

# Open Door



The Open  
University

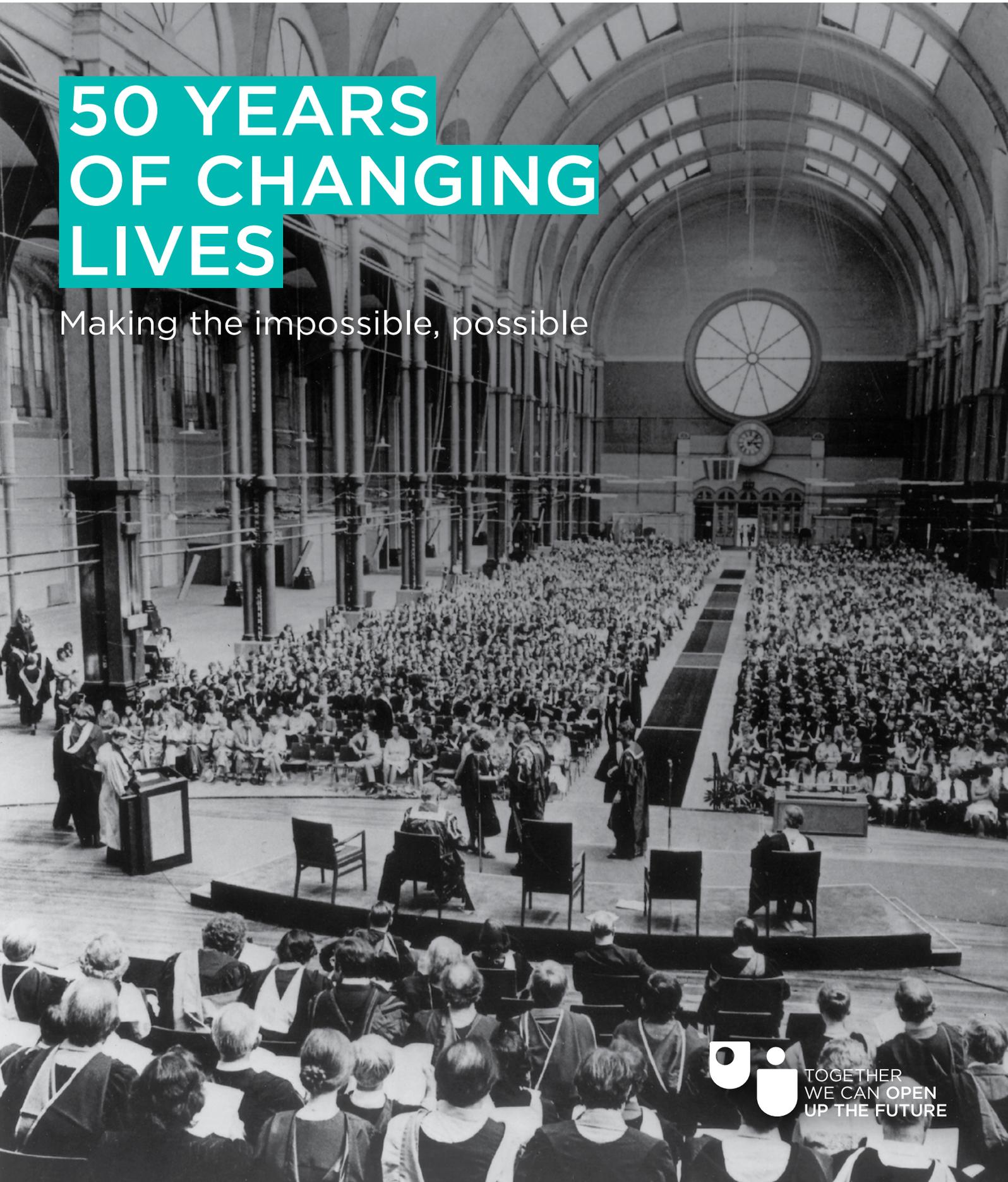
50  
YEARS

The magazine for supporters and friends of The Open University

Issue No. 15

## 50 YEARS OF CHANGING LIVES

Making the impossible, possible



TOGETHER  
WE CAN OPEN  
UP THE FUTURE

# Inside this Open Door

- 3 Celebrating the OU at 50**  
As seen through our archives
- 5 You're supporting future environmental scientists**  
Life-changing research and addressing social barriers
- 6 Thank you for making a difference**  
We couldn't do it without you
- 8 Growing success**  
Update on our stunning **Tree of Learning** sculpture
- 10 News in brief**  
Update on scholarships, diversity and partnerships
- 12 Every gift helps**  
The life-changing gift of education



The front cover shows one of the OU's first graduation ceremonies, held at Alexandra Palace, London

## Welcome and thank you for your support



Welcome to the latest edition of Open Door. This year is a very special year for The Open University – it is the year we celebrate our 50th Birthday. This issue of Open Door reflects on some of our history and projects we have undertaken.

Whilst some had their doubts back in 1969, we have proved time and again that being open to people, places, methods and ideas means that millions of people have been given opportunities they never dreamed of, and achieved more than they ever thought possible.

It is thanks to you and all our wonderful supporters that we have been able to continue to help students; by offering more scholarships, more bite-size free learning, enabling more life-changing research and

delivering distance learning to more teachers and healthcare workers in developing countries.

On behalf of the University and the students you support, thank you so much for your generosity. Without your kindness, we would not be able to help students realise their ambitions and fulfil their potential. As one of our students told me recently, *“No matter what your background is, you’ll achieve anything with The Open University - so long as you want to learn. My eyes have been opened to an exciting new world.”*

With your support, our aim is to continue to do this for the next 50 years and beyond!

Karen Hart  
Deputy Director of Development: Alumni Engagement

# 50 YEARS OF HISTORY

OU students on the stage during the Alexandra Palace graduation ceremony in 1974

As The Open University celebrates its half century, University Archivist Ruth Cammies highlights the stories and objects which helped to shape the 'University of the Air'

Fifty years ago, Harold Wilson and Jennie Lee made history. In April 1969, The Open University received its Royal Charter and their vision of a University that would open up education for all, was finally brought to life.

By 1971, the OU welcomed its first 'pioneer' students on the first four foundation courses. Teaching was delivered through a combination of printed course materials, kits, summer schools, tutorials and TV and radio programmes.

Since those exciting first years, the OU's Archive, based in the Library, has kept a record of almost everything the OU has ever taught and some key archives that form part of its rich and internationally significant history. The OU is quite unique in that most of its history has been well documented and often filmed; for instance, the first degree ceremony at Alexandra Palace in 1973 was partially broadcast live on BBC2!

Some of the archived items go beyond the OU's official beginnings, including correspondence and reports which outline the Wilson and Lee vision and the importance of establishing an institution dedicated to distance learning of the highest quality.

The collections, including thousands of images, printed course materials, over 20,000 audio-visual items and much more, are housed in the Betty Boothroyd Library on the Walton Hall campus. Each item we have – from the first broadcasts, to innovative home experiment

kits for students, and more recently a variety of online learning resources – tells a story of a University that was always striving to be ahead of its time.

To help share as many of these stories with as many people as possible, the OU Digital Archive was established in 2016. This includes over 300 historical images and 240 programmes – from clips of events, to magazine-style programmes from the 1970s.

Online Archive exhibitions, including:

- The OU Story from the 1960s to present day, which has been updated for the 50th Anniversary and links to several key moments, including Harold Wilson's famous 'White Heat of Technology' speech when he announced his plans for a University of the Air.
- A historic walking tour of the OU – so anyone can 'walk' the campus and learn more about the people who gave their names to each building.
- Other special exhibitions, including items that showcase the links of Betty Boothroyd and Harold Wilson to the OU.

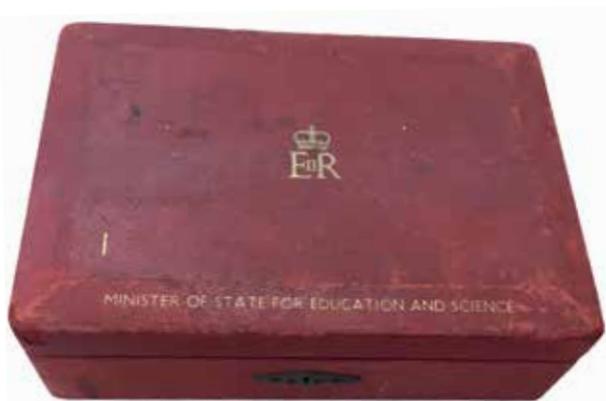
The Archive team are continually updating the Digital Archive so that even more of the OU's history can be shared online. Challenges for the team include digitising the old video and audio footage including fragile tapes that need to be transferred very carefully – often on very old equipment!

As custodians of the OU Archive, we are hugely proud that the first fifty years of our University has been documented so well and that we are able to share this with more people than ever before. We look forward to sharing more of the OU's unique history.

# DISCOVER SOME TREASURES OF THE ARCHIVE

## The Royal Charter

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1969, The Open University received its Royal Charter. This key document in OU history only comes out on special occasions and is always handled with care and a bit of nervousness!



## Jennie Lee's ministerial red box

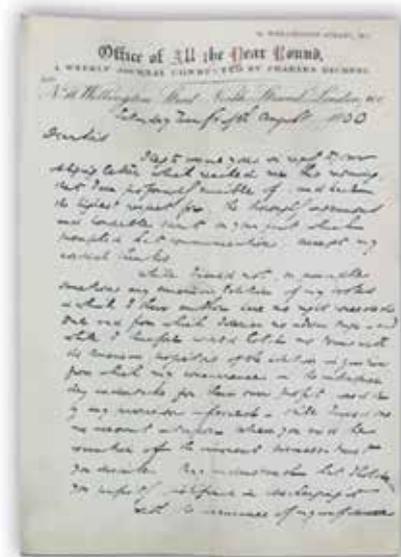
Jennie Lee played such a vital role in bringing the OU vision to life. That's why we're proud to have the red box that she used to carry her documents when she was a Member of Parliament. This box would have seen it all! To us, it symbolises the radical thinking and changes that were going on when the OU was first founded.



We asked Ruth Cammies and her colleagues, Amanda Saladine and Anita McDonald, to share some of their personal highlights from the Archive

## Sampson Low collection

This is a collection from the publisher Sampson Low, which includes letters from iconic authors and social reformers of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, such as Charles Dickens and Florence Nightingale. One of Sampson's direct descendants was an editor at the OU in the 1970s.



## Slippers

This is one of those funny stories which makes OU staff and visitors giggle. It's said that 100 pairs of carpet slippers were purchased for staff in the 1970s to help protect the carpets in the new buildings from the mud of the construction work on campus. We still have a pair on display in the Library.



## Visits from famous faces

It's always amazing to recognise important figures that have been part of OU history. This photo captures Her Majesty The Queen visiting the Walton Hall campus in 1979, standing alongside Major General Peter Girling and the OU Vice-Chancellor Walter Perry.

Discover hundreds of interesting objects, broadcasts and stories on the Online Digital Archive



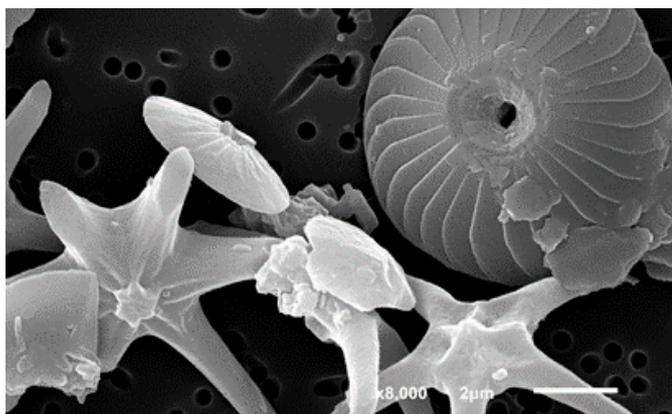
Visit the Digital Archive

[open.ac.uk/library/digital-archive](https://open.ac.uk/library/digital-archive)

# PROJECT DEEP BLUE

50 years of teaching and research: Opening up the future for the next generation of environmental scientists

Many who watched the *Blue Planet II* series (BBC, 2018) were mesmerised by the amazing cinematography as well as the natural and scientific wonders of the Earth's oceans. However, this landmark BBC Natural History series, made in partnership with the OU, brought into focus the impact we are having on this fragile environment. It is clear that positive actions need to be taken if we are to better protect our oceans and the diversity of life they support.



**Project Deep Blue** was launched in 2018 and was designed to raise philanthropic funding with two key objectives in mind - helping OU students develop the practical field skills they need to become our future Earth and Environmental scientists; and supporting postgraduate research investigating the effects of climate change on our past, present and future oceans. The project was an incredible success, with £67,000 kindly donated by alumni and supporters.

## Developing practical field skills for tomorrow's researchers

Field work is an important and integral part of studying Earth and Environmental Sciences, and anyone wanting to work in these areas needs to develop the necessary practical skills. However, the financial costs involved in attending a residential field school can act as a barrier, preventing some students from studying the courses that would give them the best chance to follow a career in Earth and Environmental Sciences.

Through the generosity of alumni, **Project Deep Blue** has enabled The School of Environment, Earth and Ecosystem Sciences (EEES) to actively address this social barrier by establishing a field school bursary for students on S206/SXF206 Environmental Science and S209 Earth Science. Students on benefits or with low household incomes can apply for a bursary to cover the full registration fee and accommodation costs;

also helping towards the costs of travelling to the field schools, where necessary. We are also proud of the positive steps we have taken to address disability restrictions associated with field schools.

## Linking phytoplankton with climate change

Marine phytoplankton (from the Greek for 'floating plants') are responsible for half the Earth's photosynthetic activities. As well as supplying oxygen to the oceans, phytoplankton form the base of the marine food-web, on which almost all other marine life-forms depend. However, because of changing climates, the very existence and diversity of phytoplankton is under threat.

Generous donations from alumni and supporters are helping to fund EEES Postgraduate Research student, Emmeline Gray who, with her supervisor, Pallavi Anand (Lecturer in Oceanography) are investigating how the diversity (i.e. species abundance) and morphology (i.e. shape and size) of calcareous phytoplankton have changed under variable climate regimes in the past. They are doing this by examining phytoplankton extracted from sedimentary cores deposited in the Indian Ocean 2-4 million years ago (from the Late Pliocene to Early Pleistocene).

To further quantify climate variables such as sea surface temperature and salinity at the time of deposition, Emmeline and Pallavi also need to carry out detailed geochemical analyses, and gifts from alumni will help support this work. By processing the sediment samples, and using oxygen isotope and trace element analysis on shells, it will be possible to calculate the age of the samples, as well as quantify the sea-surface temperature and salinity.

Knowing how phytoplankton responded in size, numbers and species-type to climate change in the past, will let us understand what might happen to the abundance and diversity of phytoplankton in the future. And, given the importance of phytoplankton to the health and richness of the oceans, this is a vital insight for the future of our planet.

Thank you to everyone that supported this life-changing project, providing students with the opportunity to change the world we live in



If you would like to donate, visit [open.ac.uk/donatenow](https://open.ac.uk/donatenow)

# 50 YEARS OF C

Thank you for your support  
so many lives through



## Teachers in India

TESS-India (Teacher Education through School-based Support in India) with your help has been able to improve the quality of teaching and teacher education whilst changing the classroom experience of millions of pupils in India.

1 million teachers and teacher educators have been reached through TESS-India.

Two versions of a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) were created, in English and Hindi, with over 50,000 participants from 135 countries.



## Students

Over 24,000 student  
Open University last

Donor support has e  
access to laptops so  
software to complet

## Teachers in Africa

Teacher Education in sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) provides free, quality resources to support teachers and can help them plan lessons that engage, involve and inspire pupils.

1.27 million teachers and teacher educators have been reached through TESSA.

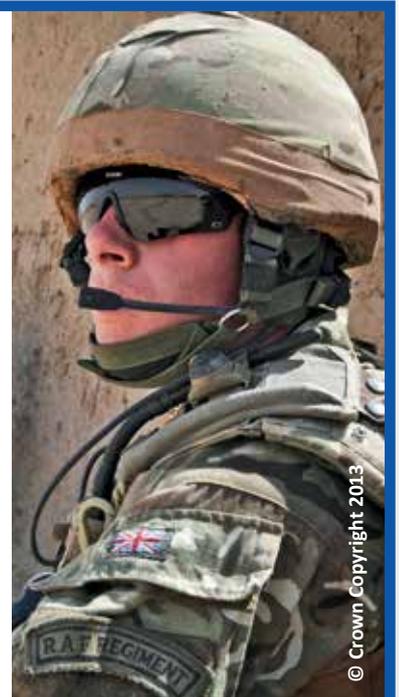


## Carers

The **Tree of Learning** has already raised over £230,000 in support of the 50th Anniversary Scholarships Fund which will support the equivalent of 12 full-time scholarships for carers. See page 9.

## Disabled Veterans

54 disabled veterans started their studies with The Open University in October 2018 thanks to the donors who supported The Disabled Veterans' Scholarships Fund (DVSF). Our students have to overcome a variety of physical and mental barriers, take on the commitment of studying, and hope to come out the other end with skills, knowledge and a realisation of what they really can achieve. We are proud to be part of this journey and we want all our supporters and donors to feel proud too. Applications are now open for the next cohort of students.



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# HANGING LIVES

port. You have changed these amazing projects

## with disabilities

s with disabilities studied with The year.

abled students with disabilities they can use assistive technology e their studies.



## Healthcare Workers

HEAT (Healthcare Education and Training) was launched in early 2011 and has helped train thousands of frontline healthcare workers across sub-Saharan Africa.

Over 20,000 rural and urban Health Extension Workers have now been trained using the HEAT materials as part of the Federal Ministry of Health's Health Extension Programme.

## Saving Lives: ACI research

"The money kindly donated to the Animal Computer Interaction (ACI) Lab over a period of two years has allowed us to fund a 15-month research position which, together with ongoing support from the OU, has been instrumental in advancing our Canine Interfaces for the Bio-Detection project. We are immensely grateful for the generous financial support we have received from donors, which has allowed us to make significant progress with this important project in collaboration with UK Charity Medical Detection Dogs."

Clara Mancini, Senior Lecturer in Computing and Communications, STEM



## Students taking their first steps

Access modules provide those with little or no knowledge of studying the opportunity to have a taste of university level education. Alumni support has provided students with the chance to begin their OU journey.

*"You don't know how much this means! Thank you so much!"*

*"I am glad there is someone out there who believes in a good education"*

These are some of the positive comments we have received.

## Supporting Students: Project Deep Blue

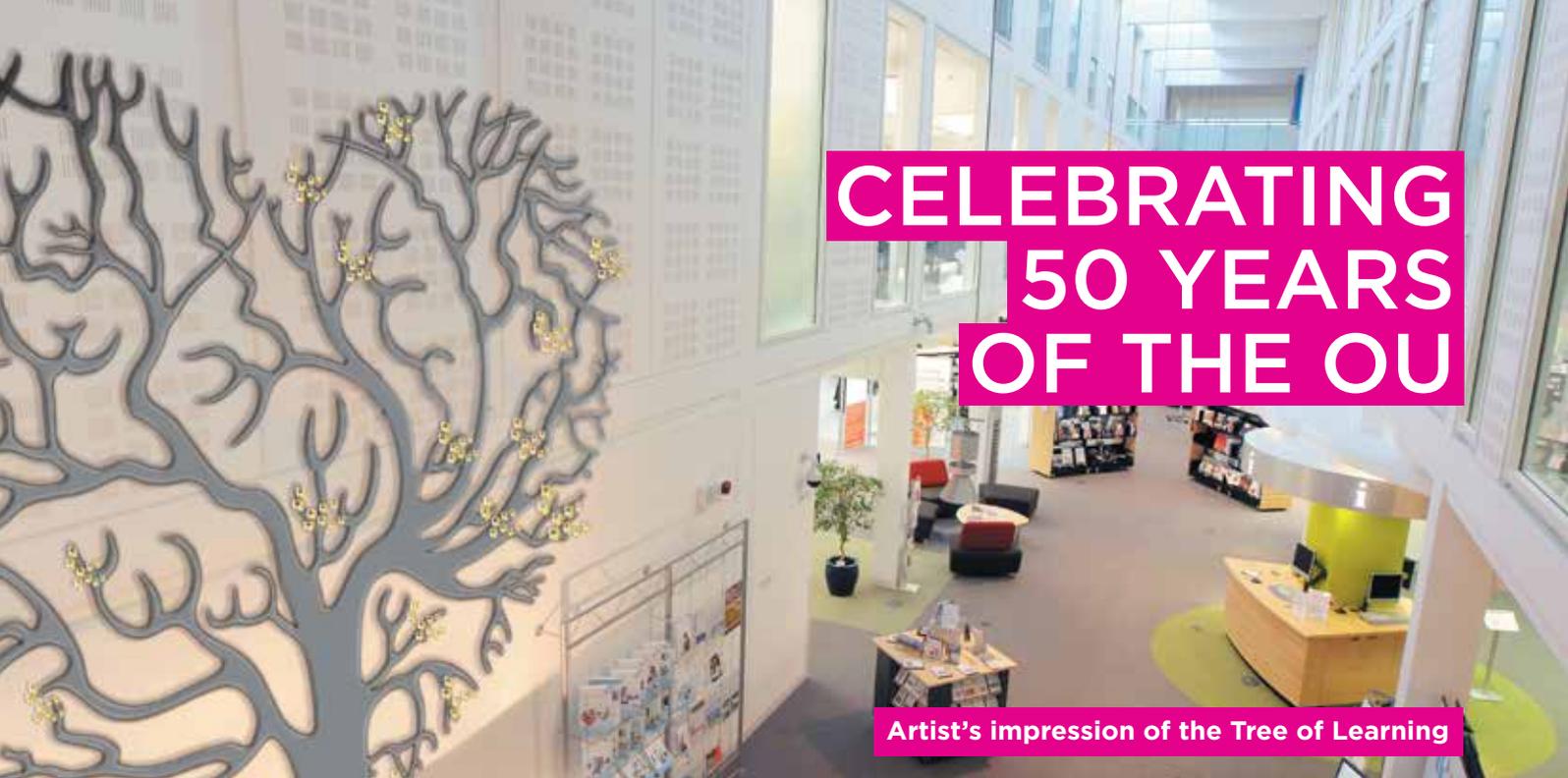
£67,000 has been donated by alumni to support funding for a Postgraduate student's research into phytoplankton, and to help break down barriers by providing funding for field schools. See page 5 for a full update.

## Future Leaders

The Fund provides students with the opportunity to start their MBA studies with the OU.

Thanks to the generosity of alumni and donors many students have been empowered to become better leaders.





# CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF THE OU

Artist's impression of the Tree of Learning

## Find out how you can be part of the future

In celebration of 50 years of being open to all and increasing access to education for over 2 million people worldwide, The Open University is installing a stunning **Tree of Learning** sculpture on the Walton Hall campus. The tree, which will be unveiled in October 2019 in the Betty Boothroyd Library, will feature thousands of gold-coloured OU shields as leaves recognising the generosity of donors.

We first shared the concept of the **Tree of Learning** earlier this year and the support has been exceptional, with over 5,500 alumni donating over £230,000 to the 50th Anniversary Scholarships Fund, creating the equivalent of 12 full-time scholarships. In recognition of their support, donors will have their own shield hung on the tree, personalised with their name and a year significant to the start of their OU journey. Thank you to everyone who has already contributed so far.

It's not too late to get involved, visit [alumni.open.ac.uk](http://alumni.open.ac.uk) or telephone 01908 655 044

## 50TH ANNIVERSARY SCHOLARSHIPS FUND

The OU is launching the first UK Carers Scholarships Fund, dedicated to helping carers overcome the many hurdles that prevent them from accessing education.



There are an estimated seven million individuals in the UK without whom health and social care is unsustainable. These individuals provide unpaid care for a family

member or friend with an illness, disability, mental health condition or an addiction. The support given by these carers includes tasks such as helping their loved one to communicate or helping them in and out of bed. They may do the cooking and household jobs or look after their younger siblings. The tasks that they perform can be unexpected and difficult to plan around; impacting their everyday lives and leaving them exhausted.

Unsurprisingly, carers find engaging with higher education difficult and the practicalities of studying can be difficult for carers of any age. The Fund will provide 100 scholarships to carers and vulnerable people, ensuring no one is left behind.



For more information on the tree, visit [alumni.open.ac.uk](http://alumni.open.ac.uk)

# IN CONVERSATION WITH MISSFIRE, THE TREE OF LEARNING SCULPTOR

Clare McHugh works under the creative name of MissFire and has been commissioned by The Open University to produce the stunning **Tree of Learning**



## When and how did you decide that sculpture was going to be your career?

I have always enjoyed making things and showed a flair for creativity from an early age. College (GNVQ) was the first time that I chose to specialise in sculpture, finding that my mind functioned better in three dimensions than two, creating something tangible and, in my opinion, more challenging. A passion for architecture, custom motorbike design, fashion, and furniture led me towards metal as a material with which to express my creativity. I was attracted to its versatility, strength and durability. I discovered that my love of large-scale metal sculpture was best suited to working with steel, and the introduction to blacksmithing - shaping hot metal between hammer and anvil - opened up a whole world of possibilities of what I could achieve with metal. I was hooked and have never looked back. I established MissFire in 2008 wanting to create my own recognisable style and work under my own name.

## What inspires your work?

My biggest inspiration is nature, the endless intricate details found in plants and animals. This also ties in with my love of the Art Nouveau period style. I find inspiration all around me, in other artists, through film, music, street-art, floristry, garden design, anywhere you choose to look. A recent visit to the Ironwork section of the V&A museum in London reminded me of how excited I'd get as a student, amazed by the talent and variety in hot-forged metal throughout history.

## How will you create the tree?

Due to the enormous size of the tree I will divide the design into sections and work on 16 individual panels, which will all link up when fitted on site. This approach is mainly down to weight, ease of transport and the limited size of my studio. I am currently in the process of completing my existing commissions and clearing my schedule to allow at least four months for manufacturing during this summer.

## What are you most looking forward to about the tree?

For me the most rewarding moment will be standing back and looking at the completed sculpture after installation, and I can't wait to see the effect of all the personalised shields shimmering in the branches. It's going to look incredible. It's definitely one for the MissFire history books!



To see more of MissFire's work  
visit [missfire.co.uk](http://missfire.co.uk)

# NEWS IN BRIEF...



## ALL SYSTEMS GO FOR DISABLED VETERANS

Andrew Fenwick-Green, Reception at BT Tower

We are delighted to have formed a new partnership with BAE Systems, a global defence, aerospace and security company, to make education accessible for disabled veterans. BAE Systems will be supporting The Disabled Veterans' Scholarships Fund and funding 12 life-changing scholarships for veterans injured in, or due to, military service.

The Disabled Veterans' Scholarships Fund was designed to allow veterans living with a disability to gain a new qualification while being supported by specialist disability and careers services. It was developed with the Ministry of Defence to meet the needs of

this community who have left a unique working environment with valuable workplace skills.

As we enter the second year of the scheme we are looking forward to our next cohort of students joining us in the autumn. Thanks to the huge support we have received from generous donors like BAE Systems and thousands of alumni, we are now two thirds of the way to raising our target of £2.6 million.



For more information visit

[alumni.open.ac.uk/campaigns/veterans](https://alumni.open.ac.uk/campaigns/veterans)



## SUPPORT FOR FLOODPLAIN MEADOWS

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, one of the largest independent grant-makers in the UK, has kindly agreed to fund the work of the Floodplain Meadows Partnership. The Floodplain Meadows Partnership is hosted by the OU, and led by academics from the School of Environment, Earth and Ecosystem Sciences. The grant will enable the Partnership to continue their vital work supporting management and restoration of rare floodplain meadows across the UK.

Meadows found on floodplains have numerous environmental and social benefits. They help to reduce flood peaks, store carbon and are home to a diverse range of flora and fauna. They are also at the heart of

local communities, providing beautiful places to walk and explore nature. These meadows can support over 200 different species of plant, however, they need careful and specific management in order to conserve their unique and complex ecological systems.

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation grant will enable the Partnership to visit and offer advice at more sites, support more volunteers and train local Ambassadors to monitor sites at a local level.



For more information visit

[floodplainmeadows.org.uk](https://floodplainmeadows.org.uk)



## IT NETWORKING SKILLS REACH DIVERSE GROUP

Cisco, the leading IT and networking company, has developed the Cisco Networking Academy (NetAcad) a global training programme that helps give students the digital, problem-solving and entrepreneurial skills they need to get a job, earn a promotion or start a business of their own. The OU works with Cisco as a leading Academy Support Centre, offering NetAcad courses to OU students and supporting other institutions to do the same.

The OU is one of a small number of Cisco Academies who are part of NetAcad for Diverse Abilities (N4DA) that focus on teaching students with diverse abilities.

N4DA's emphasis is to share experience, build communities and enable instructors from any Cisco Academy to support their own students with diverse

abilities. It examines ways to improve experiences for students with vision, hearing and mobility impairment.

In addition, the project considers the particular aptitudes that these individuals have. For example, cybersecurity experts often seek the more neurodiverse members of society for assistance, and blind people are often more able to conjure up a clearer mental image of their environment, which is extremely helpful when dealing with network connections. Their very lack of sight gives them a unique perspective into troubleshooting networks, supporting complex and distributed systems.



For more information visit

[ouasc.org.uk](https://ouasc.org.uk)



## THE GIFT OF SHARING

Making a gift to The Open University is one of the most powerful ways to change lives through the power of education. Whether it is supporting students to realise their dreams, helping the University to undertake pioneering research both on Earth and even in space, or helping transform education across the developing world.

One way some of our generous alumni and supporters are helping the OU to continue to deliver its mission of being open to all, is by making a gift of shares to the

University. Share giving is an amazing way of supporting life-changing projects and initiatives; it is now easier than ever to make a donation in this way.

We work with ShareGift, an independent UK registered charity, who specialise in releasing funds locked up in small shareholdings, which are often difficult to dispose of because of the costs involved. If you are a UK taxpayer, you can claim income tax relief on the value of most stocks and securities when you donate using this method.



For more information on ShareGift please visit [www.sharegift.org](https://www.sharegift.org) or contact Ollie Badger on [01908 659876](tel:01908659876) or at [ollie.badger@open.ac.uk](mailto:ollie.badger@open.ac.uk)  
Please remember to quote 'The Open University' when making your gift

# THE LIFE-CHANGING POWER OF SAYING 'YES'

By saying 'yes' to leaving a legacy to The Open University in your Will, you can share one of the most powerful, life-changing gifts anyone can ever make to another human being – education.



In 1969 Harold Wilson said 'yes' to creating The Open University; and man first walked on the moon. Both required giant leaps of faith.

The OU wasn't even part of the Government's manifesto at the time, but came about largely due to the personal determination of the then Prime Minister, Harold Wilson and the commitment of his Minister for the Arts, Jennie Lee.



They believed passionately in the idea of creating a 'University of the Air' and said 'yes' to making it open to all.

What a fantastic lasting gift to all those students in the future who otherwise might not have had the chance of a higher education! Today the OU continues to say 'yes' to students, regardless of educational background, disability or circumstance.

If you believe in saying 'yes' to the OU's values, breaking down barriers and opening up access to education for future generations, will you consider saying 'yes' by leaving a gift in your Will to The Open University?



If you'd like a free booklet on remembering The Open University in your Will, or have any queries, please contact our Legacy team via

[giving@open.ac.uk](mailto:giving@open.ac.uk) or call 01908 659141

## PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM TOUCHES DOWN AT BT MURRAYFIELD

The OU and the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) will come together to co-host the 9th Pan-Commonwealth Forum (PCF9), a four-day international event in Edinburgh, Scotland between 9th - 12th September 2019.

With both organisations celebrating significant anniversaries - COL's 30th and the OU's 50th - and a joint commitment to quality education and life-long



**OU Chancellor Baroness Martha Lane-Fox**

learning, makes it a perfect partnership.

The Forum theme 'Innovations for Quality Education and Lifelong Learning' incorporates the sub-themes of Employability; Equity and Inclusion; Opening

up Education; Technology; with special focus areas of Education for Girls and Empowering Youth.

The Canadian High Commission in London was the venue for the official launch of PCF9. The event was co-hosted by OU Chancellor Baroness Martha Lane-Fox, UK Deputy High Commissioner for Canada, Sarah Fountain Smith, Professor Asha Kanwar, President and CEO of COL and the OU's Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Josie Fraser.

Invited guests included Government and Foreign Office officials, business leaders, alumni and supporters of the OU, higher education and international development representatives and colleagues from the PCF9 project team.



For more information visit [pcf9.org](http://pcf9.org)

➤ If you would like to give a gift to help **Open up the future** for carers, visit [giving.open.ac.uk](http://giving.open.ac.uk) or call **01908 655044**

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