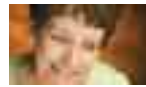




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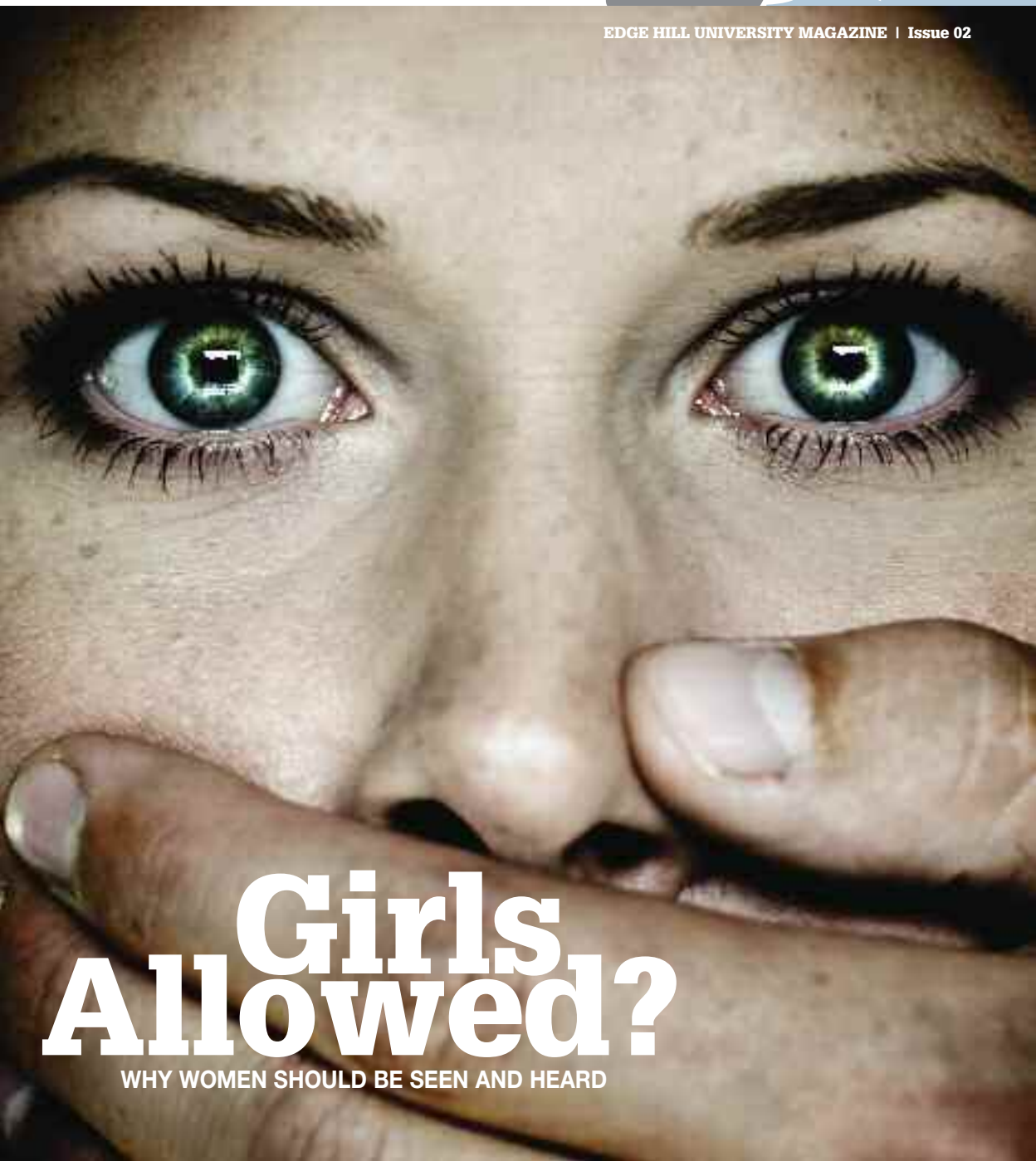
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EDGE HILL UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE | Issue 02



Girls Allowed?

WHY WOMEN SHOULD BE SEEN AND HEARD

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GUARDIAN ANGEL

Broadcaster, clinician, Government adviser and comedy writer - Edge Hill's newly-appointed Chancellor, Dr Tanya Byron, is a woman of many talents. E42 asked her about her new role, her friendship with Jennifer Saunders and being a 'Supermum'.

Congratulations on becoming Edge Hill's first Chancellor. How does it feel? How? It's absolutely bonkers! I still can't believe it; I'm completely overwhelmed. My kids always bring me back down to earth though. When I had the official photo taken they thought the outfit was hilarious – especially the hat – and secretly set it as the wallpaper on my computer! Now, every time I switch it on I'm confronted with a huge picture of myself in oddly-shaped headgear! Seriously though, I couldn't be more delighted.

You've rejected similar offers before.

What convinced you to accept this one?

It just felt like something I could really get behind. The fit feels right, too. The University wanted a woman, to reflect its all-female origins, someone with a professional, clinical background and a familiarity with the media, and someone who is involved in policy-making, but isn't part of Government. I feel I can offer all those things. But when the Vice-Chancellor said he also wanted someone youthful to appeal to students as well, I could have leapt up and kissed him! I'm a 41-year-old mother of two, I don't get called youthful very often these days, so that sealed it for me!

What was your own educational background like?

I guess it was quite privileged. I went to a private girls' school which I loved because of the friends I made there, but I didn't enjoy my education. It was a classic 'get results' type of school. Some people work well with challenge and a bit of pressure – I'm not one of them. One of my teachers even wrote on my report, "Tanya will never be a high-flier"! Whenever I achieve something, like being offered the Chancellor role, my mum still says, "That will show her!"

You come from quite a showbiz background. Your father was renowned film and theatre director John Sichel, your sister's a TV director and you're married to DC Terry Perkins from The Bill (aka actor Bruce Byron). Is your life all film premieres and glamorous parties?

No, not at all! My dad did work with some very famous people – Alan Bates, Helen Mirren, Alec Guinness – but he wasn't a celebrity himself. We had a very normal upbringing, although I did apparently wee on Laurence Olivier's lap when I was three. How's that for an epitaph? "Here lies Tanya Byron who once weed on an Oscar-winning Knight of the Realm!" Bruce and I are also very grounded people. I still live where I grew up in North London, so I have close family nearby and we have pretty much the same friends around us that we've always had. They all knew us before we were on television, so we don't get treated like celebrities at home. Actually, we're quite tediously normal!

You recently co-wrote the BBC2 sitcom *The Life and Times of Vivienne Vyle* with Jennifer Saunders. How did that come about?

In 2005 I was asked to appear on the French & Saunders Christmas Show as Jennifer and Dawn were big fans of *House of Tiny Tearaways*. It was quite surreal. I walked into Pinewood Studios and the two tiniest women ever came running over to me going, "Oh my god, it's Tanya Byron!" They looked totally star-struck and there I was, towering at least a foot over both of them thinking, "Surely this should be the other way around?" Jennifer and I just got on really well and started going out for lunch every now and then.

"My own kids have their moments. They are naughty sometimes, they have had tantrums in the street. I have been that mother in the supermarket with the screeching kid that everyone tuts at!"

One day we'd had a few drinks and I suggested a character to her and before I knew it, I had pitched a comedy series to Jennifer Saunders!

Is that the most unlikely turn your career has taken to date?

Well, anyone who knows me will testify that I can't tell a joke – I can bring a dinner party to a standstill with my rubbish comedy skills! But, in general conversation, people tell me I'm quite witty and I have a good imagination, so working with Jennifer has allowed that side of me to come out. But, no, if anyone had told me I would end up writing a comedy series with one of the greatest female comedians of all time, I would have been sceptical to say the least! *(At this point Jennifer Saunders, who has been sitting quietly in the background since the beginning of the interview, chips in with a deadpan, "Tanya's not funny at all. She thinks she is, but in fact she's the least funny person I've ever met." "See, this is what I have to put up with," sighs Tanya.)*

As the nation's best-known 'parenting guru', do you feel under pressure to be the perfect mum yourself?

I honestly don't care what other people think of my parenting. I guess people do expect my children to be little angels because of my TV work, but they have their moments like all kids. They are naughty sometimes, they have had tantrums in the street, I have been that mother in the supermarket with the screeching child that everyone tuts at! I think there was more pressure on Jack and Lily

with their mum being in the spotlight as a so-called 'parenting guru', and that was one of the reasons I decided not to do any more TV parenting shows.

Do people stop you in the street for parenting advice? Does it bother you?

Yes, people do stop me all the time, but I can't say why a child won't eat or sleep if I've never met them or their parents before and know nothing about their circumstances! When I'm not working, I'm not working and I do find it a little intrusive, especially if I'm spending time with the children. Now, if people ask me a question, I either direct them to my clinic or ask them to write to *The Times* and I'll answer it in my column. If they continue, I just say I'll have to bill them for my time – that usually does the trick!

You were responsible for the highly influential Byron Report into the effect of computer games on children. Is that a particular interest of yours?

As a psychologist I've always been interested in what affects and influences young people. I was asked by the Prime Minister to investigate the risks to children from exposure to potentially harmful or inappropriate material on the internet or video games. I'm not against computer games as such; they are part of all children's lives now, including my own children. I just think they should be able to play video games and surf the internet in a safe and informed way. By talking to children and putting them at the heart of my report, I hope I've given some focus to a necessary debate.

Broadcaster, writer, Government adviser, clinician, working mother, and now Chancellor of Edge Hill University – how do you fit it all in?

Most of what I do involves writing and I can fit that in around the kids. Filming for a series is pretty hectic, but it's very short-lived so the disruption is minimal. I still see patients at my clinic two days a week, then I pick up the children from school, make their tea, then see a couple more patients at home while they're doing their homework. I have a lot of support from family and friends and an assistant who organises me. The kids are pretty flexible, too, it all seems to fit together somehow!

What are your immediate plans as Chancellor of Edge Hill?

I don't want to be the sort of person that just pops up every now and then spouting on about how great Edge Hill is. I'd like to be involved at the strategic level, working with the marketing department on specific ways in which I can help raise Edge Hill's profile. I'm hoping to get involved in university initiatives or collaborations, particularly in the areas of mental health and young people.

You weren't able to confer the degrees at Edge Hill's first graduation ceremony. How did you feel about that?

It was really disappointing, but it was my sister's wedding so it wasn't as if I could rearrange the date! I'm doing my first graduation ceremony in December and I'm really looking forward to it. It fills me with joy to think that it'll be me in the silly hat giving people their degrees! I also get officially inaugurated as Chancellor then as well so it will be a pretty exciting occasion all round – I don't think the graduates' families will be the only ones with their hankies out that day!

What are you up to next?

I'm looking forward to a bit of relaxing family time – if there is such a thing! I'm taking a month off to go on holiday and spend time with my husband and children. Professionally, I'm writing another book in the Autumn and I'm also doing some more stuff with Jennifer. The great thing about my job is that there's always something exciting just around the corner. ●



Jennifer Saunders in the *Life and Times of Vivienne Vyle*.

SAFER CHILDREN IN A DIGITAL WORLD

In March 2008, Dr Tanya Byron completed her Government white paper into the potential dangers to children posed by the internet and computer games.

The Byron Review recommended a national strategy for child internet safety with improved self-regulation and better provision of information and education for children and families. It stressed that families, industry, Government and others in the public and third sectors must share responsibility for reducing the availability of potentially harmful material, restricting children's access to it and to increasing their resilience.

In relation to computer games, Tanya proposed a new classification system to ensure children are playing games that are suitable for their age. She also suggested that the games industry, retailers, advertisers, console manufacturers and online gaming providers should work together to raise awareness of game content and enforce the classification system.

Tanya insists her proposals are not about stopping children from using the internet or playing computer games as they can offer many opportunities for fun, learning and development. The Byron Review is about empowering children to keep themselves safe. Children will be children and will always want to push boundaries and take risks. As she puts it: "At a public swimming pool we have gates, put up signs, have lifeguards and shallow ends, but we also teach children how to swim." ●

To read the full report visit: www.dcsf.gov.uk/byronreview



Writing Wrongs

Edge Hill's Vicky Duckworth uses the power of the pen to inspire adult learners.

Marie is one of many people whose lives have been transformed by Edge Hill's adult literacy courses. People who, for whatever reason, have failed to thrive in mainstream education and left school barely able to read, write or spell. Most come from deprived areas where there are low educational expectations for children, no family support and a culture of underachievement. Some, like Marie, have also endured years of bullying, which have contributed to low self-esteem and a lack of ambition.

"I try to tell my students that it's never too late to learn and that they don't have to take the path that's been set out for them in life," says Vicky. "The problem is with society, not with them."

One of the ways in which Vicky's students learn is through writing about their experiences. She is a member of the *Write About... Group*: a collection of lecturers, tutors, researchers and mentors working in a variety of college, community and outreach education settings, which encourages people to work through their issues by writing about them. The group's first project focuses on the impact of bullying and has culminated in the publication of a new collection of stories, poems and images called *Write About... Bullying*. Marie was one of the contributors.

"The aim is to encourage students to write about their own barriers to education to help them and to inspire others," says Vicky. "It's also a practical way of practising their literacy skills and they get to see their work published, which can be a great boost to their confidence and give them a sense of empowerment."

Vicky has recently become a Research Associate in Edge Hill's newly-established Centre for Learning and Identity Studies. As part of her research she is following 16 students, including Marie, who have completed the basic skills course to see how learning has affected their lives.

"The research feeds into the Post Compulsory Education and Training course," says Vicky. "It will give teaching students real-life examples of barriers to learning and how they can be overcome. They can then supplement their theoretical learning with actual case studies and, eventually, provide their own students with local, contemporary and meaningful role models." ●

"IF YOU DIDN'T BELIEVE IN YOURSELF BEFORE, ONE CLASS WITH VICKY WILL MAKE YOU BELIEVE YOU CAN DO ANYTHING."

These are the words of Marie Dolan, former student, research subject and now friend of Senior Lecturer in Post Compulsory Education and Training, Vicky Duckworth.

BEATING THE BULLIES

Marie's Story

I didn't want to kill myself; I just couldn't bear to go to school again and thought that, if I sprained my ankle or something, I would get a few more days off. With a deep breath I closed my eyes and threw myself down. I must have landed awkwardly because I felt paralysed and couldn't even get up. It turned out I had fractured two bones in my spine and had to spend six weeks lying flat on a board. The pain was incredible, but compared with another day at school it was worth it.

I had been bullied since I started at secondary school. At first I was just teased for being different – I didn't have the right clothes, I had short hair and freckles and I didn't have a dad – but it soon escalated into physical abuse.

I started faking illness to stay off school. I remember sitting with my face really close to the fire so that I could convince my mum I had a temperature. My constant absences meant that I wasn't entered for any exams and I left school early with no qualifications at all.

The bullies took away my self-esteem and left me full of self-hatred. I didn't believe I could ever achieve anything because I didn't think I was worth anything.

After years of struggling to help my children with their homework, I decided to enrol on the basic skills course at Edge Hill and I feel like I've been given my life back. I now realise that I've got as much right to an education as anyone and that my only limits are the ones I set myself." ●

According to the
national charity Women's Aid,
two women lose their lives
every week
as a result of domestic violence.

One in four women
in the UK **will experience abuse**
from a husband, partner or family
member in their lifetime.

Girls Allowed?

Add to this the increasing prevalence of mental health issues in new and expectant mothers and the rise in sexually transmitted infections in women – particularly among those over 40 – and it's easy to see why women's health and wellbeing is high on the Government's agenda.

Any attempt to tackle these alarming statistics requires a skilled and informed workforce with a specific understanding of contemporary women's issues. Edge Hill University is leading the way in this area with a unique degree course looking at the psycho-social, spiritual and political needs of women and how these can impact on their health and wellbeing.

The BA in Women's Health, which was developed within Edge Hill's Faculties of Health and Arts & Sciences, welcomed its first undergraduates last September. Programme leader, Cath McEvilly, explains the rationale behind the innovative new course.

"The experience of the midwife often goes beyond simple ante and postnatal care and delivery," she says. "Women come to us with a wide range of personal and social issues which can impact on the midwifery care we are able to offer.

"This led to the development of a degree programme which focused on a holistic approach to women's health, encompassing everything from sexual health and domestic abuse to breastfeeding and children's health."

In the first year, the course aims to give students a generic and wide-ranging foundation in women's issues. It then focuses specifically on inequalities in society that can impact on women's health, such as race and ethnicity, socio-economic factors and disability, and how addressing these can improve the wellbeing of women, children and society as a whole.

"We look at the underlying causes behind, for example, why some women don't access health services, or why they suffer domestic abuse," says Cath, "and we examine the changing role of women in society. The areas we cover link into several Government agendas, such as improving sexual health, encouraging single mothers to return to work, obesity, even increasing breastfeeding targets."

So far, the BA in Women's Health has attracted a range of students, some straight from A-levels and some with existing careers in health. Although it is non-vocational, so doesn't include a compulsory work placement module, course tutors are happy to help students find relevant voluntary or paid work to enhance their CVs.

"We expect our students to go on to careers or further study in areas such as sexual health, domestic abuse or any field where there is a need for women's advocacy," says Cath. "This degree is aimed at people at all stages of their career and would make an excellent secondment opportunity for NHS employees." ●

There are still some places left on the BA in Women's Health programme.

For more information visit:

www.edgehill.ac.uk/study/courses/women-s-health



How have women's roles in society changed?

E42 asked four female academics from across the University to explore the changing role of women in their specialist areas.



Georgina Roy Lecturer in Socio-Cultural Aspects of Sport

Sport is one of Britain's most traditional and most valued institutions. This is particularly true of football which, historically, has also been one of the most fiercely protected bastions of male privilege.

During the First World War, women's sport grew considerably in the absence of British soldiers. On Boxing Day 1920, more than 53,000 spectators turned up to watch a ladies' football match. By 1921 there were around 150 ladies' teams playing regular, well-attended games. Yet, on 5 December 1921, the English FA banned women from playing matches at any FA affiliated ground. The reason: football is 'unsuitable' for ladies.

The ban on women's football lasted until 1971 and women have struggled ever since to make up for 50 years of lost time. In recent years, football has become the fastest growing sport for girls. In 2007, the same year that the England men's team failed to qualify for Euro 2008, the women's team reached the quarter finals of the women's World Cup. It was also the year that *Match of the Day* welcomed its first female commentator, Jacqui Oatley, much to the quiet dismay of many sport journalists.

It would seem that women's football is again on the up, reflecting the progress made towards equality in most other sports. Women are visible as athletes, players, coaches, officials, presenters, commentators, even managers. However, women – like ethnic minorities and those with disabilities – still remain under-represented in the boardrooms and committees of almost every sport. Women may have made many advances in sport, but the race is not yet over.



Dr Maggi Eastwood Senior Lecturer in Law

In 1922 the first female solicitor was admitted to the British legal profession. Women had not previously been permitted to sit the Law Society examinations, but the Sex Disqualification Act of 1919 made it possible, for the few women that could afford it, to qualify and practise as solicitors.

The unrepresentative social background of solicitors and barristers means that, even today, the majority of legal personnel are white, male and middle class, perpetuating an 'elitist' and 'aloof' perception of the profession.

However, things are beginning to change. The number of female solicitors is on the rise; today there are more women qualifying as solicitors than men and 40% of barristers are women. In 2002, equal numbers of men and women qualified to practise.

But when it comes to the top jobs and the top salaries, women are still lagging behind their male counterparts. Of 96 High Court Judges, only seven are women, and there is only one Lord Justice of Appeal from a total of 35. All 12 law lords are men. Male legal staff continue to earn more than female staff, despite the fact that women achieve more upper and first class degrees than men, and fewer women are being promoted to partners in their law firm. As Philip Sycamore, President of the Law Society, says: "We are well on the way to having a gender-balanced profession. However, we still have a long way to go to ensure a profession that offers equal opportunity to all, regardless of gender, race or social background."



Dr Mari Hughes-Edwards Senior Lecturer in English Literature

US televangelist Pat Robertson said, as recently as 1992, that "feminism encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practise witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians". Phew! How do we feminists find the time? Extremist comments like these and the patriarchally-motivated abuse of women frequently reported by such organisations as Women's Aid, Zero Tolerance, Survive and Amnesty International, suggest that there is still very much a need for feminism as we head into 2009.

It is sobering to reflect that the struggle for sexual equality is ongoing, even in the supposedly enlightened world of books, although nearly 200 years have passed since Anne Elliot declared in Jane Austen's *Persuasion* that "men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands." The vast majority of Booker Prize winners have been male and, although the Orange prize for fiction at least attempts to redress the balance – it has an all-female judging panel appointed this year – we've still never had a female poet laureate in this country.

At Edge Hill, the MA in Women's Writing: 1500 to the Present Day, demonstrates that women writers have been just as prolific as their male counterparts for centuries, with female authors such as Aphra Behn largely responsible for the creation of the novel form. The work of GenSex – the University's Gender and Sexuality Research Group – also continues to highlight and interrogate important debates about gender, power and feminism.

We've come a long way since women had no rights over their bodies, their minds and their children, and the pen is now firmly in our hands; but for me, there is still a long way to go.



Dr Lesley Sumner Associate Head, Department of Social & Psychological Sciences

Women's interests in psychology have reflected changing concerns as their social role has grown. Early psychologists such as Anna Freud and Melanie Klein focused on child development, while contemporary researchers such as Erica Burman look at similar themes from a feminist perspective. Much early research in psychology focused on men's lives and extrapolated from these realities to the lives of women.

Women psychologists have made an enormous contribution in the area of life-course development work, acknowledging the different constraints and opportunities offered by different life patterns, rather than accepting the stereotypical role as homemaker, carer or career woman. Our understanding of men and women in terms of physiological and functional differences in brain and body, as well as the socio-cultural factors leading to women being so well-represented in service and health and care roles, comes from extensive multidisciplinary studies.

It is the very nature of their multiple careers that allows women in psychology to provide key insights in pivotal areas of life. Whole person approaches are key to understanding why people behave as they do in relation to their health, how they cope with illness in themselves – and others – and the impact that the integral relationship between our unique minds and bodies has on how we live, and how we choose to experience our lives. ●

Challenging Stereotypes

“People think being a social worker involves taking children away from their families and interfering in people’s lives, but that is an outdated stereotype and it certainly isn’t my experience of social work.”



Liz Rafferty, Programme Leader of Social Work.

Weddings are always emotional occasions. When the bride and groom have severe learning difficulties and have lived in an institution for most of their lives, getting married and starting an independent life together in the outside world, despite some opposition, is a major cause for celebration. If it weren’t for the care and support they received from a range of professionals, including social workers, this is one happy couple that may never have made it down the aisle.

One of the social workers at that wedding was Liz Rafferty, now a Senior Lecturer at Edge Hill University. It is this kind of positive experience that helped inform her career as a social worker, and one that she intends to use to inspire her students on Edge Hill’s new Social Work degree programme, starting this year.

“Social workers tend to get a bad press,” says Liz, Programme Leader for the new course. “People think being a social worker involves taking children away from their families and interfering in people’s lives, but that is an outdated stereotype and it certainly isn’t my experience of social work.

“The media, rightfully, highlights cases where mistakes have been made, such as the Victoria Climbié case, and we must all learn from those – but we also need to remember the breadth of work carried out by social workers and the many positive aspects of the job.”

One of Liz’s first roles as a social worker was to help people with learning difficulties move from long-stay institutions into the community. “It was a massive transition for most of the residents,” says Liz. “Some had been in the institution for many years and had no memory of living in an ordinary home environment. They were used to living in a ward with no privacy, sometimes sharing clothes, eating communally, and having all their decisions made for them.

“A lot of the help we gave them was around understanding choices. For you or I, the simple choice of whether to have tea or coffee is one we make every day without thinking. People living in large wards were used to

tea, milk and sugar being poured out from one big pot with no choice at all. Imagine then having to suddenly take responsibility for other choices, such as who you want to live with, which staff you would like to help you, and how you want to spend your money.”

One incident from that time will stay with Liz forever. After working with a resident for many months, she came to pick him up from the institution for the last time and take him to his new home. “The man came out and the auxiliary put two black bin bags on the pavement and shut the door,” recalls Liz. “No-one even waved him off. He’d been there for 15 years.”

It is this kind of experience that makes Liz so passionate about the need for social workers to ensure they always treat people with respect and integrity. Communication is of utmost importance and is a major component of the Social Work degree course.

“The words we hear from any professionals really stick with us,” says Liz. “We need to make our language matter as people will remember those exact words for the rest of their lives. Our programme helps students understand how vital communication is to building trust and supporting people through often very difficult experiences.”

This is the first time Edge Hill has offered a professional qualification in social work that allows students to immediately practise as social workers on graduation. And it has been hugely popular, with more than 350 applications for just 25 places.

“Social work is such a diverse profession; you could be working with people of all ages from birth to death, with a range of abilities and in a variety of settings. You could focus on people with drug and alcohol problems, mental health issues, older people or children. Wherever there is a need, you can offer help,” says Liz.

“It’s a challenging job, but you really feel like you are contributing something to society. I like to think that some of the work I’ve done and the interventions I’ve made have improved people’s quality of life and helped them to live in a way that may not otherwise have been possible.” ●

Profile: Daniele Pantano

Daniele's new book of translations, New The Possible is Monstrous: Selected Poems by Friedrich Dürrenmatt, is published by Black Lawrence Press in October 2008. His latest collection of poems, The Oldest Hands in the World, is due for publication in October 2009.

I wasn't allowed to go to college in Switzerland because of my Sicilian heritage. At that time in the early 1990s there were hardly any foreigners in Switzerland. Although I had a Swiss passport, I was considered foreign because my dad was from Sicily and my mum was German. It wasn't the norm to continue your education after 16 and if you were foreign, it was actively discouraged. I remember going to a parent's evening, picking up a flyer for colleges and the teacher basically saying, 'you stupid Italian kids have no business going to university'. We had the grades, but no support from the teachers or our parents.

I've played tennis against Pete Sampras.

I lost, obviously, but it's still one of the highlights of my time studying at the tennis academy in Tampa, Florida. When I left school I applied to the academy because I was quite good at tennis and, more importantly, the academy also offered the college education I'd been denied. When the scout asked what my world junior ranking was, I told her I probably wasn't even ranked in my village and promptly gave up hope. The academy only took the best players in the world and cost \$50,000 in fees. I was astounded when the scout called the following week and asked to see me play against an up-and-coming Columbian player. To this day I don't know what happened, but I beat him and was offered a full scholarship.

A week of studying tennis made me realise I wanted to be a poet.

I didn't speak much English when I arrived in America aged 16, but I loved the Shakespeare classes. I didn't understand it, but I enjoyed the music of the language, the patterns it made in my head. After the first week, when I was regularly beaten by six-year-old girls, I realised my future didn't lie in tennis. I started faking injuries so I could stay in my room and write poems. I left the academy with little hope of being the next Roger Federer, but with a college diploma.

Being a penniless artist in London isn't as romantic as it sounds.

After college, I travelled round Europe writing poetry. I had £50 when I got to England and ended up living with street performers and musicians who saw me as a fellow struggling artist and looked after me. The bohemian life sounds very exciting, but it was actually quite grim. After a couple of months of picking old cigarettes out of ashtrays, sleeping at Victoria Station and relying on the goodwill of strangers to buy me the odd burger, I went back to Switzerland, skinny and poor but with two complete poetry manuscripts.

Teaching didn't come naturally to me.

I had to teach to afford the fees for my Masters in Creative Writing. The idea of standing up in front of students filled me with horror. I was very conscious of my accent, and that English was my second language, and thought the students wouldn't take me seriously. The first day was awful, but I got better and fell in love with it. I think my own experience has helped. I never look at a student, no matter how poorly they perform, and think they won't achieve anything. I tell them if I can do it there's no reason they can't fulfil their dreams. It's cheesy, but true.

My father has never understood my desire to be a poet.

He wanted me to get a proper job like my brother, who is an industrial painter, or take up carpentry like him. It was like we were operating in separate universes. Once I was asked to do a poetry reading at one of Switzerland's top universities and I invited him along to see what I did. Afterwards he told me how impressed he was at seeing his son reading his own poetry in a university, even though he couldn't understand it as it was in English. That was the first time he had ever said he was proud of me. ●



POETIC JUSTICE

After the first week,
when I was regularly beaten
by six-year-old girls,
I realised my future didn't lie in tennis.

I started faking injuries
so I could stay in my room
and write poems.

Short Story 2008

Edge Hill University's Short Story Prize 2008 reached an exciting finale at Liverpool's Bluecoat centre, as internationally-renowned writer Claire Keegan was announced as the winner.



Keegan, originally from Ireland, received £5,000 in prize money along with a stunning glass sculpture by award-winning glass-maker Amanda Notarianni for her second short story collection, *Walk the Blue Fields*.

On receiving the award, Claire Keegan said: "I am thrilled and delighted to win and to have been in the prestigious company those on the shortlist. It is wonderful to see the short story being celebrated in this way and treated as something other than a minor art."

"The short story is meant to be slow, not raced through, giving the reader a window through which they can reflect on life."

The judges, BBC radio producer Duncan Minshull, Professor Rhiannon Evans from Edge Hill University and the short story novelist Hilary Mantel, said: "Keegan wrote superbly crafted stories, successfully merging them together

as one volume. Her lyricism and dream logic, coupled with the harsh realism of an Ireland wrestling with its past, created a whole world under an uncompromising gaze. The sense of place was acute and her often sly and dry humour was a constant delight.

"She is a young writer who has already staked her claim to genius. Her mastery of language and her full-blooded and flowing narratives impress on the reader a certain bleak and tender vision, which has much in common with that of the great Irish writer John McGahern. Yet, it is distinctive, personal and modern. Her stories stand at the strong point where myth and reality intersect. Even in this competitive year, they were in a class of their own."

The second prize went to Simon Robson, who collected a prize of £1,000 for his debut collection *The Separate Heart*. The Readers' Prize – judged this year by inclusive community-based reading group, *Get Into Reading* – was awarded to Christopher Fowler for his eighth collection *Old Devil Moon*. ●



Involving Glimpses

Roy Bayfield, Director of Corporate Marketing at Edge Hill, reads the winning books.

Good short stories deliver a distilled reading experience, potent and compelling. They can be more memorable than novels, despite having less time to engage the reader. Sometimes a brief glimpse into a fictional world is more involving than a leisurely period inhabiting one.

Walk the Blue Fields

The stories in *Walk the Blue Fields* by winner Claire Keegan are compelling and emotionally powerful with a masterful sense of place. I asked her one of the classic stupid questions that authors get asked: what happens to the characters after the story ends? Rather than rebuking me for this evident stupidity, she gave me a serious answer: that if I read the stories again, I would know. And, she was right.

The Separate Heart and Other Stories

Simon Robson's *The Separate Heart and Other Stories* (winner of the runner-up prize) also contained tales that left me wanting more, characters I didn't want to leave behind. I almost asked him the other classic stupid question: where do you get your ideas from? Instead we chatted about the influence of his acting and playwriting experience on his fiction.

Old Devil Moon

Readers' Choice winner Christopher Fowler is the only author I had read previously, back when 'dark urban fantasy' was a description of a small group of emerging works, rather than a subgenre in its own right. *Old Devil Moon* is as fresh and darkly beguiling as his longer pieces, with a fetching humour undercutting the jaw-dropping grimness. Sadly, Fowler could not attend, though his publisher accepted his award and said some nice things about him.

As the evening in the Bluecoat ended, I reflected that all the stories I had read were now wrapped up in another one – a quirky but unforgettable vignette: the Edge Hill prize, crying out for a sequel. ●

Russian Revolution

A group of Russian media students swapped Moscow for Ormskirk this summer on an exclusive exchange programme at Edge Hill.

The students, from Moscow's Humanitarian Institute of Television and Radio, embarked on a tailor-made 10-day course in TV and Film Production in the University's state-of-the-art media department.

Their course included a short film-making project which involved filming on location around the North West, as well as a programme of lectures to provide a basic understanding of the British television and film industry.

Student TV director Erkhaterina Erokhina was particularly enthusiastic about the visit. She said: "I've been very

impressed by how the course was organised. Everyone is so friendly at Edge Hill and we've had great tuition. I was excited by the historical buildings and I have taken some great still pictures, especially in Chester, which I hope to enter into some photo competitions."

Carol Poole, Head of Media, said: "The students came from various disciplines and have experience in positions such as camera operators, journalists, sound directors, producers, directors, stage designers and graphic artists. However, all of them were eager and very keen to learn. "This is hopefully the first of many exchange programmes with the HITR, as we hope to continue this relationship into the future." ●

Russian students at the Short Story event.



Conference Call

Students today are surrounded by technology – but how does this impact on their learning? Will YouTube be the University of the future? And will social learning spaces soon replace the traditional classroom?

These were some of the questions that were keenly debated at Edge Hill University's third annual international SOLSTICE conference, which attracted over 250 delegates from as far afield as Japan and the Maldives.

The theme of the conference this year was research, innovation and development, with a specific focus on learning environments of today – and what they will be like tomorrow. A keynote speech from Les Watson, Interim Director of Information Services at the Royal Holloway University of London, who has pioneered the use of social learning spaces, was a highlight of one of the best-attended SOLSTICE conferences to date.

"It was fitting that we had Les talking about social learning spaces, as the University was one of the first to experiment with this", says Lindsey Martin, SOLSTICE Centre Manager, referring to the learning pods, wireless internet access and informal seating areas found across the campus.

"There is growing use of these, as they are meant to encourage more social interaction and engagement between students, which ultimately strengthens and enhances their learning experience."

The SOLSTICE event was complemented by the seventh annual conference of its sister organisation, the Centre for Learning and Teaching Research (CLTR), that took place the day before.

Transitions and Transformations looked at ways students of all ages are transformed by their university experiences and specifically explored themes around the first year of undergraduate study, taught Masters programmes and tutors as learners.

It also gave delegates the opportunity to present work in more general areas of teaching and learning research, providing a powerful focus on the subject for 120 delegates from the UK and beyond.

Jennie Barnsley, Research Development Officer and conference organiser, said: "Once again, our keynote speakers and presenters pulled out all the stops to provide our delegates with a thought-provoking, informative and exciting programme.

"Professor Kay Sambell from Northumbria University and Professor Sue Bloxham from University of Cumbria, were both challenging and inspiring on the thorny issue of assessment.

"We are delighted by the feedback we have received and are looking forward to publishing some of this work in the forthcoming Annual Journal of the CLTR." ●

Research Recognition

Advanced scholarship at Edge Hill University has been recognised with the granting of Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP).

The Privy Council issued an order making Edge Hill one of the first new universities in the country to be able to award its own MPhil and PhD degrees. The milestone achievement comes just two years after gaining university status and underlines a thriving research culture at the institution.

From 2000 to 2006, Edge Hill academics addressed or submitted papers to 1,219 conferences, refereed 438 articles, wrote 223 book chapters, produced 72 books, edited 43 others, wrote 163 reports and contributed to a further 700 forms of research and scholarship output.

The University has eight dedicated research centres, with the success of SOLSTICE, the pioneering work of both the Centre for Local Policy Studies and the Centre for Learning and

Teaching Research, and the recent launch of the Widening Participation Research Centre strengthening its application.

Edge Hill University Vice-Chancellor Dr John Cater said: "Research is what makes universities unique. At Edge Hill we have been supervising and carrying out research for many years into areas that have a direct impact on people's lives – health, education, crime, women's rights, culture, religion, technology and science. We have also acted as pioneers in research outside traditional academic disciplines, such as widening access to higher education.

"These new powers underline our long-standing tradition of research and confer on us the status we deserve for our scholarly achievements." ●

1 wild^{AT} heart

“When the lamp glowed
A yolk of light
In their back window,
The child in the henhouse
Put his eye to the chink.”

Extract from Bye, Child by Seamus Heaney, 1972

Feral children have fascinated and terrified people for centuries. Stories of babies being raised by animals, or children locked away from society for years, have been surfacing periodically since the 12th Century. But the phenomenon is not limited to the history books. The disturbing case in Austria of Elisabeth Fritzl, who was kept in a cellar by her father for 24 years, only came to light in 2008, rekindling interest in the bizarre world of feral and confined children.

For Carol Fenlon, a PhD student in Creative Writing, a long-term interest in ‘wild children’ triggered the idea for her thesis, now an award-winning novel, *Consider the Lilies*, which won the Impress Prize for New Writers in 2007.

In her book, Carol tells the story of Hermit Jack, a homeless man who has chosen to turn his back on mainstream society after his life is ruined by alcoholism and family tragedy, and his relationship with Vicky, a woman who was imprisoned in a chicken shed on a remote Lancashire farm until the age of nine.

“I’ve always been fascinated by cases of isolated children,” says Carol, “but my real interest lies in their language development; how this contributes to their sense of identity and how it impacts on their efforts to live in so-called civilised society.”

Carol’s research for the Vicky character focused on two famous cases: Kevin Halfpenny*, a disabled Irish boy discovered in 1956 locked in a henhouse and the inspiration for Seamus Heaney’s poem, *Bye, Child*; and Genie, a 13-year-old girl found tied to a potty-chair in a locked bedroom in California in 1970. Both children had been denied social contact and sensory stimulation for many years.

“The book raises many fundamental questions about what it is to be human,” says Carol. “Does language make us human? Are language and identity connected? *Consider the Lilies* takes two people, one who has deliberately shunned conventional society and one who has been forcibly removed from it, and uses them to challenge our perceptions of what it means to be human.”

Before her career was cut short by a motorbike accident, Carol was a psychiatric nurse and developed an interest in women’s issues and child abuse. Although she didn’t encounter any cases as extreme as those in her novel, her experience gave her an insight into the devastating impact childhood experiences can have on people’s later lives. “I’ve worked with a lot of damaged people, especially women,” she says. “Whatever happens to you when you’re small, that child is always inside you, defining your actions and your perception of the world.”

Carol has also worked as a teacher for people with learning difficulties. She found that, often, her students had talents in other areas which don’t rely on language or literacy. This theory is explored in *Consider the Lilies* as Vicky seems to have a kind of sixth sense about people and appears to communicate without speech.

“I read that on trips out with her carers, Genie would somehow ‘will’ people to give her things that she wanted, like a toy out of their child’s pram or something in a shop,” says Carol. “This made me wonder whether we’ve lost or sacrificed something through our socialisation process, our learning of language. Can we ever go back to that place beyond language?”

Following its success in winning the Impress Prize, *Consider the Lilies* is due to be entered for the First Novel Award at the Guildford Book Festival 2008, as well as the prestigious Orange and Costa book prizes.

Carol is now concentrating on finishing her PhD and is working on a second novel, a ghost story, again set in Lancashire, with the famous Martin Mere nature reserve providing an atmospheric backdrop. ●



Consider the Lilies by Carol Fenlon is published by Impress Books, and available from Amazon priced £7.99



Graduations 2008

The Class of 2008 included the first Edge Hill students to receive the University's own awards at the Ormskirk Campus

The smiling faces, the mortarboards, the proud tutors, the tearful parents – these are familiar sights at universities up and down the country every summer as graduation ceremonies get underway. But the thrill of graduation day is a brand new phenomenon for Edge Hill, as 2008 is the first year that the University has held a ceremony on the Ormskirk campus.

Rather than travelling to Lancaster University for their big day, a number of Health and Education students had the unique experience of graduating on their own campus, with the added bonus of receiving the first Edge Hill degrees awarded by their own Vice-Chancellor, Dr John Cater and newly-appointed Pro-Chancellor Chris Trinick in his first ceremony in his new post.

"The first ceremony was a very proud moment for everyone connected to Edge Hill," said John. "The University has been around for 123 years, so it feels absolutely right that we should finally have the authority to

confer our own degrees and recognise the achievements of our own students.

"It is fitting that we also achieved a record number of Firsts this year, reflecting our commitment to top quality teaching and the high calibre of our undergraduates."

The graduation ceremony was also a chance for Edge Hill to show off its stunning new Faculty of Health building, which contains the University's largest lecture theatre. The impressive 800-plus seat theatre was purpose-built with this prestigious annual event in mind and is proudly decorated with the University's new coat of arms.

"The academic year 2009/10 will be another momentous occasion," added John, "as it will see all of our graduates receive Edge Hill degrees.

"It is sad that our official connection with Lancaster University is coming to an end, but the ability to award our own degrees marks the start of a new era for Edge Hill and allows us to compete on level terms with other higher education institutions in the North West."



Get the massage!

With a name like Joe Lewis, there was only one career path for this recent Edge Hill graduate.

"The name used to raise a few eyebrows when I started boxing as a kid," laughs Joe, who is one of the first students to complete Edge Hill's new Sports Therapy degree. "I've always been interested in sport, particularly the physiotherapy side, and with a background in boxing and Ju Jitsu I know how important sports injury professionals are."

The new course is a demanding mix of classroom-based learning, written assignments, external work placements and experience in Edge Hill's own student-led Sports Injury Clinic. "Being the first group of students on the course was great because all the equipment was brand new," says Joe. "We even had access to state-of-the-art diagnostic machines that some top sports clubs haven't got."

Joe's academic studies were complemented by a range of work placements at some of the region's best-known rugby and football clubs, including Wigan Warriors, Widnes Vikings, Bolton Wanderers, Wigan Athletic and Chester City FC, which he still works for on a voluntary basis.

"The range of placements is fantastic because the tutors all used to work in the industry and have very good contacts," says Joe. "For me, work experience has been vital as it has given me practical examples to use in my written work and enhanced my CV."

Joe Lewis,
BSc (Hons) Sports Therapy

Double delight

They say friends share everything, but for Tom Noon and John Potter it was a bit more than swapping CDs or going halves on a pizza. The two IT students were awarded one of Edge Hill's top academic prizes for the joint highest mark in a dissertation, both achieving an impressive 95%.

Although the boys worked on separate projects, they both used a ground-breaking piece of software, called Adobe Flex, which is so new that it hasn't even made it onto Edge Hill's undergraduate syllabus yet.

"I think it was our use of unfamiliar technology that made us stand out from the crowd," says Tom, whose project involved designing a web chat management system to assess call centre operators' performance. "We used technology that is currently only taught at Masters level, but we learnt to use Flex in our spare time."

John, whose dissertation focused on a chat support system for a web hosting company, agrees: "Although it only started off as a hobby, we saw the potential for using it in our dissertations. It offered the solutions that our clients needed, so we were able to apply our knowledge of Flex to real-life business situations."

So what's next for these high-flying Edge Hill students? While John has been diligently applying for jobs where he can apply his knowledge of Flex, Tom has a more entrepreneurial future in mind. "I'm trying to persuade John to go into business with me, to combine our skills – you never know, we could be the next *YouTube boys!*"

Tom Noon and John Potter,
BSc (Hons) Web Systems Development

Media whizzkid

While her fellow undergraduates were spending their first few weeks at Edge Hill finding their feet, Ruth Madeley was flat on her back, recovering from a major operation to replace two infected metal rods that hold her spine together.

Ruth, who was born with spina bifida, lived on campus in a room adapted for wheelchair users and, once she had recovered, threw herself into academic life, taking advantage of Edge Hill's additional support for disabled students. "Doing English, I needed so many books," she says. "My facilitator went to the library for me and also took notes in lectures if I couldn't go."

She joined the Outlook programme, Edge Hill's mentoring scheme for disadvantaged students, and was paired with a news editor from ITV. Through her, Ruth undertook several work placements at ITV in Manchester, shadowing a broadcast journalist and learning how to put together a daily news programme. She has also submitted a script for *Hollyoaks* and works tirelessly for Whizz-Kidz, the children's charity which paid for her first wheelchair when she was five.

"People often look at people in wheelchairs and automatically think they're stupid," says Ruth. "I've been determined not to let my disability get in the way of my life, but I've often felt like I have to prove myself. Getting a first class degree is a fantastic achievement for me, and for my parents who have been so supportive. I'm the first in my family to go to university as well, so they are doubly proud of me."

Ruth Madeley,
BA (Hons) English & Creative Writing

Edge Hill has recently unveiled a new coat of arms to mark the institution's transition from college of higher education to university. The coat of arms tells the story of Edge Hill using colours, symbols and objects. The red rose of Lancashire and the Liver bird, for example, reflect Edge Hill's current location in Ormskirk, while looking back to the institution's original location. Edge Hill's ideological origins are represented by the green and heliotrope (purple) of the suffragette movement and the use of gold, which is associated with generosity and elevation of the mind.

Other symbols include the sun, representing illumination and enlightenment, the quill which symbolises learning, and the peacock feathers which stand for beauty, power and knowledge. The lion represents strength, bravery and magnanimity, while the stag symbolises wisdom, regeneration, peace and harmony.

Edge Hill's commitment to partnerships and collaboration, which is crucial to the institution's continued growth and success, are emphasised by the twisted rope and chain motifs.

The coat of arms also includes the Edge Hill motto – "In Scientia Opportunitas" – which translates as "In knowledge, opportunity".



This autumn, Edge Hill University's new professors will mark their appointment with a series of free public lectures in their field of expertise.

Join University staff, students and partners at these thought-provoking lectures to recognise and celebrate Edge Hill's academic talent.

Stimulate. Inspire. Provoke.

EDGE HILL UNIVERSITY INAUGURAL LECTURES SERIES:
AUTUMN 2008

Professor Martin Ashley

Quacking Ducks, Singing Boys and a Crisis of Identity

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Wednesday 22 October 2008

Prof. Martin Ashley leads the Centre for Learner Identity Studies at Edge Hill University. His research uses the concept of learners' identities to explore the problem of why boys don't sing, following a sharp decline in young male recruitment to choirs across the country. His work recently won a grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, (AHRC) which funded a collaborative project with the University of York and the National Youth Choir. His work has also informed the *Sing Up Britain* campaign – a £40m Government drive to increase singing in all British schools. He has published widely on the subject, with current books including *Young Masculinity and Vocal Performance* and *How High Should Boys Sing? Gender, Authenticity and Credibility in the Young Male Voice*.

Professor Richard Parrish

What the Bloody Hell has the Common Market got to do with Sport?

.....
Tuesday 2 December 2008

Prof. Richard Parrish is the Director of the Centre for Sports Law Research at Edge Hill University. His research explores the interface between sport and European Union law, focusing particularly on the impact of European integration on players' rights, sports broadcasting and sports governance. He is author of *Sports Law and Policy in the European Union*, co-author of *The Sporting Exception in European Union Law* and co-editor of *Players' Agents Worldwide: Legal Aspects and Professional Sport in the European Union: Regulation, Re-regulation and Representation*. He has worked on a number of sports law projects for the European Commission and has collaboratively written sports-related reports for the Commission and the European Parliament. He is Honorary Chair of the Association for the Study of Sport & the European Union (Sport&EU).

Professor Mark Schofield

Learning and Teaching Enhancement: Doing Things Better and Doing Better Things

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Thursday 11 December 2008

Prof. Mark Schofield is Dean of Teaching and Learning at Edge Hill University and leads on the University's strategy and policy development in teaching, learning and associated research. Starting his career as a primary and secondary school teacher, he went on to work with local education authorities' advisory services and joined the University as a senior lecturer in Continuing Professional Development. He holds a visiting professorial chair at Leeds Metropolitan University and is Academic Director of Edge Hill's SOLSTICE Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. His past work on research, curriculum design and eLearning has cemented firm international partnerships including the University of Johannesburg, the United States Air Force Academy and the international Distance Learning and Collaboration group (DLAC).

FOR ALL LECTURES

Pre-lecture drinks: 5pm

Lecture: 6pm

Buffet: 7pm

RSVP: Sharon Buckley –
buckleys@edgehill.ac.uk or
01695 657162