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YORK  
ST JOHN  
UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI MAGAZINE  
2021/2022



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## Introduction

Welcome to this year's alumni magazine. From the completion of the Creative Centre, to how your donations to our scholarship fund positively impact current students, we're proud to highlight how the York St John University community has continued to thrive, despite the pandemic.

Whilst we haven't been able to welcome you back to campus for reunions, we have begun looking at ways to enhance our alumni community, including monthly newsletters, relaunching our LinkedIn group and introducing our alumni business directory. After a year where friendship, collaboration and kinship have never been more important, we're proud to continue supporting our fantastic alumni community.

Best wishes, The Alumni Team

Billy Celia Jess  
Susanna Laje



## Vice Chancellor's introduction

As Vice Chancellor at York St John, it is a privilege to be able to write to you, the members of our University's worldwide Alumni community, after what has been an extraordinary and challenging period for everyone. I do hope that you, and your loved ones, have been able to stay safe and well.

The coronavirus pandemic has required us all to adapt, live differently, and reconsider things that we might have taken for granted before. That has certainly been the case for our university. Staff and students have worked incredibly hard and in a spirit of mutual support to change how teaching is delivered, and to play our part in the wider care and recovery effort across our communities.

During this period, we have learned a lot together. Now, thanks to widespread vaccinations and plans for students to return to campus in the autumn, we are ready to build on that learning and move to the next, positive stage in the University's growth and impact.

Earlier this year, we launched a refresh of our 2026 Strategy. We wanted to take account of all the changes that have happened and set out clearly what we think that means for the direction of York St John during the next five years. We have taken the chance to reaffirm what really matters to us. In particular our commitment to social justice, and within that, to increasing access to higher education for people from all backgrounds. In this magazine, you can read about some of the social justice themed research that our academics are progressing.

We have also used the refreshed Strategy to emphasise the importance of working in partnership. We have initially outlined three transformation projects that reflect some of our key partnerships and our evolving contribution.

The first of these is health and social care opportunities. York St John has a strong record of work in mental health and a growing reputation in areas such as occupational therapy, physiotherapy, counselling psychology and biological sciences. We plan to build on that, recognising that this is a vital area of need across the country. You can read more in this edition about the new nursing courses we are introducing.

The second project is YSJ London – the campus we opened in the capital in 2018. YSJ London has been going from strength to strength, attracting students from around the world and enabling us to introduce new courses, such as Degree Apprenticeships, that work collaboratively with employers to develop new workforce skills. We want to maintain this momentum and build stronger links with our York campus, so more of our students can get a wide range of experiences.

The third project involves supporting the regional economic recovery across York and North Yorkshire. We know many people have been impacted by the pandemic, that the skills and specialisms people need for the workplace are changing, and that we all need to do things in more environmentally sustainable and socially responsible ways. We want to play

our part in meeting the challenges our region faces, using our expertise to make the biggest difference.

As you can see, we are not waiting for things to happen! This is a time to look ahead, be ready for new opportunities, and embrace our responsibilities. At York St John we are ready for that.

As Alumni, you will know how important our campus is to shaping the university experience. We have all missed being together on campus over the past 18 months and we plan a wider return to campus based learning for the new academic year. It is an exciting time for students to come back, coinciding with the opening of our new, state of the art Creative Centre, our new indoor tennis centre as part of the Haxby Road sports facilities, and major investment across campus to increase biodiversity and introduce more sustainable energy, such as solar power. If you haven't been back to campus for a while, do come and visit.

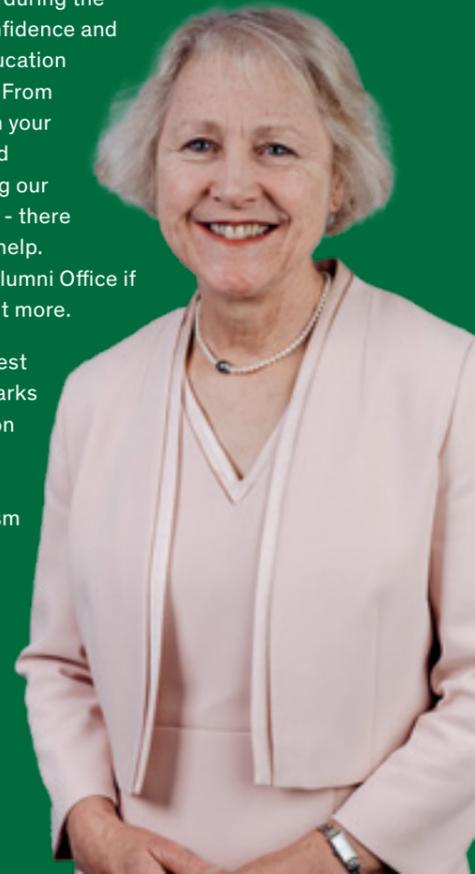
The past year and a half have highlighted the value of staying in touch with our friends and our networks. It has also shown us that physical distance does not need to be a barrier to keeping in contact. I hope you will see York St John University's Alumni network as part of your community. The team is always keen to hear from former students and the University organises a wide variety of events and activities you can get involved in.

In particular, if you are able to contribute in any way to supporting current and future students, I know how much that would be appreciated and make a difference. Many students joining us this September will have missed long periods of learning during the pandemic, and their confidence and readiness for higher education will have been affected. From offering opportunities in your workplace, to advice and mentoring, to supporting our scholarship programme - there are many ways you can help. Please do contact the Alumni Office if you would like to find out more.

I hope you enjoy this latest magazine and that it sparks memories and inspiration that strengthens your connection with York St John and your enthusiasm for staying in touch.

Kind regards

**Professor  
Karen Bryan**  
Vice Chancellor



# Coronavirus: the student story

When the coronavirus pandemic began, everyone's focus was on both public and private safety. For students, this meant that most learning moved online with limited access to campus facilities and resources.

As our national response evolved and changed, so too did the experiences of students as staff replanned module content to meet the demands of online learning.

## Campus closes

When campus closed in March 2020, both staff and students had to adapt quickly to new ways of teaching and studying. The sudden move from learning on campus, complete with spacious working environments and the appropriate technology for each course, to learning mainly from a screen was a big jump.

For many courses, the solution was prerecorded lectures to be viewed when convenient for the student, and seminar teaching in the original timetabled slot via Microsoft Teams. For most students this would be their first interaction with Teams, leading to embarrassing backgrounds and quickly muting themselves when an ambulance blared past the window. But online teaching did have some benefits. Students could attend lectures at a time that suited them best and could remain comfortable with their camera off during seminars. For the shy students, the chat function allowed them to 'speak up' in a new way.

## An autumn hiatus

In September 2020, it appeared as if online learning was receding. Government guidance allowed students to attend campus sessions with adequate social distancing, as well as accessing campus facilities in a coronavirus secure way. Students lived in 'bubbles' to ensure some aspects of university life could remain the same. But it didn't last. Increasing cases led to tougher guidance and a return to online learning.

## Free testing: no revision required

Most students fear tests, but this one required no preparation or revision, an easy win! As students began preparing to return home for the winter break, we opened a lateral flow test centre in Foss Sports Hall to make it even easier for them to return home with peace of mind. At the end of 2020, York City Council took over the test site, allowing local residents to access fast, free testing in the city centre.



## A student free city?

After the winter break, many students were faced with a tough choice: stay at home or return to their student accommodation. With a lockdown in place, many had to decide whether to stay in their childhood bedrooms with a temporary desk setup, or return to their student flats, and the isolation of a city in lockdown. Whilst it might have seemed a straightforward decision for some, students also had to contend with whether they could afford to pay rent for their student accommodation if they weren't living there, alongside any costs associated with living at home.

In York, students can expect to pay between £100 and £150 rent per week, creating a substantial financial responsibility. Fortunately, emergency funding was made available to pay for their accommodation. First year students in university accommodation were able to apply for a rent rebate if they

weren't living in York. Others could apply for funds to help cover the cost of their private housing.

However, housing was just one of many problems for students. Students employed in hospitality, tourism, or retail, found themselves without their expected income, unless their employers furloughed them. For many, the student loan may only just cover their accommodation costs, leaving them with no choice but to work part time to afford other everyday costs.

It's no surprise that with so many students worrying about housing and employment, that we received 72% more applications for our scholarship schemes than in the previous year.



## It's not just a lecture hall

When learning moved online, students weren't just missing out on attending sessions in person. Campus is usually the centre of students' day to day lives. Whether this is attending their tutorials, meeting friends for a drink in the Students' Union, or pulling an all nighter in the library, the student experience was changed enormously when it moved online.

But online learning has had some benefits. With physical office appointments an impossibility, students received more email support from tutors and could easily book tutorials online with no need to travel to campus or print out essay drafts. Plus, with more time on their hands because they couldn't go out to socialise, students enjoyed a wider variety of free, online events as part of their broader university experience.

# Our new courses

From a teacher training college to a university with over 200 courses, York St John University has always championed change and progress. Our courses are regularly reviewed and updated, and each year new courses are introduced across all levels. From the brand new Nursing degrees offered from September 2021, to an online Writing Historical Fiction MA, we're proud to offer a wide variety of courses to our prospective students.

Did you know that as an alum of York St John, you're eligible for a 10% fee discount on most postgraduate courses? Find out more on page 18.

## From Applied Bioscience to Publishing

In 2020, York St John began offering three new undergraduate Applied Biosciences degrees: Bioinformatics, Cancer Biology and Medical Biochemistry.

It wasn't just new undergraduate degrees on offer in 2020. The York Centre for Writing expanded its offering to include three new postgraduate MA degrees: Publishing MA, Publishing and Contemporary Literature MA, and Publishing and Creative Writing MA.

As part of their publishing course, students relaunched The York Literary Review. Professionally published by Valley Press, students oversaw the entire anthology process, from submissions through to final edits. We can't wait to see how this new anthology progresses!

## There are plenty of new courses starting this September

In September, York St John began offering two undergraduate Nursing degrees: one specialising in adult nursing and another in mental health nursing. These degrees not only increase our course offering, but they will also benefit our local community as our students begin their work placements and later, their careers.

We've enhanced our healthcare courses to include MSc, Postgraduate Diplomas and Postgraduate Certificates in Advanced Musculoskeletal Practice, Advanced Respiratory Practice and Advanced Assessment and Outcome Measures Practice. We also welcomed students onto our Transforming Practice Postgraduate Certificate courses.

We also began offering a Fine Art MFA, Illustration MFA and Photography MFA. Alongside an increased Arts offering, we welcomed students onto the brand new TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) with Thai MA, Professional Accounting MSc, LLM Legal Practice and the online Writing Historical Fiction MA.

## 2022 is continuing the trend

Planning for new courses involves a lot of work. In 2022 we will begin welcoming students onto two new courses: Cyber Security BSc and Forensic Psychology BSc.

## Degree apprenticeships

In the past few years, we've diversified how students can access degree courses. With degree apprenticeships, students gain valuable on the job experience alongside their classroom learning.

We currently offer a level seven Senior Leaders Apprenticeship, and these level six apprenticeships:

- Chartered Manager Degree
- Data Scientist Degree
- Project Management Degree
- Laboratory Scientist Degree
- Healthcare Science Practitioner

## Apprentice police

At the start of 2021, the first Police Constable degree apprentices began their three year courses with us. In partnership with Humberside Police, this new degree apprenticeship combines practical police officer training, with a Professional Police Practice BA (Hons) to reflect the skills and capabilities needed for future policing challenges. Police Constable apprentices also earn whilst they learn, as they begin working as police officers from day one to provide a vital service in their local communities.

From students completing their first degree, to professionals returning to further their career prospects with our postgraduate courses, we can't wait to welcome a wide range of students this September.

You might have noticed that we've used 'alum' here instead of 'alumni'. We're considering the use of this more informal, gender neutral form of 'alumni' to reflect the diversity of our alumni community. If you'd like to give us feedback about this choice, please email [alumni@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@yorks.ac.uk).

# Career advice is for life, not just for students

During your time studying with us, you may have engaged with opportunities such as one to one appointments, career fairs, or career talks. No matter what you studied with us, your future career and career development will have been at the forefront of your mind when you completed your course. However, unlike other universities, York St John University has committed to offering lifelong career support to our alumni, no matter when you completed your course with us.

## Lifelong support

Whether you're looking for a new role or seeking career advice, you can access a wide range of career support from the moment you graduate.

## LaunchPad online

LaunchPad Online is York St John's platform for all things careers. Accessed by students and alumni, it is regularly updated with job opportunities in a wide range of industries and locations. Some of these opportunities are exclusive to LaunchPad users, giving you a competitive edge when applying. LaunchPad Online can also be used to book an appointment to speak to a career adviser, access the careers blog, and read company news across a wide range of sectors.

## Speak to a career adviser

Whether you're applying for new roles, looking for a career change, or thinking about promotions, speaking to a career adviser can enhance your career choices. Our careers advisers can help you explore your thoughts and discuss the process of making informed careers decisions. They also support you to recognise what success looks like to you and give guidance on how to achieve it.

Speaking to a career adviser is free and easy to do. Book your appointment through LaunchPad Online or by emailing [careers@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:careers@yorks.ac.uk).

## Connect with us on LinkedIn

In June 2021, we relaunched our alumni LinkedIn group in partnership with the careers team. With regular posts including career advice, application tips, alumni benefits and weekly job vacancies, our group can help you to further your career. We also post about short courses you might be interested in completing to further your professional development.

Our group can also be used to ask and post your own career and sector insights, as well as a place to advertise your own company vacancies to a pool of brilliant graduates.

Search 'York St John Alumni' on LinkedIn to request to join our group.

## Support our students

If you are in a position to support our current students by offering graduate opportunities, internships, junior positions or part time work, our careers team would love to hear from you. By recruiting directly from York St John, you can offer recent graduates the first step on their career journey, secure in the knowledge that all your applicants are legitimately qualified.

You can advertise your vacancies for graduate roles, internships and placements here:

[https://yorks.jobteaser.com/en/company\\_account/sign\\_in](https://yorks.jobteaser.com/en/company_account/sign_in)

By advertising a part time vacancy suitable for a student with us, you can help students gain valuable work experience alongside their studies.

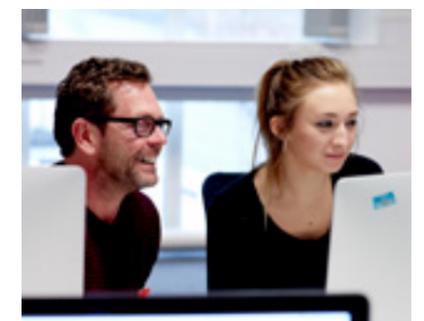
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[https://yorks.jobteaser.com/en/recruiter\\_account/sign\\_in](https://yorks.jobteaser.com/en/recruiter_account/sign_in)

## Work placements and year in industry

Could your company offer a work placement or year in industry opportunity to a current student? Work placements and year in industry placements give students the chance to learn valuable skills whilst completing vital aspects of their degrees. If you think you could provide a placement opportunity, please get in touch via LaunchPad Online:

[https://yorks.jobteaser.com/en/company\\_account/sign\\_in](https://yorks.jobteaser.com/en/company_account/sign_in)



## Key contacts:

- Email [careers@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:careers@yorks.ac.uk) for general enquiries
- Email [jobs&opps@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:jobs&opps@yorks.ac.uk) to find out more about using LaunchPad Online
- Connect with us on LinkedIn by searching for York St John Alumni on LinkedIn
- Sign up for LaunchPad Online [https://yorks.jobteaser.com/en/users/sign\\_in](https://yorks.jobteaser.com/en/users/sign_in)

# Scholarships: Can you help?

Our alumni scholarship fund continues to offer reassurance to some of our undergraduates. With your help, we have been able to offer £1000 a year to nine undergraduates facing particular difficulties.

R successfully applied to the Welcome Back to Education fund.

“ With this scholarship I can now get an up to date computer which is a huge step forward for me. In the past three months I have gone from ‘Can we pay the rent if I stay at Uni?’ to ‘I can now get the tools I need to work harder’.

So thank you to everyone who makes this scheme possible. You have given me a chance and the tools. I won't waste it. I am already planning my Master's.

We have two scholarship strands: **Enabling Education** which supports students facing significant barriers to study, and **Welcome Back to Education** which supports students starting Higher Education after the age of 21.

S is estranged from her family and has been awarded £1000 for all three years of her Music Production degree.

“ I've experienced a very friendly, helpful and outstanding board of people... this Scholarship is another example of just how much York SJ shows, not just says, the University cares for its students. As an estranged young person, I've felt very much listened to and looked after right from the beginning.

We had 62 applications for support this year but were only able to support nine students. To maintain this level of support, we need to raise £18,000 per year. If every recipient of this magazine donated just £2.00 a year, we could more than double our scholarship offer for those students most in need. By choosing to donate to our scholarship fund, whether annually or monthly, you are helping support students reach their full potential.

Donate online at [yorks.ac.uk/support-us](https://yorks.ac.uk/support-us)  
or for further information, contact  
[alumni@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@yorks.ac.uk).



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# Events at York St John

Since the pandemic began, the world of live events quickly had to adapt. Whilst our Events team were used to planning and running in person events, they quickly had to adapt to hosting events on Zoom instead.

## A note from our Events team

It's fair to say that 2020 was not what any of us had expected. When the first national lockdown was announced in March 2020, all our meticulous event planning was sent into instant disarray. We adapted very quickly to working from home and, with a little help from Zoom, we were soon able to reimagine our 2020/21 event programme as a year of digital activity.

Although we have missed seeing our audiences in person, the sudden shift to digital events has enabled us to work with speakers from across the globe, and curate conversations we would have never thought possible. From our Black History Month event with Jeffrey Boakye to our LGBTQ+ History Month chat with Jamie Windust, our online events have crossed borders and boundaries to attract record audience numbers. Our first ever virtual Christmas Carol concert alone saw over 2,500 views on YouTube and gave alumni from all over the world a chance to sing along to one of the best loved events in the University's calendar.

## (Re)watch events

An unexpected advantage of holding online events has been the opportunity to easily record them and post them on the Events YouTube Channel. Our events are now accessible to a wider audience, along with the added convenience of people being able to watch them on demand.

In the last year, some fantastic events have been hosted and posted, including the York Centre for Writing Poetry series, Green Week events, the Archbishop of York's inaugural lecture for the Institute of Social Justice, and the Questions in History series. You can (re)watch them now, for free, on YouTube.

## Discover new events

You can hear about new events by:

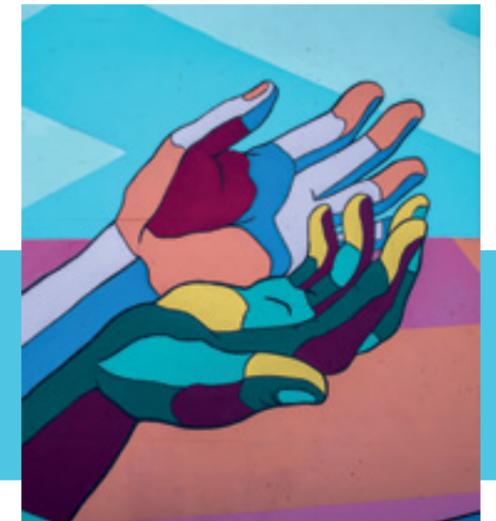
- Following @YSJUEvents on Facebook
- Following @YSJEvents on Twitter
- Signing up for the monthly events newsletter via their webpage: [yorks.ac.uk/events](https://yorks.ac.uk/events)
- Subscribing to YSJU Events on YouTube

## Dates for your diary

- **Thursday 21 October 2021**  
Black History Month 2021:  
Sophie Williams in Conversation
- **2 – 7 November 2021**  
Aesthetica Film Festival
- **Monday 6 December 2021**  
Christmas Carol Service
- **Thursday 10 February 2022**  
LGBTQ+ History Month: Jarel Robinson  
Brown in Conversation
- **Week commencing 7 March 2022**  
International Women's Day events



**CMHC**  
Counselling and Mental Health Centre



York St John University's  
Counselling and Mental  
Health Centre is expanding!

Since its launch in 2016, the University's Counselling and Mental Health Centre (CMHC) has been providing affordable and accessible general counselling and mental health services to local and regional communities. Since 2016, the CMHC has worked with over 2,000 people across its various projects and services.

The pandemic has fuelled even greater need for these services and the Centre moved its projects and provision online, to support safe and inclusive access. In Autumn 2021 the CMHC will be expanding to meet this need. The expansion will see the Centre move to refurbished premises on Clarence Street with low cost evidence based services available to people in York and North Yorkshire. The refurbishment commences this September.

The extended Centre will continue to offer one to one support and counselling help for those affected by bereavement, trauma, isolation, and domestic abuse, as well as a range of



I'm delighted about the move. It offers great potential for multidisciplinary work and specialist research across multiple areas including counselling, mental health, psychology, neurodiversity, and education. The Centre offers innovative opportunities for the University's research, knowledge exchange and teaching excellence agendas and extends rich research and placement possibilities for students and staff. Importantly, it will generate positive impacts in local communities and beyond.

Professor Lynne Gabriel, Director of The Counselling & Mental Health Centre  
For further information, please contact Lynne and the Centre Team at [cmhc@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:cmhc@yorks.ac.uk).



# Impactful research at York St John University

## How can data science and mathematics help us to unlock the secrets of virus structures?

**Dr Pierre-Philippe Dechant, Senior Lecturer in Mathematical Sciences and Data Science Programme Director at York St John University**

Watching any news briefing over the last year, you will not have been able to escape phrases such as “virus modelling”, “flattening the curve” and “herd immunity”. But did you know that these are all terms from modelling, which is central in the world of Data Science and Mathematics? In September 2019, Dr Pierre-Philippe Dechant, Senior Lecturer in Mathematical Sciences, launched England’s first ever Data Science Degree Apprenticeship at York St John University. We caught up with Dr Dechant to find out about his pertinent interdisciplinary research into virus structures and what this means for the YSJ data scientists of the future.

Collaborating with Professor Reidun Twarock, University of York, Dr Dechant has spent the last decade studying virus structures and virus symmetries. Dr Dechant explains that many viruses look very regular – akin to miniature footballs (something to ponder when you are watching the beautiful game!). “Given a pile of white hexagons and 12 black pentagons, how would you make them into a football? This is the virus’s dilemma.”

**Most viruses exhibit icosahedral symmetry (an icosahedron is a polyhedron with 20 triangular faces).**  
Source: [https://doi.org/10.1042/bio\\_2020\\_102](https://doi.org/10.1042/bio_2020_102)



As any good builder will tell you, understanding structure is the starting point to understanding assembly. If you can understand the assembly process, you can begin to work out how to disrupt it and thus beat the virus – a problem which the world has been grappling with for the last 18 months.

Recent research has uncovered some surprising facts. Viruses hold their genetic information inside, and there appears to be one group where this genetic information helps assemble the virus around itself – akin to a “proactive washing line” with pegs hanging up the clothing item by item all by itself. This discovery has two ramifications: one, you can interfere with the assembly process to fight the virus and two, this mechanism can potentially be hijacked to make artificial nanocages used for our own purposes, such as bio-nanotechnology, gene therapy or vaccinations. Indeed, the Oxford Astra Zeneca vaccine also uses a Trojan horse (aka a “viral vector”) using a modified chimpanzee adenovirus (though this assembles differently to the above mechanism). Dr Dechant and Professor Twarock published a review article on this work “Models of viral capsid symmetry as a driver of discovery in virology and nanotechnology” which is



publicly available in The Biochemist: [https://doi.org/10.1042/bio\\_2020\\_102](https://doi.org/10.1042/bio_2020_102). You can also read their latest research “Therapeutic Interfering Particles Exploiting Viral Replication and Assembly Mechanisms Show Promising Performance: A Modelling Study”. It is currently available on arXiv and is a fascinating read with real world ramifications: <https://arxiv.org/abs/2108.01973>.

The different strengths with which the clothing pegs fetch the clothing items is rather crucial for the overall assembly efficiency. Twarock et al have done extensive and exhaustive simulations for a simple model virus made of a dodecahedron. The resulting data set is so huge it took around a month to simulate on a super computer. Subsequent data science inspired work carried out by Dr Dechant and Professor Yang-Hui He has demonstrated that key patterns in the data from this month long intensive computation can be machine learnt in a matter of minutes to astounding accuracy. This expands the limits imposed by computational power and would allow for even more complex and realistic data sets to be used in future, probably in partnership between simulation and machine learning. Their research “Machine learning a virus assembly fitness landscape” has been published in peer reviewed open access scientific journal PLOS ONE: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0250227>.

The Data Science students at York St John University are benefitting from Dr Dechant’s cutting edge research as he uses examples of this in his teaching. For instance, data science involves building models to try and determine what is happening in the real world. Understanding how coronavirus works is the central data science question of our time, and recently students have been able to apply modelling techniques to coronavirus inspired examples to help understand infection chains, spatial and movement effects in epidemiology, as well as optimisation through viral evolution. These models can give clues as to which changes in behaviours and interventions are effective means to combat the pandemic such as social distancing, vaccinations etc (analysing a problem and communicating recommendations is central to the role of a data scientist.) This has given students a portfolio of relevant coursework which has led to a range of interesting secondment and promotion opportunities in coronavirus mitigation roles in Government departments and other employers that we work with for the degree apprenticeship.

If you are interested in finding out more about the new Data Science Degree Apprenticeship, have a look at the School of Science, Technology and Health pages on the YSJ website: [yorks.ac.uk/schools/school-of-science-technology-and-health](https://yorks.ac.uk/schools/school-of-science-technology-and-health).



## Together while apart: the creative doodle book and inclusive online arts during coronavirus

**Matthew Reason**

Doing things together is an underlying principle of community arts, which values being with other people as we make theatre, music and art. The lockdowns and social distancing required by coronavirus severely disrupted or even halted much of this activity. The arts have a vital role in supporting wellbeing through providing opportunities for positive creative expression. During the pandemic, it became even more vital to find ways for people – particularly if marginalized or vulnerable – to express themselves through creative contexts. Such expression provides a form of agency in circumstances that were alienating and isolating. The Creative Doodle Book has been one response to this challenge, providing a model for inclusive online community arts during social distancing.

The Creative Doodle Book is a hands on resource that uses open and playful tasks to encourage creativity, mindfulness and positive reflection. Since November 2020 York St John University, in collaboration with Mind the Gap Theatre Company and access champions Totally Inclusive People, have been supporting the use of the Doodle Book through online workshops with a huge range of community and artistic partners. Over this time, we have distributed over 3,500 copies of the Creative Doodle Book to arts organisations, community groups, schools and care homes amongst others. More than 100 online workshops have been conducted with over 25 different organisations from York to Canterbury to Pitlochry. And we have worked with a diverse range of participants, from children to seniors, from refugees to people with learning disabilities.

The project’s objective has been to explore the benefits of being together while apart and investigate how we can make online community arts practice inclusive and accessible. The project

has received funding from UK Research and Innovation as part of the rapid response scheme to coronavirus. As a research investigation it has been examining themes relating to inclusive online practice, the impact of creativity on wellbeing, and the importance of the arts in providing people with a voice and sense of agency. A huge amount of evidence has been gathered, from participants and facilitators, about the impact of the project. To give just a couple of examples, a participant with Independence, a Glasgow based arts company working with people with disabilities, said:

“Working with the Doodle Book has been really enjoyable. It’s helped me to use my imagination and think outside the box. What I also like about it is that it’s made me less stressful.”

While a facilitator with Fuse Theatre, who work with young people with special education needs and disabilities across North Yorkshire commented:

“I think creativity comes with having your own voice and you’re heard. I think a place for creativity during lockdown had a huge impact.”

Through the course of this project, we have worked with hundreds of members and participants of community groups across the country, and conducted interviews with practitioners, group leaders and creative facilitators. This has given us a remarkable insight into the importance of community arts during the coronavirus pandemic, and the vital role creativity has in supporting people’s mental wellbeing and their ability to maintain a sense of self and identity. The people we have worked with have risen to the crisis in ways that have been inventive and resilient. The Creative Doodle Book project has supported their work and provided moments of escape, joy and mindfulness for participants. We believe its impact has provided further evidence of how we all not only have the potential for creative self-expression, but an active need for art and creativity – perhaps particularly during moments of crisis and challenge.

Matthew Reason is Professor of Theatre and Director of the Institute for Social Justice at York St John University.

# Recollections of a wartime college



Born in Skelton, Nora Olennick (née Reeder) attended Ripon College from 1940-1942, completing her training with honours. At the time of writing, she is our oldest known alum.

Following High School, Nora worked as an uncertified teacher for two years to save for college. After attending interviews at Darlington, Durham and Ripon, she accepted her Ripon offer, which included the requirement that she bring her own umbrella!

## Life at Ripon College

In September 1940, World War Two had been raging for just over a year and 20 year old Nora travelled to Ripon to begin her course. At the time, Ripon College had a yearly intake of 100 women, split into those who wanted to teach 'uppers' and 'lowers'. Nora chose to teach 'lowers', children younger than eight years old.

Students were assigned 'corridors' to live in, named after local abbeys. Nora lived in Fountains for the duration of her course, attending nightly roll call in the common room to ensure all students were accounted for. Students ate communally in tables of 12, except for when they completed their teaching practices, when they breakfasted early to prepare. Nora recalls that the food was good, but that sitting near the teachers led to slightly better meals!

Over two years, students completed four practicums:

“ The first was fairly easy ... [with] not many visits from lecturers, the second and third were 3 weeks ... [with] more visits and the last was full time teaching.

Practicums varied. Some classes had 50 children, some schools expected you to perform lunch duties and, in Nora's case, one included a boy so talented he was asked to paint murals on the hall walls!

## A wartime college

War work dominated students' leisure time, including knitting with Miss Hornby, digging for victory with Miss Burch and, as Nora did, donating blood. But students also visited local landmarks, queued for their weekly sweet ration and made friends for life. Homemade entertainment, the Christmas party and compulsory but beautiful candlelit chapel services further made the rhythms of college life.

In her second year, Nora was made a Head student. Every morning she reported to Miss Lett (the principal) and told her if anything important had happened. For example, there was a spate of clothing thefts from the washing room that led to one woman's expulsion due to her actions.

But war was never far away. Students frequently retreated to the basement with their blankets to escape air raids. Trains were often targeted, leading to students losing their belongings and college projects. One of Nora's friends was given just 20 clothing coupons to replace her belongings: you needed 11 for just one dress!

In 1941, Ripon College hosted two sets of bombed out guests: 30 students from the Hull Training College and 25 babies and nurses. The chaplain's house was also repurposed into a home for children with a live in matron. This influx of children, coupled with evacuees crowding local schools, created challenging teaching circumstances. However, it did create opportunities for students including giving extra lessons, something which Nora credits as helping her secure her first teaching position at Grangetown.

## Nora now

Now living in Australia, Nora recalls her time at Ripon College as one of the happiest of her life. In late 2020, her daughter contacted our alumni department about the possibility of Nora being awarded an Honorary Degree of Bachelor of Education in recognition of the academic rigour of the Certificate of Education. We were pleased to be able to award her honorary degree in May 2021.

Do you know someone who might be eligible for an Honorary Degree of Bachelor of Education? If they completed a Certificate of Education at Ripon or St John's College before 1980 and didn't complete the optional fourth year, please email [alumni@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@yorks.ac.uk).

# Creative Centre crescendo

Construction of the Creative Centre is nearing completion and will be ready for students from the start of 2021-22 academic year.



The Creative Centre is a major investment by the University, creating modern, specialist spaces for our students. The centre will become the permanent new home for our music and computer science courses. It will also contain specialist spaces and teaching facilities for theatre, drama, creative writing and media production students.

The centrepiece of the Creative Centre is its 210 seat theatre. The theatre will host live performances from our students, community events and high profile conferences.

“ The Creative Centre will become the new home of music courses at York St John. Music students will have access to specialist teaching spaces and acoustically protected practice and performance rooms.

Dr Sarah O'Brien, Associate Head of School of the Arts

We can't wait to see the positive impact the Creative Centre will have on both students and members of the local community. Make sure to follow us on social media and subscribe to our newsletters to get the latest updates about the Creative Centre opening and its enhanced facilities.

Dr David Lancaster, senior lecturer and subject director of music:

All the Music staff and students are very excited about the move into the Creative Centre this autumn. It will have a massive impact on our teaching and music activity, since for the first time we will have purpose built, dedicated studio facilities for our workshops, rehearsals and performances. Students will be able to take advantage of soundproofed practice rooms, which will be large enough to hold ensemble rehearsals, and the lecture/workshop spaces have also been designed with acoustics in mind. Perhaps most significantly, we will be able to perform our weekly lunchtime concerts and all our evening concerts in the new auditorium, which will greatly professionalise and enhance our offerings.

Our current premises – which we have occupied since the move to the York campus in 2000 – have not been accessible by people who use wheelchairs or with serious mobility issues, so the Creative Centre offers the opportunity to make our Music courses much more accessible.

As part of our plans for the Creative Centre we will be launching our 'In Concert' series of music events, which will offer a varied and innovative programme of performances from both visiting professional performers and students. And of course, our community partners in York Guildhall Orchestra, Late Music and Converge will be invited to make use of the new facilities; in short, we hope that the centre will form a hub for a wide range of music events and offer to the community a chance to hear performances from exciting and innovative performers who they might otherwise not experience.

A whole floor in the Creative Centre will also provide the latest high specification hardware for computer science, software engineering, and games development in purpose built teaching rooms. Rob Saunders, Head of School of Science, Technology and Health explains the value of these new facilities to his students:

The opening of the new creative centre at York St John will provide fantastic facilities for our students studying for degrees in Computer Science, Software Engineering, Games Development and, arriving in September 2022, Cyber Security.

As well as having the opportunity to obtain relevant work experience in these industries our students will also be surrounded by a modern, purpose built environment designed to enhance their learning. We're also proud that the centre will house our Cyber Security outreach programme available to schools and colleges in the region as part of our ongoing role as university partner in the Yorkshire & Humber Institute of Technology.

## Spotlight on success:

# SINEAD CAMPBELL

**Born in Bradford, Sinead Campbell fell in love with York when she visited York St John University for an open day.**

After a fantastic taster session, Sinead studied Theatre with us for three years before beginning her career. After living in Edinburgh and France, where she worked as a cabaret performer, Sinead returned to Bradford where she now works as a Musical Instigator for Bradford Producing Hub, alongside her own music career as Premaura.

### York St John

During her degree in Theatre, Sinead learnt the importance of collaborative creativity, whilst making lifelong friends along the way. In a first year module about devising theatre, Sinead was pulled out of her comfort zone and was told to leave her ego outside the classroom. Sinead credits this life advice, to remember to leave her ego behind, as life changing. It helped her realise that her best work was created, and at its most authentic, when she looked outside of herself.

But it wasn't just valuable life lessons Sinead learnt during her course. She was pushed creatively, and the theory behind her degree gave her a wealth of transferable skills that have been invaluable during her career:

Sinead enjoyed more than just her classes with us. One of her favourite memories is of her and her housemates hosting a Halloween party where everyone arrived in fancy dress costumes, including one person as a dish of curry! Not to be outdone, her memories of graduating in 2012 include watching the sunrise the morning after graduation and throwing her graduation cap one last time to celebrate.



“I'll always remember the advice from my course leader in my final year. I made it clear that I wanted to be a performer, a creator and working in the creative industries. He told me to never stop creating, and not to be lured in by the temptation of having security (job wise) over the pursuit of passion’.”

### Premaura

Sinead has been a freelance performer since graduating, gaining her first industry job as a multirole actress for Northeast Producers. During her time at university, she volunteered with York Theatre Royal who later helped her refine her CV with industry advice, leading to her first role.

In September 2019, Sinead made the decision to begin her music career. From an early age, Sinead dreamt of becoming a pop star. As she got older, she explored different ways of performing, but singing was always the medium that made her light up, and enabled her to connect most authentically with her audience.

After making the decision to launch a music career, Sinead faced her first challenge: creating her stage name. Wanting a name that was original and meant something to her personally, Sinead drew from her experiences of spirituality and daily meditation to create Premaura. But, with no connections in the music industry, and with limited knowledge of how to even record her music, Sinead quickly had to learn on the job.

Inspired by David Bowie's stage persona, her musical influences also include Lana Del Rey, Nao, Kaytranada and The XX, cumulating in a sound which has begun gaining attention, including on BBC Music Introducing.

It hasn't all been smooth sailing. Just as Sinead began planning more live performances to grow her music presence, lockdown began, and she was quickly forced to adapt her plans. Despite the pandemic, Sinead's goals remain the same, albeit with a stronger focus on creating and releasing music. Instead of focusing on live performances to get her music to new audiences, her aim has instead been to release more music and focus on a slow burn online campaign instead. In fact, she recorded and released her single 'Triggered' during lockdown!

At the start of 2021, Sinead recorded another new EP and performed at the launch of Bradford Council's Ten Year Culture Plan event.

“IT WAS MY BIGGEST DREAM AS A LITTLE GIRL TO BE A POP STAR”

### Musical Instigator

At the start of 2020, Sinead secured her latest role as a Musical Instigator for Bradford Producing Hub. This flexible role allows her to fit her 'day' job around her music career, with her team supporting her to achieve new things in both aspects of her career.

As a musical instigator, no two days are the same. Her role includes applying for funding from various organisations, organising events in conjunction with other stakeholders, and speaking to Bradford based artists, producers and venues to further Bradford's musical infrastructure and presence. Sinead's role also encompasses networking, providing advice for small companies and supporting upcoming artists.

We can't wait to see how Sinead's career progresses in the next few years. You can listen to Premaura on your normal music platform by searching her name. Keep up to date with her career by following her on social media, simply search for @iampremaura.



“We aim to do our part alongside many others in the district to begin to create a healthy artistic ecosystem.”

# Alumni benefits

We're always working to increase our alumni offer, and in the last year we've begun working on some exciting new benefits, discounts and opportunities exclusive to our alumni. Whether you attended Ripon College or York St John, you can access all of our alumni package. From discounts at local retailers and on campus discounts, to our new alumni business directory and monthly newsletters, there's plenty to be excited about.

## In-house benefits

As an alum of York St John, you can receive:

- An exclusive 15% discount on campus room bookings
- The student price at our on site fitness centre, saving you a fantastic £120 a year
- Free on site library membership
- Free lifelong careers support (see page 7)

## Scholarships

All alumni are eligible for an automatic 10% discount when you study a postgraduate course with us.

Alumni that graduated in 2019, 2020 or 2021 also qualify for the progression scholarship: up to 50% of your postgraduate fees, depending on what you were awarded at undergraduate<sup>1</sup>.

## Our partner benefits

We're happy to continue offering you discounts from York Gin, York Cocoa House and Middlethorpe Hall and Spa. Available in store and online, you can get 10% off at York Gin by quoting YSJ2021 and 10% off at York Cocoa House by quoting YORKSTJOHNS10.

At Middlethorpe Hall and Spa you can access the Platinum Loyalty Rate for a single room, and more than a 50% discount off the published rate for deluxe room and suites<sup>2</sup>. The rate includes:

- Full Yorkshire breakfast
- Use of the Middlethorpe Spa facilities
- Complimentary Wi-Fi
- Secure overnight parking

<sup>1</sup> The discounts don't apply if you choose to study Physiotherapy (Pre-registration) MSc, Occupational Therapy (Pre-registration) MSc, or the Professional Doctorate in Counselling, or any PGCE courses. Scholarships cannot be combined.

<sup>2</sup> These exclusive rates are not valid on Fridays, Saturdays, York Race days or bank holidays. A supplement applies for double occupancy and any dinner or additional meals will be charged as taken.

You might have noticed that we've used 'alum' here instead of 'alumni'. We're considering the use of this more informal, gender neutral form of 'alumni' to reflect the diversity of our alumni community. If you'd like to give us feedback about this choice, please email [alumni@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@yorks.ac.uk).

## HMCA

The York St John University Alumni team has agreed with HMCA to offer discounted rates for medical plans, dental plan, hospital cash plans, travel plan, income protection and vehicle breakdown products.

Are you paying too much for your present private medical plan? Why not take a look at the HMCA plans and compare the benefits and subscriptions offered? You may transfer to HMCA at any age and without a medical examination; there will be no break in protection and there is a 14 day money back guarantee.

HMCA only offer medical plans to membership groups and can offer up to a 40% discount off the underwriter's standard rates. This is a comprehensive plan which provides generous cash benefits for surgery and other charges.

Who are HMCA? - HMCA has specialised in providing benefits and services to associations and professional groups since the 1970s. HMCA is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

For further information and quotations contact HMCA by telephone on 01423 799949 or visit the exclusive HMCA York St John Alumni Society website here:

<https://www.hmca.co.uk/ysjas>

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## Launching this autumn

### Alumni business directory

Launching soon, the alumni business directory is the perfect way to support your fellow alumni businesses. Including exclusive discounts, you can support alumni businesses whilst getting a fantastic product you'll love. For more information on how to access or be added to the directory, please see your latest newsletter, available via your inbox and on our blog. To add your business to the directory, please email [alumni@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@yorks.ac.uk) for more information.

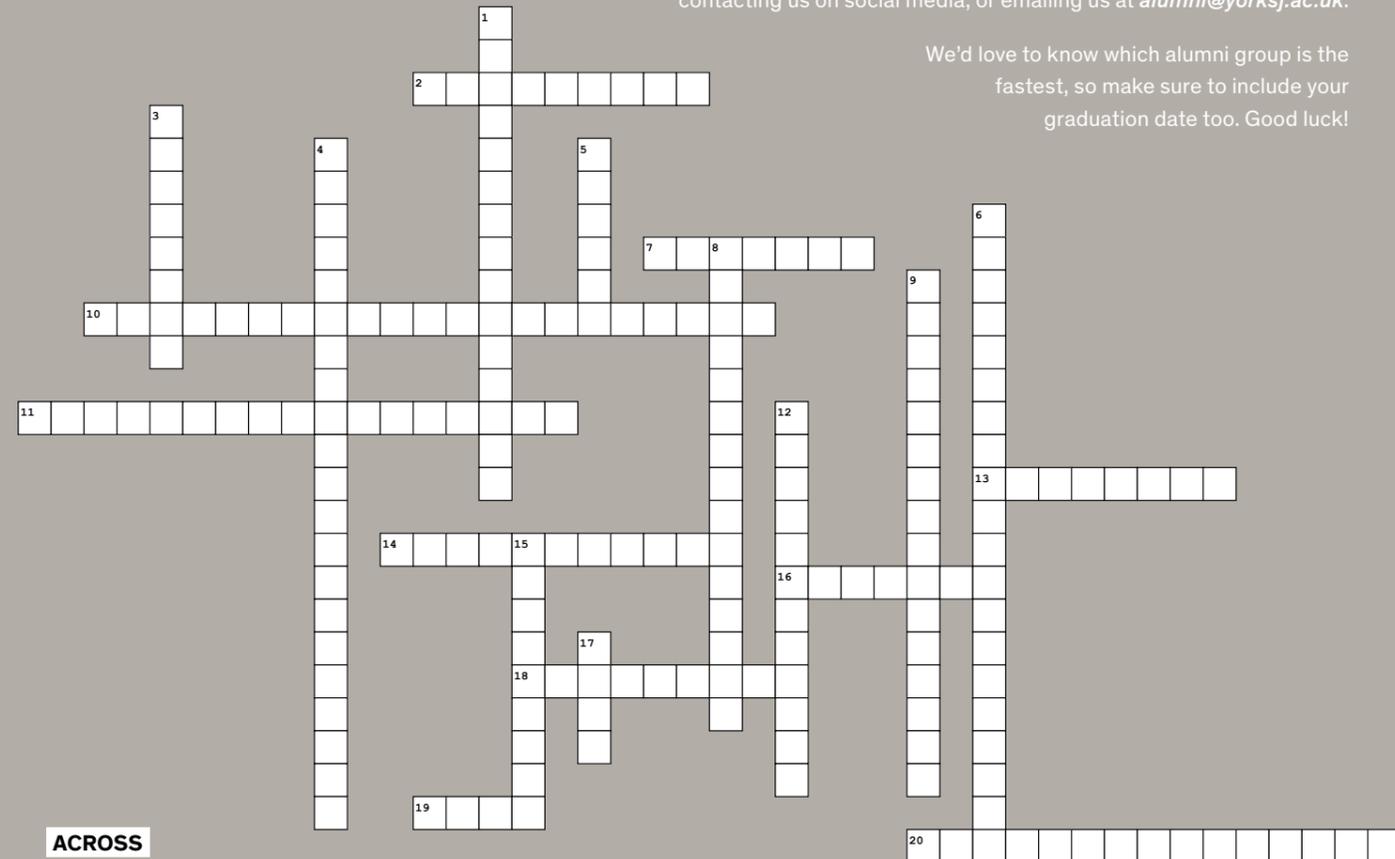
### Webinars

This autumn, we're launching an exclusive range of alumni webinars on a range of subjects. From industry advice to lifestyle stories, keep an eye on our social media and monthly newsletters for more information on how to get involved.

# Alumni crossword

Welcome to our new alumni crossword. With clues ranging from local trivia about York to information from the magazine, there's plenty to get you thinking! Once you've completed it, let us know how long it took by contacting us on social media, or emailing us at [alumni@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@yorks.ac.uk).

We'd love to know which alumni group is the fastest, so make sure to include your graduation date too. Good luck!



### ACROSS

- Which 'corridor' did Nora live on? (9)
- Which shop local alumni benefit creates and sells what was once known as 'mother's ruin'? (4, 3)
- In December, you can attend the annual what? (9,5,7)
- In September, we began offering an online MA in writing what? (10,7)
- What did the Romans call York? (8)
- Popular with buskers and street entertainment, which York Square once contained a church and may have also been the site of a royal palace during the Danelaw? (5,6)
- What was the surname of the architect who designed Lord Mayor's Walk, the De Grey rooms and the old train station? (7)
- Alumna Sinead Campbell has worked in which Scottish city? (9)
- The alumni team has how many members? (4)
- Opened in 1911, what was the name of York's first purpose built cinema? (8,7)

### DOWN

- Where can you view and post job vacancies? (9,6)
- What month does the Jorvik Viking Festival usually take place? (8)
- York St John opened what before the winter break? (7,4,4,6)
- Which brand is still producing chocolate in York? (6)
- Viruses hold their genetic information inside, meaning they work like a \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_? (9,7,4)
- Which King's portrait, associated with York, was displayed in The Yorkshire Museum this year? (7,3,5)
- Name of the York museum containing a Victorian street. (4, 6, 6)
- Fill in the blank: over 60 students applied for \_\_\_\_\_ this year, an increase of 72%. (12)
- In early 2021, Betty's announced they were closing one of their tearooms. Which one was it? (9)
- Fill in the blank. Legend says that if you \_\_\_\_ under the Heart of Yorkshire window you'll stay together forever. (4)

# Your memories... their future

“ I have decided to bequeath monies to YSJ [and] I would encourage others to make this your charity of choice. ”

Having been a lecturer at York St John and having had international students in my class, I have decided to bequeath monies to YSJ because education is so important to the individual, and to the societies from where they come.

Terry Wawn, retired teacher and York St John lecturer

Making a will is our way of continuing to support the people or places that are important to us. Even a small gift to the University could transform lives. From establishing a new scholarship to donating money to your old department, your legacy could change a life.

If you would like to talk to someone about your plans, please contact Celia in our Alumni Office in complete confidence: [c.denton@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:c.denton@yorks.ac.uk) .

You can read more about Terry's fascinating and diverse career on our blog.

Est.  
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**YORK  
ST JOHN  
UNIVERSITY**

