry.ac.uk.

The winner will be picked at random after the closing date of **31st January 2018** and announced on our brand new website launching soon. (Pictures and stories might appear in future editions of Rise or on our website)

Experience centres can be found in China, Russia, Bahrain, South Africa, Scandinavia, the USA, Canada, and across Europe and the UK. Find out more information at www.landrover.co.uk/experience-landrover/find-a-centre.

Credit: Landrover UK



Connect

There are now more ways than ever to keep in touch with the alumni team and your fellow alumni. Make sure you follow us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to keep up-to-date with what's going on.

Our new website will be launching soon. You'll be able to find out the latest news, read profile features, find out about events, learn about careers and mentoring opportunities, and you will also be able to update your details so that we can keep in touch with you.

www.coventry.ac.uk/alumni

Let us know what you think of Rise. Email alumni-communications@coventry.ac.uk



@CovUniAlumni

ALUMNI MAGAZINE

WWW.COVENTRY.AC.UK/ALUMNI