2014

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John Henry Brookes Building wins RIBA Award

The John Henry Brookes Building was the big winner at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) South awards, taking the Building of the Year accolade. The building also won the Sustainability Award, while the architects Design Engine were presented with the Architect of the Year prize.

The John Henry Brookes Building, which was submitted alongside the Abercrombie Building, was highly praised by the RIBA judges, who commented that it made them ‘wish they could go back to university’.

The RIBA awards champion and celebrate the best of British architecture and as regional winner, the John Henry Brookes Building will now be considered for the national RIBA Stirling Prize.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Janet Beer commented: “The John Henry Brookes Building is the biggest and best signal that at Oxford Brookes we put the student experience at the heart of everything we do.”

Matt Gaskin, Head of the School of Architecture, added: “The award is testament to our vision in providing inspirational architectural spaces to complement our top class teaching and research. Personally, I am delighted for Design Engine – particularly Richard Rose-Casemore and Richard Jobson as they have long been involved with the School of Architecture and our graduates. To have award winning architecture on campus will further inspire our staff and students.”

“The Forum” in the John Henry Brookes Building
Low Carbon Communities Research receives Government Recognition

A research project on low carbon communities led by the Low Carbon Building Group, a research group within the School of Architecture at Oxford Brookes, has been recognised as an exemplar project on energy and communities in a government report on Energy.

The Evaluating Low Carbon Communities project (EVALOC) was highlighted in the Community Energy Strategy, a report by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC). The research is led by Professor Rajat Gupta, director of the Oxford Institute for Sustainable Development (OISD) at Oxford Brookes, in collaboration with the University of Oxford. Laura Barnfield, Matt Gregg and Bob Irving are researchers in the Low Carbon Building Group who are also working on the EVALOC project.

The Community Energy Strategy report highlights the benefits of putting communities at the heart of energy policy, of which EVALOC is an excellent example. The report details the EVALOC project as a case study for developing true community energy in the UK. It notes that: “the researchers have developed a robust approach to evaluating the impacts and effectiveness of community-led retrofits of homes and behaviour change initiatives on household energy use.”

Speaking about the project, Professor Gupta said: “EVALOC is an exciting, novel and collaborative four-year project. We are undertaking community-led action research and a programme of household level monitoring and evaluation. We are building on the experience of a number of professional researchers, as well as the experience and knowledge in communities and we hope to make a real difference to energy use and carbon emissions.”

The work is funded by the Research Council UK Energy and Communities Programme and brings together researchers from building and social sciences fields. It aims to transform the way communities use and produce energy, and build new ways of supporting more sustainable living. In the future, the EVALOC project will be developing a Community Energy Toolkit that includes materials and guidance for energy projects. The toolkit will also include methods for monitoring and evaluating household energy use as well as carbon mapping tools to help groups identify, action and monitor energy projects in their communities.
OxArch lectures inspire students

In 2013/14, OxArch has continued as one of Oxford Brookes’ most popular student societies. The lecture series has continued to be a popular weekly event, with guest visitors including Angela Brady, Jerry Tate, Jonas Lencer (dRMM), David Portman (Mossessian and Partners) David Kohn, Andy Groarke (Carmody Groarke), Alastair Parvin and Alistair Forbes (NORD Architects).

The society has continued to run workshops throughout the year, focusing on topics ranging from photography, through to rammed earth construction and acoustic engineering. Society members also had the opportunity to be taken on an exclusive guided tour of the recently redesigned King’s Cross station by the project architects from John McAslan + Partners.

Competitions have run throughout the year with many members contributing photos for the photography competition and designs for the ever popular, OxArch sweaters. The academic year of events culminated with the popular end-of-year ‘Architecture Ball’ at the Ashmolean Museum.

PAUL OLIVER AWARDED HONORARY MEMBERSHIP BY THE ARCHITECTURAL ASSOCIATION

Professor Paul Oliver, MBE, visiting professor in the Place Culture and Identity research group in the School of Architecture, has been awarded an Honorary Membership by the Architectural Association.

This highest classification of Architectural Association membership is reserved as a special honour for individuals whose contribution to the work and development of the Architectural Association, or to the education or professions of architects in general is particularly noteworthy.

Professor Oliver joins a select group of individuals to have been honoured in this way, including Herman Hertzberger, Frei Otto, Charles Jencks, Joseph Rykwert and Kenneth Frampton. Professor Oliver was presented with this award at an event in May 2014.

Commenting on the award, Sadie Morgan, president of the Architectural Association, said: “It is for all the above reasons that we honour Professor Oliver, but in particular for his critical thinking and writing which has helped shape the architectural landscape of the past few decades.”

Professor Oliver was awarded an MBE for his contribution to architectural education in 2003. In 2002 he received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments (IASTE). In 2008 he was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame for his pioneering work on Blues and African American music, one of only two non-performers to have been honoured in this way.
Thousands of people were wowed at a night of ‘Wisdom, Wonders and Widgets’ hosted jointly by Oxford Brookes and the Ashmolean Museum.

On Friday 14 March, more than 5,600 visitors met students, staff and alumni from Brookes running research showcases around the museum or giving musical performances.

Queues for the fun and awe-inspiring research showcases reflected the tremendous popularity of the night. The event was part of the museum’s series of Live Fridays and marked the announcement of the start of the university’s 150th anniversary.

Planning, Urban Design and Architecture held their own joint showcase with the workshop ‘Build the City of your Dreams’. Student and staff were on hand throughout the evening to help visitors share ideas about how to shape Oxford’s character. Visitors used wooden modelling blocks, photographs and other type of material to create their own visions for the city.

Architecture master’s student, Matthew Gibbs, gave an account of his experience at Live Friday. “Our team was astonished by the number of visitors who came to the Live Friday event. There was a real buzz down in our room with children imaginatively drawing and creating their own cities. What I loved the most was helping people engage with such a current topic. So many people were interested, and with any luck we have inspired some of those children to become urban designers and architects of the future!”

The workshop underway at Ashmolean Live Friday
O B1 LIVE, first year students in the School of Architecture who undertake real life design projects, have collaborated with the Pitt Rivers Museum and the East Oxford Archaeology and History Project (Archeox) to explore the connection between Architecture and Archaeology and the rigid preconceptions of museum display cases.

Traditionally, valuable archaeological objects are displayed in plain glass cases or hidden drawers that can only be accessed by professionals in white gloves. OB1 LIVE is an innovative programme founded by Jane Anderson, Programme Lead for Undergraduate Architecture at Oxford Brookes, and architect Colin Priest that commissions and creates community based design projects for first year undergraduate Architecture students. Together with Archeox, an Oxford based project which encourages volunteers to get involved with local archaeology, first year Architecture students have been able to view, handle and record the finds from the Archeox Bartelmas Chapel and Minchery Priory digs. OB1 LIVE took this opportunity to design and make innovative prototype display devices, and on 19 October the artefacts were exhibited at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, in cases made by Oxford Brookes own Architecture students.

The finds reveal important evidence of a leper hospital at Bartelmas Chapel and include prehistoric and medieval finds at Minchery Farm. For one day only, these finds were displayed in an exhibition titled ‘FOUND! A Display of Archaeological Finds from East Oxford’, and first year students were able to talk to the public about their interesting display case designs that were made for the collection. OB1 LIVE gives first year students the opportunity for real collaborations and each project enables new architects to participate in a unique, valuable and site-specific experience.

An archive of OB1LIVE work can be found at the OB1 Live Website, http://architecture.brookes.ac.uk/galleries/ob1

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Drama/Architecture set design collaboration

Third year Drama students and MArchD masters students came together this year in a collaborative live project to design and build theatre sets. The Architecture students developed kinetic set-design components inspired by Baroque Theatre tradition. The final set designs were used in May 2014 in the drama students’ end of year drama productions.

Four different theatre play groups were assigned to four architectural students and six drama students. The group that Architecture student William Harrison worked in was for the Robert Harling’s play, Steel Magnolias; other plays included Mike Bartlett’s Earthquakes in London, Simon Stevens’ Pornography and Sweeney Todd.

“We were given a budget of £75 and the Architecture students had meetings with the Drama students to begin discussing what they wanted from the set design. This gave us ideas to go away with and enabled us to design the set, bringing ideas together of what they wanted from the set, and what could be designed and built within the budget.”

The process described by William was carried out by all four groups. They then presented in front of rest of the collaboration group to receive feedback, allowing their designs to be finalised. Temporary sets could then be created, allowing the actors to rehearse whilst the final designs were drawn up to be built from.

The four groups built their sets in the architectural workshop, and they were erected in the theatre space provided by the university where the final performances would take place.

William: “The process was a great learning experience as it involved dealing with clients and budget, and working together to get the optimum final design.”
GRADUATE PROFILE

Akbar Nazim Modan MA in International Architectural Regeneration and Development 2007-2009

How has the course helped you in your career?
The course’s focus on vernacular architecture heavily influenced my career because it allowed me to explore built environments within their social, cultural and historical context more. A university field trip to Cyprus gave me insight and experience of working in a post-conflict environment. This furthered my interest in architectural regeneration and development, and confirmed how both regeneration and development should be carried out with the cultural attitudes, and historical background of a settlement in mind.

After graduating from Oxford Brookes what were the next steps for your career and where are you working now?
From 2009-2011, I worked as a Conservation Architect on the revitalisation of the Erbil Citadel, Iraq. The project was part of UNESCO’s contribution to the UN’s reconstruction and development efforts in Iraq. The citadel, frequently cited as the oldest continuously inhabited settlement in the world, stands on an 8,000 year old archaeological mound, and was partly damaged during Saddam Hussein’s regime.

From 2010-2012, I worked as a Rural Shelter Manager in Haiti, post-earthquake. The objectives of the programme were to increase access to water and sanitation facilities, provide safe shelter and non-food items for displaced families, and increase the purchasing power of affected population. The project was funded by USAid for reconstruction and rehabilitation in Haiti. We developed an upgradable shelter with eco-friendly materials and appropriate construction techniques suitable for the local culture.

Currently I am a senior researcher with ‘The World Habitat Research Centre’, Department of Environment, Construction and Design, University of Applied Sciences of Southern Switzerland. Based in India, I work in post-disaster traditional and re-located rural settlements helping to further understanding of habitats, housing and social change within built environments. For four weeks of the year, I also teach in an Architectural Documentation Teaching programme at the Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage, with the University of Delaware.

What achievements are you most proud of since graduating?
My time in Iraq was definitely a highlight in my career so far. The architectural regeneration of Erbil Citadel was a great learning curve, encouraging me to adopt a vernacular architectural approach in future projects.

What advice would you give current students?
First I think it’s important when working to have a vision of your own; one you can believe in and develop. This will add a uniqueness and originality to your work, and allow your career to evolve in a way that is more in line with your personal interests and values.

I would also advise students to think ‘outside the box’ when it comes to career prospects and employment. Often jobs are available, but are not well advertised. In particular for architects, it’s important to remember that construction is booming in many developing countries, and job opportunities exist on an international scale.

Are you currently involved with Oxford Brookes? If so, how?
Yes, I am still in contact with Oxford Brookes lecturers and the architecture department. I recently came back to Brookes to talk with current International Architectural Regeneration and Development students, and share information about projects I have worked on since graduating from university.

In what way is remaining connected to your university and alumni network important to you?
It’s important to connect with people in your professional field and maintain those contacts in order to strengthen career prospects and broaden your understanding. I secured a place on The Revitalization of the Erbil Citadel UNESCO project thanks to my Brookes connections, so I strongly appreciate how valuable a relationship with your university can be.

The project was part of UNESCO’s contribution to the UN’s reconstruction and development efforts in Iraq. The citadel, frequently cited as the oldest continuously inhabited settlement in the world, was partly damaged during Saddam Hussein’s regime.
STUDENT FIELD TRIP TO GIBRALTAR

Unit F’s overriding interest this year has been human and architectural immigration. Therefore, in January 2014, they travelled to Gibraltar to experience the post-effects of immigration on such a small place with a huge history. Gibraltar’s history has been so dense due to its strategic naval position in the Strait of Gibraltar (between Europe and Africa) and has exaggerated this history through the peninsula’s dramatic topography assisting its military defence.

The current culture of Gibraltar is historically British, with numerous red telephone boxes, more British flags on display than at the 2012 Olympics opening ceremony and even a Morrisons. This is all set in a climate so unrecognisably British (it’s hot!), and with an architectural make-up of Moorish, Mediterranean and many other buildings not typically representative of British culture.

Unit F experienced the majority of this weird and wonderful place on foot as it is so small, making the trip a different experience from trips to major European cities. The architecture we experienced was a representation of the cultures that have occupied and morphed the place, with buildings having been adapted numerous times to serve different military, religious or cultural functions. The students’ interest in these fascinating transformations of architecture led to the Gibraltar Chronicle writing an article headlined ‘Multi-Layered Research’.

Jack Perry, Architecture student: “As well as learning about the place, we had all researched a specific event in Gibraltar’s history and made a postcard about it to bring with us and post home. Additionally, we made models using found objects in Gibraltar to start to convey our initial ideas and presented them at a charrette with guest critics (prominent bloggers in Gibraltar) towards the end of the trip”.

In response to what they saw in Gibraltar, the unit have since completed their own design projects. The richness and diversity of the landscape (both rurally and urbanistically) helped to inspire the students when they came to create their own architectural pieces.

12TH ANNUAL OXFORD HUMAN RIGHTS FESTIVAL

Thank you to everyone who came to the 12th annual Oxford Human Rights Festival and made it such a success. Thanks to all our performers and panellists, film makers and volunteers. Highlights of this year’s festival included Like Enemies of the State, by BeFrank Theatre Company, especially the afternoon schools performance when students from Oxford and Cherwell Valley College and Lord William’s School participated in an animated debate post performance about human rights in the theatre.

The involvement of Oxford Brookes Poetry Centre added another dimension to the festival, with the involvement of the inspiring George the Poet and Jamie McKendrick among others. The film screenings, especially Steve McQueen’s Hunger, inspired fascinating debates and intelligent conversations.

Founded in 2003, the festival is an initiative of postgraduate students on the MA course in Development and Emergency Practice. In attracting diverse audiences to each of our events, the festival hopes to raise awareness about a range of human rights concerns among students and the wider Oxford community. The festival is open to all.

Each year the festival engages academics, film directors, actors and celebrities to present films and take part in the lively audience discussions following the screenings.

The full programme is available on the Oxford Brookes website, www.architecture.brookes.ac.uk.
STUDENT PROFILE

Donata Buzinskaite
BA Architecture, 2010-2013

What did you think of the course while studying here at Brookes?
I found Brookes very flexible and open as the students were given freedom to develop their own project briefs and enrich them with their personal interests. At the same time most of the modules complemented each other and technology was an integral part of the design, which doesn’t happen in every university.

What advice do you have for others?
I would advise students to use the full potential of your and your tutors’ time as they are always ready to help you and have incredible knowledge and lots of ideas. I would also advise to attend the Architecture Society’s evening lectures and workshops, as the organisers manage to invite high profile professionals of the subject.

What did you think of the industrial placement aspect of your course?
I carried out a placement as an Architectural Assistant at the Oxford firm Berman Guedes Stretton. The experience gave me real insight in to what it is to be an Architect professionally. It is not only about design; you also have to have good technical knowledge, management and other skills. The experience helped me to understand the importance of the subjects that were less exciting while studying at university. Thus, I feel I will come back to do my postgraduate degree with a different, well-informed attitude.

What were your main responsibilities whilst on placement?
I worked with a different project team each time I had a new project. This allowed me to develop my communication skills and at the same time it was a pleasure to get to know my colleagues better. I worked on specification drawings, prepared drawings and presentations for the client meetings, and prepared visualisations for competitions.

Since graduating from Brookes what were the next steps for your career?
I am currently on a placement and will be starting my postgraduate course (Part 2) in September 2014.

GRADUATE PROFILE

Clare Nash

What do/did you think of the course while studying here?
I thought it was excellent. It really broadened my mind, particularly about sustainable technologies and vernacular architecture, the latter of which I knew nothing about prior to coming to Brookes.

After graduating from Brookes what were the next steps for your career and where are you working now?
After traveling for six months to South America, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Vietnam and China, I applied to lots of practices. I received two interviews but unfortunately lost out to another applicant in both cases. I then bumped into Charlie Luxton (‘Building the Dream’ on Channel 4) on the train who offered me some freelance work. That led to me also finding work with some other practices and eventually becoming a practice owner and forming Clare Nash Architecture.

In addition I have just received news that I now have a book deal with RIBA Publishing for a book called Contemporary Vernacular Design: A Local Approach to UK Housing. It is based on the theme of my master’s, but this time it will be focusing on European and UK case studies.

What achievements are you most proud of since graduating?
My master’s and setting up my own practice.

Are you involved with Oxford Brookes currently?
I recently gave a talk to current IARD masters students about my master’s, ‘learning from vernacular technologies in modern sustainable housing design’.

In what way is remaining connected to your alumni network important to you?
It is really useful to share experiences in the working world. Many of my ex-student colleagues have gone on to do some really interesting things, which is inspiring.

I now have a book deal with RIBA Publishing for a book called Contemporary Vernacular Design.
Joint Brookes/Harvard disaster conference marks anniversary of Typhoon Haiyan

Professor David Sanderson, Director of the Centre for Development and Emergency Practice (CENDEP) has been based at Harvard University as a visiting professor since autumn 2013.

From 5-7 May 2014 Oxford Brookes University’s Department of Planning and Harvard University delivered a joint conference on preparedness and response to urban disaster, which was organised and chaired by David Sanderson. When commenting on the conference, Professor Sanderson said: “Humanitarians, architects, planners and other designers have critical roles to play in urban disaster recovery. The question is how do they work better together?”

The conference took place at Harvard University, Cambridge in Massachusetts, USA. The event brought together over 150 people including humanitarian aid practitioners, those in government and designers from spatial/physical disciplines, to explore ways to improve actions before and after disaster. The conference addressed three key themes: response, resilience and transformation. The final day of the conference coincided with the six month anniversary of Typhoon Haiyan and the devastation caused in Tacloban.

A keynote speech was delivered by Professor Georgia Butina Watson, Head of the Department of Planning, alongside Professor Andrew Natsios, Executive Professor at the George HW Bush School of Government at Texas A&M University.

Former Planning student and Brookes alumna, Victoria Stodart, also presented at the event. Victoria is currently employed fulltime as a global shelter advisor for the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC).

Doric Club celebrates member’s 90th birthday

Jimmy Cox, longstanding member of the Doric Club visited Oxford on Sunday 6 April to celebrate his 90th birthday. He was met by Nigel Hiscock and Geoffrey Randell, both of whom shared the distinction of being both students and tutors at the Oxford School of Architecture. Jimmy was teaching here in the 1950s and 60s, and was the first Oxford tutor to teach in the USA at the University of Virginia, where he became a distinguished professor in History and Theory. He eventually retired to Savannah Georgia, where he now lives.

Jimmy was a long running Secretary of the Doric Club and organised the Doric Club meeting at the Town Hall, Oxford in May 1955, chaired by our then Honorary President John Henry Brookes.

At the Ashmolean, Jimmy was presented with a triptych memo entitled The 3 musketeers of the Doric Club covering 70 years history of the Doric Club and the Oxford School of Architecture. On his way back he stopped at the new John Henry Brookes building and the Glass Tank, within the Abercrombie building. The Doric Club wishes Professor Cox many happy returns and hopes to welcome him back next year when Oxford Brookes University celebrates 150 years and the Doric Club 88 years.
GRADUATE PROFILE

Marcus Cubitt

What do/did you think of the course while studying here?
Throughout many years achieving all 3 RIBA Parts to becoming an architect at Brookes, I enjoyed seeing how the topics covered and the expectations placed upon the students changed. The content is varied and gives a balanced approach to learning the artistic nature to being an architect and the technical basis required. There is also a good focus throughout on society and the fact that without people, there would be no architecture.

How did your scholarship or bursary enhance your experience of the course?
My bursary enabled me to secure a work placement with PRP Architects and a return to the Diploma at Brookes. Having this security and stability throughout 2007-2009 was beneficial and resulted in me having continued contact with both university and the workplace.

What are the best bits of studying at Brookes?
Without a doubt the best bits of studying at Brookes are the opportunity to express who you are through your work in architecture, and the chances to meet new people and friends. The facilities available are good and wide-ranging. There are many societies to be involved with and a continued presence of the tutors with whom you can build a beneficial study relationship. Oxford is a lovely town to have on your doorstep, full of inspiration for budding architects!

After graduating from Brookes what were the next steps for your career and where are you working now?
I have had an on-going connection with PRP Architects and Brookes and am now a full-time architect and urban designer at PRP, occasionally visiting Brookes for alumni events.

Did your career turn out how you expected it to be?
I always wanted to be an architect in London and now I can happily say that I am! I have taken on a role in the technical side to the profession and am enjoying working, drawing to build things which people will be enjoying in the built environment for many years to come. The work is always varied which is one of the reasons I love the job and things will be exciting from here on.

What achievements are you most proud of since graduating?
Since graduating from Part 3 and registering for the Architects Registration Board, I am proud to have completed the working drawings for a community centre and am now working on the technical delivery of the Olympic Legacy housing on the London 2012 Olympic Park. It is a chance to explore all the varying things about my job and look forward to producing something of significance in this important area of London.

Are you involved with Oxford Brookes currently?
Currently I occasionally attend open days to tell future students about my experiences within Brookes and give advice on studying architecture. I also attend Doric Club events celebrating the history of the School of Architecture.

In what way is remaining connected to your alumni network important to you?
It is important to stay in touch with the tutors as you never know when their expertise will come in handy. It is also a good way to let them know how you are getting on after completing your studies. Feeling like a part of the school’s history, it is important to attend events that chart the history of the School of Architecture and say a thank you to those tutors and friends who helped you along the way.

I am now working on the technical delivery of the Olympic Legacy housing on the London 2012 Olympic Park. It is a chance to explore all the varying things about my job and look forward to producing something of significance in this important area of London.
CONTACT INFORMATION

School of Architecture
Oxford Brookes University
Headington Campus
Gipsy Lane
OX3 0BP

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architecture.brookes.ac.uk

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Development and Alumni Relations Office
Oxford Brookes University
Headington Campus
Headington Hill
OX3 0BT

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