EDIT

SUMMER 2018
On full power – women in engineering
The future of keeping data safe | Who wants to be a GP? | The language of music
Dear alumni,

Welcome to your 2018 edition of Edit. It gives me great pleasure to be writing to you as Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Edinburgh – an institution which I hope means a great deal to you.

Since my arrival in Edinburgh earlier this year, I’ve been meeting as many students, staff, supporters and friends of the University as possible, and I’m delighted to have had the opportunity to meet a few of you during this time.

It has been a steep and intriguing learning curve to understand the achievements of this incredible global community of teachers and learners. This edition of Edit does much to celebrate our community, throwing as it does a spotlight on former students who have gone on to influence the world in their own unique ways.

We hear from Dr Helen Pankhurst, great granddaughter of leading suffragette Emmeline, on what it means to be still marching in this centenary year of women’s suffrage. We also hear from two law graduates about their incredible experience while working for lobbyists ICAN who won the Nobel Peace Prize. We open up the conversation about digital security, and what advice our experts can offer.

Our cover celebrates the inroads that our female engineering graduates have made, as we mark the year Engineering at Edinburgh turns 150. We talk to young medical students about their ambitions to become GPs, and to those GP graduates already in the workplace. We learn about the community work our music students and staff are doing in refugee camps.

As ever there is much more to read in these pages, and online at www.ed.ac.uk/edit-magazine. We hope you’re also enjoying your monthly Edit supplements, which you can sign up for on the website. And as ever we’d love to hear from you if you have any thoughts on the magazine or would like to tell us your story. Please contact editor.edit@ed.ac.uk

With best regards,

Peter Mathieson

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Cover story: Meet the Edinburgh alumnae who are empowering themselves in the world of engineering on page 08. Here they are pictured in one of the recently renovated corridors beneath the McEwan Hall, where alumni names are listed on the wall tiles in thanks for their donations to the Hall’s restoration.
CONTENTS

02 Timeline
News from the last 12 months

08 On full power
Women in engineering

14 The future of keeping data safe
Innovation in data security

18 The language of music
Bringing music to refugee camps

22 Who wants to be a GP?
Edinburgh students and graduates who do

28 Still marching
Dr Helen Pankhurst’s thoughts on gender equality

32 The Edit interview
The University’s links with Nobel Peace Prize winners ICAN

36 What you did next
Alumni share their experiences since graduating

38 My view
Snapshots from the workspaces of our alumni community

40 Time and tide
An alumna shares her passion for the sea

42 Landmark
The Gordon Aikman Lecture Theatre

44 General Council update
The latest news and events
TIMELINE
Summer 2017

A big deal for the city

The University signed the £1.1 billion Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal.

The deal is funding major infrastructure projects in the city, Lothians, Fife and Scottish Borders, with investment coming from the Scottish and Westminster governments and partners in local government and higher education.

The University is leading the City Region Deal’s exciting Data-Driven Innovation programme, with the aim of capitalising on the region’s rich seam of informatics, business and research expertise to make it the data capital of Europe.

Senior Vice-Principal Charlie Jeffery said: “We have a vision and capacity for technological innovation that can change and drive the economy.”

Full story: www.ed.ac.uk/edit-magazine/supplements

70 years of the festivals

Last August marked 70 years of the Edinburgh International Festival (EIF).

The University collaborates with organisers to host major events at the EIF, as well as the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and Edinburgh International Film Festival.

Among the 2017 highlights were: the University partnering with EIF for its epic 70th anniversary opening event entitled Bloom, during which projections lit up the city’s St Andrew Square; the University’s prestigious James Tait Black Prizes for Fiction and Drama being hosted once again at the Edinburgh International Book Festival; and Edinburgh academics presenting their research to the public in the Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas topical Fringe talk series.

Festivals photo gallery: www.ed.ac.uk/edit-magazine/supplements

Summer honorary graduations

A range of figures in politics, business and the creative arts received honorary degrees.

The Prime Minister of Canada, The Rt Hon Justin Trudeau (pictured above right), was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor honoris causa at the newly refurbished McEwan Hall. The award was in recognition of Mr Trudeau’s achievements as a public servant with strong commitments to equality and diversity.

The acclaimed Nigerian author, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (pictured above left), was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters at the University’s redeveloped St Cecilia’s Hall, in recognition of her achievements as an author and public intellectual.

Filmmaker Oliver Stone, social enterprise entrepreneur Josh Littlejohn and China’s Vice-Premier Liu Yandong were also among those awarded honorary degrees over summer 2017.

More information: edin.ac/honorary-graduates
Autumn 2017

The University opens its doors

The University took part in the annual Edinburgh Doors Open Day, coordinated by the Cockburn Association.

The event offered people a rare opportunity to see inside some of the most important architectural, social and cultural buildings in the city.

Visitors enjoyed access to many buildings including the University’s iconic McEwan Hall in the University’s Central Area; the FloWave Ocean Energy Research Facility at the King’s Buildings; and the Anne Rowling Regenerative Neurology Clinic at Little France. Each building provided information to help visitors learn more about its history, design and day-to-day functions, and many offered activities, exhibitions and talks.

www.cockburnassociation.org.uk/edinburgh-doors-open-day

The healing power of fish

Researchers pinpointed key molecules that prompt damaged nerve fibres in zebrafish to regenerate themselves.

The findings could pave the way for treatments that help restore vital connections between the brain and muscles of the body that are lost in people after spinal cord injury.

Scientists at the University’s Centre for Neuroregeneration found that after injury, wound-healing cells called fibroblasts move into the site of damage.

These fibroblasts produce a molecule called collagen 12, which changes the structure of the support matrix that surrounds nerve fibres. This enables the damaged fibres to grow back across the wound site and restore the lost connections.

Full story: edin.ac/zebrafish

Totally HypED

An Edinburgh student team gave an outstanding performance in the final stage of one of the world’s most prestigious engineering contests in the US.

Following years of work, the team, called HypED, was invited to California to take part in the final of a contest to design the Hyperloop, a revolutionary new form of transportation. First proposed by billionaire inventor Elon Musk, the futuristic system is intended to transport passengers over land in pods travelling at around 750 mph in a near-vacuum tube.

HypED was the only team from the UK – and one of just four European groups – to reach the final. They joined 24 other teams at the competition weekend held at SpaceX’s headquarters in Hawthorne, California.

Full story: www.ed.ac.uk/edit-magazine/supplements

Edit publishes a monthly digital supplement, read the latest features at www.ed.ac.uk/edit-magazine/supplements
Making it to Mars

An experiment in which astronauts remained in a confined simulator for a year and a half showed the need to carefully monitor microorganisms, such as bacteria, during lengthy missions.

The study, involving Edinburgh scientists, will inform estimates of risk to such flights. The team collected 360 microbial samples from 20 locations during their isolation, using air filters and swabs. “Ours is the first comprehensive long-term study that investigates the number, diversity and changes in microorganisms in a closed habitat for the full duration of a simulated flight to Mars,” said Dr Petra Schwendner, School of Physics and Astronomy.

Full story: edin.ac/mars-mission

Medical quad renamed

In November it was announced that the University’s Old Medical School courtyard is to be renamed in memory of the trailblazing doctor Elsie Inglis, one of Edinburgh’s first women graduates.

The announcement was made by the University’s Chancellor, Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal, during a visit to Edinburgh. A plaque highlighting the square’s revised name – the Dr Elsie Inglis Quadrangle – was unveiled.

The Edinburgh-raised doctor and suffragist founded 17 Scottish Women’s Hospitals across Europe during the First World War. She also established a medical college for women and a maternity hospital for poor mothers in Edinburgh.

More information: edin.ac/inglis

Nobel Prizes awarded

Several distinguished alumni and associates of the University became Nobel Prize winners.

Dr Richard Henderson (above left), winner of a Nobel Prize for Chemistry along with two of his colleagues, is an alumnus and honorary graduate of Edinburgh. The prize was awarded for developing cryo-electron microscopy, which has enabled high-resolution imaging of biomolecules in solution.

Professor Michael Rosbash (above right), winner of a prize for Physiology or Medicine, was a researcher at Edinburgh in the early 1970s. He is one of three scientists recognised for their work in so-called circadian rhythms.

Winners of the Nobel Peace Prize, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), also have connections to the University. Read our interview with alumni Daniel Högsta and Dagmar Topf Aguiar de Medeiros on page 32.

More information: edin.ac/nobel
Honouring women’s health

The University received a prestigious Queen’s Anniversary Prize, recognising more than 40 years of research that has improved women’s health around the world.

Work by Edinburgh scientists has helped give millions of women access to safe and effective contraception; developed life-saving treatments for breast and ovarian cancer; cut rates of still births and improved treatments for pregnancy-related problems.

The Queen’s Anniversary Prizes are awarded every two years by The Queen on the Prime Minister’s advice. It is the third time in a row – and the fifth time ever – the University has received a Prize.

www.ed.ac.uk/centre-reproductive-health

Bill Gates visits Easter Bush

Bill Gates and Secretary of State Penny Mordaunt visited the University’s Easter Bush Campus, where The Roslin Institute is based, to discuss efforts to address challenges around livestock health and productivity.

During the visit, Penny Mordaunt announced an investment of £4 million from the Department for International Development to fund scientists in Scotland, Africa, Australia and the USA to tackle livestock farming challenges in sub-Saharan Africa. This latest investment builds on a £10 million award from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2015.

The event also celebrated the launch of the University’s new Global Academy of Agriculture and Food Security, which aims to provide world-leading research, innovation and learning in support of global food and environmental security, sustainable rural development, and animal and human wellbeing.

Full story: edin.ac/gates-visit

Our new Rector

Ann Henderson, lifelong campaigner for equality, fairness and social justice, was elected as the University’s 53rd Rector.

She became the second woman to hold the role since its creation in 1859. Muriel Gray was the first to do so in 1988.

Securing 2,324 votes in the Election of Rector 2018, she won 77 per cent of the vote to defeat fellow candidate Marco Bauder.
Boost for Edinburgh Futures

An anonymous donor pledged £10 million to support the University’s new Edinburgh Futures Institute, which brings together researchers from across the University with other partners to tackle major issues within the economy, education and societies across the world.

The gift – the biggest ever capital donation to the University – will help transform the city’s former Royal Infirmary into a state-of-the-art home for the Institute.

Vice-Principal Professor Dorothy Miell, Head of the College of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences, said: “The world is experiencing major changes: climate volatility, political discontent, advances in artificial intelligence, economic upheavals. We need different ways of thinking about these issues and of devising new solutions. Edinburgh Futures Institute will make that difference.”

www.efi.ed.ac.uk

Enlightened letters

An art installation created with hundreds of light bulbs spelling out the phrase “The basic material is not the word but the letter” was installed in the University’s Main Library.

The enigmatic new public artwork was created by Turner Prize-nominated artist Nathan Coley. Neil Lebeter, Art Collections Curator at the University of Edinburgh, said: “The work is the result of a long relationship with Nathan Coley, and it is fitting that we unveil the eye-catching artwork 50 years after the Main Library was built.”

Full story: edin.ac/library-lights

Costumes and choreography

Compelling outfits and dance inspired by the work of acclaimed artist Jenny Saville were part of a one-off performance at the Scottish National Gallery in Edinburgh.

Fragments & Gestures: Performing Jenny Saville featured BA (Hons) Dance students from Edinburgh College wearing outfits designed by Performance Costume Masters students at Edinburgh College of Art.

The students performed original work – which explored ideas related to the body, performance, process and materials – alongside the inspirational artworks from Jenny Saville and several of her artistic peers.

The event is part of an ongoing relationship between Edinburgh College of Art, Edinburgh College and the National Galleries of Scotland. Previous work has been based on the art of Louise Bourgeois and Roy Lichtenstein.

Full story: edin.ac/dance-costumes
Music in mind

Big names from Scotland’s music scene performed an intimate concert at the University’s St Cecilia’s Hall to benefit ground-breaking research into dementia.

Deacon Blue’s Ricky Ross joined Del Amitri’s Justin Currie, along with former Danny Wilson singer Gary Clark, for a one-off performance, entitled Songs in the Round.

The event was hosted by broadcaster and alumna Sally Magnusson, who founded the charity Playlist for Life in memory of her late mother. The charity, which promotes the use of music to help those living with dementia, has teamed up with the University’s Centre for Dementia Prevention to research the relationship between music and brain health. Proceeds from the gig will go towards supporting this project.

Read the Edit magazine feature A dementia-free future: edin.ac/edit-dementia

A trail into a lost world

Dozens of giant footprints were discovered by Edinburgh scientists on the north-east coast of the Isle of Skye.

The tracks, made some 170 million years ago, offer rare evidence of the Middle Jurassic period.

Paleontologist Dr Steve Brusatte, School of GeoSciences, explained: “This new site records two different types of dinosaurs – long-necked cousins of Brontosaurus and sharp-toothed cousins of Tyrannosaurus rex – hanging around a shallow lagoon, back when Scotland was much warmer and dinosaurs were beginning their march to global dominance.”

Full story: edin.ac/friends-jurassic-park

A healthy planet

Edinburgh hosted the second annual meeting of the Planetary Health Alliance.

The Planetary Health Alliance is a consortium of universities, NGOs and other partners committed to the protection of human and environmental health. Chaired by Professor Liz Grant, the three-day event brought together researchers, policymakers and communities from around the world to discuss ways to reduce threats to human and ecosystem wellbeing.

To promote the concept of planetary health, and to generate knowledge and action, there is a list of simple, achievable pledges that individuals or alumni clubs can sign up to online.

Full story: www.ed.ac.uk/edit-magazine/supplements

Commonwealth Games success

Elite athletes with University links helped Scotland to its most successful overseas Commonwealth Games, in Australia.

Leading sports men and women took nine medals, including gold, silver and bronze awards, at the Games. University swimmers and divers excelled in the pool, claiming a total of eight medals in a number of events, while a silver medal was won in the 400 metres hurdles. Sport science student Grace Reid (pictured) became the first Scottish female diver to win a medal at the Commonwealth Games, taking gold in the 1 metre springboard diving.

Full story: edin.ac/gold-coast
ON FULL POWER

By Dr Aileen Ballantyne
With only 11 per cent of the engineering workforce in the UK being female, the industry is still very much male-dominated. However, a group of alumnae recently returned to the University on a mission to empower the next generation of women in engineering. Here, they share their career experiences.

At the University of Edinburgh, 27 per cent of the engineering student body are women. This is an issue reflected across the engineering industry.

As part of the University’s drive to increase this figure, the School of Engineering recently hosted a Women in Engineering Careers Networking event as part of its 150th anniversary celebrations. Eight University of Edinburgh alumnae were invited to speak to female students, offering an outline of their careers since graduating and their tips for young women seeking to move into engineering jobs after they graduate. They were frank and honest with the students, outlining the challenges as well as the many creative and exciting opportunities that a career in engineering offers.

Several of the Edinburgh alumnae who spoke at the University careers event cited positive experiences at school as an important factor in their choice of engineering. For Denise Neill, Project Manager Non-Operated Ventures UK at Shell, who graduated in 1989, it all started with a creative teacher. “A teacher made chemistry interesting to me and made me think of it as a possible career choice,” she explained. “I liked the creative aspect of being able to make things from simple ingredients. I studied chemical engineering because it seemed to be the best way to turn my love of chemistry into a rewarding career. Shell provided an opportunity to join a company that valued diversity and offered opportunities to work abroad. Subliminally, I think I was also keen to push the boundaries of what was considered a normal career for a woman, just because I enjoy challenging perceptions.”

For fellow alumna Udita Banerjee, growing up in India in the 90s meant she felt she was at the heart of something new and exciting: “I was at the cusp of the technology boom that swept the entire world off its feet. Most children were encouraged to go into science and engineering because it meant a definite way to have a rewarding career, which in turn meant upward social mobility. I was naturally bright at maths and science at an early age and my parents and teachers kept encouraging the curiosity and feeding it, which pushed me to take up electronics at university level.”

Udita’s drive and ambition grew once she arrived at the University: “Edinburgh inspired me in many ways. I was determined to explore more of life here and made a place for myself as a graduate on the Royal Bank of Scotland Technology Services programme, one of the most competitive schemes to get on to. The University Careers Service mentored and encouraged me throughout the entire process.” Today, she has carved out a successful career in technology innovation, developing new customer propositions, organising hackathons and marketing new technologies such as application programming interfaces in banking.

While Udita was fortunate to be inspired by the people around her from an early age to become an engineer, not all graduates were quite so lucky. Jane Elliott, who also studied electronics at Edinburgh, explained: “I chose that degree based on the subjects I best enjoyed at school – physics and maths. When I told my physics teacher what I was planning, she said, “Why would you want to do that?” So I certainly wasn’t encouraged by my school to pursue a career in engineering!”

Jane didn’t let this deter her and since graduating has worked as a mixed signal integrated circuit designer for Motorola, Seagate, Wolfson, and currently Analog Devices, where she has been for 17 years.

The University recognises the importance of nurturing promising engineering students long before they choose a degree programme. As a result, the School of Engineering has become a core funder of Primary Engineer which will mean a big investment in engineering education in schools. In January, more than
30 teachers from 18 primary schools attended a launch event for the project at the University. Primary Engineer are a not-for-profit organisation working with local authorities, teachers and industry to promote engineering skills and careers with children as young as three years old, through primary and into secondary phase.

Also invited to the Women in Engineering event was Professor Dame Ann Dowling, the first female President of the Royal Academy of Engineering. Before delivering a Regius Engineering lecture she networked with the students, offering her own experiences and advice. Dame Ann – a world expert on efficient low emission combustion and the reduction of aircraft and road vehicle noise – stressed that progress for women in engineering is being hampered by several factors. She too shared the view that engineering needs to be made accessible to all from an early age.

“Education is the key to progress in any economy,” said Dame Ann. “I don’t think anyone here would dispute that. However, we still have a long way to go in ensuring that all young people have access to the right education and skills for them. Currently, not enough young people are given the opportunity to understand and explore what engineering really looks like and to pursue an educational path that allows them to take up a career in the profession.”

Olivia Sweeney, a recent chemical engineering graduate, believes the core skills of an engineer – problem solving, extrapolating from core principals to solve a new problem, creativity and interdisciplinary work – were what all young people needed when entering what is the unchartered territory of modern society. “Teaching needs to shift, as technology is moving at such a rapid rate.”

Olivia said she was inspired to become an engineer by the state our planet is in: “I was sick of reading about climate change, landfill build up and destruction of habitats, as well as reading false information may that be positive or negative. I was fed up of feeling so small in what is a global problem.”

After graduating she began working for handmade cosmetics company Lush as a Creative Buyer for Aroma Chemicals, a role that has given her the opportunity to promote the development of more environmentally friendly company products. She uses her chemical engineering knowledge to establish whether there is a better and safer synthetic which can be used by Lush, if there is a natural product which would be more effective, if the company can create products from its waste stream or work with a company to scale up a new sustainable supply chain.

As a recent graduate Olivia is, of course, focused on the future. However, when reflecting back on her time as an undergraduate, she said she has seen changes for the better at Edinburgh since she began her studies. “I have only been an engineer for five and a half years, and five of those were in University, which is an insular experience. There has been a shift though, I think, even in that time.”

“Having come back to the University after graduating for this event and speaking to a number of students there is a greater diversity of people present in this field.” Olivia explained: “My year had an OK gender balance (70:30 ish), though this got significantly worse in our Masters year, but I, as a mixed race woman, was in an even greater minority. Engineering has always been popular but chemical engineering is a young discipline, and the increased investment in this subject speaks to both its popularity and its relevance in today’s society.”

Workwise, too, it seems, attitudes to women engineers have begun to change. Denise Neill said: “When I started work, I think there was a lot more tolerance of poor performance in men while high-performing women were overlooked. True recognition of workplace performance has become

“In a world where it can seem that opinions are formed, and decisions made, based on who shouts the loudest rather than who makes the most reasoned and best supported argument, a little more engineering rationale could do us all some good.”

Jane Elliott
more balanced since then, although I think there is still some way to go.”

Asked if her professional abilities had ever been questioned on the basis of gender and, if so, what she did about it, Denise replied: “I couldn’t say that I’ve ever had anyone doubt my judgement because of my gender but I think that I may have reserved my judgement more than my male counterparts. It is typical female behaviour to reserve judgement until you are sure, while men tend to be more willing to share ideas that are less fully formed.”

Sam (Samantha) Ella, who graduated in 2010 and now works as a Project Civil Engineer at Vestas, a company which designs, manufactures and installs wind turbines globally, has had a similar experience – but only once. “A colleague said I wouldn’t understand something as I wasn’t an engineer. I firmly but politely told him that I have two engineering degrees, that if I didn’t understand it wasn’t my fault but his for not explaining it and that he could shove off (imagine more colourful Scottish language here). This worked as we were both on the same level and we worked well and closely together after this.”

Asked what she found to work, in practical terms, to overcome prejudice in work situations, Sam said: “Sometimes I can start to feel an older male engineer talking down to me a little, or trying to get one over on me, especially when they first meet me, but you firmly and politely hold your line and smile and they realise you aren’t just a skirt. It helps that I usually throw in some sarcasm here, too. Engineers love sarcasm.”

Mechanical engineering alumna Sara Kheradmand (MSc 2003), who is now a partner at Max Fordham LLP, has also found ways to tackle preconceptions: “I find that you have to prove yourself more as a woman. I am 38, but have a baby face so that does not help matters. But once people know you it’s a different story. I find sometimes it’s easier if they have met me on the phone and via email and then met me in person.”

So what are the ambitions of these pioneering women about how engineering can achieve positive changes in our world in the future? Sara put it succinctly: “I think engineers are good organisers. They see the world as a series of steps, action/reaction, problem/solution, and can therefore definitely achieve positive changes in the world if they put their minds to it.”

Jane also sees the thought process involved in engineering as something to be valued. Looking ahead, she hopes this could have huge universal benefits, as she explains: “If I were to choose an ambition for engineering, it would be for an engineering attitude to become more valued in society. By its very nature, engineering involves compromises in reaching a solution, while basing the process of getting there on verifiable facts. In a world where it can seem that opinions are formed, and decisions made, based on who shouts the loudest rather than who makes the most reasoned and best supported argument, a little more engineering rationale could do us all some good.”

For Sam, the possibilities are far-reaching – yet practical – in terms of how engineering is changing the world: “It’s the everyday people working closely with different fields and scientists to share knowledge and ideas that have managed to build machines that will defy gravity, eradicate many deadly diseases or manage others, send men and women into space, power the world and create land and links where there was none. We just need to keep going. And maybe if someone could invent the flying car soon that would be great, I hate traffic.”

Engineering graduates are welcome to attend an alumni weekend on 5 and 6 October 2018. More details at engineering150.eng.ed.ac.uk

Alumna Dr Aileen Ballantyne, PhD Creative Writing and Modern Poetry (2014), is a former Medical Correspondent for the Guardian and The Sunday Times. She has twice been commended in the British Press Awards for her investigative journalism.
Engineering alumnas Jane, Sara, Udita, Olivia and Sam, pictured in one of the recently renovated spaces beneath the McEwan Hall and on page 08 in the refurbished Robing Room.
The future of keeping data safe

By Corin Campbell
A wave of recent high-profile breaches, including the Facebook data scandal, alleged election hacking and cyberattacks targeting NHS patient records, have thrust the complex issue of data security and ethical behaviour to the forefront of public consciousness. The time is right to use this awareness to embrace the conversation and take the opportunity to share expertise.

Here’s how innovation is helping to upgrade safety and upskill people in our data-driven world.

“As recent events have shown, in the arena of data security and the ethical use of data, it is easy to lose public trust and difficult to regain it once lost. This highlights the vital importance of having robust systems in place to protect and govern the use of personal data,” says Professor Mark Parsons, Director of EPCC (the Edinburgh Parallel Computing Centre) a supercomputing hub at the University. “Building on its decades of world-class experience in data science, the University has an opportunity to lead the way in developing new ethical, regulatory, privacy and security standards for the management of data.”

The University has a wealth of expertise in data science. The School of Informatics is one of the world’s best, and was ranked first among UK universities in the 2014 REF assessment for computer science and informatics. EPCC has also gained an international reputation, with almost 30 years’ experience working at the leading edge of high-performance computing and data analytics. It is also home to ARCHER, the UK’s national supercomputing service.

A number of projects in recent years have demonstrated the University’s expertise in driving innovations in various aspects of cyber security. For example, Professor Charles Raab in the School of Social and Political Science was a leading participant in PRISMS, a European project that conducted key large-scale survey work on public attitudes to privacy and security. The results were fed into evidence given to an inquiry by the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament.

A series of projects by the Mobility and Security group in the School of Informatics has resulted in practical tools and one spin-out company, with the aim of providing ways for programmers to ensure their code is free from flaws that lead to security vulnerabilities. Elsewhere in Informatics, Professor Aggelos Kiayias is behind work to design electronic voting systems that are more secure and have greater privacy protection.

In 2017, the University became the first institution in Scotland to win government recognition as an Academic Centre of Excellence for Cyber Security Research (ACE-CSR), one of only 14 in the UK. The ACE-CSR universities specialise in developing the latest cyber security techniques, and contribute to the UK’s increasing knowledge and capability in the field.

With 22 academic leaders working across themes in cyber security, privacy and trust, the University is ideally placed to guide innovations in the field. Professor David Aspinall, Personal Chair in Software Safety and Security, and Director of the Edinburgh ACE-CSR, explains that ideas are being combined ranging from quantum security to privacy-enhanced data analytics for the Internet of Things:

“Multidisciplinarity is a hallmark of the University’s approach to cyber security and it’s needed to solve this complex, global challenge which involves people and their behaviour as much as it involves technology. We are bringing together researchers from informatics, mathematics, engineering, law, sociology, politics and design to share understanding and find novel solutions together.”

“Students are also becoming increasingly cyber-savvy,” says Professor Aspinall. One example is the SIGINT society, which has been particularly successful in fielding teams taking part in cyber security competitions, including in 2018 winning the top prize in the largest UK-wide contest between ACE-CSR universities.

The University’s work in the area of digital security is set to expand through its involvement in a major government project to stimulate growth of the digital economy in Scotland.

As part of the £1.1 billion Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal, the University’s Data-Driven Innovation (DDI) programme aims to make a long-lasting contribution to the economic and social development of the region, establishing it as the data capital of Europe.

The programme is expected to benefit a range of sectors – including health and social care, financial services, tourism and festivals – by delivering a raft of activities to support data-driven
innovation, from research to entrepreneurship and company formation.

It will build on the University’s proven track record of developing systems that enable research using personal data ethically while safeguarding its privacy and maintaining public trust and support. EPCC is responsible for building, supporting and hosting the infrastructure for the Scottish National Data Safe Haven, through which vital health research is carried out using NHS patient and other public data.

At the heart of the DDI programme will be the World-Class Data Infrastructure, a state-of-the-art computing facility that will support all aspects of the programme, including managing sensitive data sets from across the region and around the world.

All of this work will be underpinned by robust data governance, as Professor Parsons explains: “The University will harness its expertise in data security to find solutions to the ethical, privacy and regulatory challenges of managing data sets. In doing so, we aim to enable innovative research and development that involves the use of digital data, while ensuring that public trust and personal privacy is maintained.”

As well as developing sophisticated new ways of protecting personal information, other DDI initiatives will deliver data science training to address a digital skills shortage in Scotland and help all citizens in the region adapt to the data economy. Over 10 years, the programme will aim to provide 100,000 people with a formal certification that has a data science component.

“This is about empowering people to become much more data literate, from PhD students to schoolchildren or people doing an online course. The aim is to grow the level of understanding about data among the general population. As well as helping to meet a key skills shortage, this will enable people to make better-informed decisions concerning their personal information and understand more about how their data is used,” says Professor Parsons.

These developments come as European data privacy laws are being overhauled through the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which is designed to ensure legislation to protect people’s personal data keeps pace with the latest technological advances.

At a time when digital security continues to make global headlines, the University is helping to create the tools needed to safely and securely reap the benefits of living in a data-driven world.

Find out more:
www.ed.ac.uk/local/city-region-deal
www.epcc.ed.ac.uk
www.ed.ac.uk/cyber-security-privacy
www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/gdpr

Corin Campbell graduated from the University of Glasgow in 2005 with a BSc in Biochemistry, and holds a MSc in Science Communication and Public Engagement from the University of Edinburgh. He is currently a PR and Media Manager for the University of Edinburgh.

Artwork by Edinburgh College of Art Illustration student Kristina Kapeljuh.
THE

LANGUAGE

OF MUSIC

By Christina Bain
The refugee crisis has shocked the world. The media has been flooded with images of waves of humanity being driven from their homes and crossing treacherous seas in the hope of finding some relief from the torments of war.

Refugee camps have sprung into existence along this long escape route. Greece, being the first EU landing point for many boats, has seen its population explode as more and more desperate people have clambered to its shores.

Two years ago, in my role as a tutor on the Music in the Community course at Edinburgh College of Art, I travelled to some of the refugee camps in Greece and met the children who live in them.

The language of music

The Music in the Community Senior Lecturer, Dee Isaacs, had embarked on a pilot project with the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, and led a team of music students and staff to work with the children in the camps, through a series of workshops.

Music in the Community emerges at an influential meeting point of a number of diverse concerns including: performance arts outreach, community development, creative arts therapies and conflict resolution.

Dee had composed a musical adaptation of Tin Forest by Helen Ward. The story is of a man who builds a forest from the junk around him. This becomes so beautiful that eventually the birds come, dropping seeds and bringing his forest to life. The students I was tutoring, had been developing their community workshop skills over two years on the course. Now, they could really put them into action seeing just how much impact music can have on children in the most desperate situations.

We began working in Eleonas, a camp in Athens' industrial district. Behind high walls and wire fences are hundreds of metal trailers surrounded by nothing but concrete. The trailers are luxurious compared to the tents and makeshift shelters that are found in the unofficial camps. As a relatively well-funded camp, there is food, water and air-conditioning – a necessity in temperatures of over 40°C.

In the centre of the compound is a large white tent where we gathered the children. The tent is an airless furnace but outside there is no shade and the sun is unrelenting. The children were full of energy and curiosity. It was instantly apparent that, even though the camp meets most of their basic needs, they were craving other interaction and stimuli. The hyperactive energy radiating from the children is common in those who have suffered trauma; this energy can be impulsive and unpredictable. Fights between the children are frequent and can spark out of nowhere. This ferocity dissipates as quickly as it arises and it is clear these children struggle to process and understand their emotions. They have been robbed of a structured environment in which to learn the boundaries of social interaction.

Music is a powerful tool for encouraging socialisation and positive interaction. It can be used to create a
The children took great joy in learning the songs together. Also within our team were artists and dancers who helped bring the story and music to life through creativity and movement. Still the difficulties these children face were always apparent and the fragility of the calm and focus we strived to create was all too evident. The openness of the tent meant distractions and interruptions were frequent. This made the construction of a safe, focused and creative environment incredibly difficult. These children are constantly surrounded by unpredictability; it is little wonder their moods can alter so swiftly.

We saw them come together and build a mural of colours and images, each contributing to the whole with such care and consideration, only to attempt to destroy their own beautiful work moments later. This sudden destructiveness is another indicator of trauma: the fear of losing anything they consider good and positive incites the traumatised child to destroy it themselves before anyone else can.

In this life devoid of structure and focus, participating in the project and putting together our show brought some relief, however temporary, from the day-to-day hardships the children face. Children from Iraq, Iran, Syria, Sudan, Afghanistan and many more places, were able to sing, play and come together in a safe, neutral environment.

The joy the music brought was undeniable. This was exemplified by our visit to an unofficial camp set up in the disused airport – Elliniko. The authorities couldn’t grant us access to the inside so, undeterred, we stood in the old car park (now a sea of shanty structures) and brought out our instruments. We began playing. As if by magic children emerged from all around to listen. Their parents joined them and soon we were performing our show for an ever-growing group of camp residents. Dee led the audience in call and response participation – a technique used frequently in workshops – and suddenly we were all linked by musical interaction.

We returned to Greece last summer, bringing a series of songs from all over the world to the camps. We had worked with these songs in Leith Walk Primary School in Edinburgh, as part of a production in March 2016 called *Postcards from Our World*. This production encouraged the local children to think of the concept of home and what that meant to them. Leith Walk has one of the most culturally diverse catchments in Edinburgh and the project encouraged the children to explore different countries and cultures through song. Many of the songs featured in *Postcards* were from the same countries as the refugee children in the Athens camps.

We took *Postcards from Our World* to Skaramagas, another camp near the Athens docks guarded by the navy. Miles from the city centre, surrounded by barbed wire fences, on another concrete wasteland are yet more rows of metal huts housing around 3,500 people.

The children gathered around our huge map of the world. Each song’s origin was marked and the children drew lines between them as we travelled the globe in our imaginations. Their enthusiasm for the songs was incredible. Their curiosity was boundless as they explored the music and instruments. We had to take great care as their eagerness verged on the brink of chaos. Words are not a reliable form of communication in a group of at least five native languages, but through different musical moods we were able to direct the energy, maintain focus and transcend the language barrier. We saw how music facilitates positive shared experience and creativity in places where such interactions can be rare.

Seeing the children – many of them unaccompanied minors – was shocking. Some that we had met in 2016 were still there. Those that had told us tales of how they were “on their way to Germany/UK/France tomorrow” were still here a year later. This stagnancy is deeply demoralising for them. They have no money. They cannot go on and they cannot go home. This fenced-in community is it. They have food, water and shelter but they have no hope. Without hope of progress it is difficult to fight apathy or worse, anger at the great injustice of circumstance. The camps are full of people who used to lead productive lives, many of them professionals and academics now unable to utilise their skills. Their frustration is palpable.

By taking our Music in the Community course out of the art college we have a unique opportunity to work closely with communities around the world. Going into these camps, meeting these people, learning, singing, sharing and creating music with them allowed us to see the real people behind the statistics. They sang us songs from their homelands and told us of their hopes for the future. They are not numbers but human beings in need of more than just sustenance and shelter.

Music in the Community will return to work in Greece this summer.
Christina Bain (BMus) graduated from ECA in 2012. As a student she was involved in Music in the Community workshops, working with Nigel Osbourne in the Balkans and Dee Isaacs in The Gambia, before becoming a Tutor on the course after graduation. Her area of academic research is the role music can play in post-conflict social reconstruction. She is pictured here with a fellow music-maker, in Skaramagas in 2017.

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“Children from Iraq, Iran, Syria, Sudan, Afghanistan and many more places, were able to sing, play and come together in a safe, neutral environment.”
Who wants to be a GP?

By Dr Jen Middleton
As the NHS prepares to turn 70 in July, looming staff shortages mean the future of the National Health Service may be more insecure than ever. Concerns are acute in primary care, with the number of General Practitioners (GPs) shrinking following years of underinvestment. Workloads are growing while budgets are falling, and yet some of our best students remain dedicated to carrying out this essential community role. We find out why.
Experts have been warning of an impending crisis in general practice for several years. Family doctors bear the brunt of increasing demand on NHS services and these mounting pressures have led to something of an exodus from the profession.

Figures show the number of whole-time equivalent GPs in England fell by more than 8 per cent between 2013 and 2017. In Scotland, numbers fell by around 4 per cent over the same time period. Practices are struggling to train and retain new talent while many GPs are choosing to retire early, citing stress and fatigue.

The decline in GP numbers comes at a time when demand for general practice continues to grow. The average member of the public now sees a GP six times a year, double the number of visits from a decade ago.

Diseases that were previously treated by specialists are increasingly being cared for in general practice to reduce pressure on struggling hospital departments. Cases are also becoming more complex as Britain’s ageing population means that more people are living with multiple illnesses.

But there is hope that the tide may be turning. New contracts came into force in April, bringing £256 million additional investment in services in England and £23 million in Scotland. The increases may seem marginal compared to the overall budgets, but the funds are expected to go some way to addressing the pressures faced by GPs and attracting new talent.

Edinburgh Medical School has been a pioneer in the training of family doctors since it launched the world’s first independent academic department in general practice in 1963. Here, today’s medical students and graduates share their passion for their chosen profession.

Conor Foley
5th-year medical student and Co-President of the Edinburgh University GP Society

Why do you want to be a GP?
I think it is a brilliant job; an essential one and one that is endlessly interesting and challenging. Being a GP, you have to know a bit about everything. After studying for so many years it seems ridiculous to slowly forget most of what you’ve learnt. Academia in general is becoming super specialised and I think remaining general is brilliant. What’s more, academic general practice is a rapidly growing field as generalists are needed more and more to deal with difficult patients under the care of several specialties.

How do you see the future of general practice in the UK?
I see it as essential for the NHS, but things will certainly change. Technology is drastically changing medicine. Widespread use of triage systems in the future is a given, and it is possible even that some specialist’s roles will be replaced by AI (artificial intelligence). This will require GPs to fill the niche of orchestrating these systems. I think that’s pretty scary, but incredibly exciting.
Alice Harper
5th-year medical student and
Edinburgh University GP Society
Events Coordinator

Why do you want to be a GP?
I have really enjoyed most of my rotations throughout medical school and I like the idea of becoming an expert generalist and maintaining a variable career with a wider medical focus. A career in general practice also enables one to specialise in selected areas throughout their career and this flexibility also appeals to me.

How do you see the future of general practice in the UK?
I think we will see more multicentre community hubs with improved interdisciplinary working. I would also like to see more focus on preventative and lifestyle medicine, with patients taking increased responsibility for their own health. GPs will also have to embrace advances in technology and hopefully such advances will come with improved integration of IT systems and care pathways.

Callum Innes
5th-year medical student

Why do you want to be a GP?
I like the idea of being able to use all the skills I’ve learned at university. At the same time, being a GP offers the opportunity to specialise and take your own personal interests a bit further by running your own clinics. I’m also attracted to the work-life balance and the ability to be a bit more flexible with how you work. And, of course, the role a GP plays in the lives of their patients is very rewarding.

How do you see the future of general practice in the UK?
I can see a lot more GPs following a career where they are part time at their surgery and have a part-time role in a hospital doing a specialist interest. We may also see a switch to video consultations from home, in certain situations. But we need more people wanting to do the job. For that I think we need earlier exposure in medical schools. We also need to tackle the perception that being a GP is a boring or easy option.
Tricia Donald
Graduated in 1977 and became a partner in general practice in 1981

What do you love about your job?
I love the privilege of walking alongside patients and their families through their lives. I am very passionate about general practice. I’ve had a great career. I’ve been involved not only at the practice level but at local and national level. There’s huge opportunity to have a very varied career, with flexible working and quality of life.

How has the role of GP changed over the decades?
I think it’s exciting that it does change. You don’t get stuck as there are always opportunities. The whole environment is reinvented and there is constant innovation in the profession. One example is our work with multidisciplinary teams. Patients that were previously dealt with by the doctor can now be treated directly by nurses and physios, for example.

Anup Patel
Graduated in 2006, became a GP in 2013

What do you love about your job?
It is the interaction with each individual and learning more about their own specific circumstances that makes general practice interesting, and that’s what I love about it. Having this context helps us provide tailored guidance that can lead to meaningful change or a lasting benefit to a person’s life. Currently I am the GP clinical lead for musculoskeletal medicine (MSK) in the London boroughs of Islington and Haringey. In this post I am responsible for shaping MSK services for the half a million people living in these two boroughs. Helping influence and improve the health of my individual patients, but also our population as a whole, is a great privilege.

Why is it important that the role of the GP continues in the UK?
Without GPs I believe the numbers of secondary care doctors would have to expand many fold, and the NHS would never be able to cope with this. It could easily lead to patients having investigations and interventions that they might not need, as secondary care doctors are not used to managing uncertainty like a GP is. Just as our secondary care colleagues are expert specialists, GPs are expert generalists. GPs’ skills are varied and wide, and our role helps make the NHS one of the most efficient health services in the world.
Dr Jen Middleton graduated from Edinburgh in 2004, with a first-class honours degree in immunology. She received her PhD from the University of Nottingham and has worked across a number of leading bodies as an expert science communicator. She is currently a PR & Media Manager for the University of Edinburgh.

Laura Chiwanda
Graduated in 2010, became a GP in 2017

What do you love about your job?
I like the follow up and that you see results of what you’ve been trying to achieve. You really do see people from birth to death. I also like the work-life balance. There are opportunities to go part time or to have special interests, for example. If you were looking at a hospital speciality and thinking it might be for you, but you want to keep variety in your job, you can become a GP with a special interest. You could work in a hospital one or two days a week. There’s lots of things you can do within general practice.

Why is it important that the role of the GP continues in the UK?
We’re a single point of care. So much of the workload is being shifted from hospitals onto us. It’s maybe a bit more than we can handle at the moment but it’s important because otherwise acute care services just wouldn’t function.

£256 million investment in services in England and £23 million in Scotland agreed in 2018.
#STILL MARCHING
Great granddaughter of Emmeline Pankhurst and granddaughter of Sylvia Pankhurst, Dr Helen Pankhurst graduated from Edinburgh in 1990. She studied for her social science doctorate and went on to become one of the UK’s foremost campaigners for equal rights. She is now Senior Advisor at CARE International, and Board Member of Action Aid. Here she shares with Edit her thoughts on gender equality in 2018.

How much have women’s lives changed over the last century; how far have we come in terms of women’s rights? What would the suffragettes make of the progress and the world today? Where have we advanced the most, where are the blockages? Who has benefited the most or the least?

These questions in various forms are the ones I’m often asked, as the great granddaughter of Emmeline and granddaughter of Sylvia Pankhurst. They were the leaders of the WSPU, the Women’s Social and Political Union, with those involved better known as the suffragettes – a diminutive nickname given by the Daily Mail – but one they embraced. They put a stamp on the world because of their persistence in the demand for the vote, their refusal to be silenced and their increasingly militant tactics in the context of some political dinosaurs and an intransigent state.

The Edit Opinion piece
By Dr Helen Pankhurst
"I wasn’t allowed to take chemistry O level and was told that I had to do needlework instead. I’m proud of my ‘U’ (unclassified) gained at the end of the course. In the written paper I was asked: Your husband is going on a business trip, what do you pack for him? My answer: I don’t, he does it himself. I wasn’t trying to be clever, it just had no connection with my life – my dad was an electrician, when would he ever go on a ‘business’ trip? I was meant to say that I would pack his socks into his shoes, which would be at the bottom of the suitcase. This was 1981! I am very proud of my younger self.”

Dr Liz Chamberlain, The Open University

In advance of the centenary of the People’s Representation Action 1918, when some women finally gained a parliamentary vote in Britain, I thought it was time to answer the questions of how far we have come, in some depth. The result is a book published to coincide with the centenary of that pivotal but partial vote, entitled Deeds Not Words: the Story of Women’s Rights, Then and Now. It starts with a personal reflection about the suffragette story and why 100 years on, the suffragettes continue to inspire. The slogans ‘Deeds Not Words’ and ‘Votes For Women’ were the hashtags of their day; the suffragette branding so strong that even now their colours of purple, green and white have become symbols of feminism taken up by many organisations – including the Women’s Equality Party. Formed in 2015, by UK writer and presenter Sandi Toksvig, the party came about because, in her words: “… As I’m talking [about the suffragettes], what I realised was, this was not a history I was giving, this was not something where the job was done, this was something where there is so much still to do.”

No doubt much has changed in 100 years. In the political sphere women are in leadership positions, they make up 32 per cent of the House of Commons and 26 per cent of the House of Lords, with generally higher figures in the devolved administrations. Figures of around a third apply in the economic sphere and in cultural spaces. However, we are talking about a 100-year time frame. In terms of political representation, what we have is around 0.3 per cent increase per year… not exactly impressive transformation. Globally the UK is ranked 39th in the world, again not a particularly proud position to be in, for a country that prides itself on its democracy.

Similarly, women entering formal workplaces, previously barred to them, have transformed the world of work. (Though depending on time and place, many working-class women always worked outside the domestic sphere.) But education expands opportunities. Yet I was entertained and shocked by many an anecdote, for example from The Open University’s Dr Liz Chamberlain who shared with me: “I wasn’t allowed to take chemistry O level and was told that I had to do needlework instead. I’m proud of my ‘U’ (unclassified) gained at the end of the course. In the written paper I was asked: Your husband is going on a business trip, what do you pack for him? My answer: I don’t, he does it himself. I wasn’t trying to be clever, it just had no connection with my life – my dad was an electrician, when would he ever go on a ‘business’ trip? I was meant to say that I would pack his socks into his shoes, which would be at the bottom of the suitcase. This was 1981! I am very proud of my younger self.”

The labour market remains doggedly segmented with women predominating in lower pay and public sector jobs, and even in feminised jobs, men managing to dominate at the very top. The wage gap increases over age and glass ceilings continue to define the workplace, as does precarious at work for the very poorest.

Yet our lives have lengthened, domestic chores reduced, the options of whether and whom to marry, whether and when to have children and many other aspects of our personal lives show more choices and a greater sense of agency, though our reproductive rights remain constrained in some parts of the UK – least so in Scotland, which leads the way in de-medicalising abortion for example.
We are also more visible in the public sphere. Francis Morris, Director of Tate Modern, recently reflected: “There is something powerful about my generation of women, who have been brought up with gender bias from birth regulating our personal and professional lives, and finding – not surprisingly – that now, empowered as a result of largely our own actions, we need a different way forward, as leaders, managers and colleagues. After so long on the margins this is gratifying. The margins are the place in the forest where the great mushrooms grow, in soil that has been raked over and disturbed but often disregarded. My generation has likewise been somewhat trampled, but like the best mushrooms in the margins we are now showing our heads.”

The area that keeps pulling us down is undoubtedly the fact that violence against women is still all-pervasive. Women’s experiences of violence infected every chapter of my writing. It was there in politics, in work, in the home, in social spaces and has morphed into new forms through social media and the growth of sexualised images and of pornography. A very simple scoring – a device to compare progress in the different chapters – reinforced this, as have discussions with countless women and girls since the book was published. How far have we really travelled, how much power do women really have, if targeted gendered harassment and violence – the expression of brute force – continues to be normalised and experienced by millions of women and girls?

Overall, although we have moved forward in many aspects of women’s lives, I doubt whether the suffragettes would be that impressed. Moreover, when I discussed this with Mitch Egan, of England’s National Offender Management Service, she warned: “Change can sometimes be of the elastic band kind. You take the strain and stretch forward for progress. You begin to see real change, new motivations, a future. And then you ease the pressure – you tire, you’re moved to a new post, vital funding is cut. And the elastic band does what it does best, snaps back to its original shape. You just can’t let up the pressure, can’t relax, can’t ever believe the job is done. And that’s the mistake feminists and feminist institutions make, believing that an issue is solved, and it’s OK to take your eye off the ball.”

We must keep our eye on the ball and in this centenary year of all years, the suffragettes would be chivvying us on. They would also recognise that there is something in the air in the UK and more globally. On the one hand this includes the threat by new political dinosaurs, with their ideas and policies promoting male privilege and entitlement, and on the other hand the increasing visibility of those who are saying enough is enough and who are re-imagining an alternative. This includes #MeToo and #TimesUp, gender pay related activism, the growing acknowledgement of privilege and vulnerabilities due to different identities, i.e. to intersectionality, and the challenge to the simple gender binary. This new force, challenging the injustices and hierarchies of old, feels like a rebirth of the suffragette spirit of resistance and defiance. This time the campaign is not the demand for a single law, it is the demand for a change in culture, in behaviours and practices.

Let us hope for success, that the new spirit can sweep away all the powerful vestiges of what should be a bygone age. And if there is one last thing the suffrage campaigners can teach us, it is that sustained activism will be needed and that there will be many false dawns along the way. We have 10 years until the centenary of equal voting rights that was granted in 1928. Ten years to develop cultures, behaviours and practices that will transform society into one that truly gives the same opportunities to every little child and every adult, regardless of their gender.

Deeds Not Words: The Story of Women’s Rights, Then and Now is published by Sceptre. All quotes in this article are from the book. @HelenPankhurst, #March4Women #StillMarching #DeedsNotWords

“There is something powerful about my generation of women, who have been brought up with gender bias from birth regulating our personal and professional lives, and finding – not surprisingly – that now, empowered as a result of largely our own actions, we need a different way forward, as leaders, managers and colleagues.”

Francis Morris, Director of Tate Modern
From
Old College
to Oslo
The Edit
interview

By Barbara Morgan
In 2017 the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to ICAN, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons; the organisation where Daniel Högsta had spent the past five years, hard at work, after graduating from Edinburgh Law School in 2012. In the summer of 2016 Dagmar Topf Aguiar de Medeiros, currently pursuing her PhD at the Law School, also became fully engaged in ICAN’s mission, during her internship with the small, yet clearly very effective, Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO).

The Nobel committee awarded the Peace Prize to ICAN at a ceremony in Norway for ‘its work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons’. The United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was passed on 7 July 2017. It is the first legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons. Its goal is their total elimination.

Here, in the Edit interview, we find out more about Daniel and Dagmar, and their incredible experiences in playing a part in this dramatic shift in international law.

BM: You’ve both been closely involved in the work of ICAN, and in turn, contributed directly to ICAN winning the Nobel Peace Prize. Can you tell Edit readers how you arrived at the decision to work for the organisation?

Daniel: I went through a bit of a crisis towards the end of my degree programme, knowing that practising law in Scotland didn’t feel right for me. So I applied for a bunch of internships and as I was walking out of my Property Law 2 exam, wondering what would become of me, I got a phone call from ICAN. My application had been passed to them by another organisation that I’d applied for. They liked my profile and threw me into their application pool. After a couple of interviews, I got the job! Crazy how it can work out like that.

Dagmar: When I first moved to Edinburgh I decided to join United Nations House Scotland as a research intern, because they provided me with the opportunity to get valuable experience working with NGOs and because it was a great way to meet people with shared interests. One of the first projects I got involved in was the organisation of a conference on Scotland’s position in relation to nuclear weapons. From this the opportunity arose to be a part of the Scottish delegation to the headquarters of the United Nations (UN) in New York to attend the negotiations of what is now the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. In New York I first got to experience working closely with ICAN.

BM: How important was it for you to be involved with that particular NGO, what chimed for you between ICAN’s purpose and your own personal ambitions?

Daniel: From the first day at ICAN I realised – from observing my colleagues, to reading the strategy and getting to know the board members – I’d landed somewhere really exciting. I started as an intern, not knowing how long I’d be able to stay. Three months? Six? But I just got stuck into the work and helped out where I could across all aspects of the organisation: advocacy, communications, administration, finance. My colleagues believed in me and after about a year, I became responsible for the coordination of our lobbying activities and for the coordination of ICAN’s partnership network (currently 468 partners in 101 countries).

Dagmar: I was very impressed by ICAN’s inclusiveness. Everyone was encouraged to contribute. The traditional discourse surrounding nuclear weapons has been one of fear, mistrust, and defensiveness. ICAN’s positive attitude and humanitarian focus were able to draw people into their reframed narrative and encouraged engagement with all and any actors. This inclusive approach is something I value very much and feel strongly about. I feel inspired to think of all the things that might be achieved if we can view people’s differences in terms of insights they can bring to the table, rather than as a cause for division.

BM: What have been the stand-out moments working on the campaign?

Daniel: By far the most exciting time for me at ICAN was the process of negotiations at the UN. Our role was to ensure the resultant treaty was as good as it could be, which meant a lot of co-ordinated lobbying work. We’d worked for five years to prepare the ground for the negotiations. It was such a buzz to be able to see the treaty become a reality after all that time.

Dagmar: Yes, having the opportunity to work in that environment and connect with so many NGOs from around the world was definitely a stand-out moment.

BM: Daniel, can you tell us how it felt to attend the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony and be taking part in such a high-profile global event?

The whole process of preparing for Oslo was definitely a nerve-racking but really exciting experience. Our work had largely been in the UN sphere previously, so the Nobel weekend felt like we were introducing ourselves to the world. We received some pointers from the Nobel Committee, they were really supportive and they totally got us, which was amazing. How did they manage to learn so much about us before the announcement without us knowing? It was really impressive.

I was actually nervous the whole weekend. But as soon as I heard my boss, Beatrice Fihn, utter the first couple of sentences of her speech, I knew that she was going to own it. And she did! The rest of the time was a blur, but obviously meeting the singer John Legend and dining with the King and Queen of Norway stick out in my mind.
my legal knowledge and research skills. In my free time I continue to be involved with various NGOs in Scotland. While I’ve not yet decided on exactly what type of job I want, I do know that I would like it to be something that involves research, social engagement and interaction.

Daniel, you graduated some years ago of course. Can you tell us about any favourite memories of your time at Edinburgh?

I have to give a special acknowledgement to Professor James Harrison who was one of the professors on my Public International Law course. I doubt he remembers me, but I remember asking him for advice in the stairwell leading up to the library in Old College. I asked him what to do if I wanted to pursue a career related to international law and he said that I should try to get an internship in a small NGO where I could get stuck into the day-to-day work and see how civil society operates. Interns at small organisations tend to be given a lot more responsibility than they are at an institution like the UN, where there is really high turnover. He mentioned that he had done something similar while he was in his early 20s. That stuck with me and was basically the reason I started to apply for various internships in Geneva after I graduated. I hope I get to thank him in person one day.

BM: Going back in time, can you recall what inspired you to study law in the first place?

Dagmar: I decided I wanted to study law when I was 15 and was choosing my subjects for A level. I was interested in studying law because of my international background. I have three nationalities (American, German, Portuguese) and growing up I lived in the US, Germany, the Netherlands and England. Every time I moved, I would observe and adapt to my environment. This made me very curious about the structures, rules and machineries of different societies. Studying law seemed like a great place to start looking for answers.

Daniel: While I wasn’t sure about actually going into legal practice, I felt that studying law would give me several options. My initial thought was to go into the humanitarian field with an institution like the Red Cross or one of the UN agencies, with a view to doing fieldwork, and I’d learned that a law degree and the skills you learn in studying law would be useful across a range of careers.

BM: And why Edinburgh?

Daniel: I had spent a year abroad at the University of St Andrews during my undergraduate studies, so I was already drawn to living and studying in Scotland and I was obviously very attracted to the idea of studying law at Edinburgh, given its standing.

Dagmar: Aside from a two-day trip to Edinburgh with some friends in 2013, I had never been in Scotland before. I did my undergraduate and masters degrees in the Netherlands. For my PhD, Edinburgh was my university of choice. While preparing my research proposal for the PhD, I read many publications by members of the Law School, so – while I had also been accepted elsewhere – I was incredibly pleased when I received my offer from Edinburgh.

Dagmar, your PhD will be all-encompassing right now, but what are you starting to think about for post-publication of your thesis?

At the moment I am still spoilt for choice! In addition to the research and writing I do for my thesis, I am also employed by the University as a tutor. I enjoy teaching because of the interaction I get with the students. In addition, I also have two research assistant jobs and I greatly enjoy the combination of practical work and being able to use
Prize, this perception changed, nuclear disarmament began to be perceived as more realistic and increasingly desirable.

BM: And how have things changed for you personally?

Dagmar: I still try to engage people on the topic of nuclear disarmament – when the context is relevant! Also, I wear my ICAN pin badge with a lot of pride, which I guess is a non-verbal communication of my involvement with ICAN.

Daniel: I’ve always found it awkward to say to people that I work in nuclear disarmament because one tends to get somewhat quizzical looks. Obviously, being part of the gang that won the Nobel Peace Prize was a totally mad thing. It feels strange though – I really try not to mention it. My mother has already seemingly blanketed social media with her own promotion efforts. Ha! Ha!

BM: You’ve both achieved so much already. What do you want to do next?

Dagmar: The next step is to continue to raise awareness of the Treaty and the next big challenge is to ensure it enters into force. After that, implementation of the framework and further development of regulations need to be tackled. In Scotland in particular we face some interesting challenges. While Scotland’s First Minister Nicola Sturgeon backed the Treaty, Scotland is not in a position to sign and ratify it, as only Westminster can do this.

Daniel: Well for ICAN it’s really just the start. We have the Treaty which we worked so hard to achieve and now we have the incomparable boost of legitimacy, credibility and excitement conferred by the Nobel Prize. But we haven’t even come close to achieving what we need to. The purpose of the Treaty was to change the way that nuclear disarmament operates and to create new opportunities for campaigning in all national contexts. This is going to be a whole new phase for us and I’m excited for that to begin.

If you would like to discover more about ICAN’s work towards nuclear disarmament, visit:

www.icanw.org/projects/pledge
www.icanw.org/projects/dont-bank-on-the-bomb

There is also more information, with a report by Dagmar online at: www.ed.ac.uk/edit-magazine

Barbara Morgan graduated from Edinburgh Law School in 1998, and following a decade in higher education publishing, she is currently Head of Publishing & Communications at the University of Edinburgh.
What you did next

Here we explore the interesting locations and careers that our alumni have found themselves in.

If you’d like to share your experiences, we’d love to hear from you at www.ed.ac.uk/alumni/yournews

Chikumbutso Clara Mpanga-Munthali

MSc in Surgical Sciences (2014)

I was born in 1983 in Blantyre, Malawi. I was chosen to visit the University of Oxford as an elective student in 2007 for six weeks. I finished my Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery degree with Malawi College of Medicine in 2008.

I chose the University of Edinburgh because it was willing to admit online students on the programme with funding from Johnson and Johnson, and because it is a well-known, reputable university.

The study format was very engaging and the smaller groups encouraged every individual to participate and acquire the necessary knowledge on the topic, irrespective of the resources available in each country.

At the same time during my studies at Edinburgh, I was pursuing a Master of Medicine in Trauma and Orthopaedics with the University of Malawi. I also attended several courses including an Advanced Trauma Life Support course, basic surgical skills and sciences courses as well as an AOOrthopaedics course – Basic Principles of Fracture Management. I had the chance to visit Royal Surrey County Hospital in Guildford on observership as a Fellow for the British Association for Foot and Ankle Surgery in 2014.

I obtained my MSc in Surgical Sciences from Edinburgh in 2014, becoming the first female Malawian graduate of the programme. I still keep in contact with the programme coordinator.

I finished my Master of Medicine in Trauma and Orthopaedics in 2017 and I am now working as an orthopaedic consultant at Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, which is the biggest referral hospital in Malawi. I have a special interest in trauma surgery, trauma research and medical education.

I get satisfied when I see people smiling upon being operated and heading home. But the most challenging thing about my work is that there are people we cannot perform surgery on due to time and resource constraints, and the number of neglected trauma cases due to the low number of orthopaedic surgeons in our country.

Currently, I sit on the Board of Women in Surgery in Africa, which is an independent body established in 2015 for female surgeons, surgical trainees and women who may be interested in pursuing a career in surgical training in countries under the College of Surgeons of East, Central and Southern Africa. I am also an advocate for girls’ education.
Faisal Mohammed

BA (Hons) in Fashion (2013)

The Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) fashion programme offers complete training in the full design process, right from the initial concept to the final result, through all its various stages.

I have great memories of my time at ECA, such as the encouragement and praise I got for my tailoring project during my third year of study. The fashion show was particularly exciting. The hustle and bustle and nice summer weather made it memorable. We were a year group of extremely talented but eccentric individuals which made it so much fun.

The programme and tutoring at ECA opened my eyes to wider issues in the fashion industry at that time, such as a lack of diversity. We were encouraged to illustrate using real world body proportions rather than the exaggerated fashion figures used in the fashion world. This helped me to stay grounded and real. As a designer I make sure I am designing and making something which is contributing to the world in a positive way.

I started an ethical clothing label for men called Cloh. I was struggling to find any clothes to lounge and chill in that were also beautiful and high end. So, I decided to design and make clothes that, if they didn’t sell well, I could wear myself. I want my garments to relieve stress and make the wearer feel peaceful and comfortable.

Everything is handmade in Glasgow. Throughout the design process, every inch of available fabric is used to reduce wastage. Cloh’s mission is to minimise the negative impact the fast fashion industry has upon the environment, so it was a real highlight to be mentioned by journalist Lucy Siegle in her Ethical Living Column for the Guardian.

Natalie Starkey

PhD in Geochemistry (2009)

I was very excited when I received an offer to study for my PhD at Edinburgh. I’d been recommended Professor Godfrey Fitton in the School of GeoSciences as a supervisor. I must thank him for guiding me so well through my research, as well as teaching me a thing or two about off-road driving when we went to Iceland to complete fieldwork.

In my research job at The Open University that followed on from my Edinburgh graduation, I shifted my research focus. Instead of analysing volcanic rocks from Earth, I began to analyse meteorites and other rock samples collected by space missions to comets and asteroids.

A few years into my new research position I applied to the BBC to attend a course aiming to train women to appear as experts in the media. Since then, and through the many media contacts I met at the time, I’ve managed to regularly work as a science expert. I even fulfilled my secret lifelong ambition to appear on the BBC Breakfast red sofa where I was interviewed about the famous Rosetta space mission that landed on a comet in 2014.

Without my PhD I’m certain that I wouldn’t be where I am today. I’ve just completed my first popular science book, Catching Stardust, about comets and asteroids, and have signed a commission for a second book, Fire and Ice, about space volcanoes.

I’ve no idea where the rest of my career will take me, having moved from volcanologist to laboratory manager/ space scientist, to author/science communicator. However, I know that I have to thank Edinburgh for being one of the key factors that set me on this fascinating course in life.
We asked alumni to send us a photo of the view from their desks or workspaces. The eclectic submissions include perspectives of office desks, laboratories, workshops, studios and industrial estates, serving as fascinating snapshots of the varied and global locations in which alumni work and create.

Send your view to alumni@ed.ac.uk and we'll upload it to our photo gallery on the alumni website.

José Mezquita
MSc in Environment & Development, 2011

“From my window is a view to a part of the financial and banking district of Panama City. I find it inspiring to look out and see people go about with their day-to-day business, especially when the national football team plays and everyone is out wearing their red Panama kits.”

Mike Dixon
PhD in Plant-Environment Interactions & Biophysics, 1982

Mike is a Professor and Director of the Controlled Environment Systems Research Facility, School of Environmental Sciences, University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada.

“This is just across the hall and shows an array of custom plant growth chambers used to measure plant-environment interactions relevant to deploying controlled environment systems (greenhouses) on the Moon or Mars for human life support.”

Simon White
MSc in Veterinary Science, 1982

“I am just reading Enlightened in my office in a renovated annex to my house in central France (Loire Valley). From here, I am advising on good distribution practice of medicines globally for Pfizer. On the wall on the left some original artwork by my partner Pascale. On the shelf on the right you can make out my Edinburgh degree certificate. But the reason for this office location is the prunus in blossom and the yews beyond.”
Xu Teo

BSc (Hons) in Ecological Science (Environmental Science), 2014; MSc in Earth Observation & Geoinformation Management, 2015

"I work at Earth-i in Guildford, a satellite imagery and value-added services company, and we recently announced that we will be launching our own constellation of high-definition, full-colour, video satellites built by Surrey Satellites Technology – the company out of my window."

Sandie Hall

LLB, 2008; Postgraduate Diploma in Legal Practice, 2009

"I work at Melbourne Museum, a post-modernist building positioned opposite the World Heritage Listed Royal Exhibition Building in Carlton Gardens, Melbourne, Australia. Looking out of the window I feel really lucky to be working in such a beautiful city – and for an institution that is central to its cultural life, past and present."

Georgina Dixson

Medical elective, 2018

"Here is a view from my desk when studying for my medical exams in Port Macquarie, Australia. I'm a final-year Australian medical student at the University of New South Wales. I did my medical elective at the Royal Infirmary through the University of Edinburgh."

Madhav Mittal

MSc in Finance & Investment, 2015

Madhav is an Associate Consultant with PwC. "Our office is based in More London Riverside, adjacent to the tall Shard building and overlooking the River Thames, Royal Palace of Horse Guards and the Tower Bridge. The view is spectacular and often distracting with the bridge opening for big ships to pass as well as the tourists posing in all sorts to get their pictures."
“Being in the big outdoors puts everything into perspective, and sometimes it is good to disappear off the radar and realise how small and unimportant a person is compared to the world around them.”
A childhood love of landscapes and water led marine biologist Fiona Stewart to a life offshore.

Ever since she was a child, the rocks have told alumna Fiona Stewart stories. Growing up in Northumberland, Hadrian’s Wall ran close to her family home, its Whin Sill escarpments proclaiming the Roman Empire’s northern frontier. Later, during her teenage years in Blackwood, Lanarkshire, the ground beneath her feet was rich with sandstone, limestone, and coal; ancient seams that spoke of force and timescales beyond the comprehension of vainglorious emperors.

“I loved digging holes, excavating ‘things of interest’, and collecting distinctive stones,” she says. “Walking in the hilly parts of Scotland and the north-east of England meant I had a fine appreciation of the landscape, although I didn’t understand fully the processes that formed it.”

Another element loomed large in her childhood: water. “I have been fascinated by the sea from a very early age,” she says. The River Tyne ran close to her home. “My love of it and all things associated with boats and ships drew me towards the offshore life.”

Which is where we find her, late in the evening, corresponding from a vessel gently bobbing in the Moray Firth. Ursa Major burns in the sky overhead. Fiona is alone. To her, it is perfect.

“I love the sea and working offshore,” she says. “It is all about a feeling of wide open space, be it on a mountain with amazing views, or on a vessel with an amazing night sky, and no light pollution. Some of my offshore colleagues feel claustrophobic, but I enjoy the isolation of a small vessel in big landscape.”

Fiona is a marine geologist, a job that neatly combines her twin elemental passions. As director of HI-RES Subsea Services, she works with a variety of industries, including oil and gas, and renewables, to survey the uncharted corners of the seabed.

She uses acoustic equipment mounted on remotely operated vehicles, similar to those used to search for the Titanic or the missing Malaysian Airlines jet MH370.

“I am still curious and excited by exploring the unknown spaces underwater,” she says. “These are currently a blank canvas with hidden secrets and a wealth of undiscovered lifeforms and microenvironments.”

Her adult life has been spent unpicking the history of subsea strata. Her career may be more than 25 years old, but its focus is best measured in deep time, geological timescales so massive they can induce vertigo.

For her undergraduate dissertation at the University of Aberdeen, she studied ancient sediment cores from the central and northern North Sea. Her PhD brought her to the University of Edinburgh, where she reconstructed the eastern margin of the last ice sheet in Scotland.

“I realised I was fascinated by studying past environments, especially those recorded in the marine record,” she says. “I saw this as the ideal way of combining my love of being at sea with my love of glacial environments and reconstructing palaeoenvironments.”

For years she lived out of a suitcase, travelling between the Earth’s high latitudes. “One of the downsides to having expertise in glacial landscapes,” she says. After spells in Norway, Moray became home.

“I wanted to live close to the sea, but not in a busy area, and when I discovered my current house it seemed ideal,” she says. “I have the hills and access to the outdoor life which I love, but have the sea at my front door too – sometimes too close for comfort!”

“The area is very interesting historically, both from social history, but also geomorphologically, and, of course, glacial processes have had a major role in shaping the landscape.”

Hers is a life that has been sculpted in the remotest areas of the world, at great depths under the sea, or in the outer reaches of the Universe.

“There are no limits, and I think that is a great prospect for people to strive towards. I would like to think in my own small way I can help make big things happen for people with the determination to go out and explore what is around us.”

“I also would like to give something back to the University, as I certainly wouldn’t have had the opportunities to achieve what I have achieved without the time and energy my mentors invested in me.”

Through mountain-biking, cross-country skiing, or simply running, she inhabits them. Be it the Icelandic sea, the Norwegian fjords or the Scottish mountains, this is where she challenges herself and revels in the isolation.

“I am not very good at social interaction and am comfortable in my own company,” she says. “Being in the big outdoors puts everything into perspective, and sometimes it is good to disappear off the radar and realise how small and unimportant a person is compared to the world around them.”

Given her utter connectivity to the wilderness, it may be surprising that Fiona is leaving a legacy to the University of Edinburgh, a place very much woven into the city fabric. Not so, she says.

“Although the institution is based in an urban environment, Edinburgh is the springboard for a lot of people,” she explains. “Literally they can go anywhere they want to pursue their passion, be it fantastic wild landscapes, in the remotest areas of the world, at great depths under the sea, or in the outer reaches of the Universe.”

More information on leaving a gift for future generations can be found at www.ed.ac.uk/legacygiving

Edd McCracken is a PR & Media Manager at the University of Edinburgh. He is the former arts correspondent for the Sunday Herald and his freelance work has appeared in the Guardian, Holyrood Magazine, The Scotsman, Time Out Dubai and www.bookriot.com.
A striking stand-alone piece of modernist architecture, the Gordon Aikman Lecture Theatre has been the home of lectures, music gigs, film screenings, comedy shows and student protests since its unveiling in George Square in 1970.

Formerly known as the George Square Theatre, the venue was recently renamed after Motor Neurone Disease campaigner Gordon Aikman, an Edinburgh Business graduate who sadly died in February 2017. Here, members of the University community share their memories of this iconic multipurpose building.

Jim Hickey
(MA Fine Art 1970)

“I associate George Square, now Gordon Aikman, Lecture Theatre with film more than anything else, as it was the main venue for the University Film Society programme in my student days. The first use of the theatre as a cinema was by the Edinburgh International Film Festival (EIFF) in 1969. The festival used the venue five times that year, including for the world premiere of The Stones In Hyde Park and compilations of films by Kenneth Anger and Andy Warhol. It continued to be used by EIFF through the 1970s and it became the cinema of choice for films from the European avant-garde, American independent filmmakers, underground films, political cinema, music films and student films.

“As a student in 1965 I joined the Film Society when films were screened on Sundays in Adam House and there were on average 18 screenings per year. With a growing membership, the Film Society began to book an even wider range of films. The prospect of the new 500-seat George Square Theatre was exciting for those of us who were then on the programming committee and we ensured that there would be two 16mm projectors in the theatre so that films could be projected without interruptions for reel changes. The 1969/70 programme had 47 screenings, almost all of them double bills, shared between the George Square Theatre and the Appleton Tower. The improved experience of watching films in the new building contributed to the rise in membership which then reached 2,000. The following year the Film Society rented the 1,800-seat Odeon cinema for Sunday screenings and continued using George Square Theatre on Wednesdays.”

Jim Hickey is the former director of the Filmhouse and the Edinburgh International Film Festival, and since then has become a prolific filmmaker. His work includes the acclaimed short Hunger Artist and Frozen with Shirley Henderson.
Notable events over the years

The world premiere of Bill Douglas’ *My Childhood* took place in 1972 with Bill present. The film is regarded as very important to Scottish cinema and went on to have international success.

The theatre has been a popular music venue with memorable gigs by Ian Dury (1977), Simple Minds (1979), The Human League and The Cure (1980) and Peter Skellern (1985).

Academics and literary figures have delivered talks and recitals including Pulitzer Prize-winning poet WH Auden (in the early 1970s), theoretical physicist and Nobel Prize laureate Peter Higgs (2012) and ambient music composer and producer Brian Eno (2017).

Lorna Brain
Festivals Manager at the University

“The theatre is one of the biggest and longest serving Fringe venues. It was run by the National Youth Music Theatre as a venue up to 1996 at which point the University took it back over, and we then ran it as a Fringe venue ourselves up until 2010 with theatre, dance and comedy as part of our programme. Some famous people have performed there as kids, and we’ve been the preferred venue of some famous comedians such as Dave Gorman, Ross Noble and Doug Stanhope. We’ve also hosted shows as diverse as the BBC New Comedy Awards and the Krankies!”

Community feedback

We asked our alumni for their memories on Facebook and here are some of their responses.

**Sarah Purves (MA Politics, 1995)**
Went to the Film Society there most Sunday nights in the early 90s.

**Kimberley Bing Harsley (MA French and History, 2013)**
I saw Dave Gorman there at the Fringe, which was a strange experience as the last time I had been there was for a Medieval History lecture about the plague!

**Catriona Milligan (MA Celtic and Scottish Historical Studies, 1987)**
Pretty sure I was at an early Capercaillie gig there somewhere around 1986! Passed it every day going between the David Hume Tower and the School of Scottish Studies.

**J Gordon Hughes (BSc Computer Science, 1979)**
My first memory of George Square Theatre was as an undergraduate seeing the 1978 Edinburgh University Opera production of the Bizet opera *Don Procopio* in a very professional production with an impressive set.

**Melanie Reid (MA English Literature, 1999)**
I think I sat a Philosophy exam in there in the second year (as well as countless lectures)! I had to go to the toilet halfway through my exam and got lost on the way back! It all worked out OK in the end. Was the exam really happening if I wasn’t there to see it?

**David McLeod (Law (LLB), 1976)**
Film Soc most Sundays in the 70s. I remember seeing some cracking films there and am sure I saw a great double bill – *Don’t Look Now* and *Play Misty For Me*.

**Carole Binbrek (MA Arts, 1966)**
Went to see many Royal Scottish Country Dance Society Edinburgh Branch summer shows there. Sat in the back row when my daughter was small. Long, long way down to the basement for an ice cream.

**Richard A. Davis (PhD Divinity, 2013)**
Provided a little shelter from the rain approaching the Library from the David Hume Tower.

**Katie Brooks (PhD Molecular and Cellular Basis of Disease, 2004)**
Everything from the annual Enlightenment Lecture to Out of the Blue a cappella gigs at the Fringe!

**Mahwish Arif (MSc Computer Science, 2013)**
Peter Higgs lecture *My life as a boson* back in 2012 before he was awarded the Nobel Prize.

**Duncan MacInnes (MA Politics, 1973)**
I saw Ian Charleson in *Marat-Sade* there. Also WH Auden gave a reading there at a Poetry Festival organised by Andrew Greig. Auden died in 1973 so it must have been just before.

**Medea Santonocito (MSc Contemporary History, 2017)**
My first gig ever with Edinburgh Uni DrumSoc.

Join our online alumni community at facebook.com/edalumni
February Half-Yearly Meeting 2018
At its Half-Yearly Meeting on 24 February the General Council was delighted to meet the new Principal, Professor Peter Mathieson, who introduced himself and shared his perceptions and priorities having recently taken up post. The annual report, based on the University’s Annual Review, of another outstanding performance from the University in 2016/17, was given by the Senior Vice-Principal, Professor Charlie Jeffery. Members applauded the invaluable service given to the General Council by its retiring Secretary, Dr Mike Mitchell, and approved the motion for new procedures for appointing General Council Assessors. JJ Chalmers, gold medal winner at the Invictus Games and sports media presenter, earned a standing ovation for his inspiring after-lunch presentation.

General Council Assessors
In implementing the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016 the University Court intends to retain three General Council (GC) Assessors, although the Act does not require it to do so. One of the three will be the Chancellor’s Assessor. These positions will be filled by appointment not election. New procedures will be introduced as the terms of office of current Assessors expire. Thus two positions, one GC Assessor and one Chancellor’s Assessor, will be appointed to take up office in August 2019. Henceforward the recruitment process will be overseen by a selection panel, including GC Business Committee and Court Nomination Committee members. Applicants will be assessed on the skills and experience they offer, with consideration of the equality and diversity of Court membership. These are formal Court appointments. The Chancellor’s Assessor has a final stage of formal appointment by the Chancellor.

New Secretary of the General Council
The General Council has approved the appointment of a new Secretary, Professor Ann Smyth graduated from the University of Edinburgh BSc (1970); PhD (1974); and MPhil in Clinical Psychology (1975). After a career in clinical psychology involving clinical practice, research and professional education she was a General Council Assessor to the University Court 2007–15, serving on the Business Committee during that time.

June Half-Yearly Meeting 2018
The General Council Half-Yearly meeting took place on 9 June 2018, with lunch and presentations in Appleton Tower followed by a tour of the University Main Library and Centre for Research Collections.

Elections
Election for five members of the Business Committee will be in February 2019. All General Council members are eligible to stand. Further information and nomination forms are available from the General Council Office or website. Nominations should be received in the General Council Office by 21 November 2018.

February Half-Yearly Meeting 2019
Saturday 16 February 2019, in the Law School, followed by lunch in the Playfair Library Hall. Motions should be received in the General Council Office by 21 November 2018.

About us
Much more information on the General Council and its work is to be found on our website. News and meeting papers are in Billet which is once again a separate publication. This has been sent out by email or is available on the website under Publications. Remember, all graduates of the University are members.

www.general-council.ed.ac.uk