



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

Celebrating 100 years of change

Our 100





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Our 100

One Hundred Years of Change



Foreword

This is a people's history. A story about a 100 year journey from a unique beginning.

It began with Dr Astley Clarke who deposited the first funds into the appeal to create a University College in Leicester and who declared:

"Now, every material asset a person possesses may flee; education alone is an asset of which an individual cannot be robbed."

To mark that occasion 100 years on, Sir David Attenborough inaugurated Centenary Square in November 2018 and launched our three-year centennial celebration. It is a celebration of the transformative power of education – its ability to create Citizens of Change that is our legacy.

Now, the publication of this fascinating book marks 100 years since the first eleven students arrived at Leicester to begin their studies. On 4 October 1921 the University truly began – that was the moment when people and place came together for a purpose. Since then the University of Leicester has been embodied in that triumvirate: people, place and purpose.

Purpose is encapsulated in the University's motto *Ut vitam habeant* – that they may have life. This institution was created both by and for local people: in remembrance of those who made sacrifices during the First World War; and in hope that educational opportunities would ensure a better future for all. This origin gives us a unique legacy and significance in terms of place as the first University in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

Above all, a university is its people: those who study, those who teach, those who research, and all those who support them in so many ways. It is a diverse mix of backgrounds, perspectives and ideas. The University has always embodied diversity and inclusion and this is perfectly characterised by the very first intake of students – 10 out of the 11 of the first recruits were women!

This is not a chronological history, but a collection of the memories and stories of the University as nominated by students, staff, alumni and associates – our Citizens of Change. These nominations include both physical objects – buildings, locations and artworks – and more intangible concepts such as events, discoveries and activism. Brought together in this beautifully designed volume, courtesy of award-winning illustrator Amrit Birdi and AmCo Studio, they represent the University in a way that an objective, dry history never could.

We have all played a part in this incredible journey and to all of you, past and present, I send my best wishes. Especially to the new students who join us in this, our centenary year, and carry our passion for education into our second century. It is you, and those that follow, who will write the new chapters of this, our story.

I am humbled and honoured to be here at this special time and be part of these celebrations. We stand at the threshold of a new epoch – the dawn of a new century for the University. 'That they may have life' resonates with us to this day as our calling to continue a legacy of hope and of change.

Our history enriches us. Our story emboldens us. Our mission empowers us.

We will continue to be a force for change.

Our University was created in the wake of a cataclysmic global conflict 100 years ago to sow the seed of hope for a new tomorrow. Now, in the wake of a global pandemic, we uphold that legacy, and commit to give hope and opportunities for the next 100 years and more.

Our commitment to be a force for good is unwavering. We are Citizens of Change. We are the University of Leicester.

Professor Nishan Canagarajah, President & Vice-Chancellor

Introduction

One Hundred Years of Change

A lot happens in 100 years. More than any of us can know. But everyone remembers something: a defining moment ... a chance encounter ... a discovery that captured their imagination, changed their life, or brought their world into focus. Some are the big events that went global; others are personal stories, rich with meaning for the people who experienced them; all are part of our collective history. These are *Our 100* – the stories that define our first 100 years, and set the tone for the next.

Our 100 – what the University means to all of us

A university is what we make of it. As is its history. So we asked everyone we know – our students, staff, alumni, neighbours and collaborators – what was the defining moment or activity in their relationship with the University. We wanted the personal stories as well as the great cultural events and the world-changing, imagination-capturing discoveries.

The response was wonderful: more than 300 suggestions that we whittled down to the 100 of *Our 100*. No two people will ever agree on what should be in or out of that final selection. But that's not the point. It's the impression left by those 100 stories that counts. In our Centenary year, this is as close as we can get to a collective memory.

A Centenary captured in colour

To bring *Our 100* to life, we commissioned a series of 100 illustrations from a team of ethnically diverse illustrators at AmCo Studio Ltd. Their pictures, imagined in a variety of styles (manga, graphic novel, modern illustrative, traditional, and painted), capture the humanity of the stories drawn from our memories and our archives. Dip in, be surprised, and enjoy the wonderful legacy of our founders.



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The Fielding Johnson Building

A grand building at our centre



The 19th-century Fielding Johnson Building was the University's first home.

Originating in 1837 as the County Asylum, it became a First World War military hospital. After this closed in 1919, it was bought by worsted spinner Thomas Fielding Johnson, who donated it to the campaign to start a university college in Leicester.

When the College first opened on 4 October 1921, works were still not complete and the first students recalled constant building going on. It remained the only teaching building on site until the 1950s.

While it has been much altered, historic fragments, including graffiti from when it was the asylum, survive.

It remains the historic heart of our campus.

Our Motto and Coat of Arms

Life with learning after the war



Our motto is *Ut vitam habeant* – 'That they may have life'.

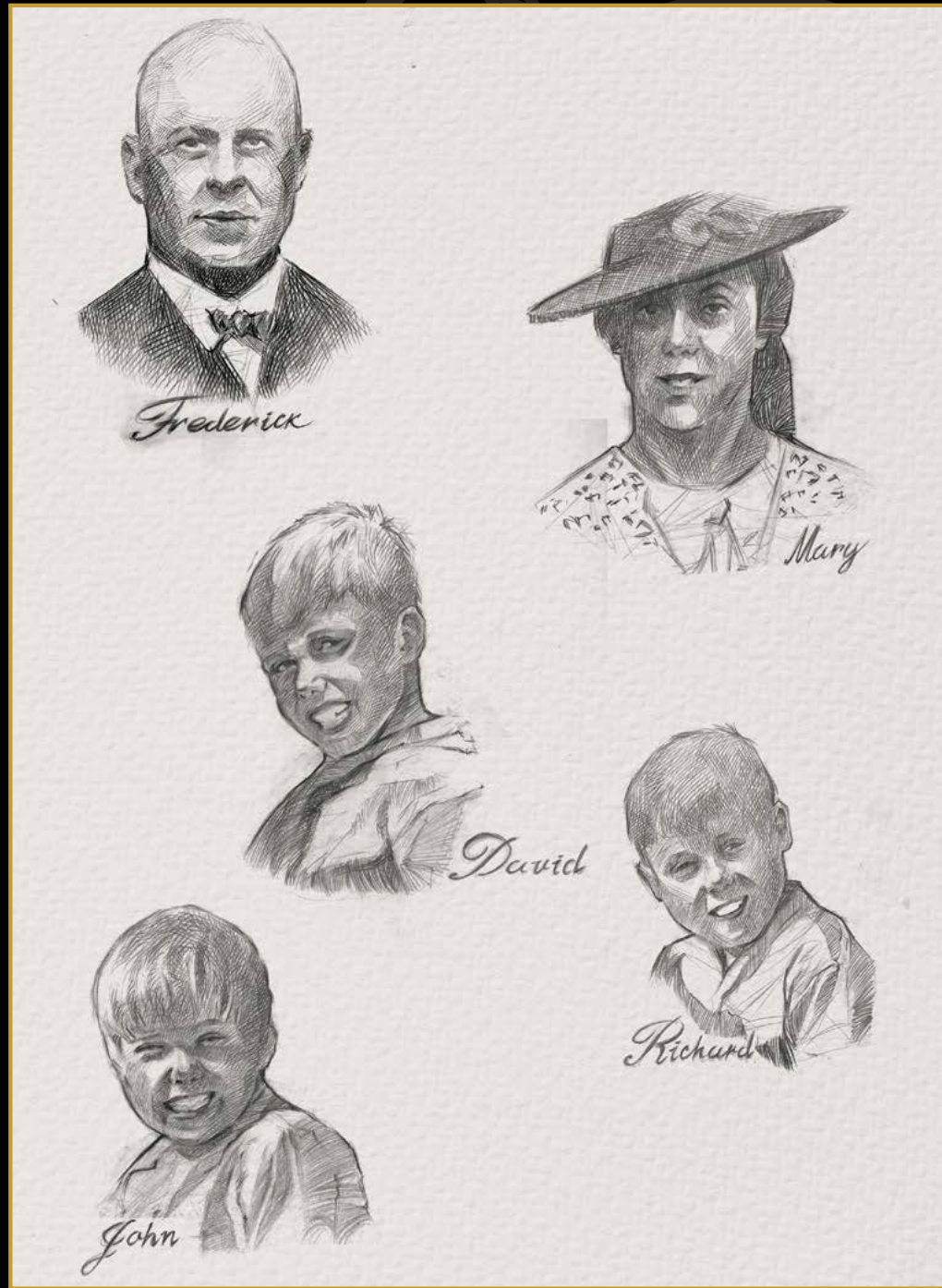
This reflects the University's establishment as a memorial to the First World War, and was suggested by Principal Dr Robert F Rattray. Other ideas included 'Learning by doing' and 'Dare to be wise'.

The 'heraldic achievement' of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland College was granted by the College of Arms in 1922.

The shield, designed by sculptor Joseph Morcom, has two cinquefoils (flowers) representing Leicester and Leicestershire, and a horseshoe for Rutland. Above is a demi-gryphon holding a book, from benefactor Thomas Fielding Johnson's coat of arms. Centre is a book, symbolising learning.

The Attenboroughs

A famous family at the heart of our history



Summing up the Attenborough family's 90 year connection to the history of the University is near impossible.

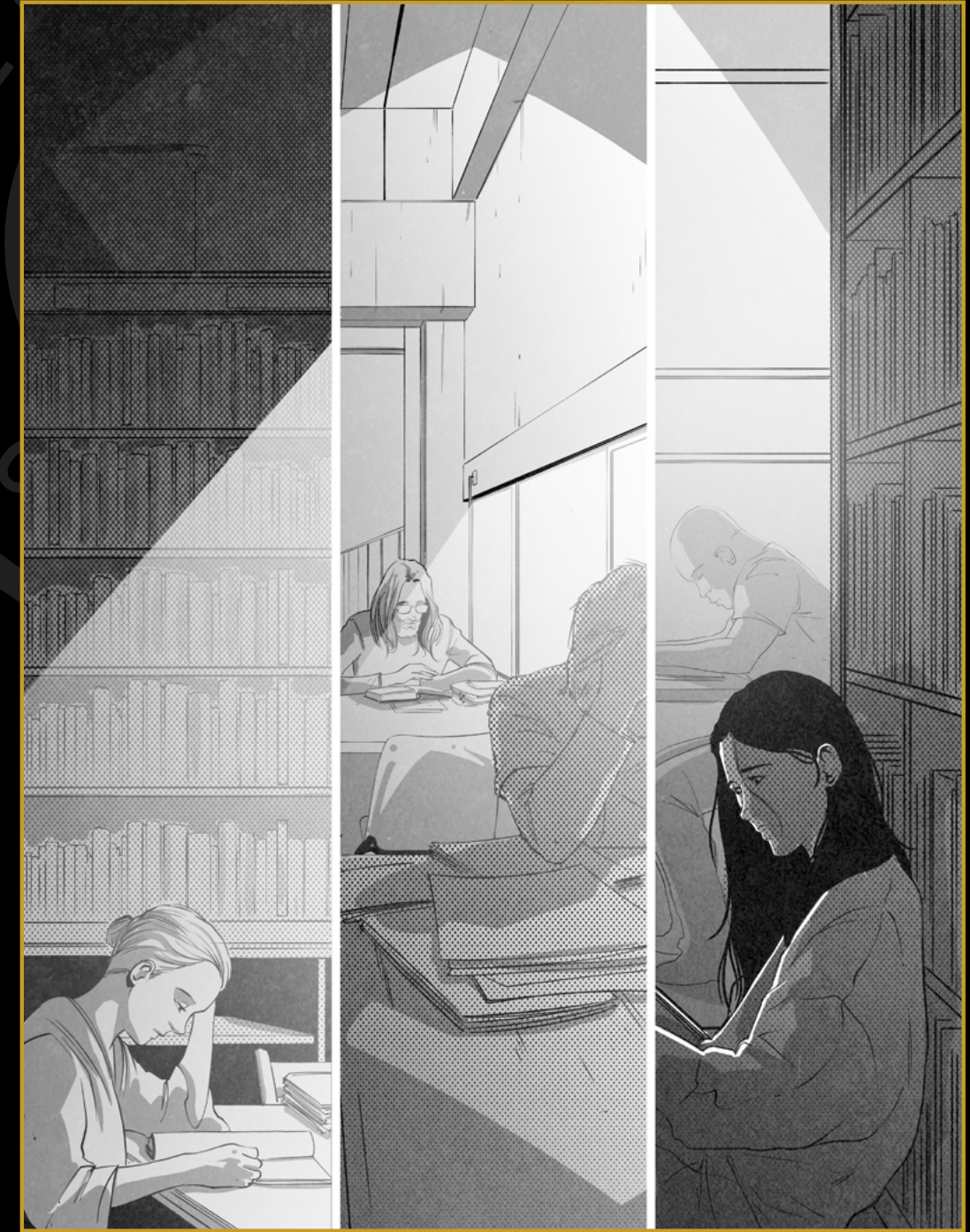
Frederick Attenborough became our second ever Principal in 1932. He was the driving force behind the then University College gaining its Royal Charter and full University status. His wife Mary helped to welcome 50 Basque refugees to Leicestershire and the family adopted two Jewish refugees from Berlin during the Second World War.

Their children David, Richard and John grew up on campus and Sir David still frequently returns for events and to show support. Our illustration shows the family whilst at Leicester.

You can read and hear much more about the family on our website including Frederick's grandson and Lord Richard's son, the renowned theatre director, Michael Attenborough.

The Library

Lives of Leicester libraries



The first library held entirely donated books, on makeshift shelves built from cubbyholes from when the Fielding Johnson Building was a hospital. Located above the main entrance, it was overseen by an Honorary Librarian.

Our first professional librarian was Rhoda Bennett, who had been one of our first students. In 1946, she appointed poet Philip Larkin as Assistant Librarian, a post he held until 1950.

After the Second World War, the University College expanded rapidly; a new Library wing was built, which is now the Harry Peach Law Library.

Twenty-five years on, temporary buildings at the back of the Fielding Johnson Building were cleared to make way for an award-winning, glass-fronted library – and Larkin returned in 1975 to open it.

Today's David Wilson Library is a 2008 reinvigoration of this.

Becoming a University, 1957

Becoming a University: a royal charter and a new law



Becoming an independent University required royal approval and this took several years to attain.

The first important step was taken after the Second World War, when we were granted a Royal Charter by King George VI in December 1950. Then, in 1956, a petition to Queen Elizabeth II requested University status.

The royal seal was added to the charter on 1 May 1957 and, from that day, we were the University of Leicester and could award our own degrees, rather than those of the University of London. Our first Chancellor, Lord Adrian, and the first full Senate were installed. We had new ceremonial silverware and ceremonial robes, a gift from the City.

In 1958, when an Act of Parliament finalised the process, there were only 15 other universities in England.

College Colours

Wearing our colours with pride



The University's colours, green and maroon, were chosen in its first year.

A varsity colour shared with Nottingham was desired, as an East Midlands University was being discussed.

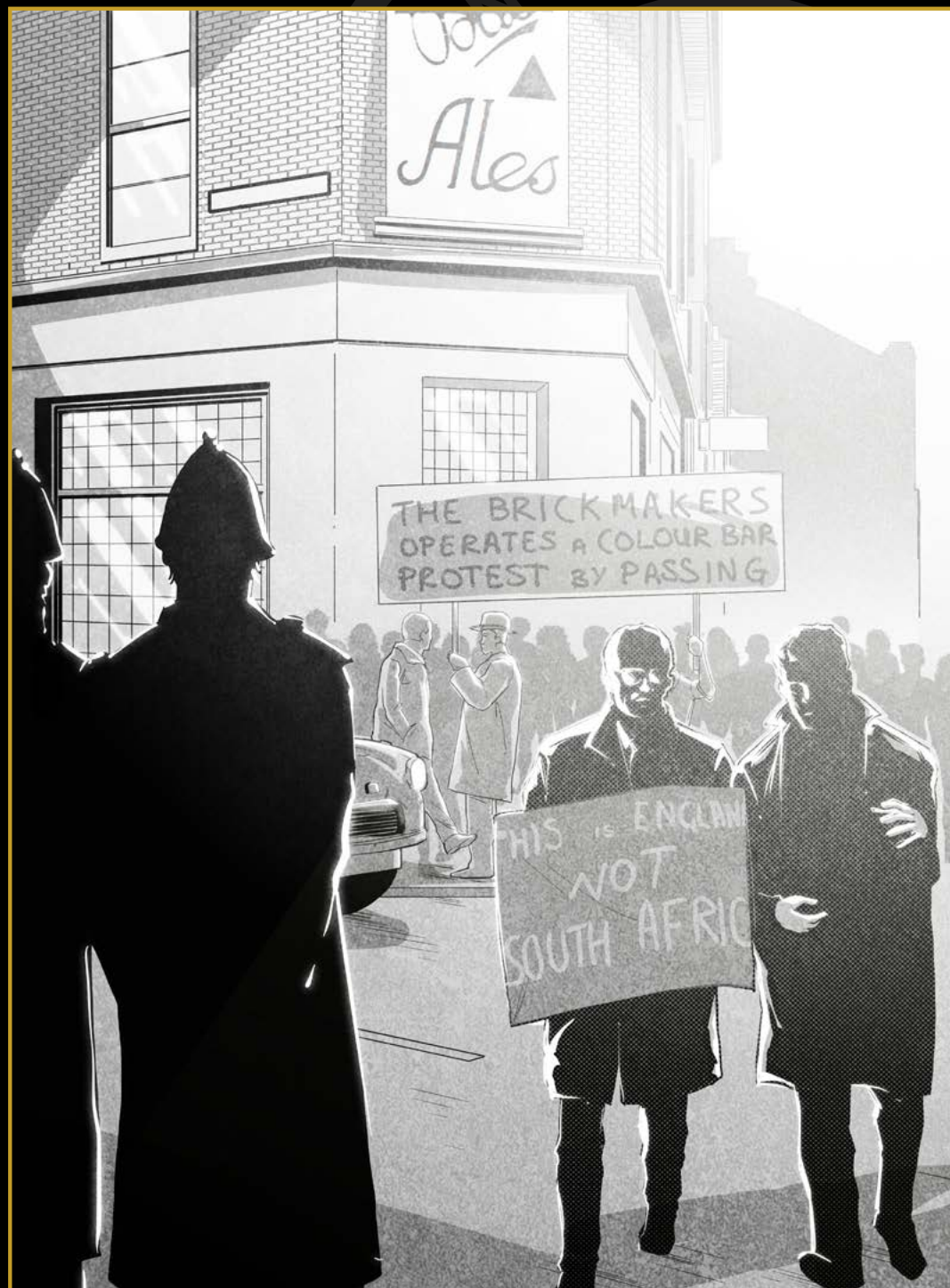
The green was partly inspired by the shade used by the Sherwood Foresters. Women got blazers with the College badge before men.

Reginald Brown, a technical chemist in London, gave advice and ran trials to determine colours that would harmonise and to find the right shades and dyes for various textiles.

Local companies were approached about producing ties, badges, straw hats with the College badge on the hatband, sweaters, scarves and more. You can still buy the distinctive maroon-and-green scarf today.

Combating Racial Discrimination: the 1961-65 Pub Protests

No to 'colour bars'! Our people tackle racism



"Creeping apartheid in Leicester", first alleged when Black students struggled to secure lodgings in the late 1950s, sparked action by staff and students.

"Students of many races and colours...mingle and share each other's pursuits... but they are finding it difficult to establish multi-racial acceptance in the city," reported a local newspaper.

Over several years, they protested at pubs and cafes thought to operate 'colour bars' (pictured is a protest at the Brickmaker's Arms in 1961) and helped bring these to an end. They set up the influential Leicester Campaign for Racial Equality, which was chaired by English Department Lecturer Dipak Nandy.

The University is proud that a such large part of its community was inclusive.

Our Early Female Scientists

Women led in science teaching from our beginning



Ever since we opened, women have studied and taught the sciences and gone onto research on an equal basis with men.

The first science staff were women: Charlotte Measham taught Botany in 1921 and was joined by Dr Ethel Miles Thomas, who founded the Botany labs in 1922.

Zoology got its own department in 1937, led by Dr Anne Hosker. She was active in research, aided by a young Sir David Attenborough who collected newts for her.

The University encouraged women to apply here. The illustration is from a 1938 prospectus photograph showing Florence Shaw, a Chemistry research student who went on to become a key staff member.

We continue to recognise the potential of our women in science.

Arts and Crafts Gifts

Arts and Crafts furniture set a spectacular scene



Two remarkable sets of Arts and Crafts furniture, the Gimson and Cholerton suites, were given to the University in the 1920s.

The Gimson Room in the Fielding Johnson Building contains an inlaid English walnut table and 13 chairs designed by Ernest Gimson, made by his head craftsman Peter Waals and donated by Gimson's family in his memory.

Three ceremonial chairs for the Council Chamber, designed by Waals, were donated by Mr and Mrs AF Cholerton. The presidential chair is ebony, inlaid with ivory, with the University's motto carved into an ivory plaque.

The local press at the time compared Gimson furniture to "that of Chippendale... having quite special qualities of individuality".

Our First Doctorate

First PhD shows commitment to original research from the outset



The first doctorate awarded at Leicester was in 1924 to founding Geography Lecturer, Patrick Bryan, who earned a University of London PhD for 'An enquiry into the major geographical factors conditioning the production and distribution of coal and iron in the United States of America,' (shown being congratulated by our first Principal, Robert Rattray).

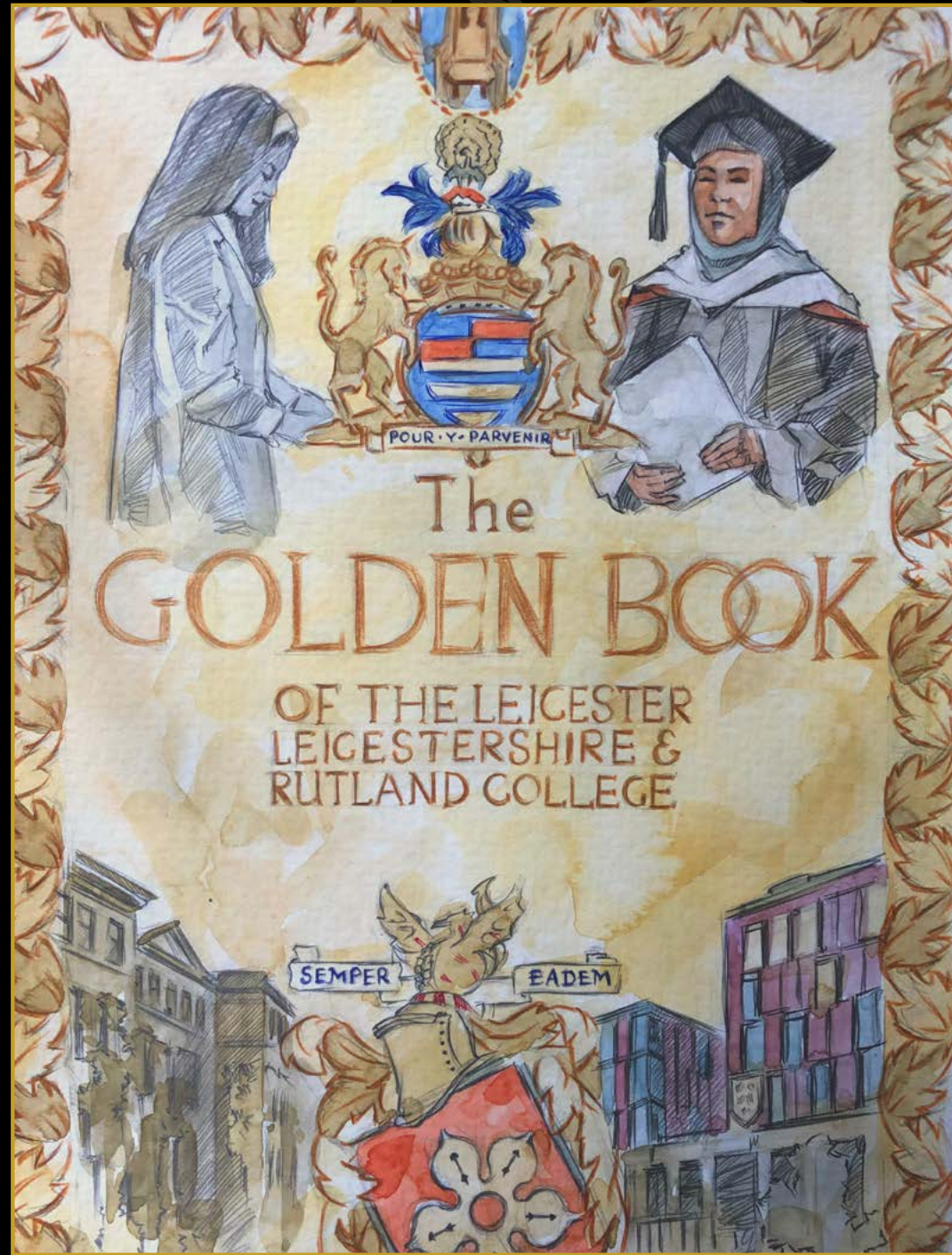
"It shows the importance of original research to the University right from its earliest years," says William Farrell, Research Services Consultant for the Library.

Bryan drew on his thesis for his book *North America: An Historical, Economic and Regional Geography*, co-authored with LL Rodwell Jones, which became a standard text in print for 40 years. His *Man's Adaptation of Nature: Studies in Cultural Landscape* was ahead of its time. A negative review of some of his work unfairly affected his research career, and Bryan was overlooked for a Chair when these were introduced. He was, however, awarded a long-overdue Honorary Professorship in his final year of work.

Bryan remained at Leicester for over 30 dedicated years. He served as Acting Principal before Frederick Attenborough's arrival, he was Director of Vaughan College during the Second World War, a Vice-Principal for 15 years and Dean of the Faculty of Arts from 1942.

Philanthropy at Leicester

A tradition of philanthropy that runs through the University



Philanthropy has a long history at Leicester, dating back to our foundation, and has remained an ever-present shaping force over the years.

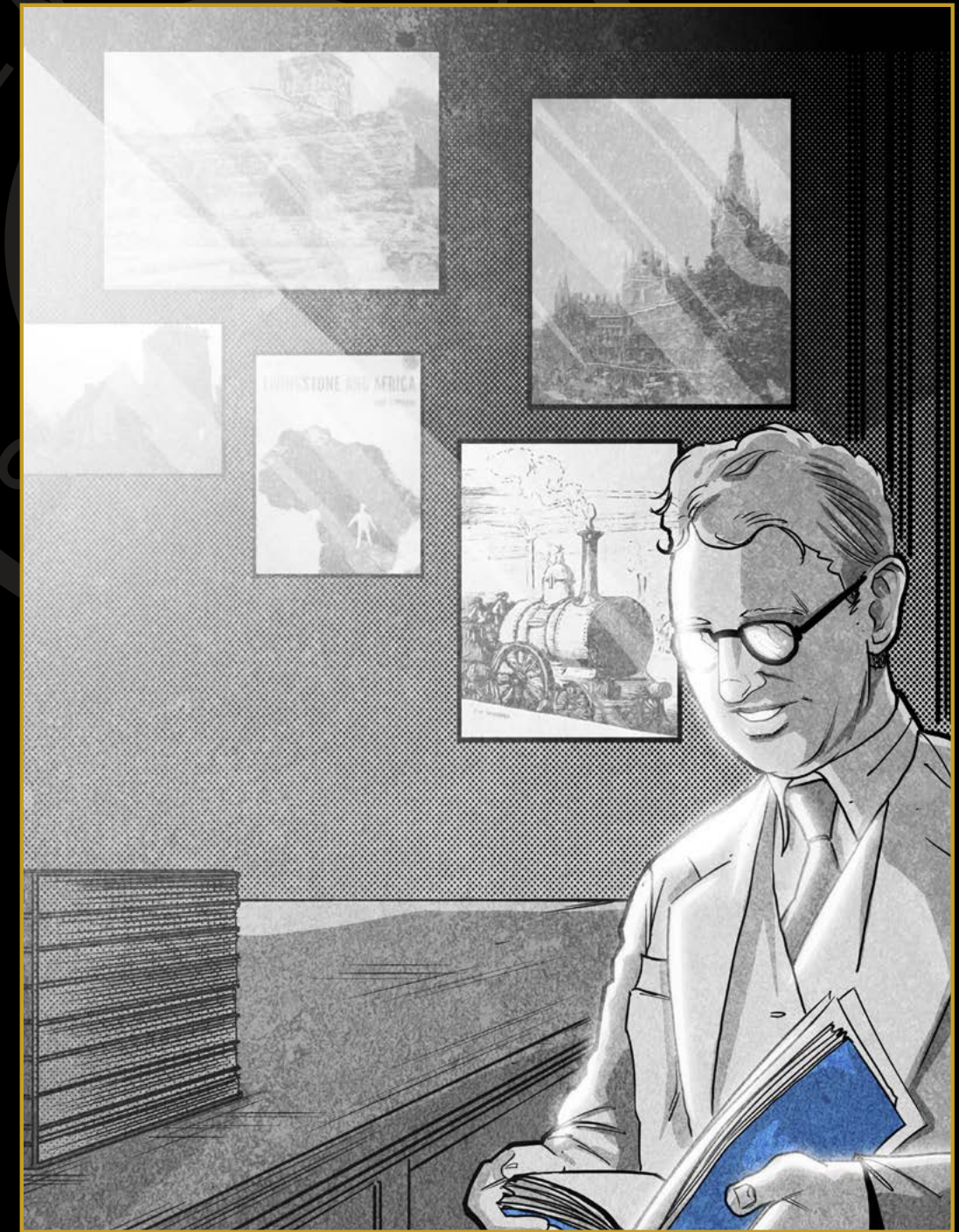
It has made many achievements possible. The campus site and the Fielding Johnson Building were early philanthropic gifts and, nearly 100 years later, philanthropy helped to fund the state-of-the-art George Davies Centre.

Support from donors also makes groundbreaking research possible and means students can complete their studies here.

The Golden Book was used to record gifts to the University between 1918 and 1924. To mark our centenary, Leicester plans to commission a new Golden Book to record gifts made during the centenary period.

Making History: Professor Jack Simmons OBE (1915-2000)

Historian and Pro Vice-Chancellor who helped develop a young University



A transport historian helped drive Leicester to its University status.

Jack Simmons was one of ten professors appointed in 1947 who steered the college through the process. The first Chair in History, he also served as Acting Vice-Chancellor and Pro Vice-Chancellor.

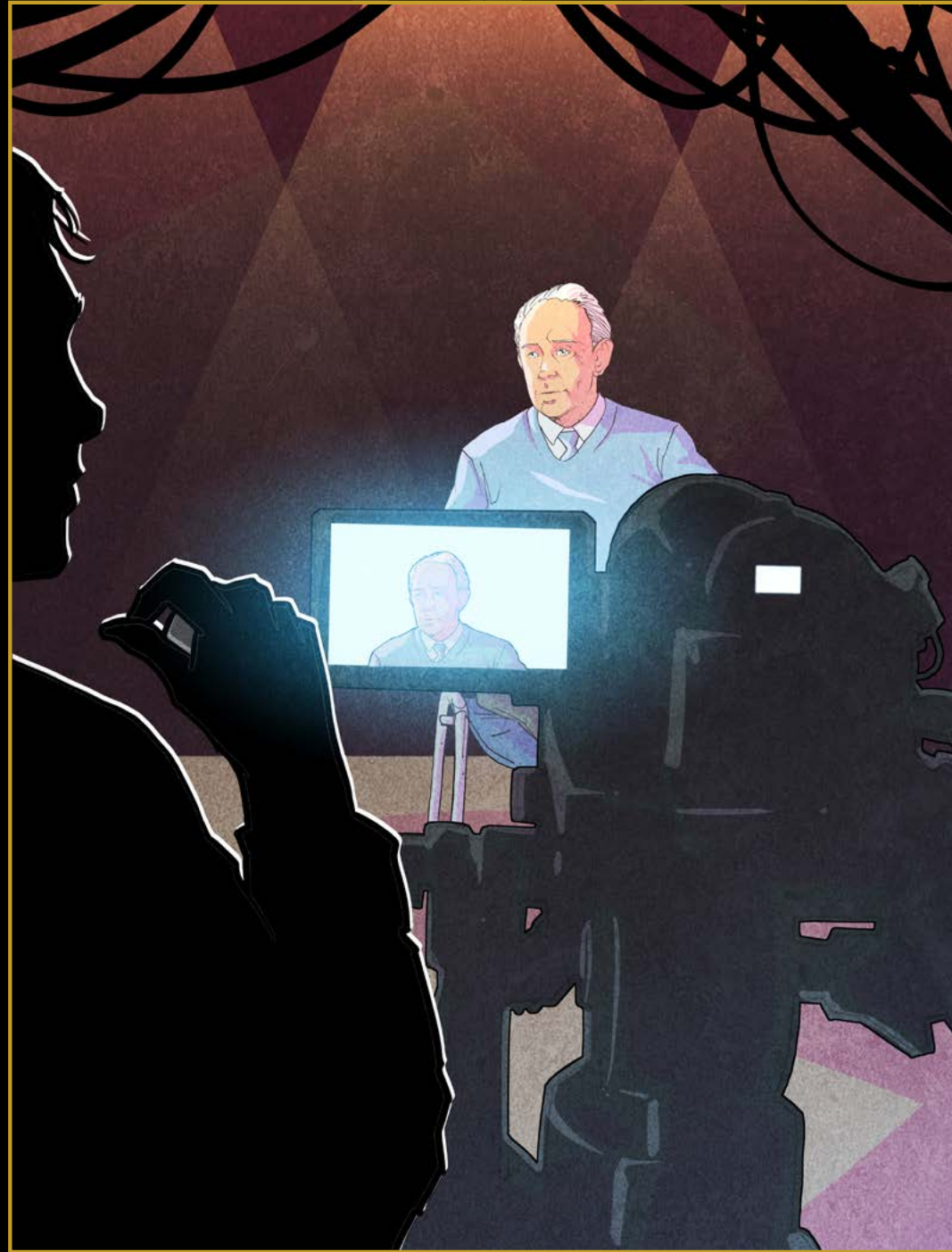
He was instrumental in setting up Leicester University Press, a campus bookshop, local BBC Radio Leicester, and also Centres for Victorian Studies, English Local History and Museum Studies. He published *New University about Leicester* in 1957, and was our first Honorary Archivist following his retirement.

Locally, he chaired the Leicester Local Broadcasting Council and was Leicestershire Archaeological Society president.

He was the academic brains behind John Betjeman's campaign to save St Pancras Station.

The East Midlands Oral History Archive

Going on record to tell tales of Leicester



Many people have stories to tell of Leicester, and we are ensuring such tales and archive recordings are not lost.

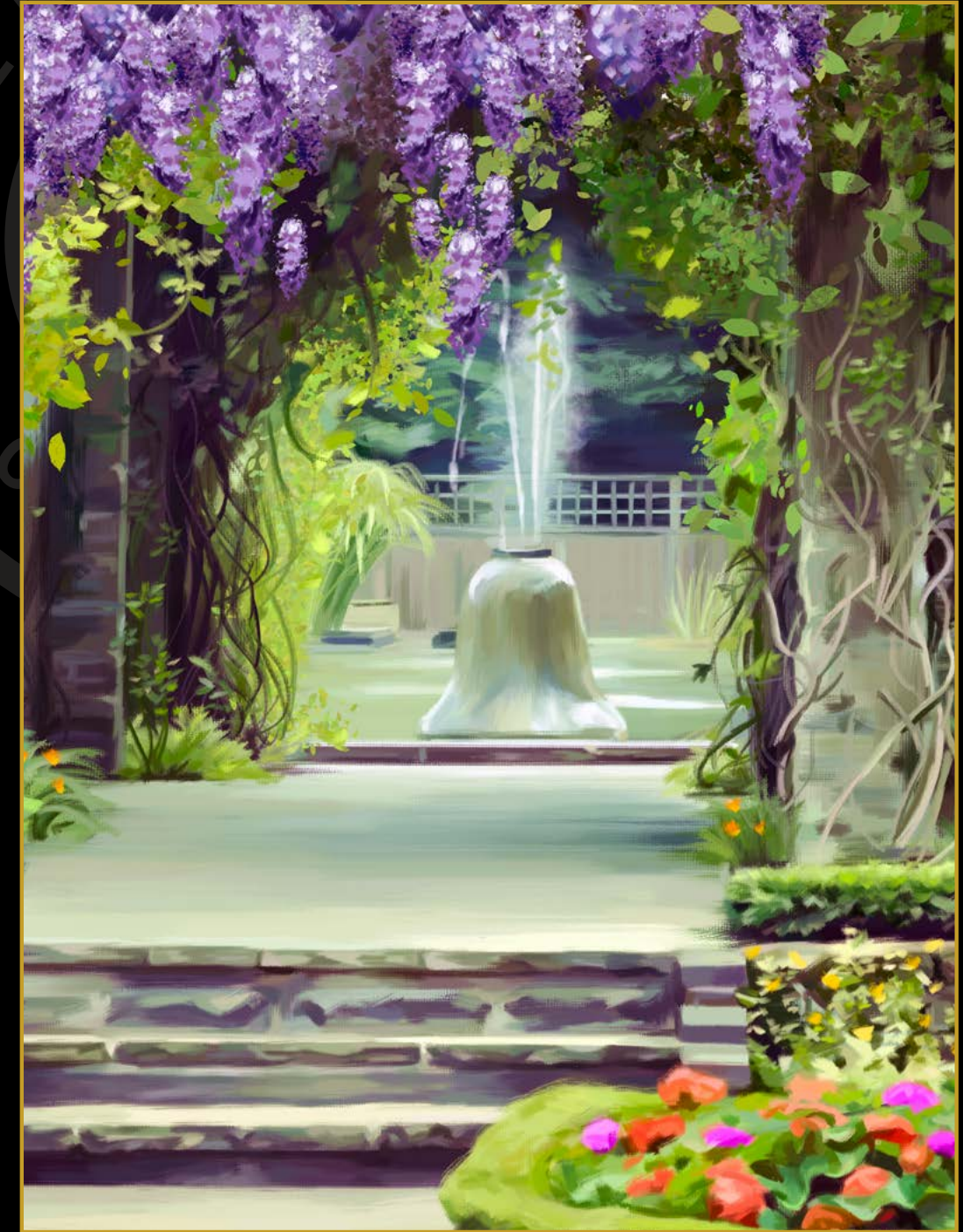
In 1983, the Leicester Oral History Archive and Market Harborough Museum started to record oral histories. By 2000 however, many recordings from across the region were stored away and neglected.

So the University's Centre for Urban History, with the City and County Councils, got National Lottery Heritage Fund money to set up the East Midlands Oral History Archive (EMOHA).

EMOHA digitised and catalogued oral history recordings and gave a home to BBC Radio Leicester's reel-to-reel tape archive. It now has an online catalogue and continues to preserve and collect oral histories and train others to do this.

Botanic Garden

A wonderful world of plants for learning and leisure



A garden of interesting and rare plants was established in Leicester's grounds by 1924. Planned before the college opened, it received donations of seeds from Kew Gardens and the University of Cambridge and became a useful resource for botany students.

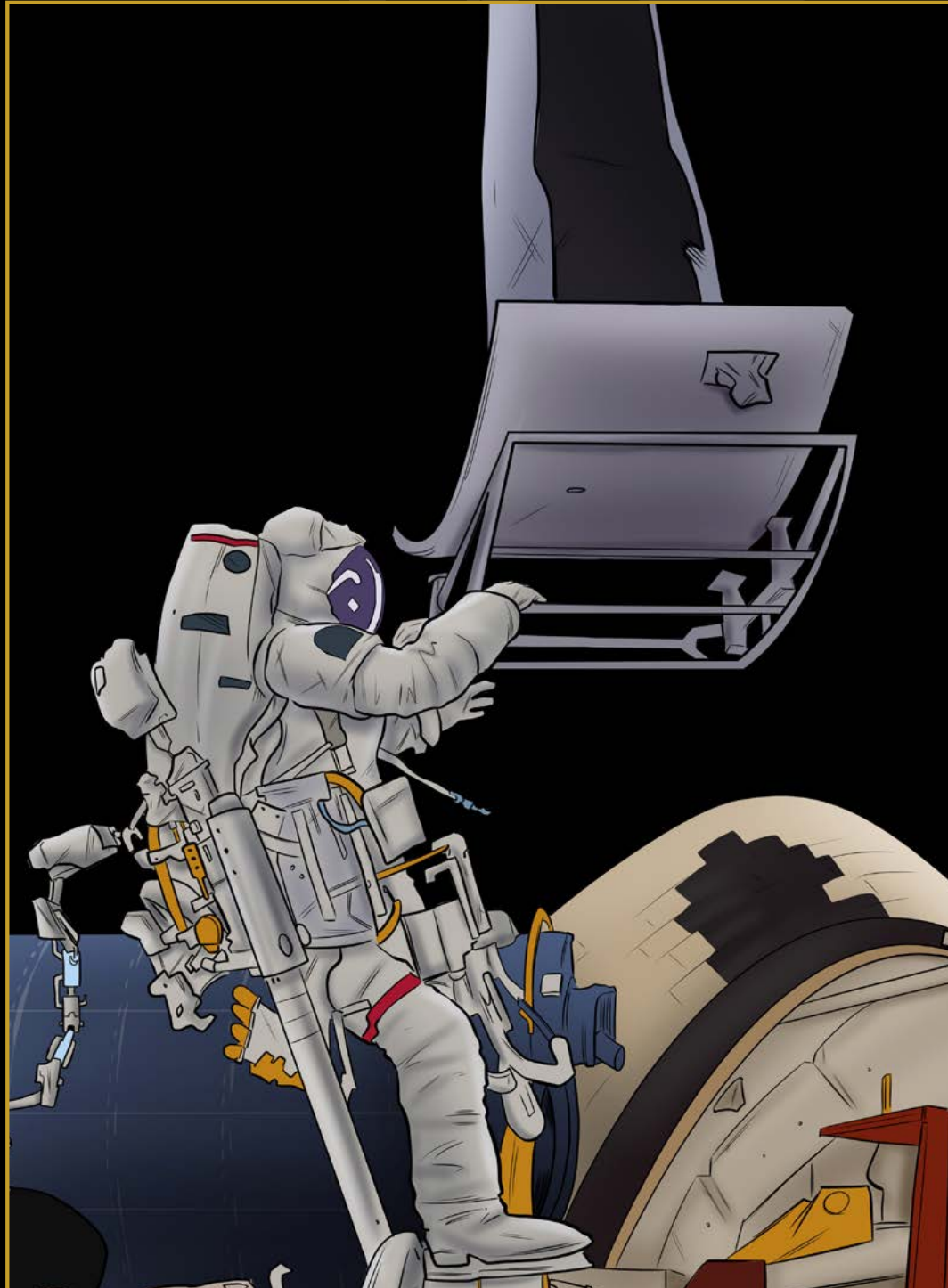
After the Second World War, the University bought houses in Oadby to house its growing student population, and the Botanic Gardens were re-established there. They were later expanded and features such as paving in a Fibonacci sequence added.

In 1995, it was named the Harold Martin Botanic Garden after a former Registrar.

The garden, open free to the public, is used for research, teaching and events. Approximately 165,000 school pupils have taken part in educational activities there since 1993.

Professor Jeff Hoffman

Our astronaut professor



Professor Jeff Hoffman is a former NASA astronaut who took part in five Space Shuttle missions and was one of two spacewalkers who rescued the Hubble Telescope (shown here in 1993). He started here as a research assistant and is now a Visiting Professor.

Professor Ken Pounds recalls first meeting him at Harvard in 1971: "Jeff turned up out of the blue to enquire about coming here. His PhD supervisor, Giovanni Fazio, had suggested Leicester was the place to be in space astronomy."

The adventurous Jeff "turned up in Spring, on crutches and with a leg in plaster. He had taken one risk too many skiing off-piste. On being chosen by NASA, Jeff said he believed his practical experience gained in Leicester was an important factor."

Discovery of King Richard III

When King Richard III was found, history was rewritten



Sometimes it still seems like a dream.

In August 2012, the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) began to dig in a Council car park to look for evidence of a friary believed to have been where King Richard III was buried in 1485 after the Battle of Bosworth.

The first trench contained a pair of leg bones and, 11 days later, an S-shaped spine was revealed. It had been accepted that Richard III's deformity was Tudor propaganda. History was being rewritten and announced to the world.

Comparing DNA from the bones found with that from living relatives showed the remains were those of King Richard III. They were kept at the University until reburial in Leicester Cathedral in 2015.

Heather Couper (1949-2020) and Nigel Henbest

Stellar duo who brought astronomy to the masses

Heather and Nigel met at Leicester in 1971. They later set out to popularise astronomy through their partnership, Hencoup Enterprises. They produced many books and science programmes, and presented 'Seeing Stars' for the BBC World Service. Both have asteroids named after them.

Couper was the first woman President of the British Astronomical Association. She appeared on BBC programmes including *The Sky at Night*, and presented Channel Four's *The Planets* and *The Stars* series.

Henbest has written books, articles and radio and TV scripts, and won the Glaxo-Wellcome Science Writer's Award. He has been Astronomy Consultant to *New Scientist* and Media Consultant to the Royal Observatory at Greenwich.



COVID-19

Pandemic response including world firsts in research

The University responded rapidly to the pandemic, with learning moving online and staff working from home. Our medical students graduated early to pitch in to support the NHS.

The COVID-19 research team worked tirelessly at a social distance (pictured) on numerous projects.

"Our ground-breaking research has been instrumental in understanding the virus, its impact and how best to treat it," says Professor Nishan Canagarajah. "We have delivered world firsts."

Leicester scientists discovered that people from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds were more susceptible to severe disease.

The University is working on NHS England's Your COVID Recovery website. Research on the virus itself is examining how to block its action and how it triggers health conditions.

The Herbarium

A place where thousands of plants are stored and studied



The Herbarium has over 120,000 specimens, mainly from the British Isles, Europe and the Mediterranean.

It stores voucher specimens (identified by experts as representative of their species) and has rescued plant specimens from loss. It serves many student, researcher and volunteer activities on a daily basis.

“The Herbarium’s internationally important collection informs our knowledge not only of botanical taxonomy but also diversity and genetics,” says alumna Lynda Wight.

It was set up by Thomas Tutin, Head of Botany, and Ted Horwood, Laboratory Steward, in 1945. Their research and work on the Herbarium made significant contributions to scientific and public knowledge.

The Herbarium is a much-loved collection and even retired botanists find it difficult to leave. “Professor Tutin, as an elderly gentleman, was almost always to be found studying in the corner,” recalls Wight.

Olive Banks (1923-2006), First Female Professor

First woman professor was an early sociology of education expert



Portrait reproduced by kind permission of Elizabeth Tooth (2018)

Olive Banks became the first female professor at Leicester in 1973. She had been appointed reader in the Sociology Department in 1970.

An LSE graduate who had left school at 16, Professor Banks concentrated on the new field of sociology of education, publishing her first book in 1955. Her 1965 textbook, *The Sociology of Education*, cemented her position as an expert.

In 1975, Professor Banks decided to concentrate on the history of feminism, which led to her acclaimed 1981 work *Faces of Feminism*.

She took early retirement the following year – she was still our only female professor – and produced works including the two-volume *Biographical Dictionary of British Feminists 1800-1945*.

Attenborough Arts Centre

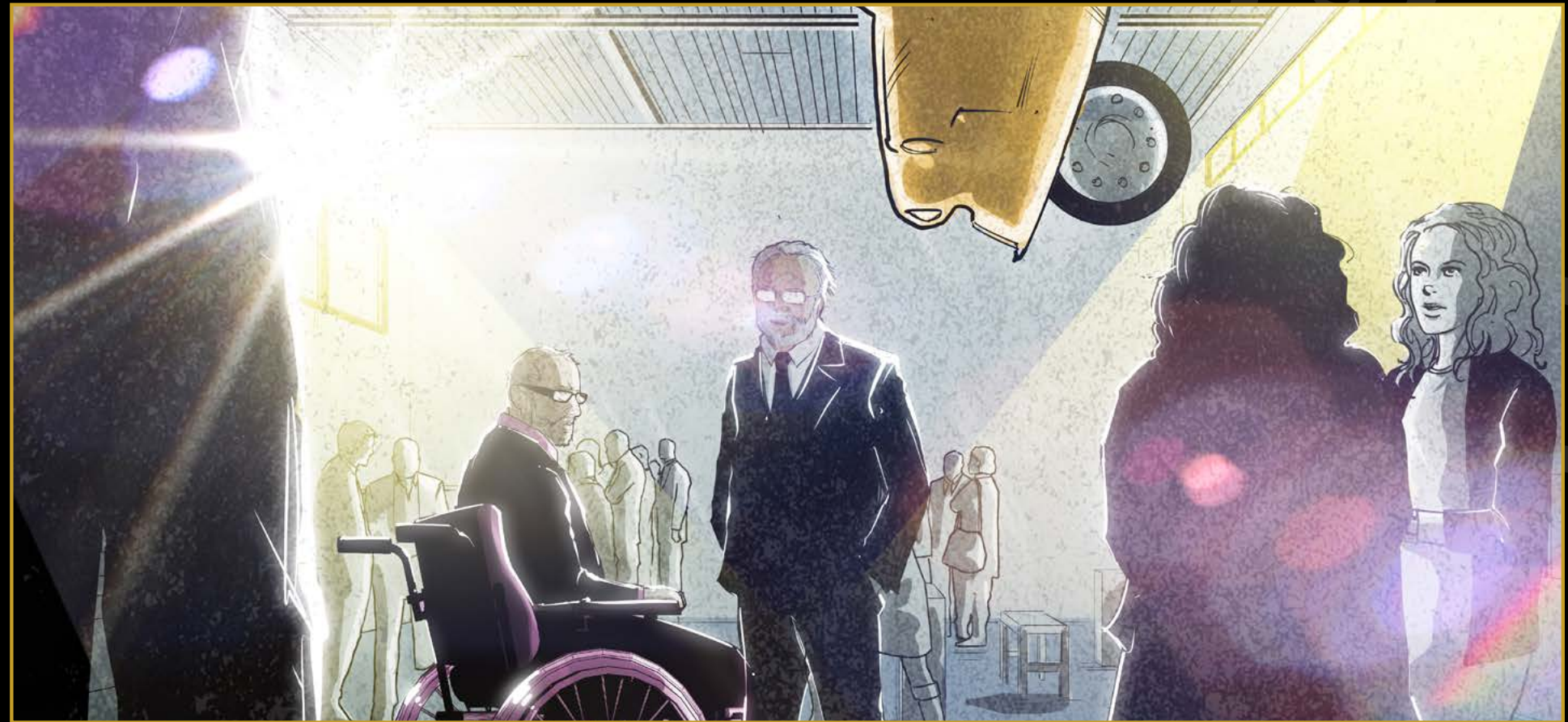
Inclusive arts centre created for all

The Richard Attenborough Centre for Disability and the Arts (now called Attenborough Arts Centre) was designed for all creatives, audiences and art admirers, disabled and non-disabled alike.

It was opened by Diana, Princess of Wales in 1997, accompanied by Lord Richard Attenborough. Today, it is supported by his son, theatre director Michael (shown centre).

Diana said: "In this beautiful building, I have met students in wheelchairs who were dancing, [visually impaired] artists creating superb sculptures and a painter who has been blind since birth."

"What a forward-thinking University it was when it agreed to Richard Attenborough's campaign to create a centre for arts, disability and learning," says staff member Jeremy Webster. "No one is left out and the art is always of the highest standard."



Refugees and Sanctuary

A University of Sanctuary, where education transforms lives

Through our Sanctuary Seekers' Unit, we work with Leicester City of Sanctuary to ensure we are a genuinely welcoming place for people seeking sanctuary in the UK. Our English Language Teaching Unit (pictured) offers free lessons to asylum seekers and refugees, and our Sanctuary Scholarship offers a full fee waiver.

This legacy goes back a long way. During the Spanish Civil War, Mary Attenborough helped establish a refuge for 50 Basque children.

During the Second World War, refugees here included several students and the eminent Dr Felix Rosenthal from Germany. Rhoda Bennett, an alumna then Librarian, helped to resettle many Jewish German refugees in the USA and UK. The Attenboroughs 'adopted' two refugee girls.

In the 1950s, we took five Hungarian students and, after the 1973 coup in Chile, made refugee academic Mr A Munoz a Visiting Fellow.

Paternoster Lift

An amazing, scary, non-stop paternoster lift



A paternoster lift, with non-stop open cars, carried people up and down the Attenborough Tower for nearly 40 years until 2017.

Quick reflexes and agility were needed to hop on and off, and Leicester's paternoster was a huge source of fun and trepidation.

"I recall the first time I saw this amazing continually moving elevator and the fact one could simply walk into and out of the moving boxes with no barriers," recalls alumnus Richard Acton.

"Although I never tried it, the trick was to ride over the top then do a handstand coming down so that it looked like cells stayed in the same direction!"

The Rag, Since 1930

Rag Week: a high-spirited way to raise money



Over the years, Rag has raised millions of pounds for charity.

Rag at Leicester started in 1930, with a 'pancake riot' and torchlit procession from Town Hall Square to the campus, followed by a masked ball. *Lucifer*, the Rag magazine, was first produced in 1935.

Activities included processions with floats (including the 'It' monster from 1957), pram races and the Rag Revue. Raids on other universities and kidnappings were popular, as were three-legged pub crawls.

Rag made students visible to local people, who they entertained with pranks and spectacle in the name of charity.

In 2005, a special Rag raised over £50,000.

Unsung Workers

Vital staff who keep the campus running



Often working behind the scenes, the porters and cleaners are essential to the smooth running of the University.

“The world-class research and teaching in this University depend on the commitment and quiet dedication of these services,” says Dave Pidgeon from Estates and Digital Services.

“The porters and cleaners have a crucial role in ensuring the campus and its facilities are fit for purpose, clean, open and accessible, and welcoming.

“From 7.00am, porters and cleaners will open buildings and rooms, prepare teaching areas, and clean and tidy the campus. Teaching staff then have the best possible environment to begin changing lives.”

During the pandemic, they were critical workers and kept our campus safe.

Oadby Halls of Residence

A student village, Edwardian houses and newly built halls



Student numbers rose greatly after the Second World War, so the University bought homes for them in Oadby.

The first included Edwardian buildings called Hastings House, Beaumont House (illustrated) and Shirley House, in what became Oadby Student Village.

Before then, female students lived in a hostel on the campus and male students had to take lodgings.

Digby, Latimer and Herrick Houses soon followed and, by the mid-1950s, an accommodation masterplan was in place, which led to more halls being developed.

“I lived in Oadby Student Village during my first year,” says student Lavina Dhillon. “The team members were always kind and helpful. They even provided free food on many occasions. Who doesn’t love free food?”

Our First Staff and Students, 1921-22

The first students, in gowns and on campus

In its first year, Leicester had 11 full-time students – ten women and one man (the picture imagines them all in summer 1922). Full-time students paid £20 a year. Academic posts were temporary to begin with.

We are unsure how many students crossed Leicester's threshold on its first day. The new University College was very much a work in progress – only 19 rooms in the Fielding Johnson Building were ready for teaching and there was no central heating.

Students had to wear academic gowns while on campus, in the style of the gown of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, which was dark blue with black facings. They studied English, French, Latin, Geography and Botany.

When the first Principal, Robert Rattray, moved to Cambridge in 1931, his wife Mary recalled 11 undergraduates visiting their home for a Christmas party in 1921. There were nearly 300 students by the time he left.



Opening of the Medical School, 1975

The rise of medicine at Leicester

The Medical School admitted its first students in 1975. This realised the vision of one of our founders, Dr Astley Clarke, who had championed a medical school for Leicester from the beginning.

It was part of the Leicester-Warwick Medical School between 2000 and 2007 and expanded into the purpose-built George Davies Centre in 2016.

"I started as a medical student in 1986 having chosen Leicester for a number of reasons, full cadaveric dissection being one. Gerald Charles Tresidder, a retired urologist, was our tutor. He made everything clinically relevant, clear and fun," says Suzanne Dawson.

"I hadn't thought about surgery as a career, but I will never forget the day Mr T lightly tapped me on my knuckles and said "Please hold the forceps like a surgeon, not like you're gardening."

The Discovery of DNA Fingerprinting, 1984

DNA fingerprinting catches a double murderer



Genetic fingerprinting was born at the University at 9.05am on 10 September 1984. Professor Alec Jeffreys, analysing patterns in DNA from a lab technician and her parents, found DNA 'fingerprints' could show relationships between people.

The technique was used in an immigration case and then a paternity case. Then a double murder investigation established it in forensics.

Two teenage girls had been raped and murdered in Leicestershire, and a local man had confessed to one murder but denied the other. A detective enlisted Professor Jeffreys' help – and the results showed the accused had committed neither. Testing other local men led to a conviction.

Professor Jeffreys was awarded a knighthood and the Royal Society's Copley Medal. He was also made a Companion of Honour.

International Students, Since 1922

International students: here since the beginning



Leicester has welcomed students from abroad since our inception, with our first coming from Japan in 1922. By 1930, students from Denmark, Germany, France and the Netherlands had come to study.

The Students' Union supported them – pictured are SU members in 1967 protesting against higher fees for overseas students.

Refugees came here during the 1930s and 1940s from Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Germany. The Second World War also brought American, Canadian and Chinese students.

Former student Catherine Cho remembers activities and outings run by Leicester's International Students Association: "I recall seeing snow for the first time on a trip to Scotland and having a snowball fight!"

Today, 25% of our students are from overseas, coming from over 100 countries.

Art on Campus: The Henry Moore Sculptures

Henry Moore sculptures once hosted by Leicester



Two works by renowned sculptor Henry Moore were once on show in our grounds.

Draped Seated Woman, one of the seven original editions, sat in front of the Fielding Johnson Building, a site chosen by Moore, in 1970. The University celebrated this by awarding him an honorary degree.

This was replaced by *Oval With Two Points*, a loan we think Moore intended to be permanent – unfortunately this was not put in writing.

In 1977, Moore transferred ownership of his works to the Henry Moore Foundation. After his death in 1986, the foundation borrowed *Oval With Two Points* for an exhibition then decided to keep it.

We are proud that Moore chose us to host these great sculptures.

Professor Ken Pounds CBE FRS

Pioneer in the new science of X-ray Astronomy



Ken Pounds came to Leicester from UCL in 1960 with a three-year Royal Society grant to study X-radiation from the sun and other stellar sources – although none were known then.

A team of space enthusiasts was quickly established. Access to Skylark rocket launches from Woomera and the small Ariel satellite allowed a rapid re-focus on several remarkably bright sources in the night sky. Ariel 5 (1974-80) detected 296 such cosmic X-ray sources, including stellar black hole A0620-00.

By then a Fellow of the Royal Society, Pounds was lead advocate for the first European X-ray mission, EXOSAT (1983-86), and UK Project Scientist for the German Rosat (1990-96) and Japanese Ginga (1987-90) satellites.

Returning to research in 1998 after a four-year secondment as chief executive of a new research council, he used X-ray spectra to show that, when overfed, massive black holes in galaxy nuclei eject excess matter as a powerful wind, in turn limiting star formation in the host galaxy.

The Students' Union

Empowering and championing students

The Students' Union appears to have been founded in 1922-23, and had a sports club and a dramatic society (which still exists). Its first president was Nellie Bonsor, and its second the author CP Snow.

It gained its own home when the Percy Gee Building opened in 1957, and many high-profile musicians played there.

"The Union expanded my experience in so many dimensions," says alumnus Chris Smith. "I met people from backgrounds I had never encountered, and participated in activities, building confidence and experience in trying something new. Even if it did not always go well. I immersed myself in a range of music that is the soundtrack to my life today."



Percy Gee Building (Students' Union)

The Students' Union gets its grand new home

The Students' Union gained its own home when the Percy Gee Building was opened by the Queen and Prince Philip in 1958 amid "a mood of infectious friendliness and gaiety," the University reported.

Designed by T Shirley Worthington, it was "one of the most magnificent buildings in Leicester", according to the *Leicester Evening Mail*.

Columns were made of travertine marble and neoclassical chandeliers graced the oak-panelled Great Hall. It included "a games room, squash court, seminaries, a devotional room, common rooms and dining halls", marvelled the paper.

"Percy Gee really is the heartbeat of the campus and it's where some of my fondest memories of University occurred," says Martin Cullen.

It was refurbished in 2011, then extended and reopened in 2021.

The Redfearn Bar, 1958-2009

The social hub that was the Redfearn



It did not take long for the Redfearn campus bar to become the hub of social life. It opened in 1958 after the Students' Union campaigned for a fully licensed bar in the new Percy Gee Building.

"In the days before social media, it's hard to overstate the importance of a student-owned place to meet, study, party and find a warm welcome as a bright-eyed fresher," says Rob Hicks.

The Redfearn was extended in 1998 and last orders were called there in June 2009.

Hicks adds: "It was the social hub of the University, often imitated by off-campus bars, but never matched."

The Inaugural Professors, 1946-48

The first professors brought scholarship and cake



After gaining our first Government funding from the University Grants Committee in 1945, the University College could expand and appoint its first Professors.

An authority on hydrogen, Louis Hunter was appointed to the first Chair, in Chemistry, in 1946.

Between 1946 and 1948, ten professors were appointed in rapid succession: as well as Chemistry, there were Chairs in Adult Education, Education, History, English, Physics, French, Botany, Mathematics and Economics. Arthur Raleigh Humphreys was made Professor of English in 1947.

"Deeply learned in 18th-century literature, he was the epitome of scholarship," recalls Peter Harris.

"By the 1960s, we were having sit-ins at the University. He was always not just courteous to his long-haired charges but also deeply supportive.

"Cherished memories include group tutorials in his home. We had tea and cake. Most of us were a long way from home and this domesticity was comforting."

Student Journalism

Publications with politics, attitude, and some notable interviews

Student magazines open a window into history.

“The articles and photographs capture the political, social and cultural attitudes and interests of students throughout our first century,” says Simon Dixon, Head of Archives and Special Collections.

“There has been some important campaigning writing, for example the coverage of the anti-apartheid movement during the 1970s and 1980s. There have been notable political interviews, including with Robert Mugabe and Yasser Arafat.”

The first student magazine, *Luciad*, was handwritten and issued in 1924, and was followed by the *Wave*. *The Ripple* has reflected student life since 1950, and a great many societies have launched their own publications and newsletters.

The online Leicester Student Magazine is keeping the tradition of campaigning journalism alive. Digital publications are being saved to preserve the student voices of our second century.



Dr Mary Swainson (1908-2008)

A pioneer and global authority on student counselling

Leicester was home to one of the country's first student counselling services, set up by Mary Swainson.

While lecturing in Education, Swainson began counselling students in 1948. This service grew and, in 1967, joined the Student Health Service.

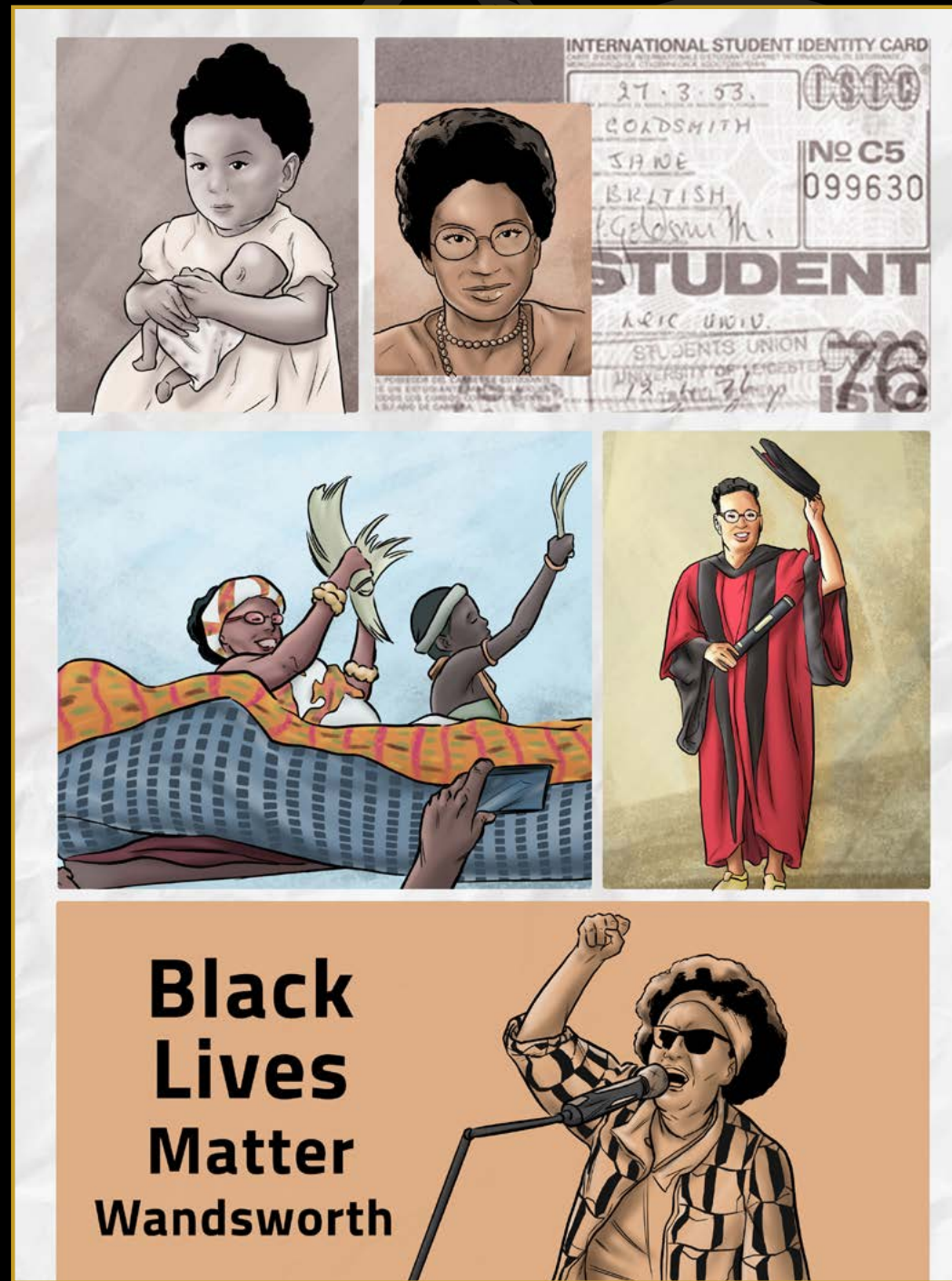
Swainson was driven by various experiences including caring for 19 Second World War evacuees in her parents' home.

Her papers on student counselling services, including for UNESCO, attracted enquiries from colleges around the globe.

In a copy of her autobiography that she gave to the library – *The Spirit of Counsel: The Story of a Pioneer in Student Counselling* – she inscribed: “Obstacles can be overcome with patience and determination.”

Esuantsiwa Jane Goldsmith

Student activist to Ghanaian princess and global influence



Esua (Jane) Goldsmith was the first Black female student to be elected President of the Students' Union back in 1975.

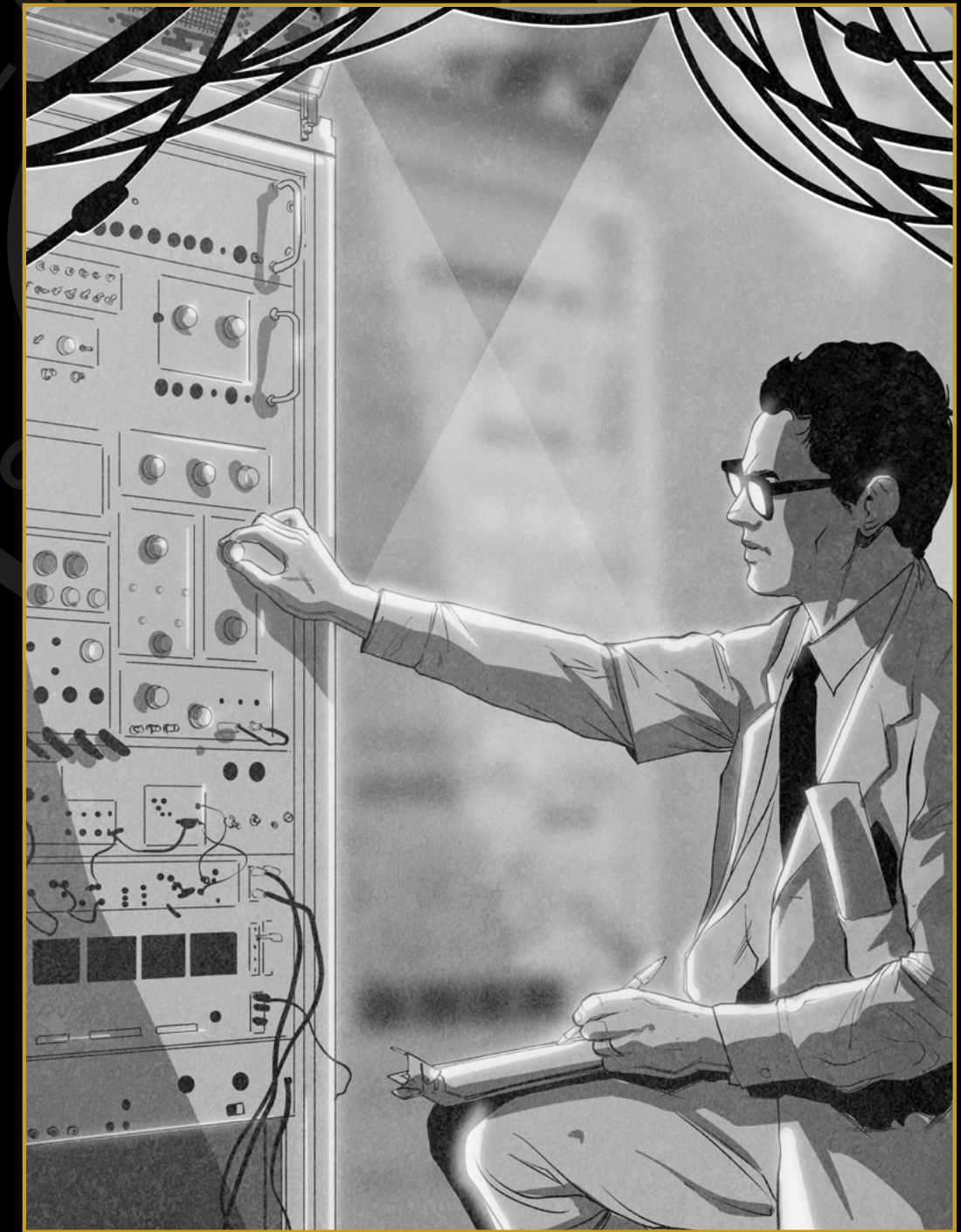
Admitting to being "your number one dungareed, dangly ear-ringed activist", she was President of the Anti-Apartheid and Women's Liberation Groups as well as Union Vice-Chair.

The first minority ethnic woman to chair the Fawcett Society, Goldsmith is a consultant to voluntary organisations nationally and internationally. She was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Laws in 2015.

She now uses her Ghanaian name Esuantsiwa, (Esua for short). Her recently-published Memoir, *The Space Between Black and White* looks back at her time in Leicester and charts her journey to discover her African Roots, where she was astonished to discover she was Ghanaian Royalty.

Learning Technologies

From magic lanterns and punched cards to online learning



We could not have got through the COVID-19 pandemic without our Ignite online learning systems, and it's hard to imagine University life without computers.

Back in the 1920s, typewriters, carbon paper stylography and magic lanterns were our technology.

The Geography Department pioneered the use of photography and was making colour videos of field trips by the 1950s. The Computer Laboratory, set up in 1962-63, featured an Elliott 803 and CCTV broadcast it to lectures.

Former postgraduate student John Poston was paid "a nominal fee" to operate the computer on night shifts in 1970: "It had one card input, one printer and eight tape drives. How things have changed."

Our Technicians

The technicians who keep teaching and research going



Teaching and research both rely on the skills of technicians. They are specialists – our image shows Geology technicians from the 1970s – and have performed demonstrations for generations of students.

However, while many assistants and ‘lab boys’ (and girls) worked here from its earliest days, few appear in the archive and they have not always felt valued. Low pay was partly addressed after 60 Leicester technicians joined a national strike in 1965.

The first Chemistry technician was Albert Cobble (known as just Cobble) “a great multi-talented, including glassblowing, asset”, recalled alumnus Frank Rodwell.

Alumnus Allard Johnson recalls Cobble winning many a game of Solo during wartime firewatching nights. “Cobble, whose first name seemed to be secret, was the students’ friend,” he said.

Leicester’s Literary Legacy

Literary Leicester, with novelists, poets, playwrights and book illustrators



Delve into our literary history and you will discover many a famous name.

We hold the literary archives of Sue Townsend (shown here accepting her Honorary Degree in 1991) and Joe Orton, as well as the Reg and Ann Cartwright children’s book illustration collection.

Poets connected to the University in the 1940s-1960s include Philip Larkin, GS Fraser, US-born Paris Leary and Lyman Andrews.

Novelist alumni include CP Snow (one of our first students), Malcolm Bradbury, who wrote *Eating People is Wrong* while he was here, Graham Joyce and Adele Parks. Non-fiction writers include Jeffrey Boakye.

Among our staff are novelist Jonathan Taylor and, from 1959-62, Richard Hoggart, who penned the influential *The Uses of Literacy*.

Our Founders

The founders who made the University happen

The University owes its existence to the generosity of local people who gave their time, money and energy.

On Armistice Day 1918, local physician Dr Astley Clarke made the first donation to the fund that founded Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland College.

Shown here are (back, left-right) Dr Robert Rattray (Unitarian Minister and first Principal), Jonathan North (Mayor), Thomas Fielding Johnson (benefactor), Dr Astley Clarke (principal founder) and Walter Gibbs (Leicester Daily Post editor, first Secretary), and (front, left-right) Gertrude Vincent (philanthropist), 'Poppy' Clarke (social worker, married to Dr Clarke), Sarah Heron (Headmistress of Wyggeston Girls' School) and Isabel Ellis (philanthropist, and health and social worker).

Founding gifts includes Arts and Crafts furniture, books for the Library, laboratory equipment, a sports field and pianos.



University Challenge

Starter for ten, the first Indian woman to compete on University Challenge

Leicester beat Balliol College, Oxford, to win the first series of University Challenge in 1963.

Then, in 1974, Sandya Narayanswami became the first Indian woman to compete on the show – her team beat St John's College, Oxford.

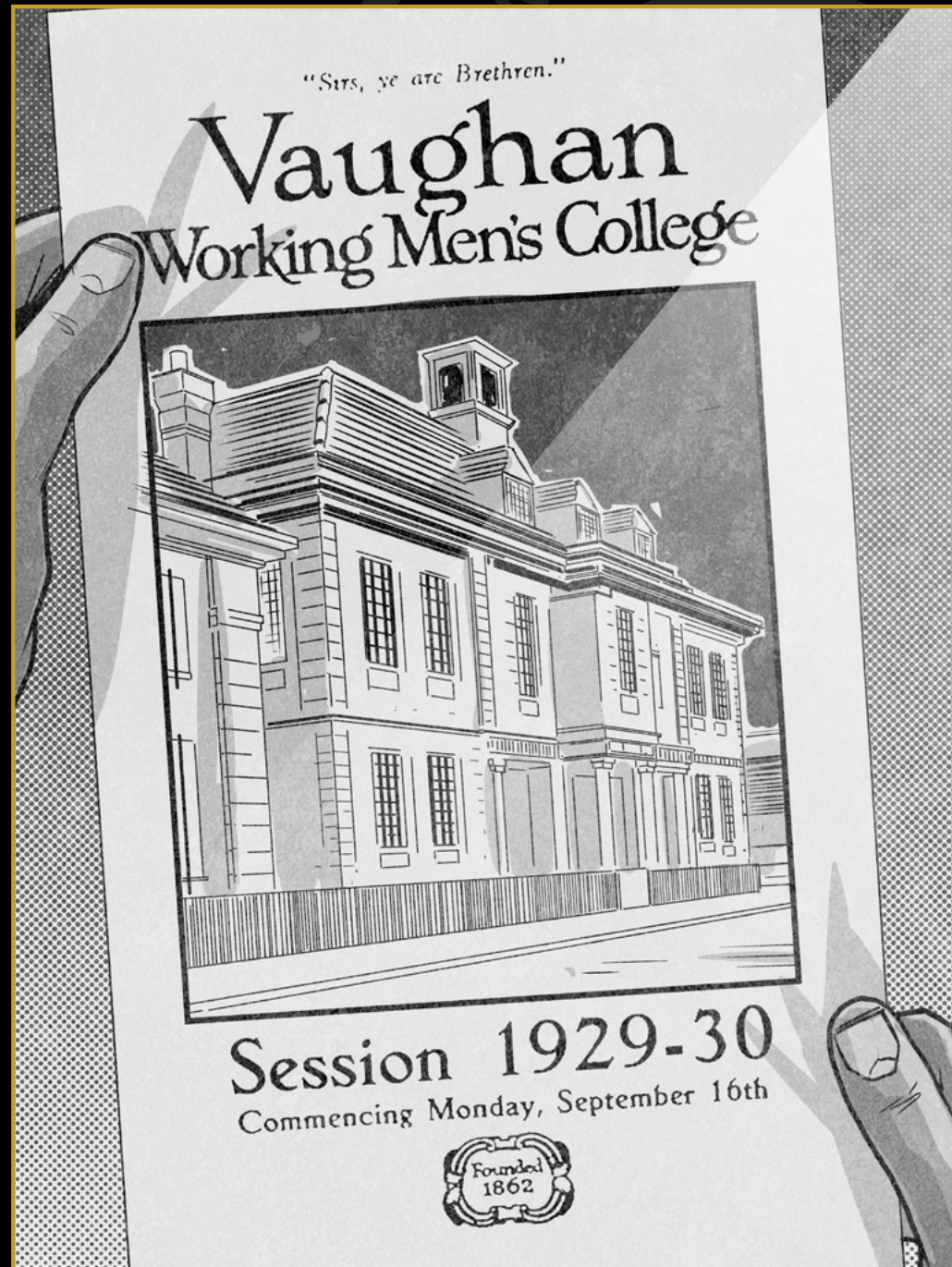
"We made the quarter- or semi-final, so did well. I received a lot of fan mail, including three proposals," she writes.

"Bamber Gascoigne said I had 'exceptionally broad general knowledge for a science major'. I replied: 'That's because I spent all my time in libraries'. What I didn't tell him was that the racism in my school was so bad I spent all my time in the library. I read extensively and retained what I read.

At Leicester, I was treated like an intelligent human being and graduated with a first-class degree at the top of my year."

Lifelong Education for All

Vaughan College, evening classes and adult education



Vaughan College started in 1862 as the Working Men's Institute with library, reading room and classes. It became an extramural department of the University College in 1929, providing adult education, especially part-time and evening courses.

It was demolished in 1962 and replaced with a new, purpose-built college in 1962 next to Jewry Wall.

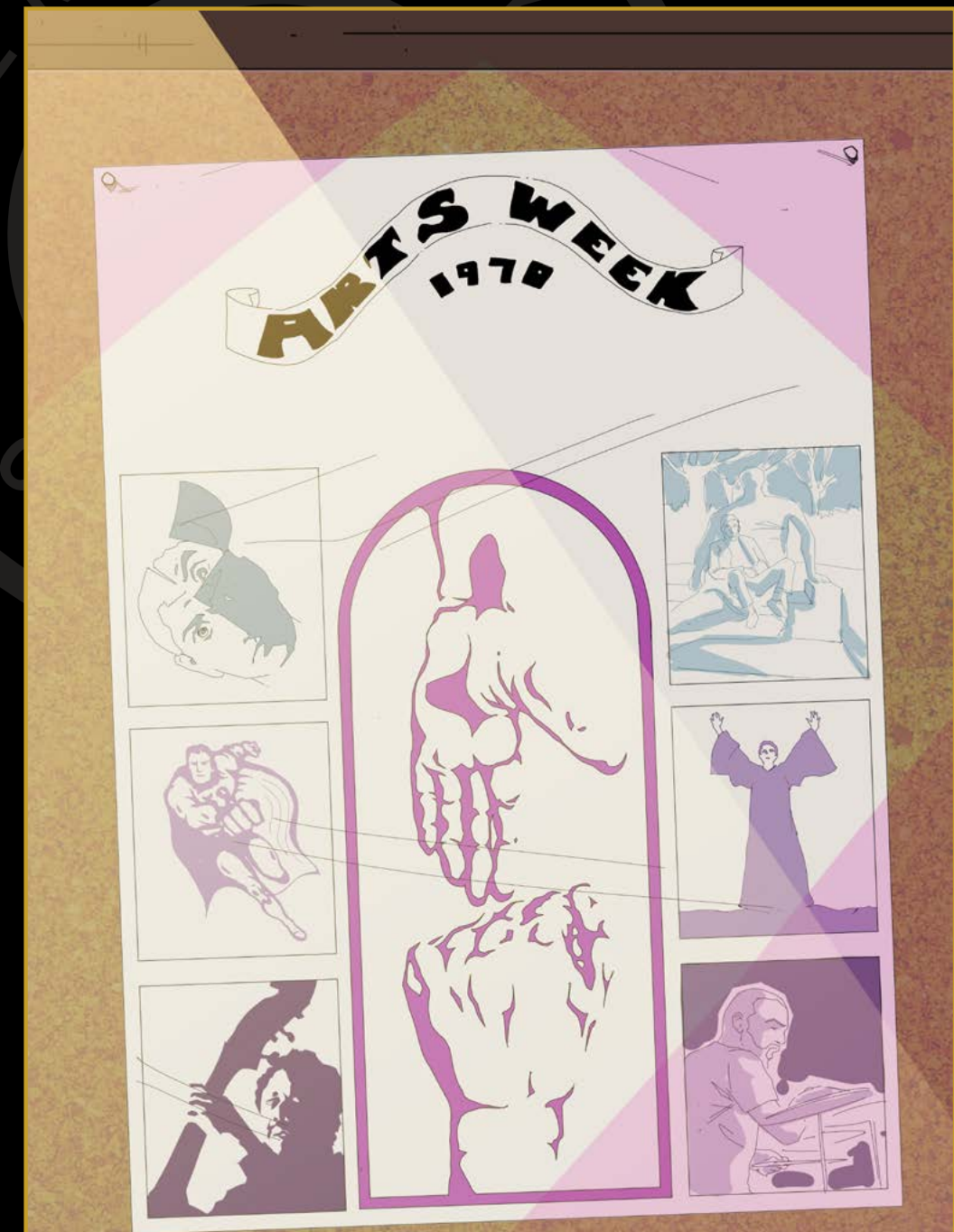
This was closed and replaced by the Vaughan Centre for Lifelong Learning on the campus in 2013. Three years later, the University decided to end this provision and the Centre closed in 2020.

"Both the certificate and the degree courses were superb – with excellent lecturers and topics. Hard work alongside the day job!" says alumnus Mary Ridgway.

Former staff re-established it as Leicester Vaughan College, which is independent.

Student Arts Festivals

Jubilee year for arts festival with work by high-profile names



Arts Week has shown work by inspirational artists since 1961 and gained support from Paul McCartney along the way.

The festival, run by the Students' Union, started with an exhibition by local artists. Later, it included James Stirling lecturing on his Engineering Building, and textile designs by Trinidad-born artist Althea McNish.

McCartney argued for more funding in 1968: "If a big public relations firm had asked me to take part, I would have told them what they could do, but I really think these students need some help."

That year, exhibits included Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth sculptures, a Goya sketch, Lichtenstein cartoon, Renoir engraving, and Polish posters.

In 1975, students organised a Black Cultural Event, showcasing Black artists, to recognise the cultural inheritance of Black students and to engage Leicester's Black population.

Brookfield

Founder's house rescued to become a place to learn business

The 19th-century home of Thomas Fielding Johnson, one of our founders, has a new lease of life as the School of Business after being saved by the University.

Brookfield House, designed by architect Joseph Goddard and decorated by interior designer Joseph Armitage, was the home of Thomas Fielding Johnson and his wife Agnes (pictured) from 1869.

His son gave the house to the local diocese for a bishop's residence. During the Second World War, it was passed to the British Red Cross Society, and later sold to the Leicester Royal Infirmary and used for nurse and midwifery training.

By 2011, Brookfield was at risk of demolition but was saved after the University bought the house and its grounds in 2013.



Students' Union Rock Gigs

Legendary acts feed a musical appetite that never wanes

From piano playing or a gramophone for 1920s 'hops' to postwar jazz and O₂ Academy opening with Professor Green, live music is central to student life.

Headliners of the 1960s and 1970s included the Rolling Stones, Cream, The Who, Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple, Elton John, Slade, The Kinks, The Jam, Iron Maiden and Motörhead.

Later came Adam and the Ants, The Smiths, The Ramones and Radiohead, and a Stone Roses gig halted by a collapsing lighting rig.

Queen played Stamford Hall in 1972 (pictured). Alumnus Roger Cornish recalls being told they would "be hugely successful".

"The volume was truly physical – many moved outside – but Freddie Mercury drove the performance with athletic and hypnotic enthusiasm."

Leicester University Press

University publisher took scholarship into the wider world



Leicester University Press illustrates the innovation of the postwar period well.

Founded as the Publications Board in 1952, it started by making the texts of inaugural lectures available outside the University but soon began to publish monographs and scholarly editions.

It became Leicester University Press in 1957.

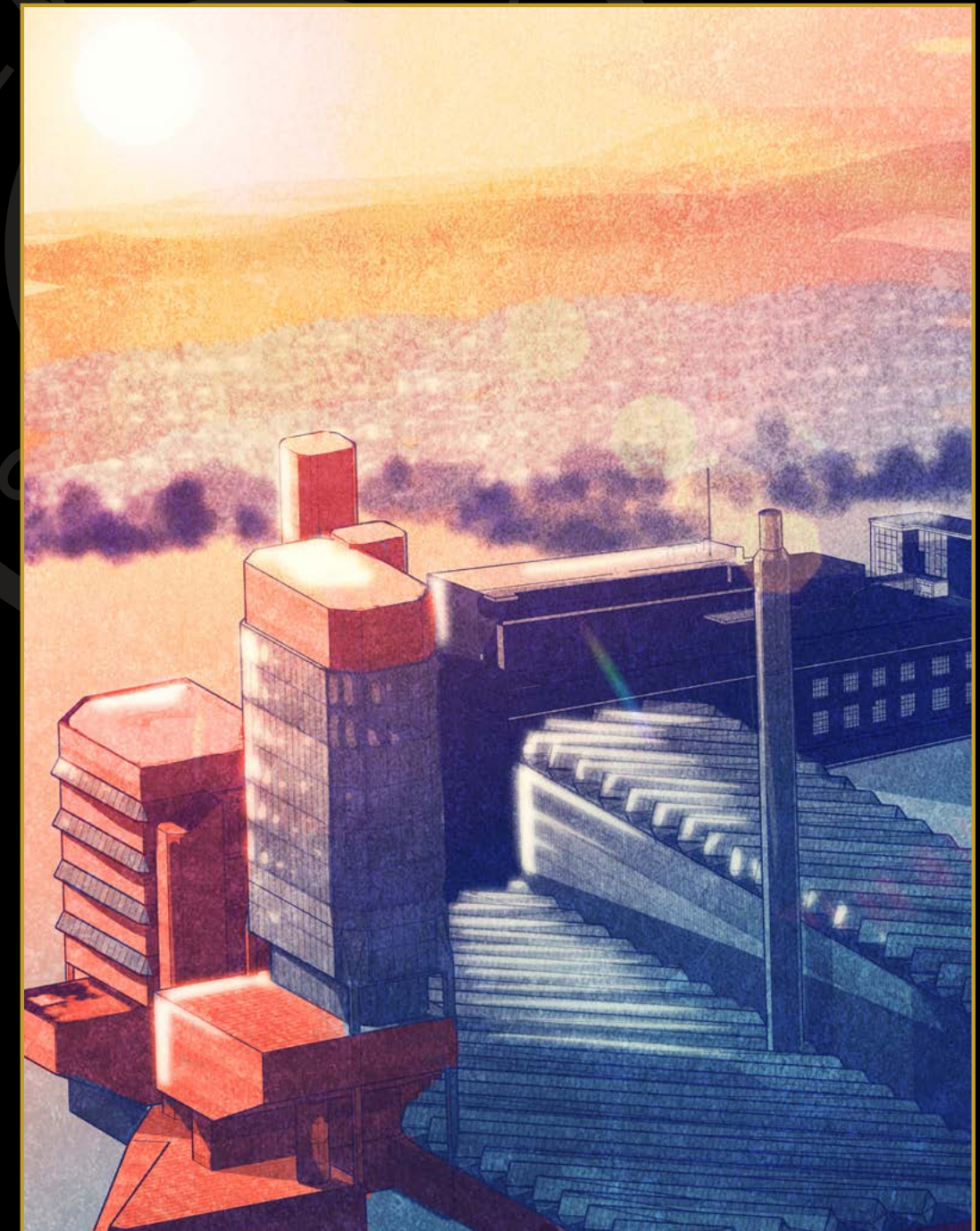
Herbert Finberg, the first Professor of English Local History, had been a typographer and publisher, and provided advice and contacts.

The Press had strong relationships with new disciplines, such as Victorian Studies, English Local History and Urban History. Its publication of JD Halloran's *The Effects of Mass Communication* in 1964 signalled the birth of media studies.

It published over 250 titles before being sold in 1988.

The Engineering Building

A stunning, practical place for engineers of today and tomorrow



The grade II* listed Engineering Building is one of the world's most famous works of postwar architecture. Every aspect of its design reflects and facilitates the engineering work going on inside it, with its form reflecting its function. It was named 'The Shack' by the first students to use it in 1963.

While opinion was strongly split over its design, thousands of people came to see it, and Historic England ranks it as one of the country's best postwar buildings.

Aircraft carriers inspired architects James Gowan and James Stirling, plus engineer Frank Newby, to design two joined towers above cantilevered lecture theatres.

The rippling diamond-shaped waves of the large glass roofs face north, as direct sunlight could affect sensitive instruments. The distinction between its two types of glass can be seen only at night.

Bennett Building Roof Collapse, June 1973

Crash – down comes the ceiling

It was a near miss when a ton and a half of ferro-concrete roof beams crashed to the floor of the Reading Room in the Bennett Building.

This incident, along with other failures at schools in Camden and Stepney, led to the banning of this type of calcium aluminate cement concrete in new structures.

A student had left only moments before – so could confirm no one was buried under the debris – and an examiners' meeting due to be held there had been rescheduled.

For a year and a half, staff were scattered around the University. Books and papers remained in the Bennett Building and could be accessed only with difficulty, and research output was hit.

In January 1975, staff and students returned to a rebuilt and strengthened Bennett (and Physics) Building, and recovery began.



'Building a University': the 1982 Radio Play

BBC radio broadcasts our double jubilee drama

A double jubilee for the University was celebrated in 1981-82 – silver for 25 years with full University status was added to diamond for 60 years as a University College.

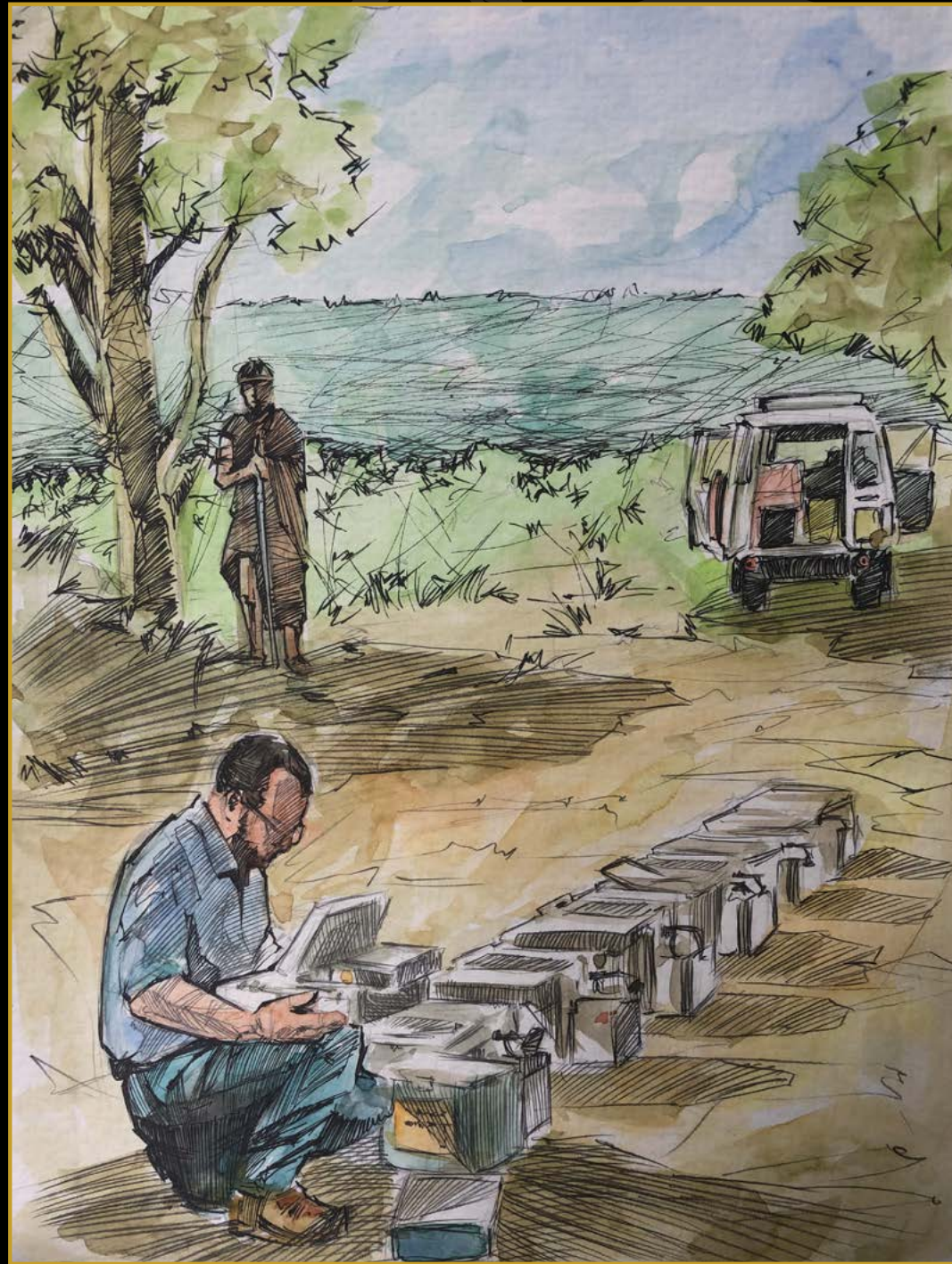
A packed programme included a play on the University's life being broadcast on BBC Radio Leicester. Written by Lois Potter of the English Department, 'Building a University' was performed by staff and students, with music and sound effects, including noises of construction and printing presses.

Among the voices of student actors can be heard Professors Arthur Humphreys and Jack Simmons playing themselves.

A cassette tape and script were recently rediscovered in the archives, and the tape has been digitised to ensure its preservation.

East African Rift Geophysical Research Project

The heart of research on the East African Rift



Leicester Geologists have been at the centre of international study of one of the main tectonic structures on the planet for nearly 60 years.

Originally led by Professor Aftab Khan in the early 1960s, the project involved collaboration with European, American and African universities and other institutions through the 1980s and 1990s.

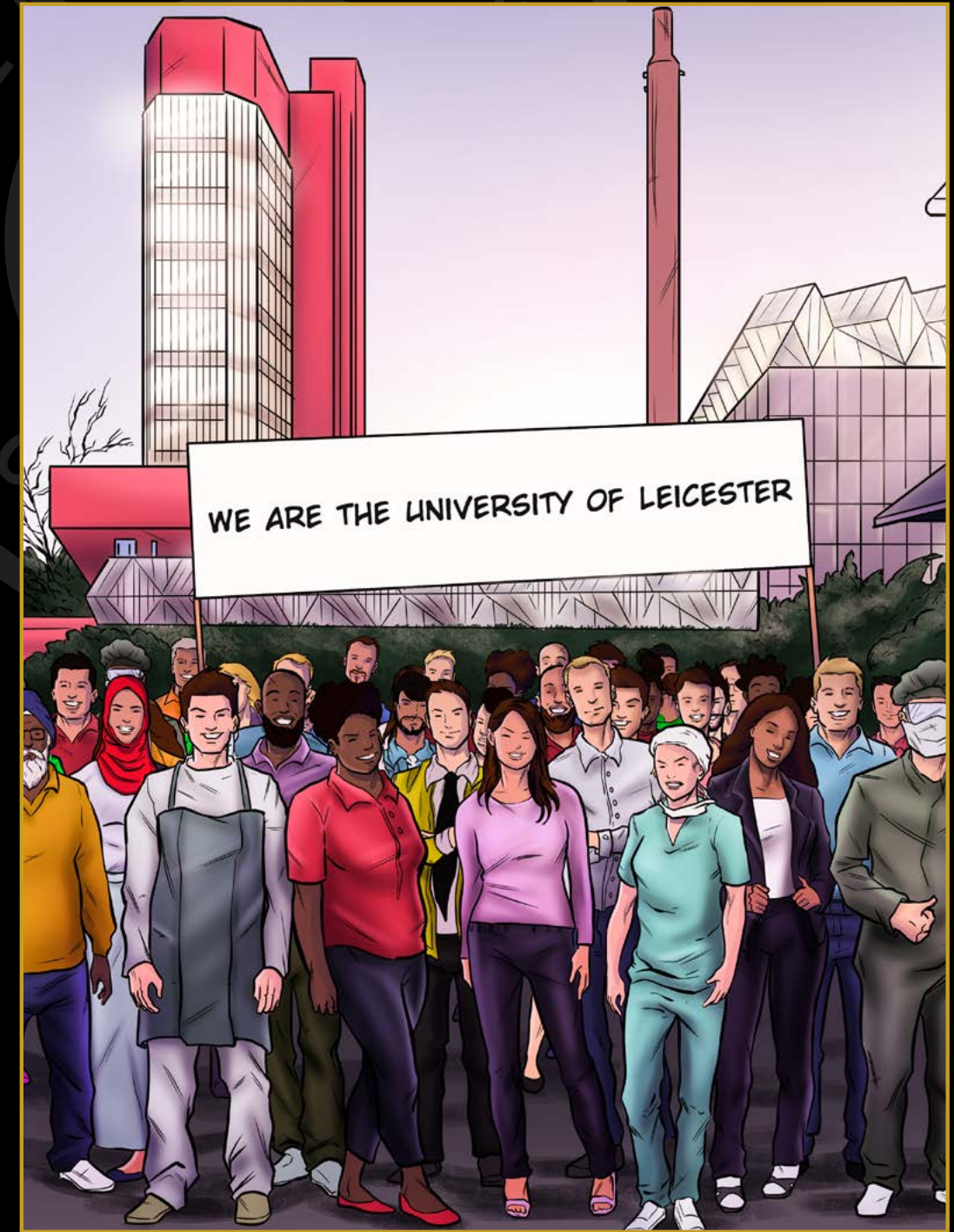
It has provided opportunities for many research students to work in Africa and brought global acclaim for the School of Geography, Geology and the Environment.

Through study of active continental rifting, where plates of the Earth's mantle move away from each other, the work has verified a key principle of plate tectonic theory.

This work has led to more advanced studies about the Rift, including earthquake prediction research.

Our Global Community

The whole world at Leicester



Students and staff from around the world come to Leicester to study and work, bringing with them an incredible diversity of viewpoints, beliefs, attitudes and approaches.

“What I loved most about the University is that it was so international. I learnt so much about diverse cultures and, after I got my degree, I started working at Arts Council Malta as the Internationalisation Associate,” says alumna Romina Delia.

“My work is now focused on international cultural exchanges, encouraging trust and understanding between diverse cultures worldwide. Making international friendships and collaborations is what the world needs more and the University kick-started this process for me.”

Mary McIntosh (1936-2013)

Campaigner who pioneered sociological studies of homosexuality



Mary McIntosh, a lecturer and influential sociologist, was a founding member of the Leicester Campaign for Racial Equality and involved in setting up the Gay Liberation Front.

In 1967, male homosexuality was partly decriminalised. That year, Mary McIntosh wrote 'What is a homosexual?' for student newspaper *The Ripple*.

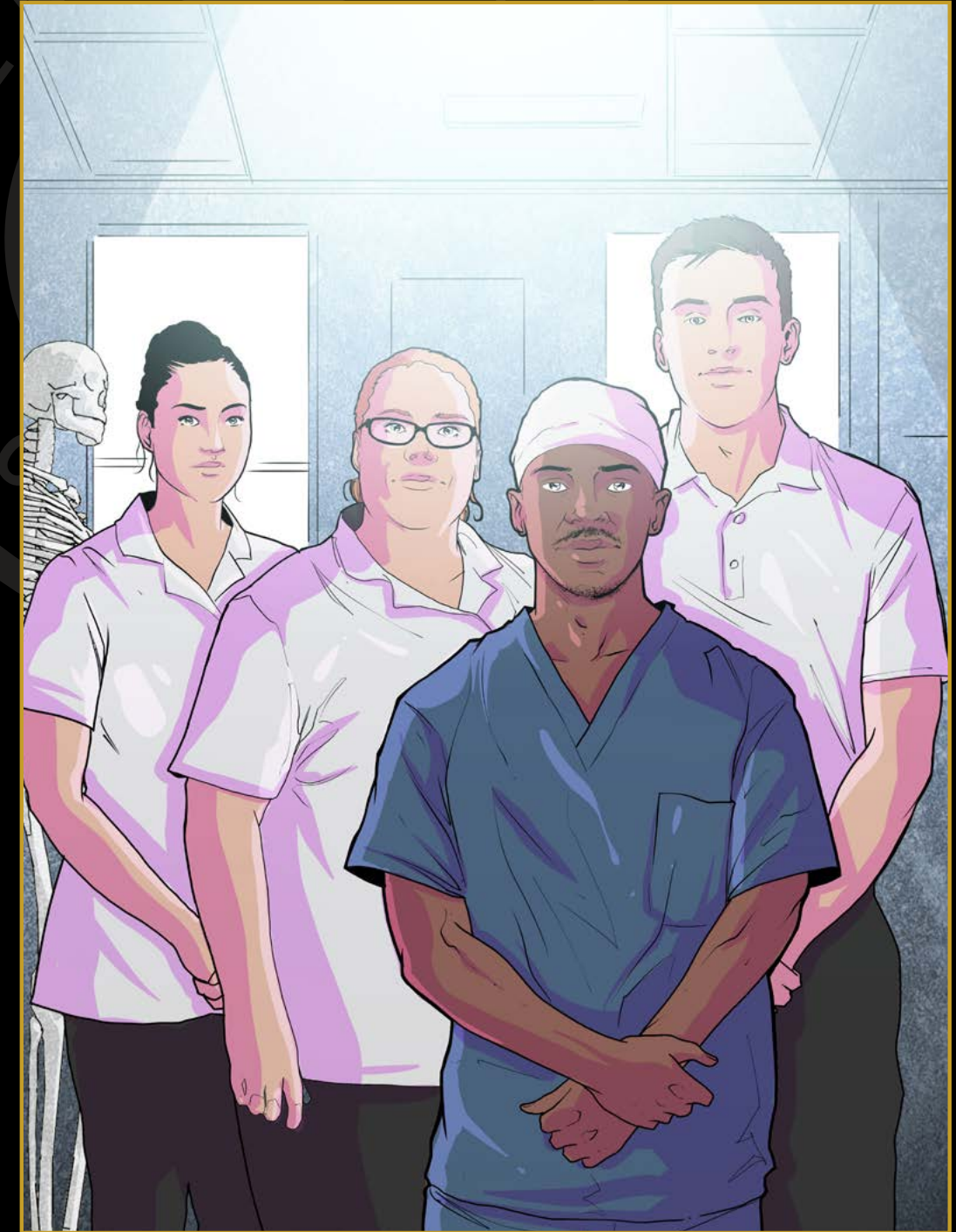
She later wrote a pioneering sociological study called 'The homosexual role', in which she objected to homosexuality being regarded as a set of 'symptoms'.

"This was a significant leap forward that empowered the possibilities of and for the sociological study of homosexuality," says Professor John Goodwin of the Sociology Department.

McIntosh also played a crucial role campaigning to get the local Sikh community registered to vote.

Nursing and Midwifery

Our unique health care teaching and research history



When our first Nursing and Midwifery Professors were appointed in 2017, this formally acknowledged teaching and research – and our history – in these areas. Since then, the academic team has grown and new degree programmes have been established.

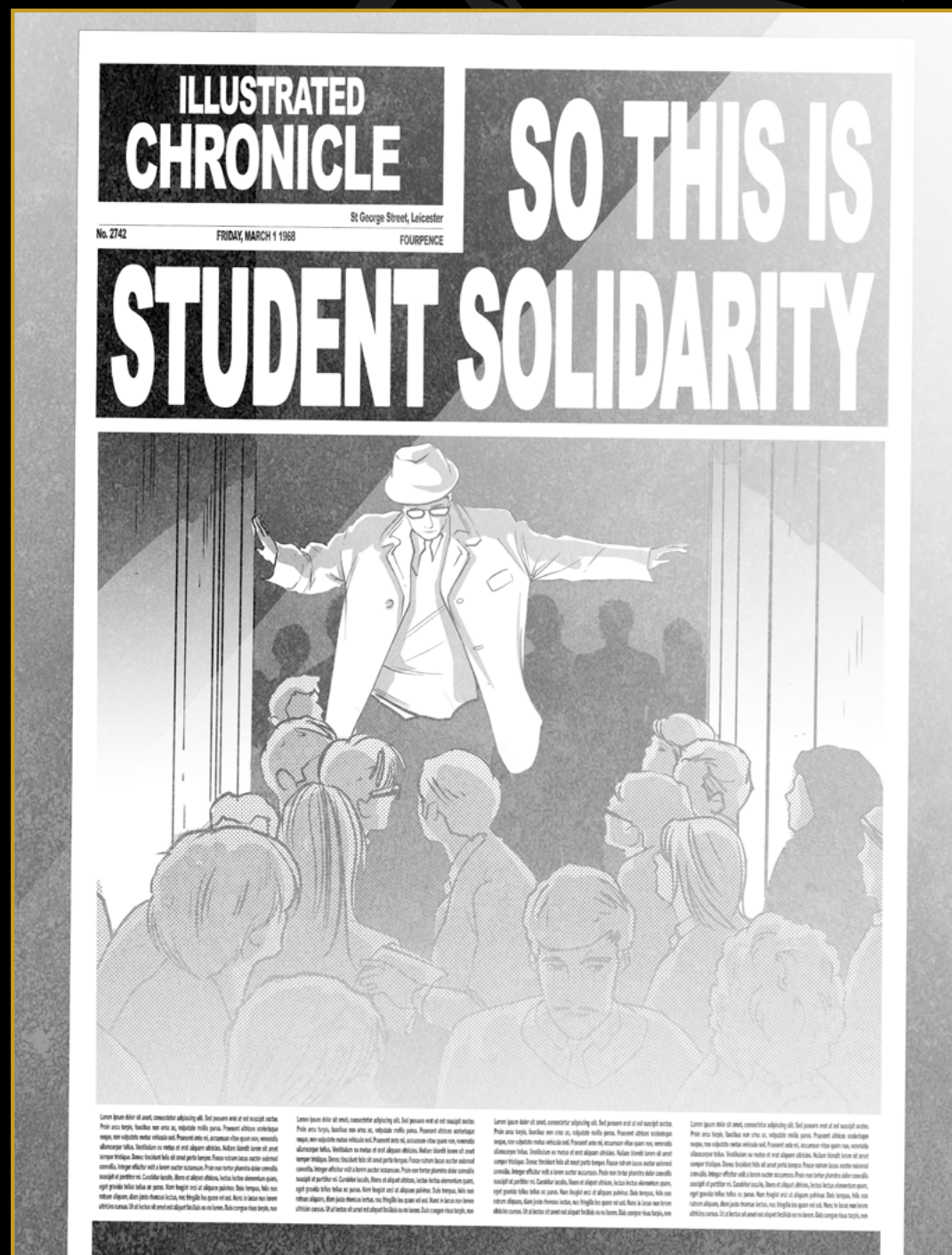
Back in 1928, the University provided a "centralised lecture course for pupil midwives", going on to become responsible for local midwife examinations by 1939, when the first Tutor in Midwifery was appointed.

We were running courses for Queen's Nurses from 1937 and started nurse training in 1969.

The School of Allied Health Professions has drawn on the expertise of the School of Business to offer unique MSc qualifications that combine nursing or midwifery with leadership.

1968 Sit-In Protest (Student Representation)

Protesting students in the 1960s occupy main building



The 1960s were a time of global student protests, and Leicester was no exception, with a sit-in gaining local and national press coverage.

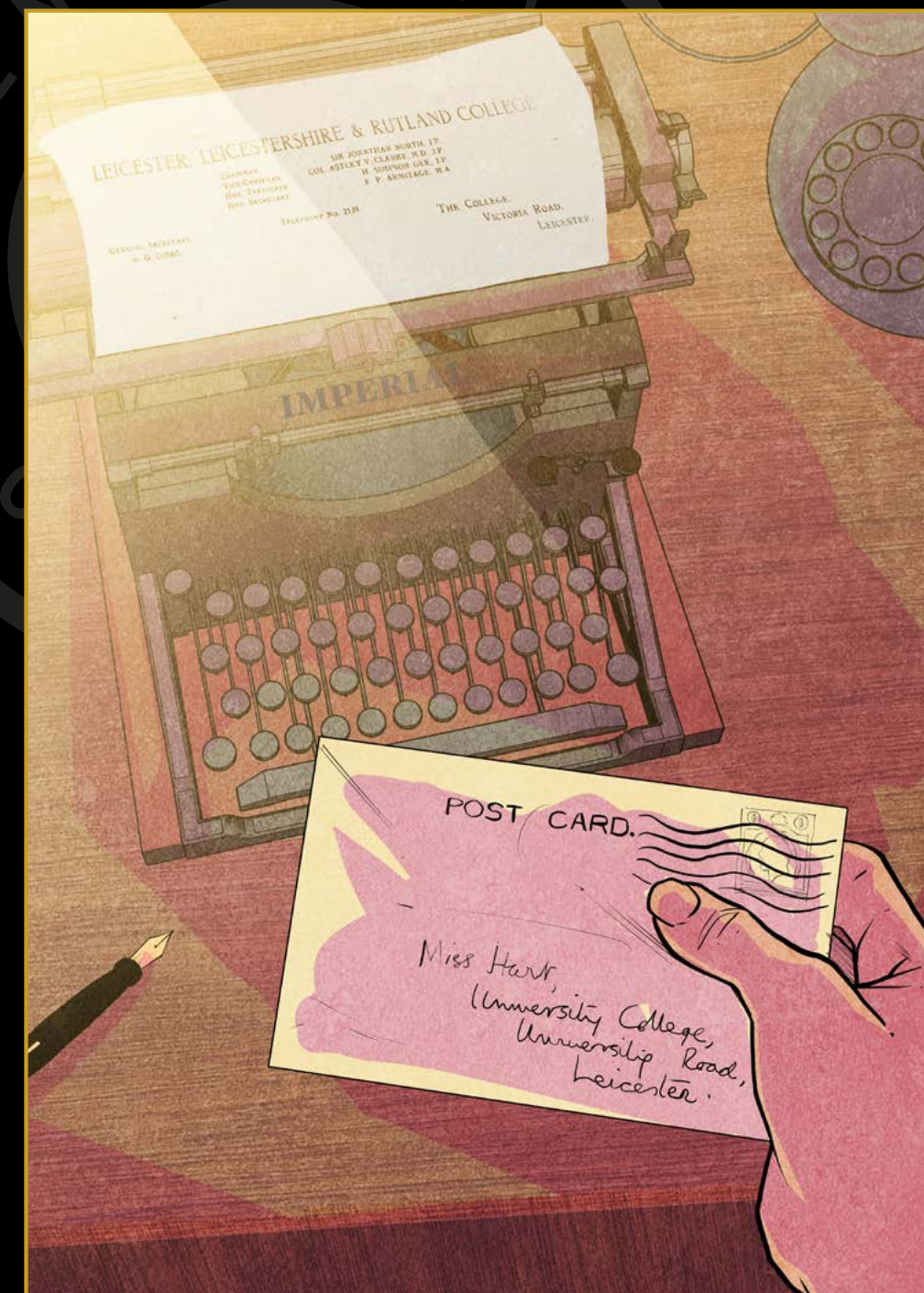
Feeling impatient over a lack of response to calls for more say in how the University was run, students occupied the Fielding Johnson Building in 1968, camping out for four days and three nights.

Following talks, a Staff-Student Council was set up, and the Students' Union was represented on the University's Council and allowed to manage the Percy Gee Building.

Fifty years on, students once again occupied the Fielding Johnson corridors – this time over the appointment of a new Chancellor.

Our Administrators

The administrative heart of the University



The earliest staff – hired before the College opened – were administrative.

The Secretary (now called the Registrar) was the first official employee. Walter Gibbs was crucial to getting the University College project off the ground.

The first female member of staff, Una Hart, was employed in a clerical role from December 1920 and remained here until retiring in July 1949.

She was a linchpin of the early days, a friend to students and essential to the College's everyday running.

Invisibly, her touch is behind each letter, file and minute book. Our illustration imagines her original desk, with an Imperial typewriter, a candlestick telephone and actual documents from our archive.

This is to thank administrators who keep the University world turning.



Artwork reproduced by kind permission of David Burrows (1971)

Marat/Sade at the Leicester Phoenix Theatre, 1971

Ambitious performance provided stage for future stars

Students staged one of the most ambitious projects ever undertaken by an amateur theatre group – Peter Weiss’s play *Marat/Sade* – in 1971 at the Phoenix Theatre.

Written in 1963, it was considered very demanding. It was staged in the round, in one act, all actors on stage at all times.

The Leicester University Theatre production received “great critical acclaim – even from the *Leicester Mercury*. Many of those involved went into professional theatre, myself included,” says actor Keith Guest.

David Burrows, who designed the costumes (whose artwork is shown here), agrees, noting that Ken Drury, who played the Herald and later appeared in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, “went on to have a pretty decent screen career as an actor”.

Graduation Day

A day of celebrating students' achievements

Graduation is the ceremony where degrees are conferred.

"My graduation ceremony was and will always be a memorable day. Being part of the graduating class with graduates from other countries was all so real," says Mirina Sackie.

'Graduation' comes from the Latin *gradus* which roughly means 'step-taking' – a step towards entering the teaching world of the university.

Students have been graduating from universities since medieval times. The caps and gowns worn by graduands derive from clerical clothing of the time, and were later made more distinctive by coloured linings and hoods denoting subjects and levels of qualification.



Our Fellows of the Royal Society

The eminent academics who became Fellows of the Royal Society



Professor Hans Kornberg is shown here in his lab around the time he became the University's first Fellow of the Royal Society in 1965 for his work on metabolic pathways in microorganisms.

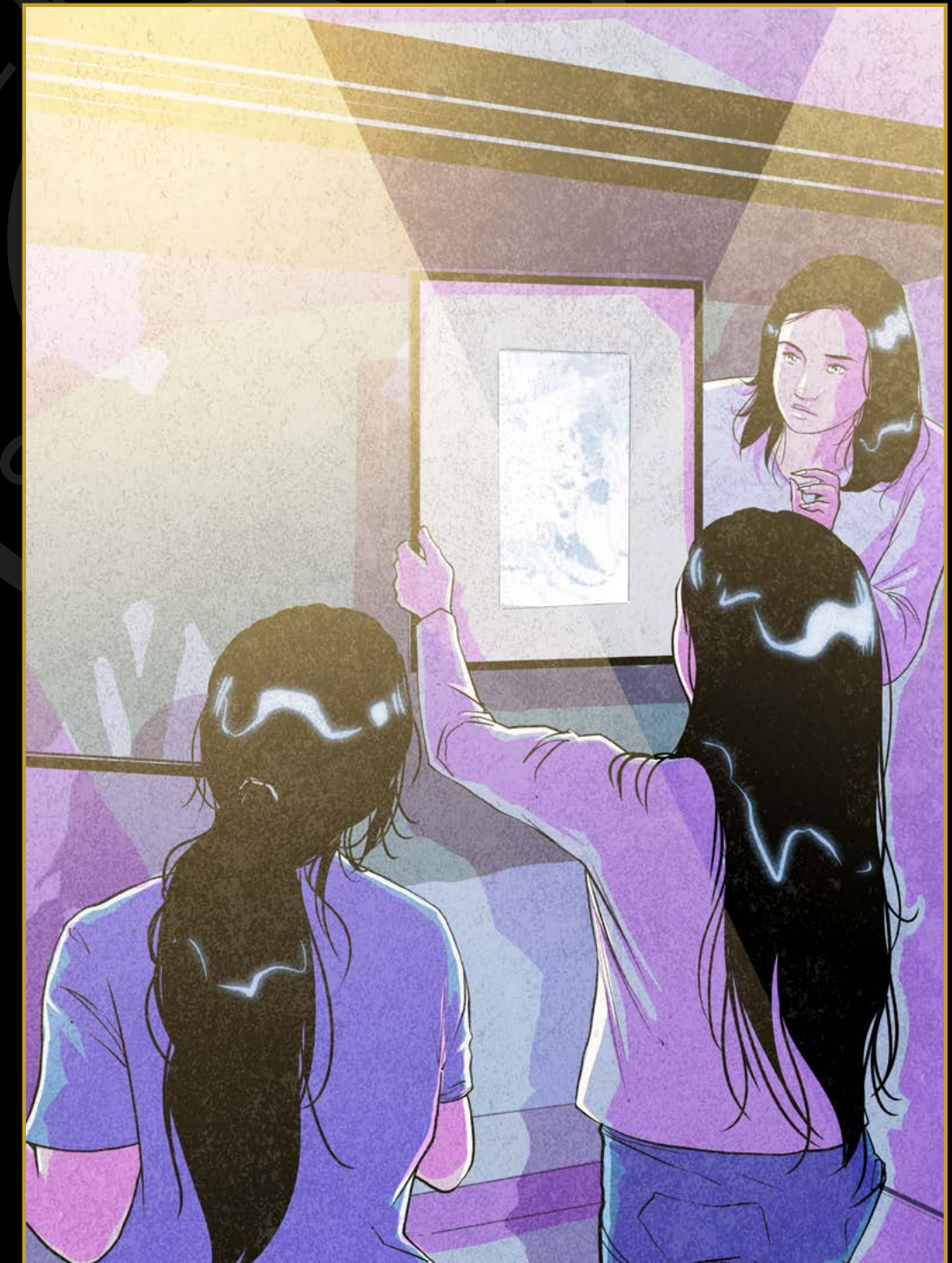
Also achieving Fellowships were botanists and married couple Thomas Tutin and Winifred Pennington. Pennington was awarded hers in 1979 for providing the first evidence for climate change in Britain. Tutin's was awarded in 1982.

Our Fellows include Ronald Whittam (Physiology), Ken Pounds (Physics), Martin Symons (Chemistry), Alec Jeffreys (Genetics) and Peter Sneath (Microbiology).

Leicester also proudly boasts many Fellows of the Royal Academy of Engineering, the British Academy, the Academy of Social Sciences and the Academy of Medical Sciences.

Museum Studies

The unique and globally renowned School of Museum Studies



For over 50 years, researchers, practitioners and postgraduate students have come to Leicester to think creatively and critically about museums, galleries and heritage.

Beginning in 1966 as a small team offering a graduate certificate, Leicester's School of Museum Studies is the largest academic unit of its kind in the world. It remains the only UK university department devoted to this discipline.

Through its interdisciplinary approach, extensive international partnerships and dynamic teaching, it shapes its field.

At the heart of its collaborative work is the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, which focuses on developing museums as research-led, socially impactful and inclusive institutions.

Jane the Dinosaur

The roaring success of Jane the T. rex

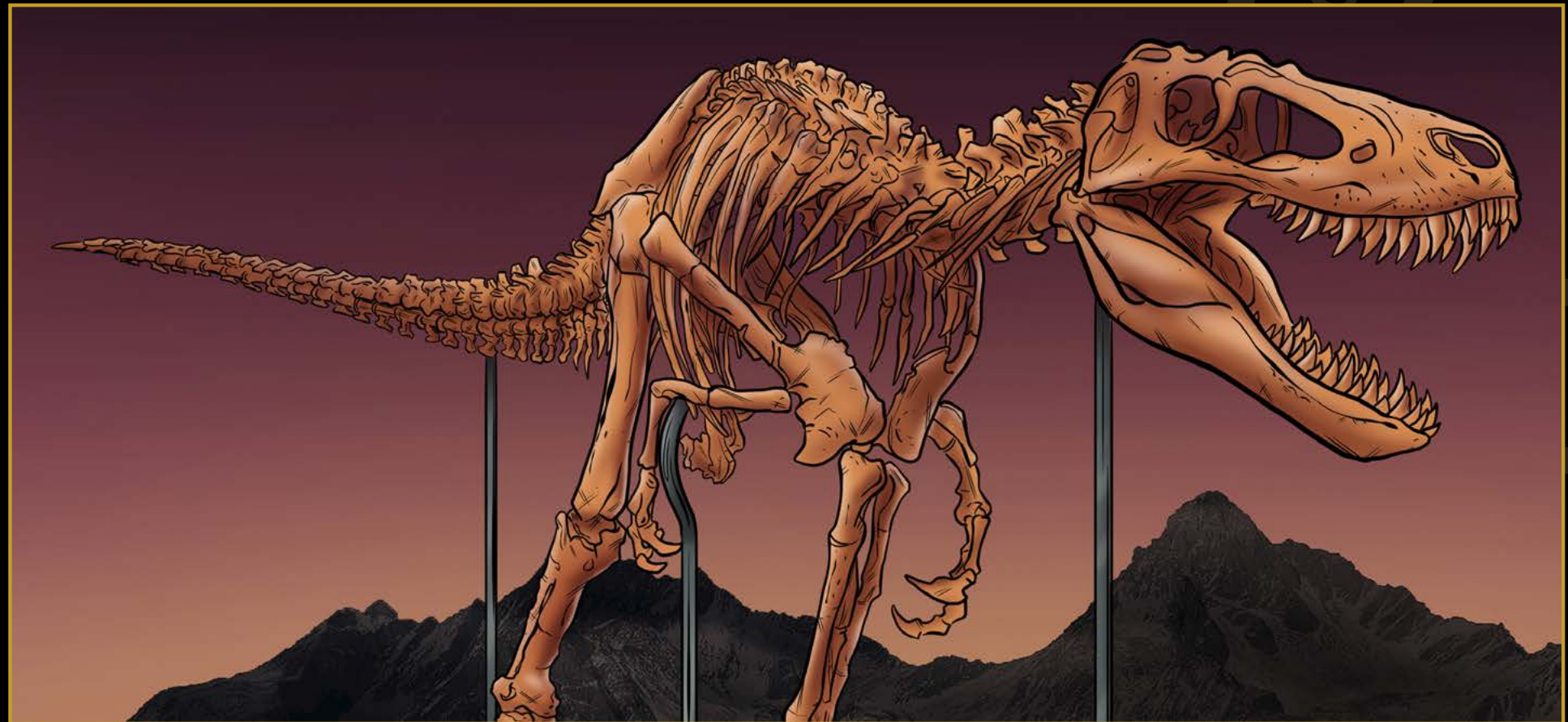
A 21-foot long *T. rex*, Jane, has pride of place in the Department of Geology foyer.

It is a cast of the most complete subadult skeleton of a *T. rex* ever found. The 66-million-year-old dinosaur died aged around 11 years old and could have run at 20-30mph.

The cast, unveiled in 2008, was commissioned from a company that worked on *Jurassic Park*.

"When visiting, one cannot help but notice the huge *T. rex*. It shows the ambition of the department," say alumni Fiona and Chris Preece.

"For those graduating from the department, it is a must-have photo and, for visitors, something they will remember forever. Jane is a legend!"



Archives and Special Collections

A wonderful resource covering 900 years

From medieval manuscripts to modern literature, our Archives and Special Collections span over 900 years and include books, manuscripts and items of regional, national and international significance. Many were donated, including a 12th century manuscript.

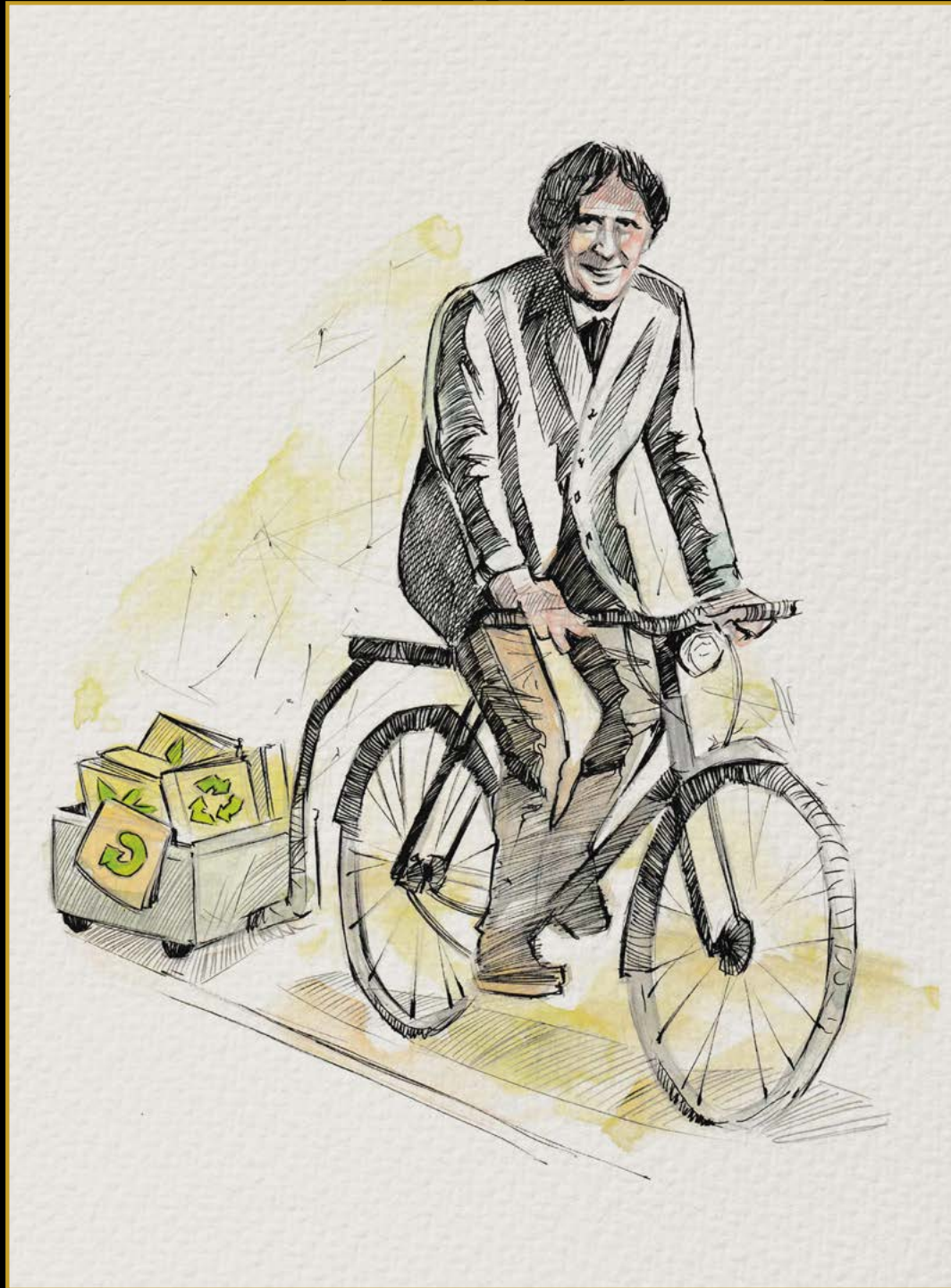
The Sue Townsend Collection contains literary, personal and business papers. Townsend was the author of the Adrian Mole series, and wrote plays, novels and for TV and radio.

The Orton Collection holds scripts, correspondence, photographs, ephemera and diaries of Joe Orton, and gives an insight into his life as a dramatist and his experiences of life as a gay man in the 1960s.

In our rare 'Wicked Bible' from 1631, the fourth commandment reads: "Thou shalt commit adultery."

Professor Peter Sylvester-Bradley (1913-1978)

A sense of scientific adventure imparted by our cycling professor



Peter Sylvester-Bradley led his growing Geology Department to national and international recognition for its research diversity that encompassed tectonics, geochemistry, geophysics and palaeontology.

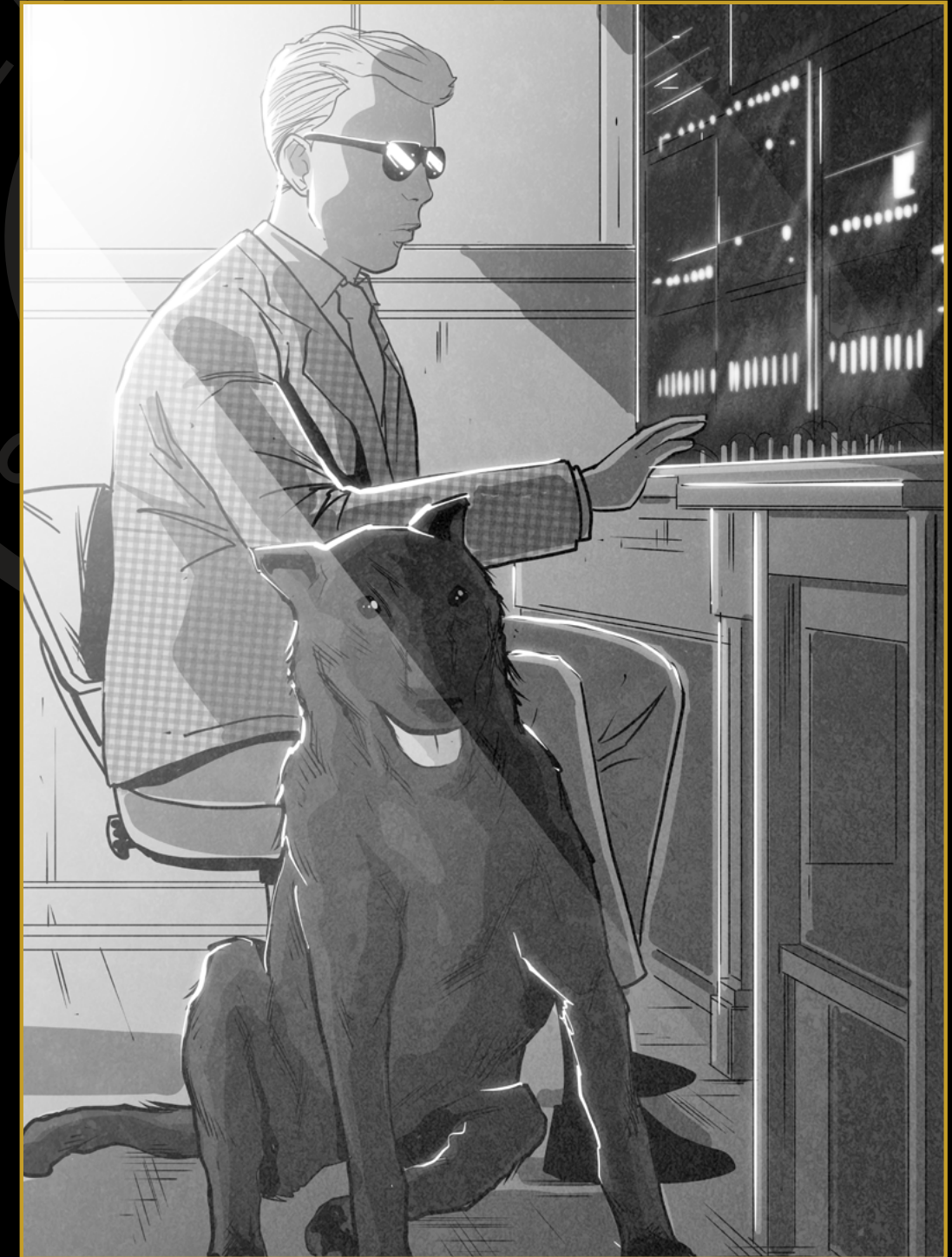
The first Professor of Geology, he developed undergraduate and masters degree courses in geophysics, mining geology and mineral exploration alongside more traditional subjects.

He delighted in sharing his sense of scientific adventure, and held coffee evenings with speakers for students at his home. "Never believe your lecturers or what is in the text books," he told them.

He was an early adopter of the green movement, abandoning the car in favour of a bicycle and trailer to get to university.

Albert Kinder (and His Dogs)

Operating an adapted switchboard for 25 years



After wartime service and facing blindness from disease, Albert Kinder trained as a switchboard operator.

"I found it very difficult to get a job. I had to advertise for this job, and they all said it would be too big for me," Kinder told the *Leicester Mercury* when he retired in 1975.

The University gave him the opportunity to prove them wrong, by employing him from the late 1950s to run our switchboard. It was the largest one in the country worked by a blind man.

He applied home-made markers to the plugs and sockets so he could identify them. With guide dogs Sheba and Eliza at his side, he routed millions of calls to and from every department in the University.

Sir Malcolm Sargent (1895-1967)

Proms leader and head of the first Music Department

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland College was fortunate to secure 26-year-old Dr Malcolm Sargent to head its Music Department in 1921.

He went on to conduct the BBC Promenade Concerts in the 1960s, his sense of theatre, elegant dress and panache winning him followers around the world.

When he started at Leicester, Sargent was already a local household name. He enthralled capacity audiences conducting the Leicester Symphony Orchestra at De Montfort Hall (pictured) and, with local operatic societies, brought colour, light and fun to post-war life.

Academically, he gained a doctorate by the age of 24 after less than a year's study on a course that would normally take five years. As a teacher, he offered something very special.



Terry Garfield and the Departmental Staff Common Room

The powerhouse of our staff social club

Terry Garfield was a member of the Geography Department from 1946 to 1992, beginning as a junior lab assistant and rising to Chief Technician.

As well as being a founding member of the Society of University Cartographers, he helped found our Departmental Staff Common Room (DSCR).

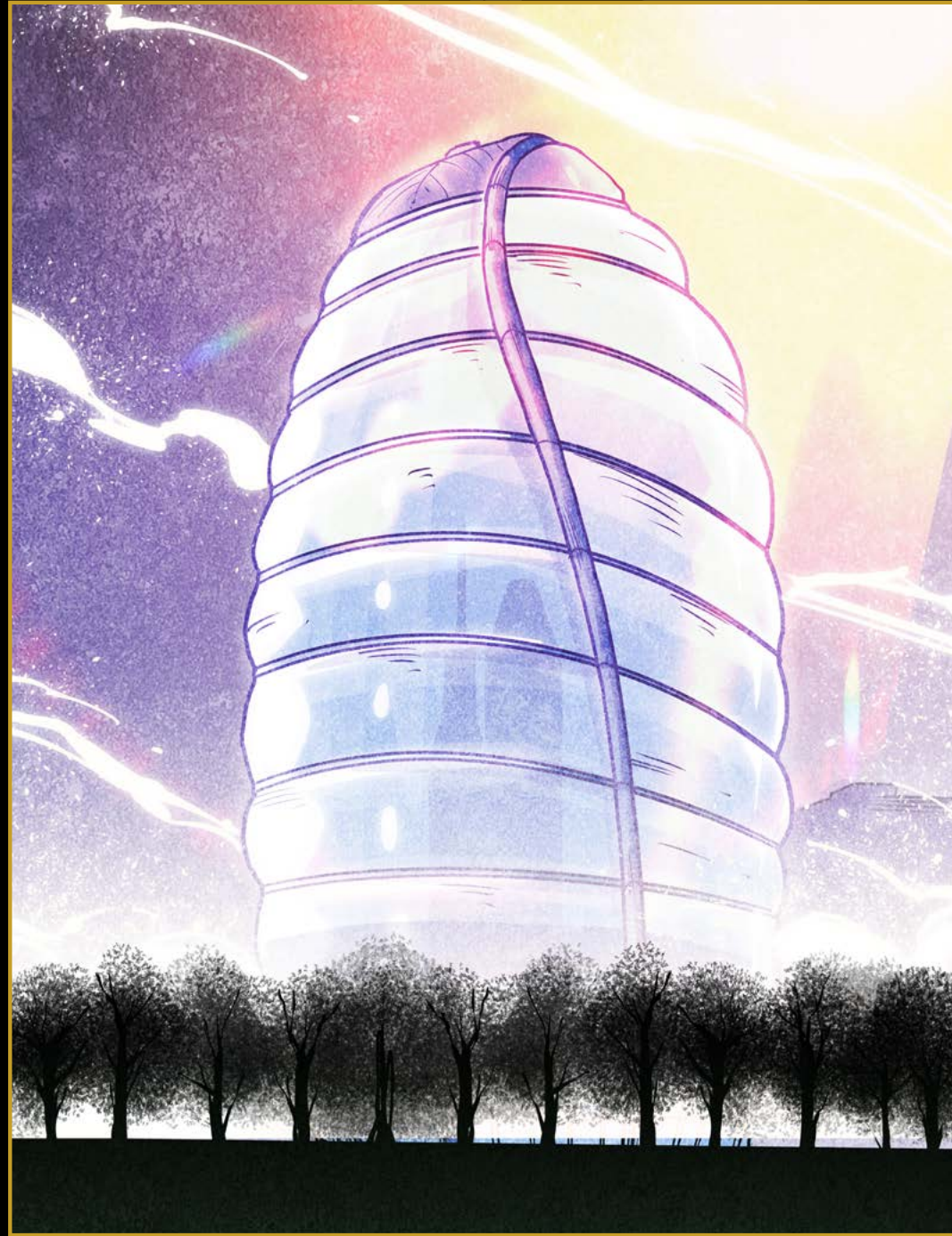
“The DSCR was set up to encourage technicians, administrative, library, secretarial and other support staff to have social interactions with similar colleagues in non-academic roles at the University,” explains former colleague, Mary Bettles.

This staff social group organised events including visits to Ladybird Books, factories making pork pies, and many heritage sites (their trip to Ely Cathedral shown).

Most importantly, as former colleague Hilary Whitbread says, it provided “a community, a family, within the University.”

The National Space Centre

An experience that's out of this world



The National Space Centre, designed by Nicholas Grimshaw, is the UK's only visitor attraction dedicated to space exploration, space science and astronomy. It boasts the UK's largest planetarium and the 42-metre-high Rocket Tower.

The University conceived and proposed the idea as a Millennium project, and our staff advised on exhibition content and developed educational programmes.

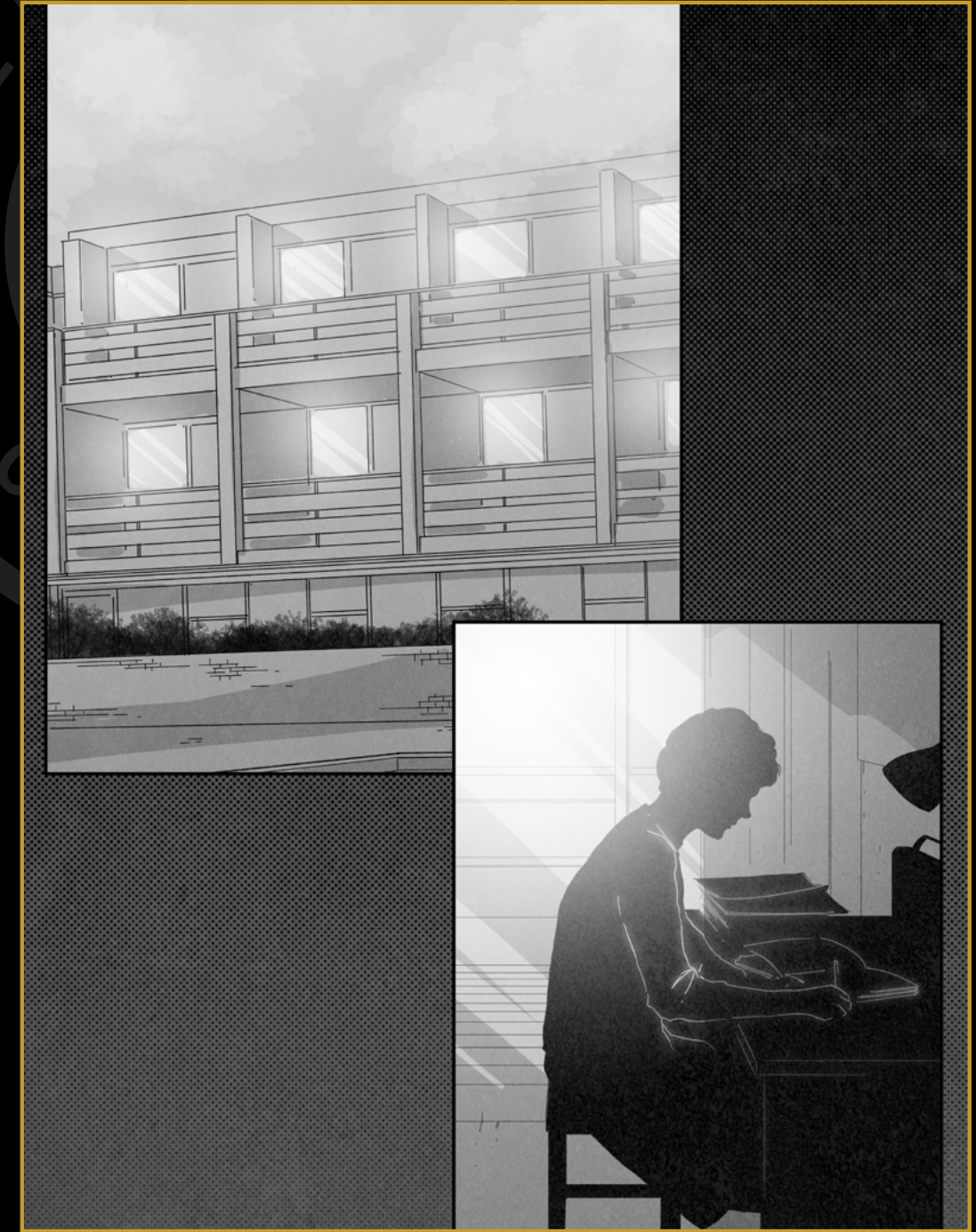
Today, 300,000 visitors come each year, including more than 80,000 school children. Inspiring them to study science is a key aim of the venture.

The National Space Centre was home to our Space Research Centre for several years as well as to mission control for the Beagle 2 mission to Mars, which involved University staff.

With the addition of Space Park Leicester on an adjacent site, Leicester's position as the UK's 'space city' is confirmed.

College Hall, 1960-2005

College Hall, a 'cut above' the other halls of residence



Designed by Sir Leslie Martin and Trevor Dannatt, College Hall was opened for women students in 1960. It featured balconied bedrooms, a library, dark room, laundry, common room and, as Lady Adrian said when opening it, was "marvellously suited to its purpose."

At the time, student Judith Paine wondered: "Could any college do better?"

Male students once dropped a boulder in its pond, which remains on site since it became College Court in 2013.

"College Hall is a fine example of the architecture of the period," says alumnus Colin Hyde, who now works here. "Its design seemed to be a cut above most of the other halls. With the Attenborough Arboretum behind it, this forms a lovely part of Leicester."

Sports Facilities

Sports games, successes and stars



Our early students played sports in tennis courts and in Victoria Park. Then, in 1950, Manor Road sports track, one of the best at the time, was opened.

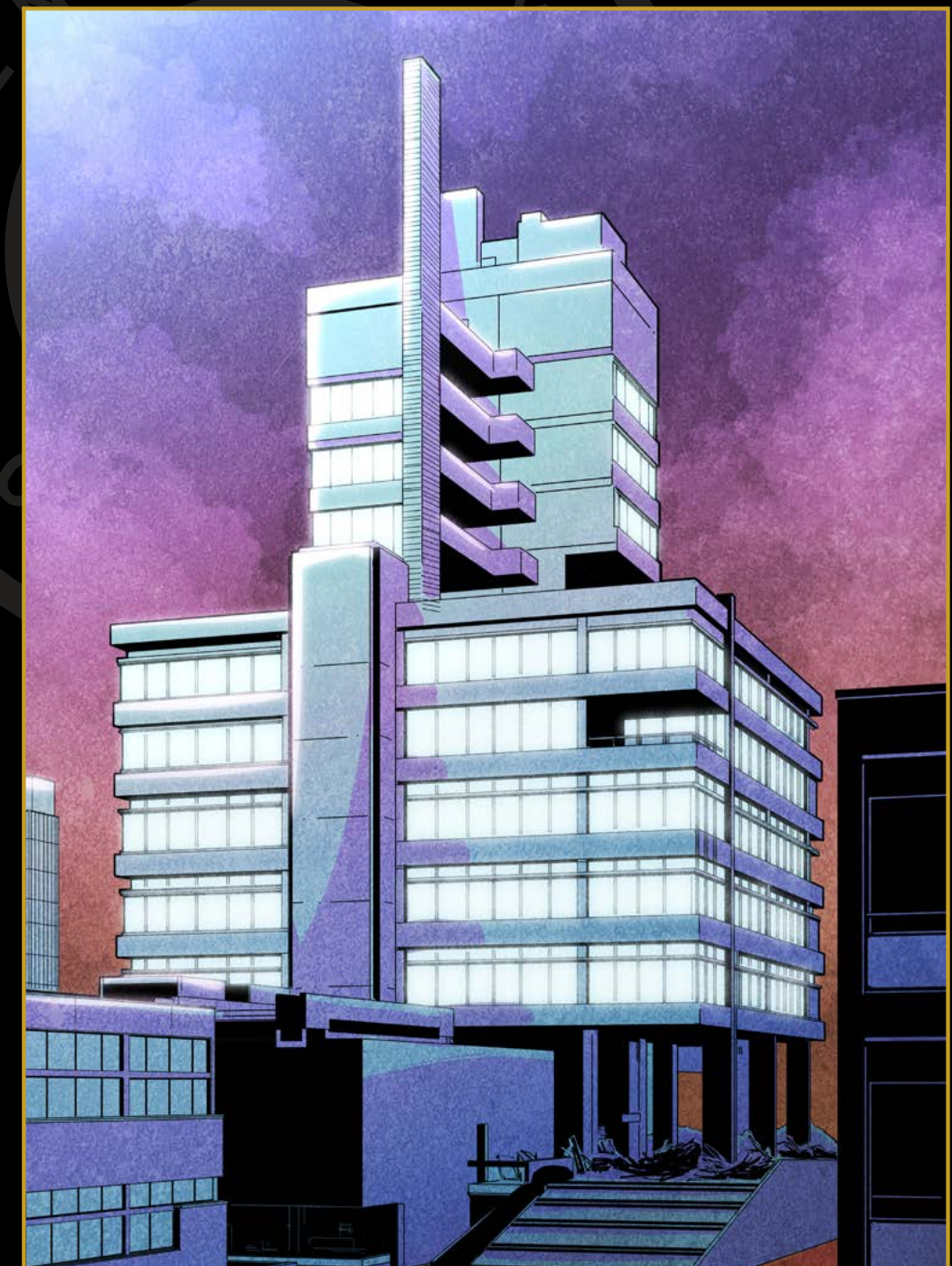
Leicester successes included winning the University Women's Table Tennis Championship in 1959 and the 1963 Inter-University Women's Athletic Sports Trophy. The Rifle Club regularly performed admirably in university championships.

Our sports stars include rugby union player Terry Price, and Paralympian Danielle Brown – one of our sports centres is named after her.

Student Martha How was nominated for our Sports Personality of the Year award, which she won in her second year. The award was presented by Rachael Heyhoe Flint, "a real hero of women's cricket", she says, adding: "I played cricket at University when women's cricket was very difficult to find."

Charles Wilson Building

A bold, modernist building to make the University stand out



The University's push for visibility included commissioning architect Denys Lasdun in 1961 to design a bold building that would stand out on Leicester's skyline.

The modernist architect's high-impact design for the Charles Wilson Building displays Brutalist bare concrete, jutting layers and cubic towers reminiscent of his National Theatre in London.

It was to have six storeys but four more were added before completion in 1967, giving it its unique shape. It was named after Sir Charles Wilson, the University's first Vice-Chancellor.

The 'social building', it brought leisure space to the campus. Staff and students have praised the coffee bar with pineapple cream cakes and "particularly good flapjacks", the prayer room used by the Islamic Society and the badminton court. Lasdun also designed Stamford Hall.

The Barwell Meteorite

The biggest meteorite to hit Britain

On Christmas Eve 1965 at around 4.20pm, a large piece of asteroid fell to Earth in the Leicestershire village of Barwell.

Residents saw a flash in the sky as it exploded followed by streaks of light and thuds as pieces hit the ground. It is the largest and best recorded meteorite shower in British history.

Experts, including those from the University, identified the meteorite, which was more than 4.5 billion years old, as a chondrite, composed of tiny droplets of rock called chondrules.

Leicester's geologists and astronomers hit the headlines, and scientists from different institutions gathered to collect samples.

A fragment of the meteorite is held in the Geology Department's specimen collection.



“The people that made a difference to me”

People and connections that make Leicester what it is

Whatever your experience of Leicester, it will have been shaped by those you met here.

Countless people nominated their closest friend, wisest mentor, or most inspiring colleague.

We couldn't include them all so this entry recognises and thanks all those who have made a difference to others over the past century.

This illustration is based on a photograph sent in by alumnus Matthew Jensen, who nominated “my cohort buddies”.

“We had ample opportunity to work together, share experiences and become friends. We are a family now. These connections will last a lifetime and I am very grateful for that,” he says.

The Fox Mascot

Was the fox a fake to fool Rag raiders?



The plaster fox, shown here on the laps of the Students' Union President and Vice-President in 1956, may have been a decoy to trick Rag raiders from other universities.

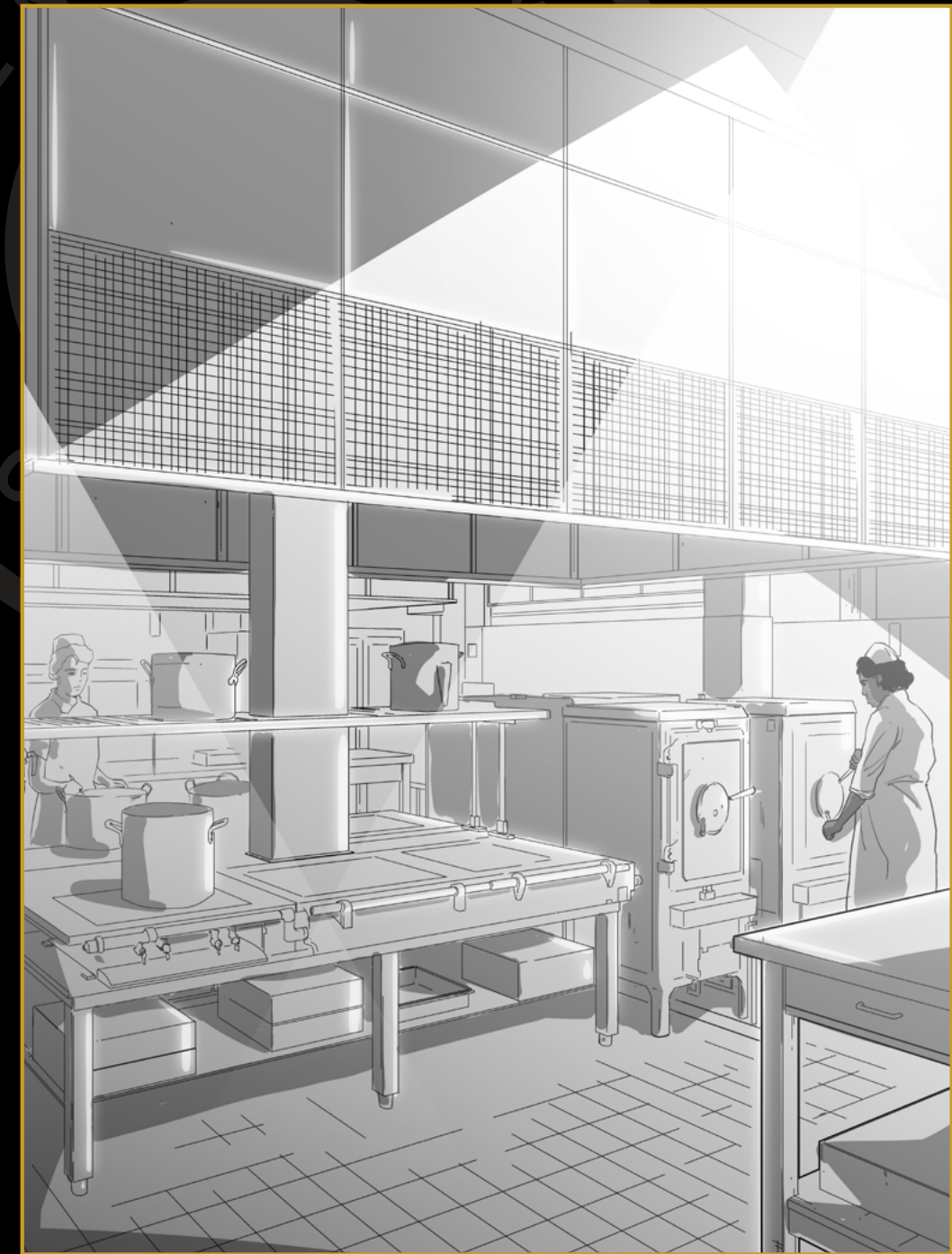
The University had been presented with a mascot – the mask, pads and brush of a fox – by the Fernie Hunt in the 1950s. Although our first Principal, Robert Rattray, was opposed to hunting, it was accepted.

However, no Rag raid was complete without stealing a mascot and the students feared capture would damage the “extremely fragile” item. The story is that this plaster model was a faux fox, cast as a decoy.

The fox is a symbol of Leicestershire and appears on the new county flag.

Catering

The enormous job of feeding a University



From coffee and cake to formal dinners, vending machines and cafeteria, Catering does it all.

Do you remember Crush Hall's serving hatch? The coffee boycott of 1957? Ticket-for-coffee systems? Fancy some 'University pudding'?

Wartime students called Miss Robinson's cooking “the best in the city”. Halls of residence originally provided full board but, unlike today, there was little choice.

Modern, expanded facilities came with the new Percy Gee Building in 1957 (kitchens illustrated). Alumna Lynda Wight recalls its “pizza, chips and beans” in the 1970s.

Elizabeth Webb was a resident cook at College Hall from 1964 to 1969, before later studying here: “In 1969, I was married, and my wedding reception was held in the College Common Room – I did much of my own catering!”

Skylark

The rocket that launched decades of research



A shortened Skylark rocket stands in the Physics and Astronomy Building foyer. It represents a landmark in UK space research.

From 1957, Skylark gave UK space scientists the first direct access to space. Our new Space Research Group, led by Ken Pounds, quickly got involved. Their first launch in 1960 from Australia provided the first high-quality X-ray images of the solar corona.

From 1967, they identified other bright sources of X-rays in the night sky. It was the dawn of cosmic X-ray astronomy at Leicester. Over the next decade, Leicester researchers used Skylarks in increasingly sophisticated ways.

Brief rocket flights were superseded by satellites by the mid-1970s but the Skylark remains an icon of UK space science.

Inspiring Teaching

Lecturers who make an impression and make a difference



Teaching is the lifeblood of the University.

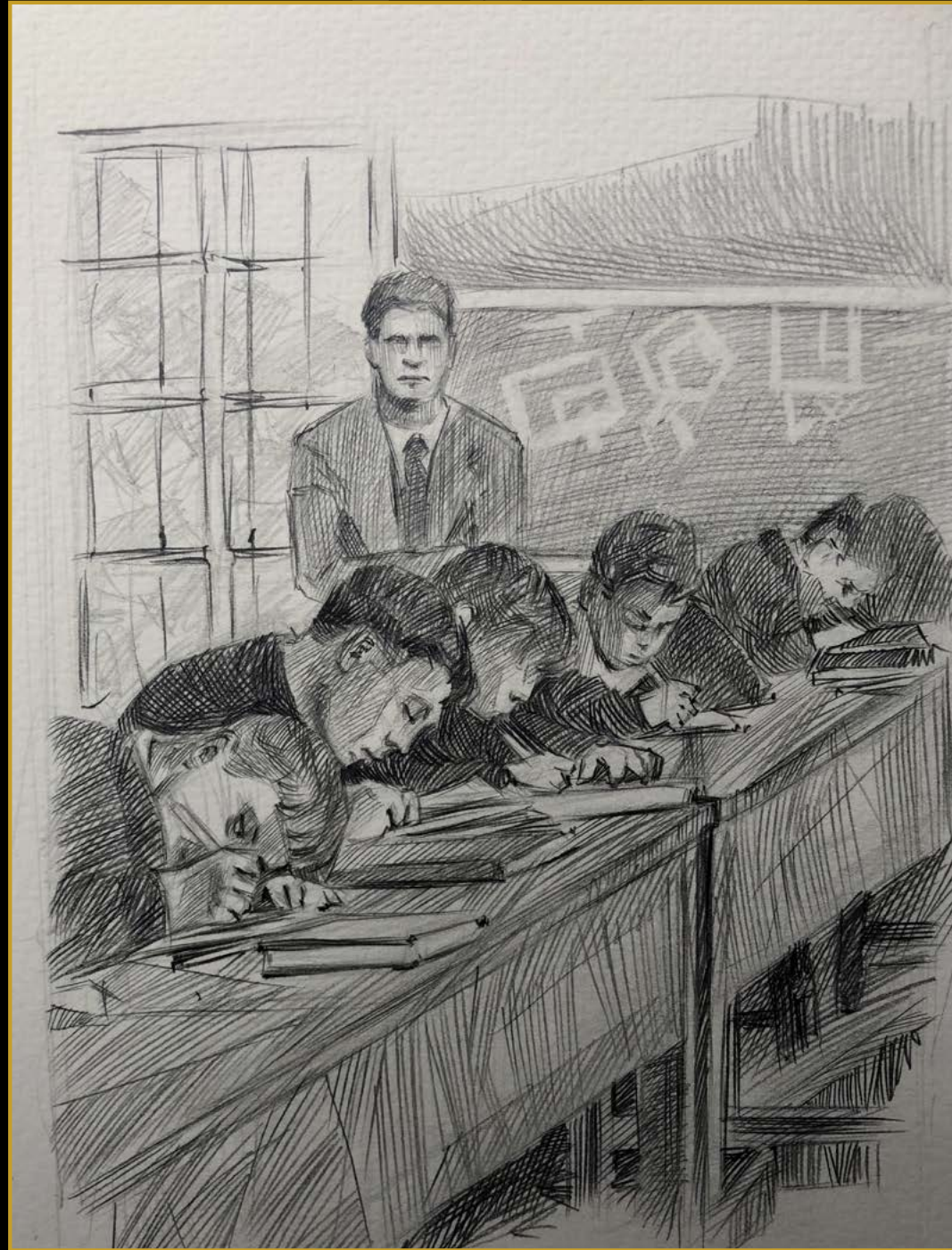
Staff who teach at Leicester are remembered for mentoring, advising and listening, supporting students with dedication and commitment, while demonstrating an infectious enthusiasm for their disciplines.

“Inspirational” and “generous” and showing “kindness, friendship and professionalism” are just a few ways in which alumni describe them.

They have adapted to changing academic, technological and societal environments and helped students to navigate the same.

Many lecturers, some deceased and many still teaching today, were nominated – far more than we could include. This entry celebrates their excellence in teaching that is remembered by thousands of students.

Professor Brian Simon (1915-2002) and the School of Education
Learning to teach and the start of comprehensive education

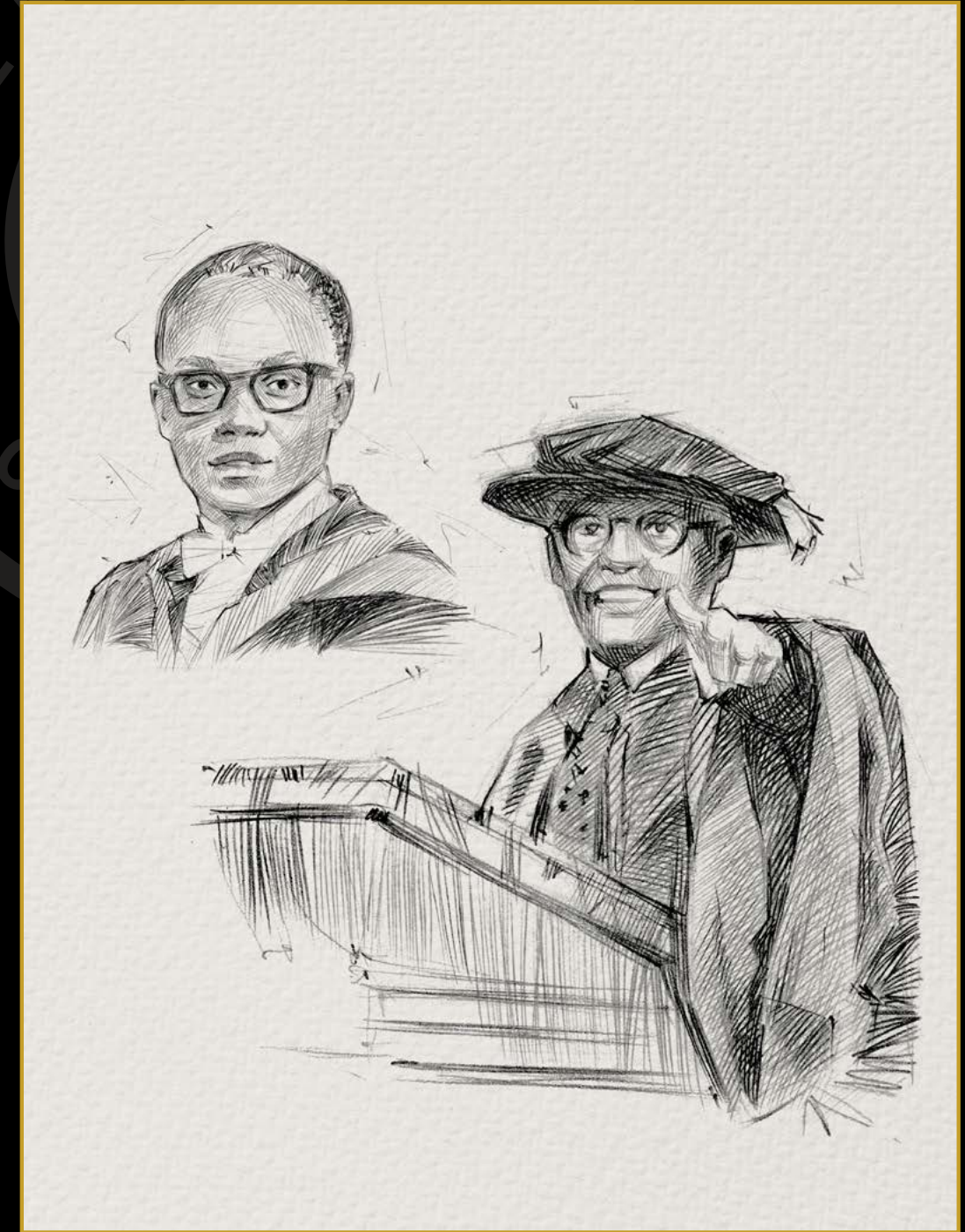


Although Education courses started in 1928, it was the postwar influence of the first Chair of Education, Billy Tibble, that set the School of Education's tone. From 1950, left-wing Brian Simon and right-wing Geoffrey Bantock brought strong, opposing opinions that created a challenging, dynamic environment.

Simon was a proponent of comprehensive schools alongside Robin Pedley, whose ideas for the 'Leicestershire Experiment' were applied across the country. Simon became a world expert in the history of education before retiring after 30 years.

Charlotte Murphy recalls: "My PGCE was led by some inspiring lecturers and experts. I'm now a confident teacher with the ambition to inspire children and young people in the same way the School of Education inspired me."

Professor Sir Geoff Palmer
A great of global grain and racial equality



Sir Godfrey (Geoff) Palmer OBE studied Botany at Leicester and graduated in 1964. Shortly after, he discovered the barley abrasion process that has revolutionised the world of brewing.

Instrumental in the development of sorghum as brewing material and food in Africa, he also helped to secure Britain's first exports of barley to China.

Geoff became Scotland's first Black University Professor in 1989 and is a prominent campaigner for racial equality. He was knighted in the 2014 New Year Honours for services to human rights, science and charity.

After a distinguished academic career there, he is now Chancellor of Heriot-Watt University.

He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Leicester in 2016 and returned to speak at our 'Silences in the Archives' event in 2021 about statues and slavery.

Open Days

Opening our doors to welcome future students, alumni and friends

Since Leicester's first days, it has opened its doors to founders, friends and supporters.

The 1920s campus was regularly opened to the public to show progress, renovations and gardens and demonstrate what donations had achieved.

An open day in 1953 featured a glassblowing demonstration, X-ray experiments and music in the Beaumont Hall gardens.

Displays, experiments, films and talks were on offer at what appears to have been the first open day for prospective students on 15 March 1969. The student societies there included judo, ballroom dancing and debating.

Today, open days welcome would-be students to the campus to see everything for themselves and to help them decide whether Leicester is the place for them.



College House and Knighton Hall

Principals' homes, famous graffiti and ghostly guests

The University's Principals lived first in College House, then Knighton Hall. College House was built in 1872 as a home for the asylum's medical superintendent.

When the site became the University College, College House became the official residence of Principals Robert Rattray then Frederick Attenborough until 1947. On its side remains some graffiti by the Attenborough children.

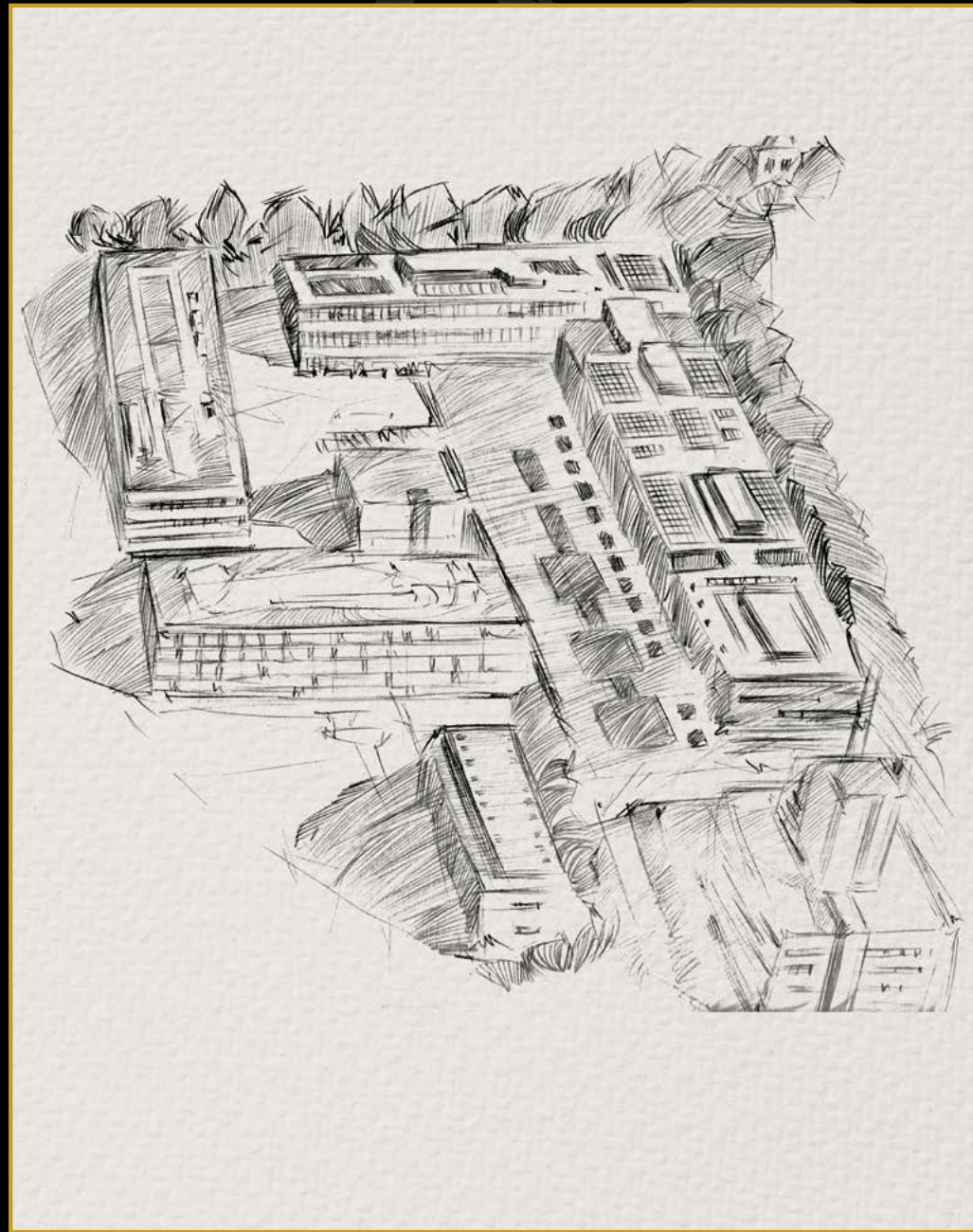
Knighton Hall, bought in 1946, has been the official home of our Principals and Vice-Chancellors ever since. First to occupy it was Principal Attenborough during 1947-51. It has a 16th century core, a Georgian facade and Jacobean rear.

It is rumoured to have a secret passage to the nearby church and to be haunted by a ghostly coachman and Grey Lady.



Campus Extension, 1957-68

The buildings that embody our mid-century aspirations



In 1950, the University College bought part of Victoria Park so it could accommodate increasing student numbers.

Architect Sir Leslie Martin designed a masterplan for this new section, as well as for halls of residence sites at Oadby.

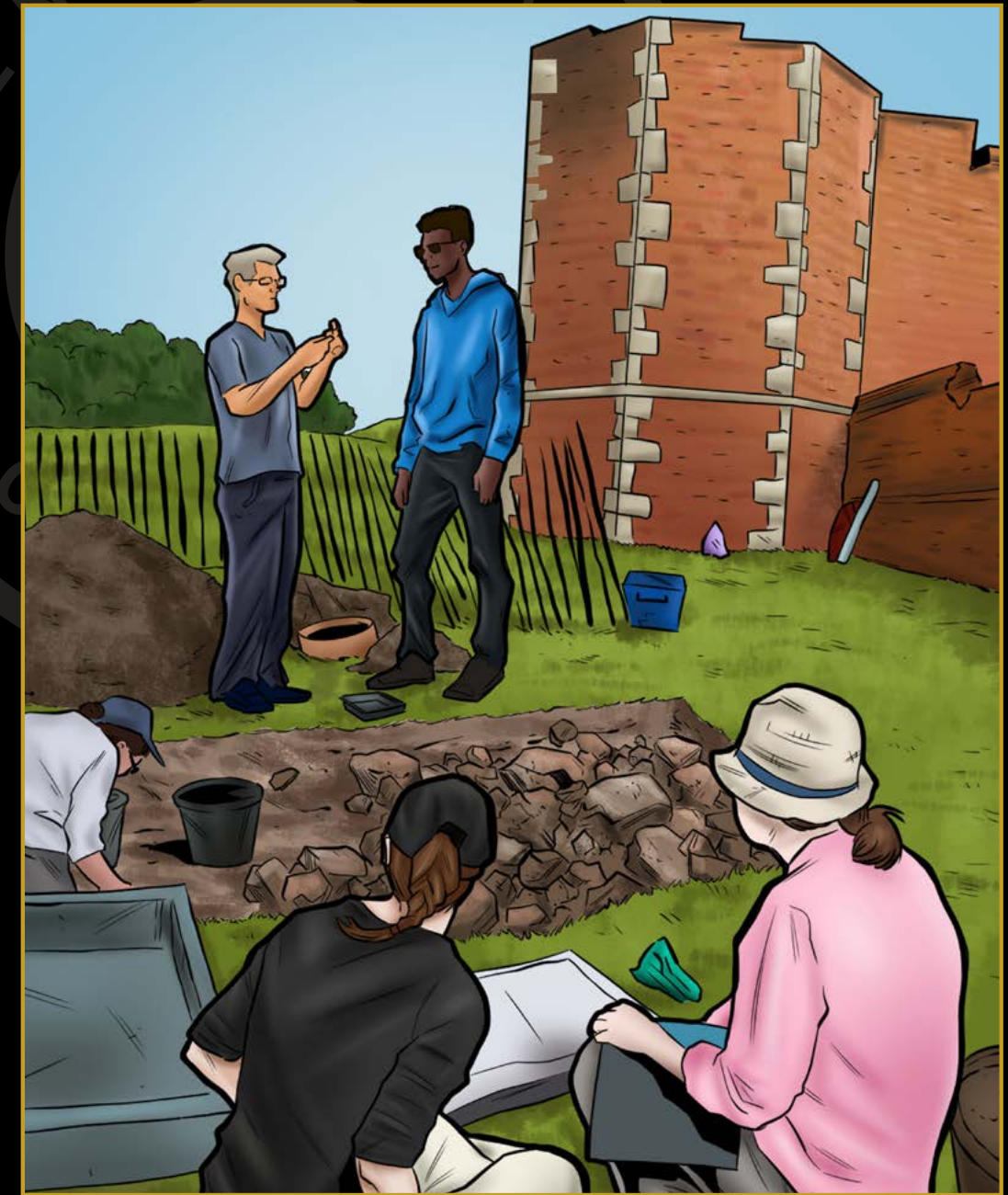
Stretching from the Charles Wilson Building (1967) in the south corner to the Adrian Building (1966) in the north, it is a harmonious quadrangle of buildings and plaza-style walkways that are so distinctive of mid-century design.

It also includes the Archaeology and Ancient History Building, originally for Chemistry (1960), the George Porter Building (1961), Physics and Astronomy Building (1961), Rattray Lecture Theatre (1962) and Bennett Building (1965).

This first main campus extension embodied our “genuine sense of dramatic excitement about life and work in our new buildings”.

Pioneering Fieldwork

Seeing real life in the field



Working in the field to experience a discipline in reality has long been a core activity.

The young Attenborough boys joined Botany and Zoology field trips to the coast in the 1930s. Colour films survive of 1950s Geology field trips.

Our students work around the world. Education and research staff toured West Africa in 1977, and geologists carry out long-term research on the African Rift.

Closer to home, our School of Archaeology and Ancient History holds annual field schools at Abbey Park and Bradgate Park (shown).

Alumnus Tim Brown, was part of a “magic” 1961 expedition to East Greenland: “Beautiful, beautiful fjords. We did mountain climbing, a lot of specimen collecting [and] helped the scientific programme.”

Digital Heritage and Culture

Research institute looks at heritage and culture through a digital prism

Our research has generated new ways of understanding heritage and culture in a digital age.

The origins of this work date back to 1966, when Leicester established the UK's first centre for studying mass communication, and offered its first media and communications masters degree shortly after.

Since then, we have broken disciplinary boundaries, not least with our landmark 'Representing Re-Formation' project, which used space technology to help crack a Tudor art history mystery.

The inter-disciplinary work of our CAMEo Research Institute has explored (and challenged) dynamic relations between culture, media and economy.

And today, building on this legacy, our 'One by One' research initiative, brings together practitioners, policy-makers and technologies to help build digitally confident cultural industries around the world.



Digital Artwork reproduced by kind permission of Andrew Williams (2012)



The Wives' Club

The society created by women for companionship and support

A University wives' club may seem anachronistic now but, in the early days, it provided much-needed support to women in the wider University community.

The Wives' Club – later the Wives' Association then the Women's Society – formed by chance.

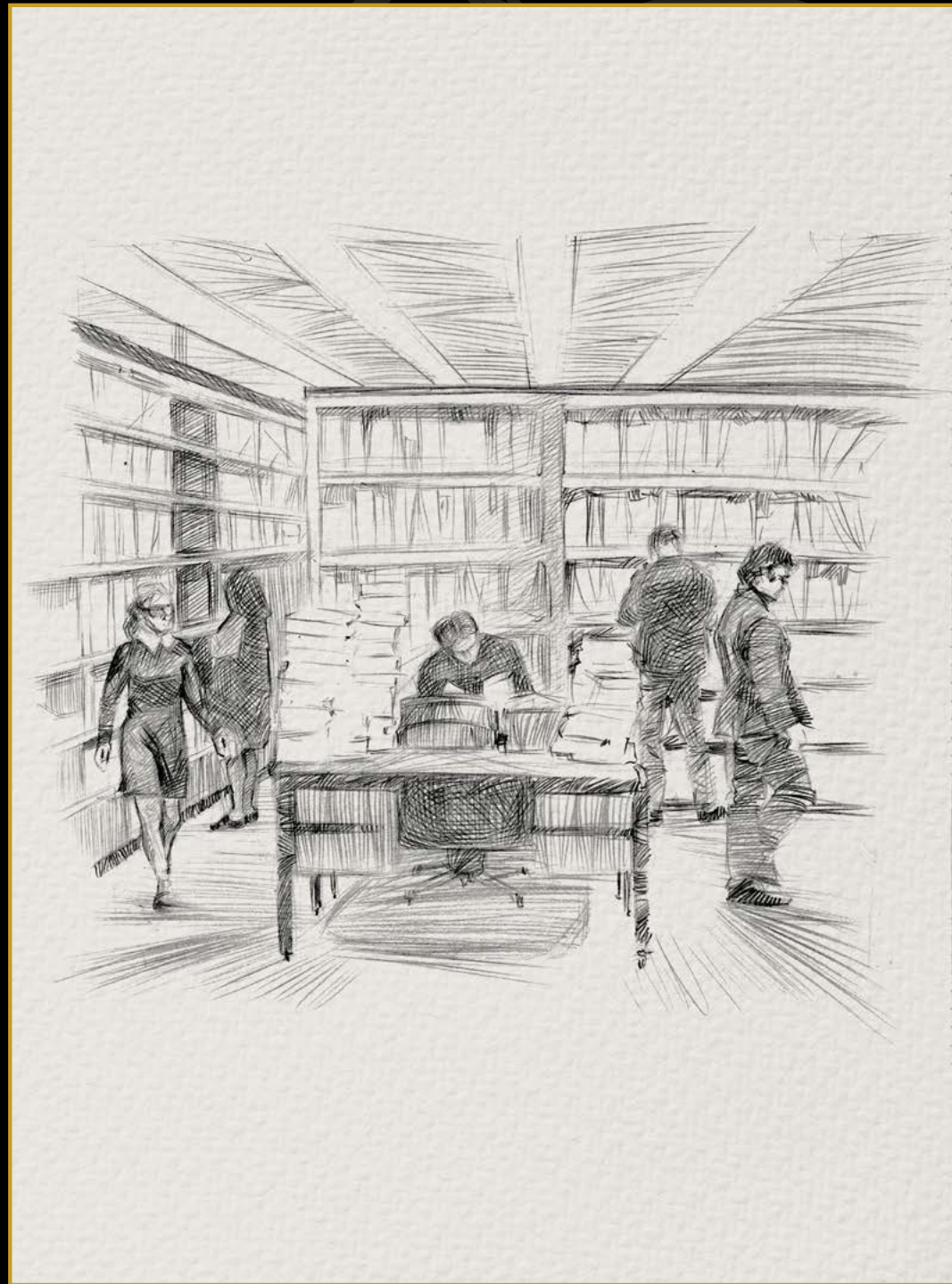
It was a Thursday, and the wife of a new staff member had knocked on the door of the home of Mrs Jean Humphreys, who was married to our Professor of English, for some guidance on settling in.

The knock at the door continued each Thursday after, forming a tradition and a social network.

The 'Thursday girls', as they are fondly remembered, met for social and educational activities, and organised events to support the University and each other.

Campus Bookshop, 1958-2016

Where students bought textbooks before the internet



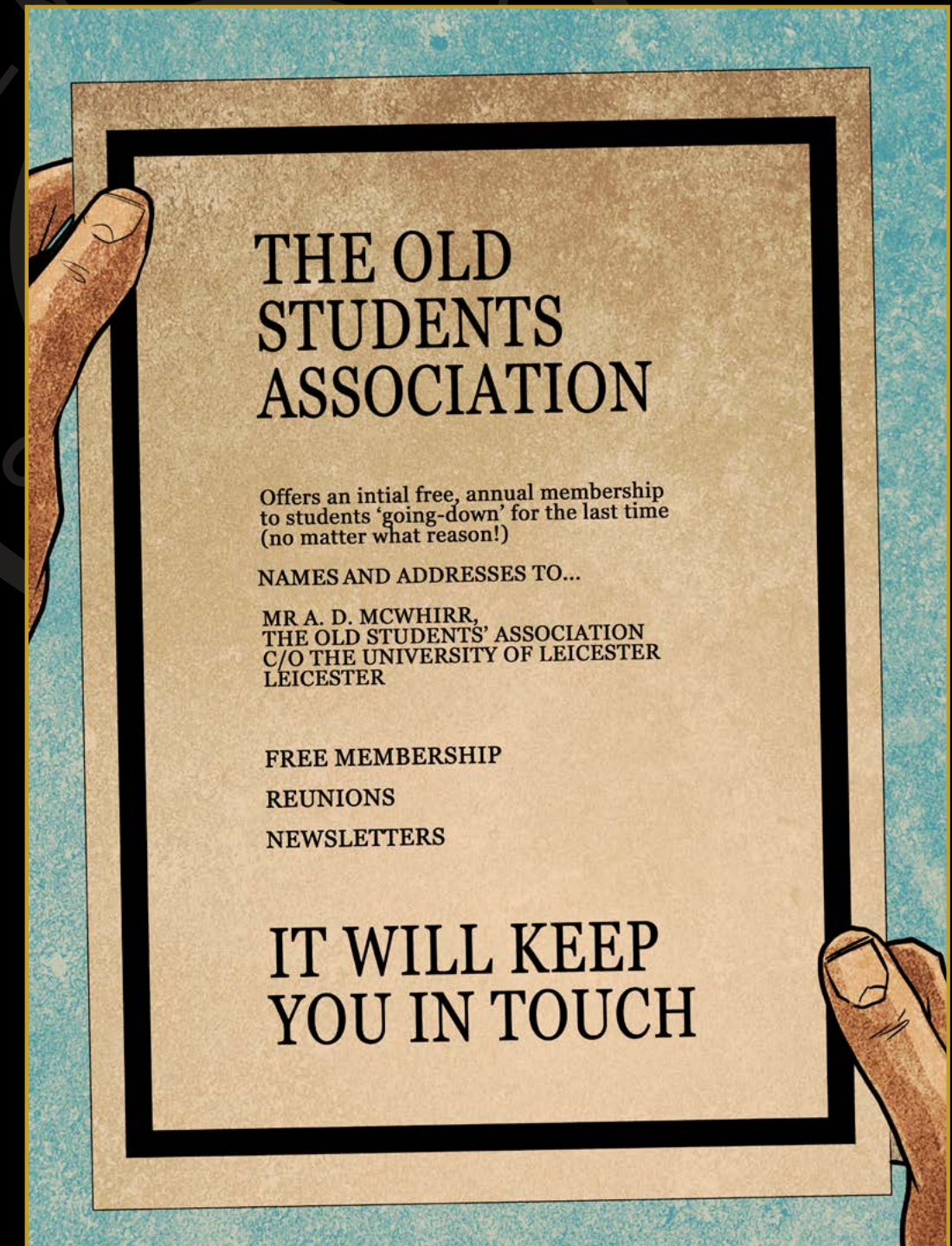
A bookshop first opened on campus in September 1958, mainly thanks to the efforts of Jack Simmons, our first Professor of History, and Leslie Sykes, who was then Professor of French.

The first bookshop, in the Charles Wilson Building, soon grew and specialised in arts and social sciences. Another was opened in the Maurice Shock Medical Sciences Building, which specialised in medicine, education, science and engineering – and gramophone records.

The bookshops were merged in the redeveloped Library in 2008. After this shop closed in 2016, the space was redeveloped into the interactive Digital Reading Room, reflecting the development of our digital campus.

Our Alumni

The Alumni Association – lifetime membership of our community



Once you graduate, one chapter of your University story closes but another opens as you join the Alumni Association.

Formed by Principal Rattray in 1923, the Old Students' Association comprised alumni who wanted to stay connected to each other and the University.

Though small until after the Second World War, it was tightly knit, and arranged reunions, sports events and fundraising campaigns and supported the University. Today, it is a diverse and global network of people who all have Leicester in common.

“The Alumni Association promotes relationships between alumni, the University and students,” says Association Chair Martin Cullen. “It supports alumni on their career journey, and runs events to bring them together and build a community.”

Our LGBT+ Lanyard

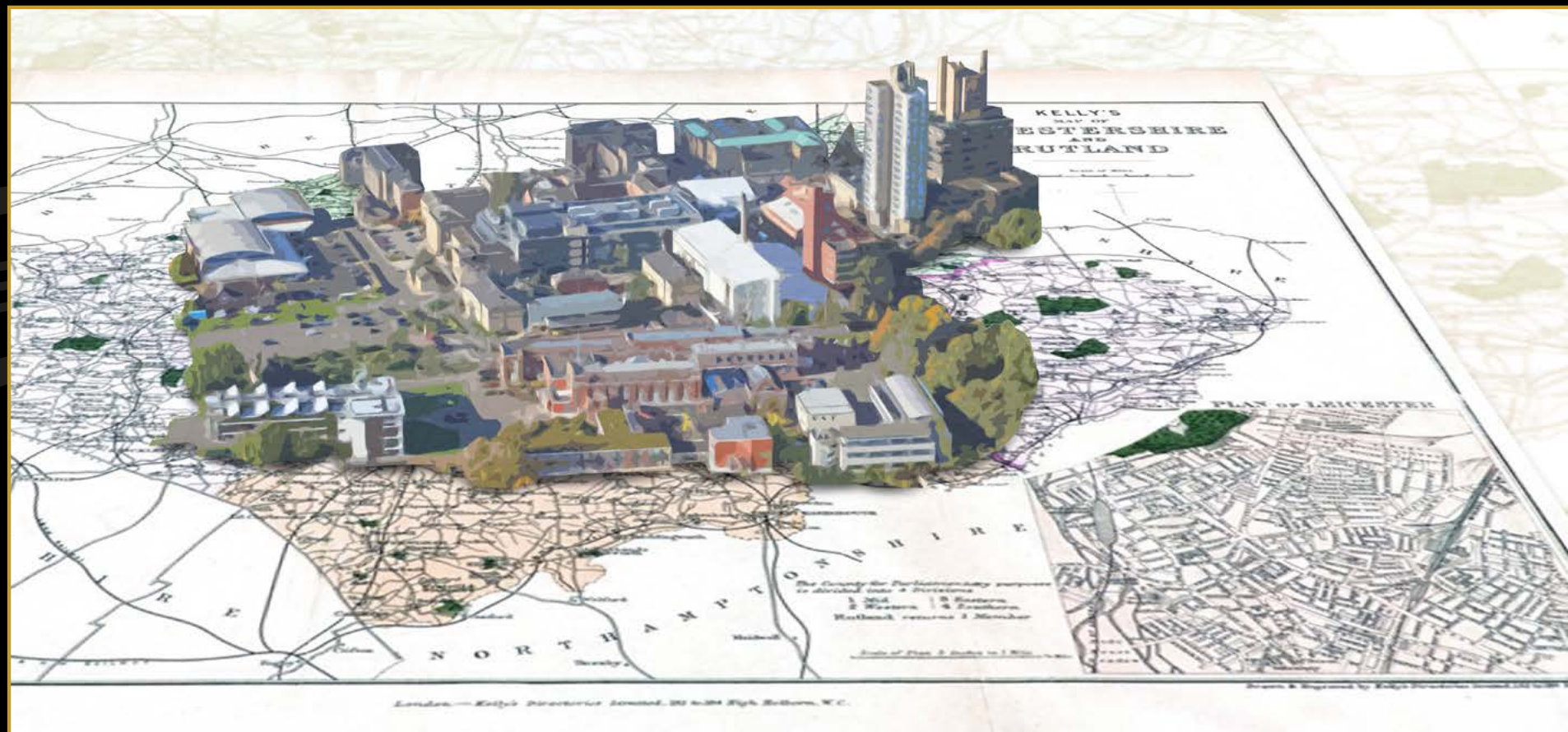
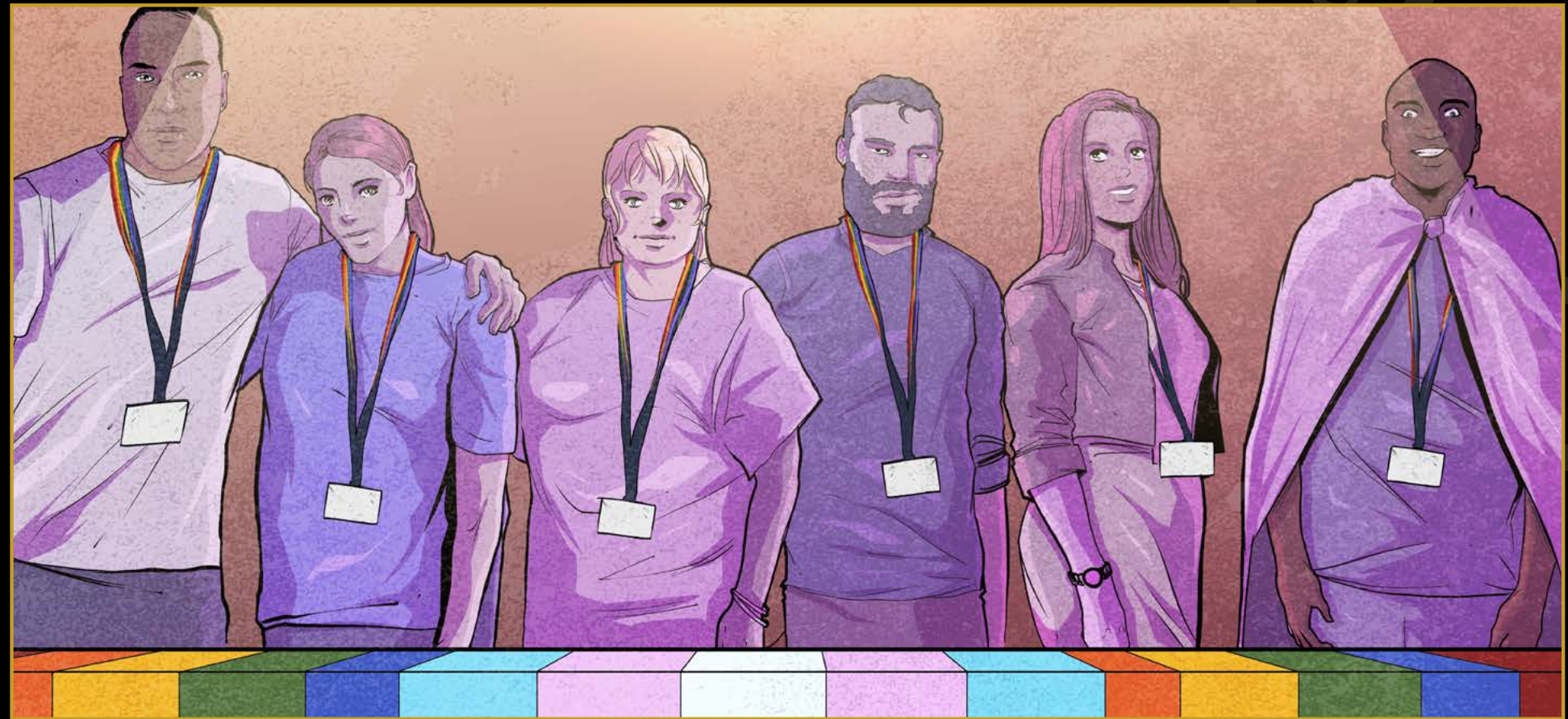
Lanyard shows Pride in our diversity

Since 2019 staff on campus have been proud to wear Pride Lanyards round their necks to celebrate diversity and inclusion and to signal to staff, students and the public that all are welcome here.

As LGBT+ Action Group Chair Manish Masuria says, "The Pride Lanyard serves as a reminder that the diversity of both staff and students within the University community is something to be recognised and celebrated.

Despite featuring a rainbow, the Pride Lanyard is a visible display of Allyship of all EDI characteristics, rendering wearers as advocates of equality and the readiness of learning about oneself and the realities and lived experiences of others.

Wearing my Pride Lanyard makes me feel proud of who I am and what I represent to others at work, and my willingness to help others and advance the EDI agenda across the community."



Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland

Historic links with our region live on

The University was founded as Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland College. The cinquefoils and horseshoe on our coat of arms represent this. A founding principle was to provide higher education to local people, and this was achieved.

We remain very much part of local life. Thousands of people enjoy the Attenborough Arts Centre and the Botanic Gardens every year, we engage with councils, businesses, learned societies and charities, and our Medical School has worked with the county's hospitals for decades.

Jack Simmons, our first History Professor, and WG Hoskins, who founded English Local History, were the go-to academics for the region's history.

Students volunteer as Community First Responders, providing potentially life-saving treatment in response to local 999 calls.

Highfields Adventure Playground

Playground brings adventure to city children



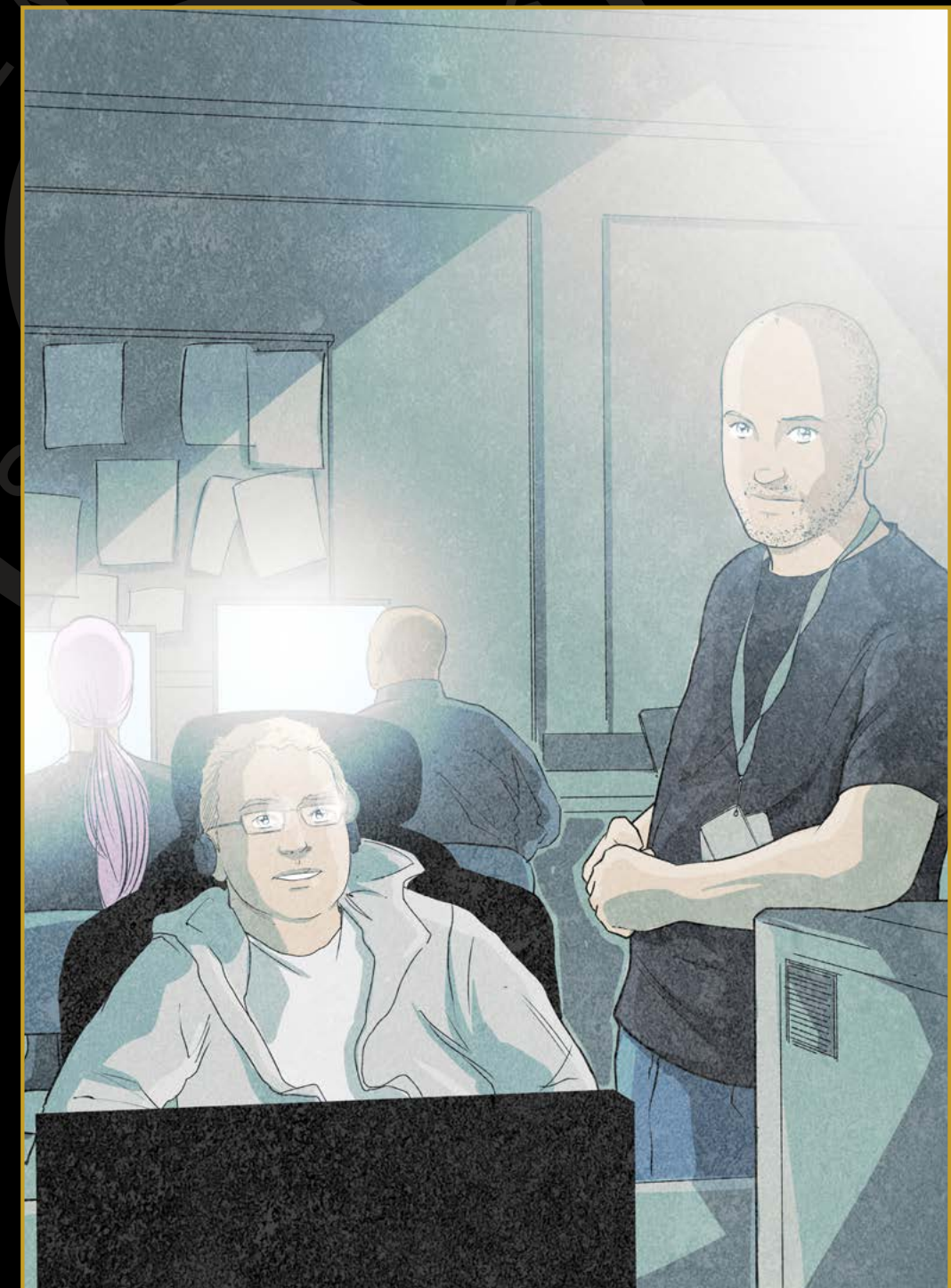
Students were behind the creation an adventure playground in one of Leicester's poorest areas.

Highfields Adventure Playground, in Spinney Hill Park, was set up "to lure the children out of the derelict buildings, off the streets and away from the traffic into a world of old drums, boxes and tyres where they can pull things apart, build them up again, climb and tunnel without risk".

The students, who came up with the idea in 1968, worked with the City Council and other local and national bodies. A local engineering firm donated design services, and the Lord Mayor of Leicester opened the playground in 1971.

The AccessAbility Centre

Goes the extra mile to support disabled students



The AccessAbility Centre offers support and help with study skills to nearly 2,000 students with disabilities every year.

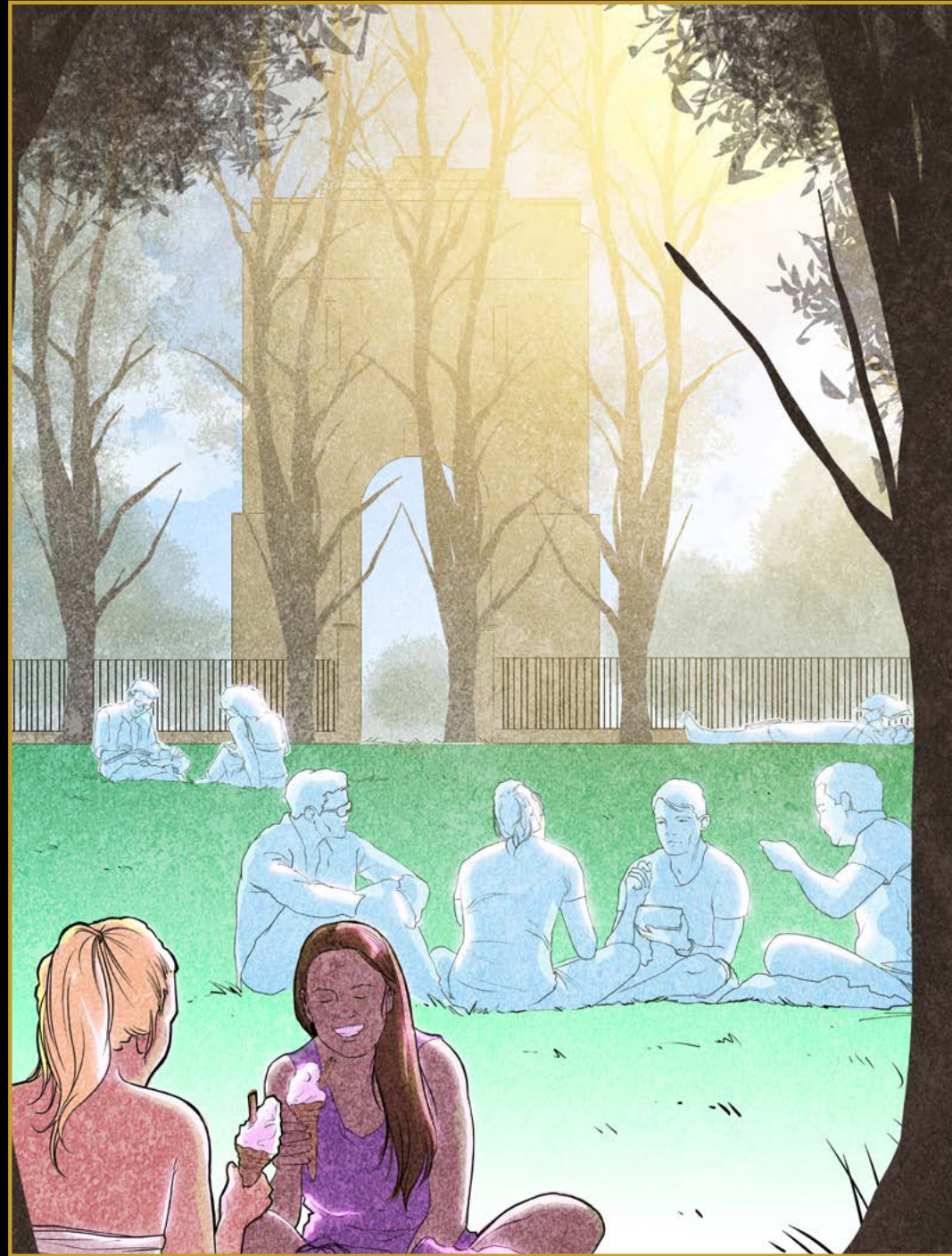
When it was founded in 1993 as the Study Support Centre, it assisted fewer than 50 students with a third of today's staff numbers.

Its development reflects changes in legislation and higher education that are helping thousands of disabled students reach their fullest potential in both education and employment. Shown above is alumnus Alex Squire (graduated 2015) with his PA, Charlie.

"My favourite part of the University is the AccessAbility Team, because they always go the extra mile to make sure we're all accommodated," says Casey Barrett-Gibson.

Victoria Park

A place of nature, rest and recreation



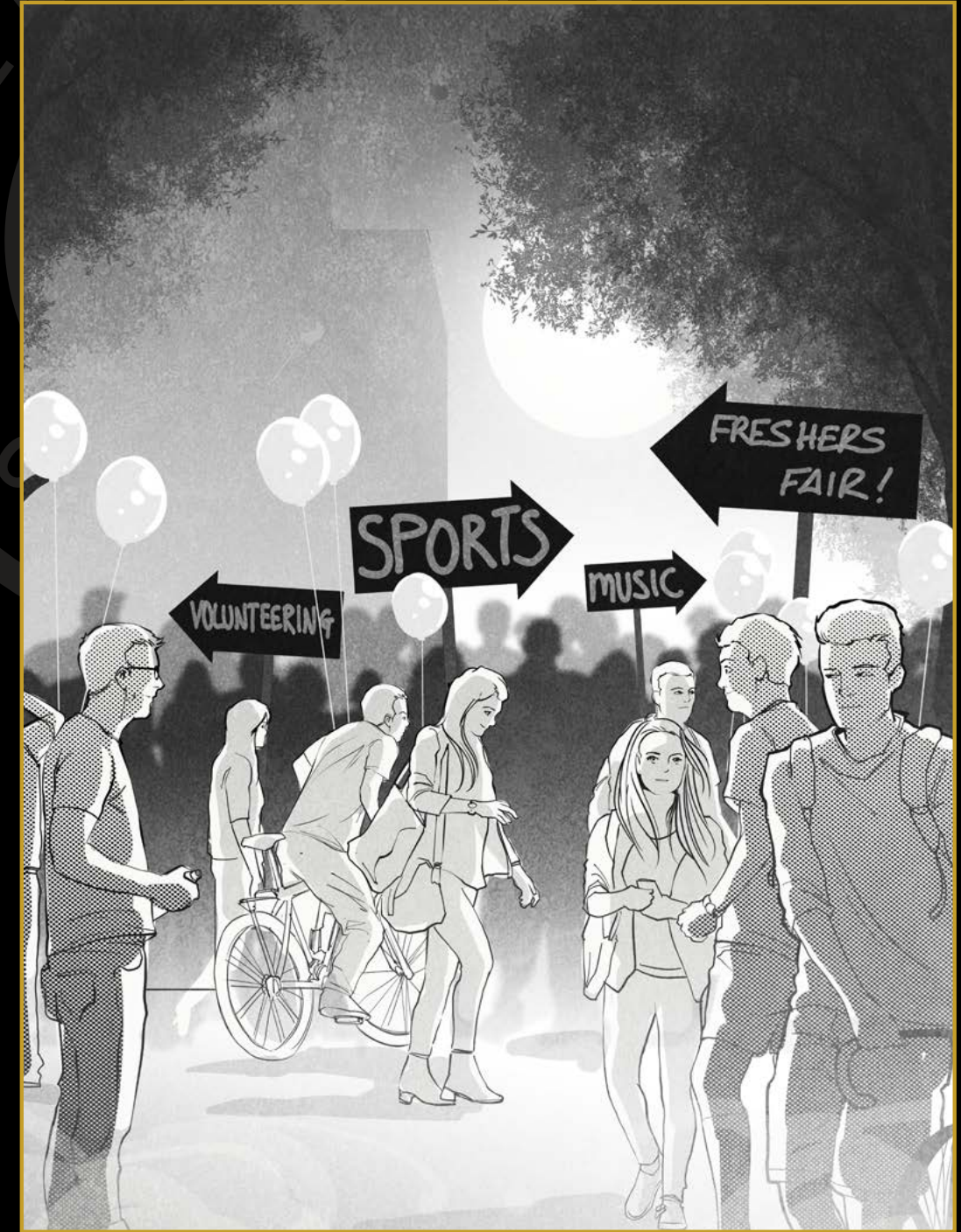
Victoria Park is one of the green lungs of the University. It's where people go for lunch, to socialise and play sports, and is often part of a walk to campus.

The 1920s Arch of Remembrance, the city's War Memorial designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, was sited to form an entrance route to the new University College; the last verse of Blake's Jerusalem (beginning "I will not cease from mental fight...") is inscribed intentionally on the side facing the campus.

"Coming from abroad I was amazed to see such a beautiful park next to such a large university. It is the perfect place to dilute student stress," says Malinda S S Weerakkody Arachchige.

University Societies

Societies where students pursue a huge range of interests



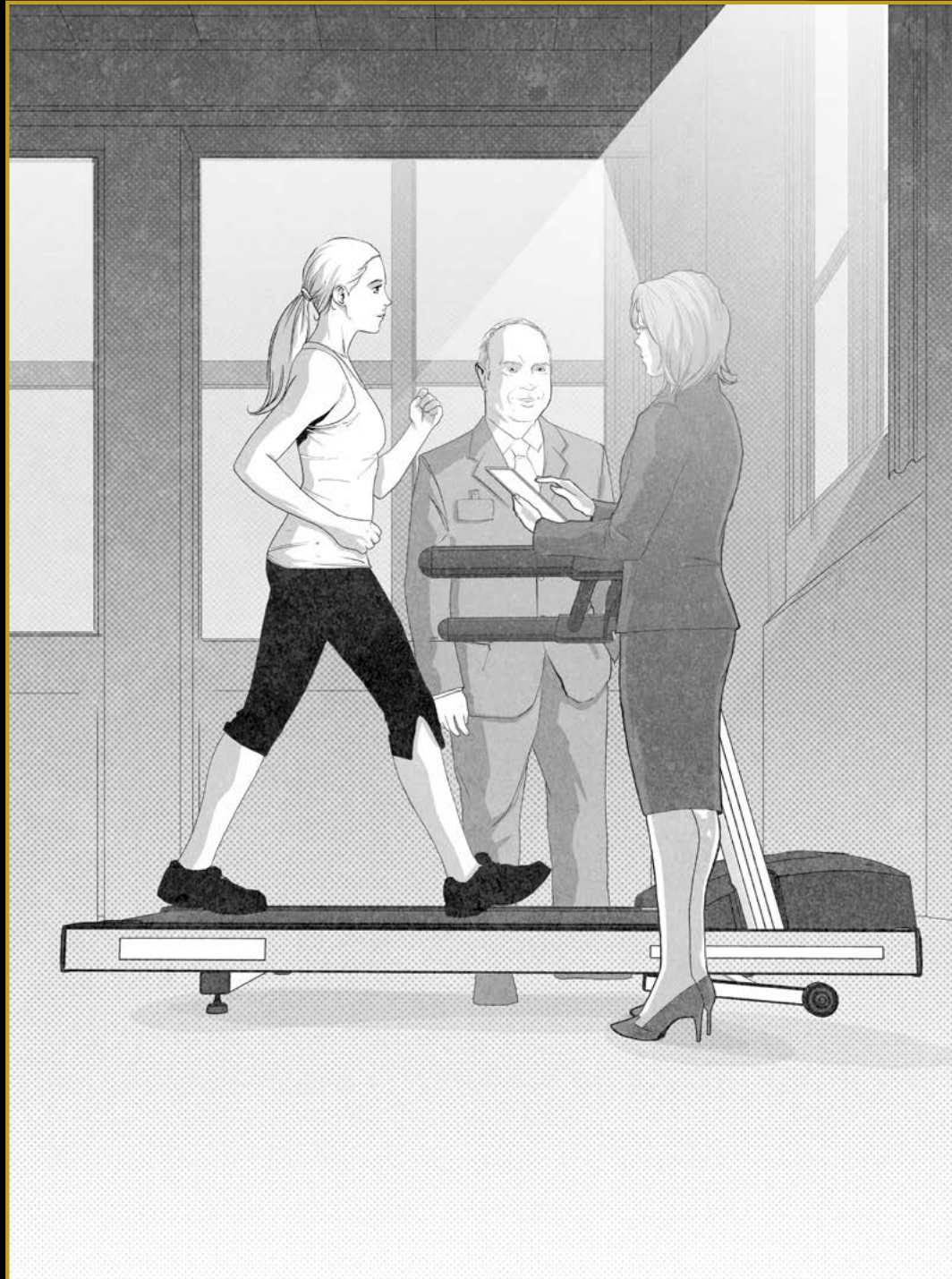
Societies for drama, athletics, debating, french, geography and music were founded in our first year – despite there being so few students.

CP Snow is thought to have been behind the chess club and the student magazine. Soon there was a Film Society, Rambling Society, Folk Dancing Society, the Vaughan Players and many more. Hundreds more have formed since and many were nominated for *Our 100*.

An alumna and staff member recalls Leicester University Student Television Society in 2007: "The LUST office was down a damp corridor that smelled a bit. You always got a warm welcome and, for a shy academic type, that was a big deal. We were never quite sure of what we were doing but, by some miracle, made a few short films. I learnt some video editing skills, picked up writing tips and found a friend who still responds to a random text. The old LUST has a dusty, dark, scrappy little corner of my heart."

Diabetes Research

A longstanding reputation for outstanding diabetes research and care



Leicester has an international reputation for excellence in diabetes research, being home to the first community diabetes clinics and the first diabetes research nurses in the UK.

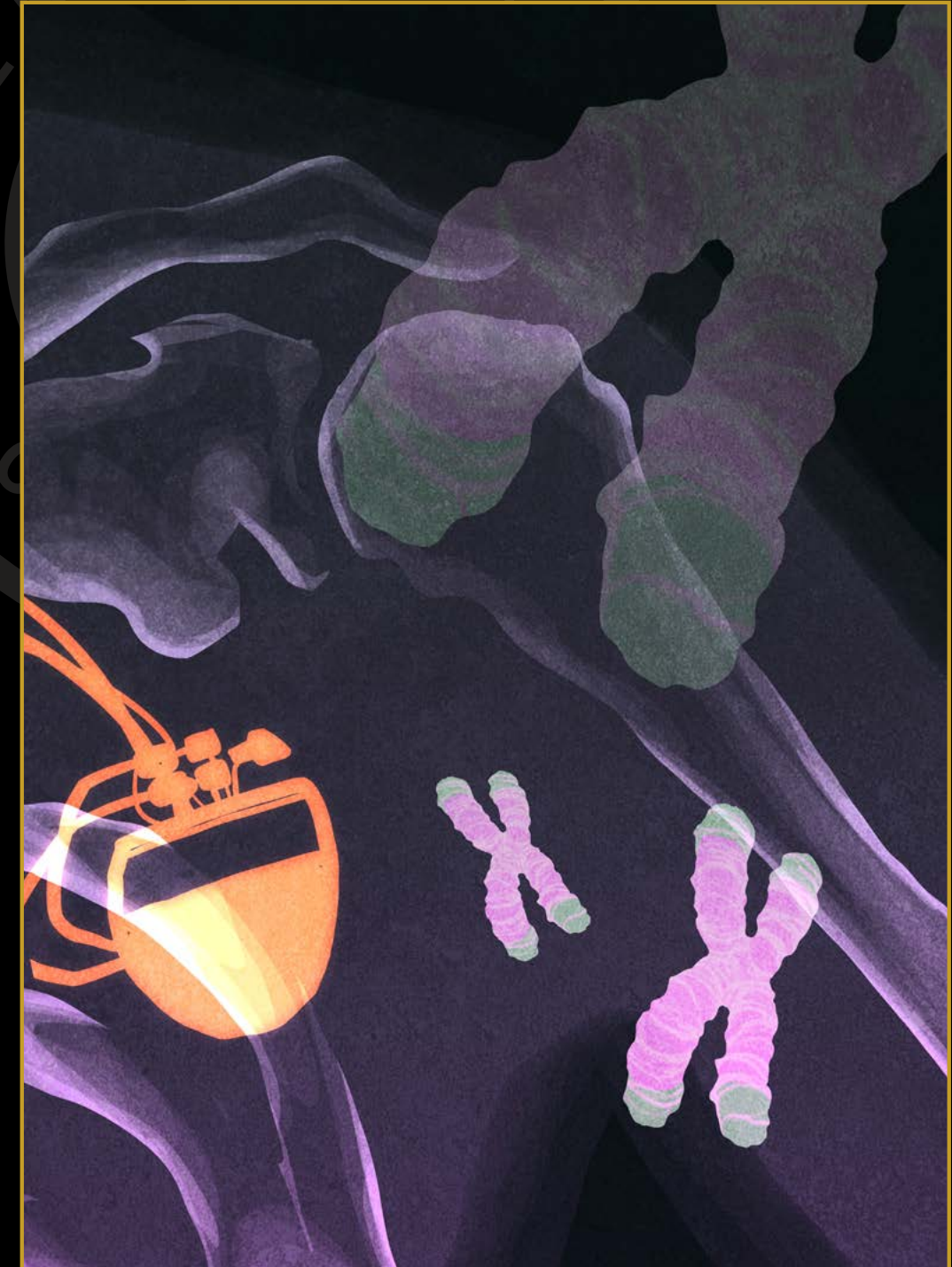
Professor Melanie Davies began the Diabetes Research Service in 2001 with a single Nurse Research Fellow.

Today, she and Professor Kamlesh Khunti (shown here monitoring a patient) have a team of over 160 researchers, clinicians and educationalists working on academic and commercial studies. Diabetes is relatively common in Leicester, and a lot of the work is focused on local people.

Professors Davies and Khunti lead the Leicester Diabetes Centre, which opened at Leicester General Hospital in 2012, and work closely with patients. This is one of Europe's largest diabetes research centres.

Cardiovascular Sciences

Close to all our hearts: cardiac research for better health



Studies on heart health and disease in our Department of Cardiovascular Sciences bring genuine benefits to patients.

Genetic research here is looking at the inheritance and development of conditions such as coronary artery disease and high blood pressure. It is also examining the role of biological ageing in cardiovascular disease, focusing on body cell telomeres – the highlighted ends of the x-shaped chromosomes illustrated – which shorten with age.

Groundbreaking clinical research has involved pioneering use of cardiac magnetic resonance imaging, robotic heart surgery, implanted pacemakers and cardioverter defibrillators (shown) and the prediction and prevention of sudden cardiac death.

We are changing the lives of patients across the world.

“My father revisits his old lecture theatre, 45 years on...”

Keeping Leicester in the blood



“My father and I visited the University of Leicester in September 2018 and discovered the Physics Department was the same as when he studied for his bachelors degree in 1975,” says student Lizzy Mumby.

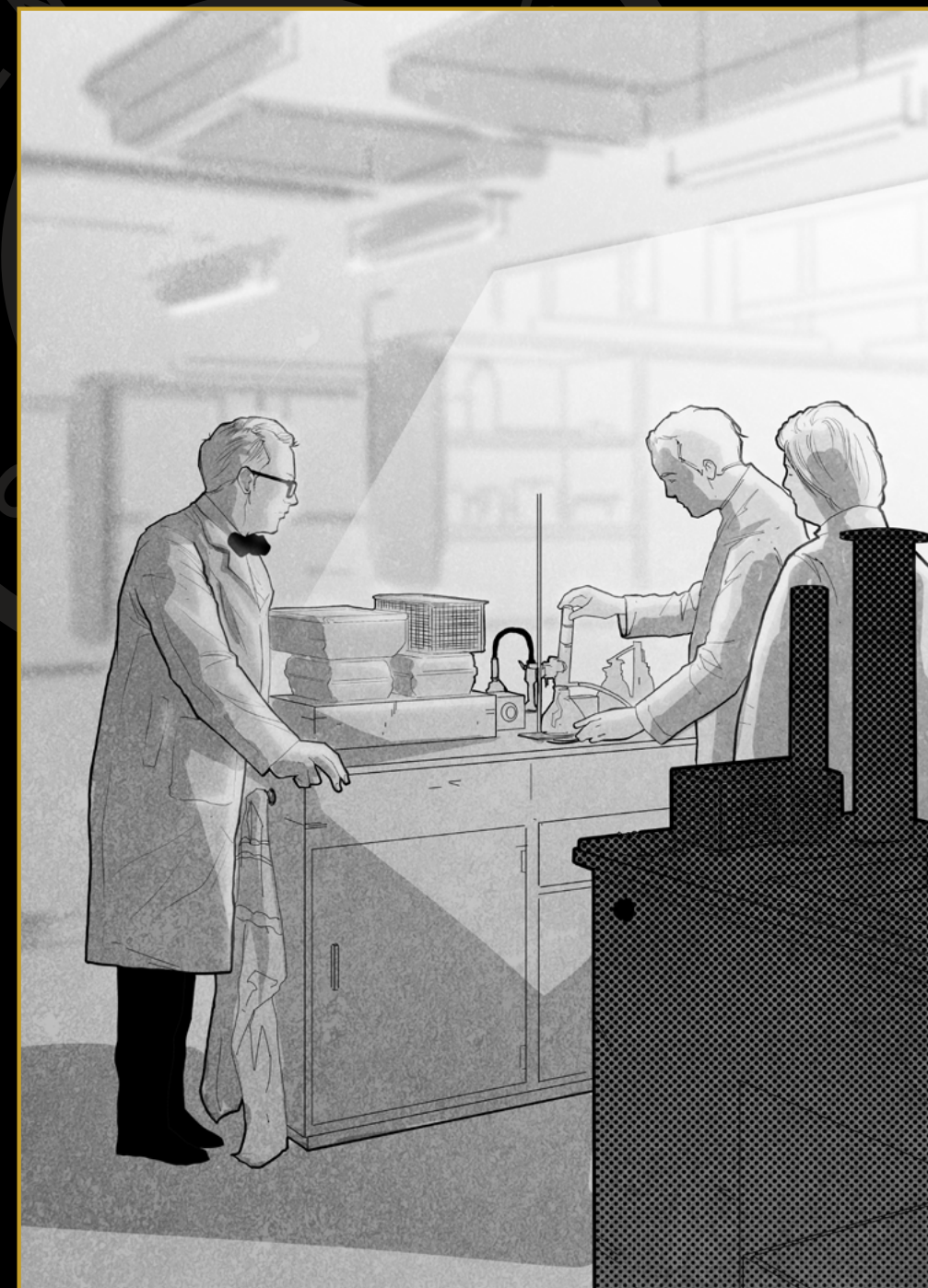
They found her father Simon’s former lecture theatre and Lizzy photographed him there (shown).

“He told me about sitting in lectures and glancing at the clock (now replaced), wondering when he would have time to play badminton in the Charles Wilson hall, which still exists.

“This moment highlighted that Leicester has so much history, which was important for me when choosing a university. I look forward to making my own memories with links to the past.”

Our Science Labs

Rapid growth of the science departments



At the beginning, the University College had 19 basic rooms, which limited what could be taught.

In 1922, the only laboratory was for Botany; Physics and Chemistry were established after a fundraising appeal in 1924. Today, the University enjoys a global reputation for scientific teaching and research, partly thanks to its facilities.

The first purpose-built science building was the Astley Clarke Laboratories in 1951; this was followed by buildings for Chemistry, Geology, Physics and Engineering.

The Adrian Building (1966) housed the new Biological Sciences Department under Professor Hans Kornberg, shown here in the laboratories.

Later came the Maurice Shock Medical Sciences Building (1974) and the George Davies Centre (2016), followed by Space Park Leicester, scheduled to open during our centenary year.

Climate and Sustainability

Tackling the climate emergency, locally and internationally



The University is active in protecting the environment. We spearheaded satellite observations of climate change and our research ranked first in the world for research in the 'Life on Land' UN Sustainable Development Goals category.

Our pioneers include Winifred Pennington FRS, who found the first evidence for Britain's climate change, Peter Sylvester-Bradley, an early adopter of the green movement, and Paul Monks, who leads our air-quality research and became a Government Chief Scientific Adviser.

The Centre for Environmental Health and Sustainability carries out multidisciplinary research, and we are working to protect peatlands in places as far apart as the Fenlands, Indonesia and the Congo.

Locally, Research in Action addresses local social, economic or environmental sustainability issues and our campus is becoming a biodiverse haven.

The Transformative Power of Education

Shaping lives and leaving a legacy



Out of nothing, and thanks to the dedication and generosity of local people, the University of Leicester has seen a century of teaching, learning, research, entertainment, community, welcome, development and opportunity. All demonstrating the power education has to transform people's lives.

We can be proud that the University lives up to its initial promise to be a living memorial, 'so that they may have life,' as our motto says. The University has been a home to people from all walks of life, providing them with opportunities they may never have otherwise found.

That power to shape lives, and to be shaped by them, recalls the meaning of the word 'university.' It comes from the Latin *universitas*, meaning a whole, a sum, a world.

Our world is here in *Our 100*.



AmCo Studio is an all digital illustration studio based in Central London.

Established by bestselling illustrator Amrit Birdi, he and his team have become a highly sought after illustrative partner for clients around the world.

"As someone that spent a significant part of his childhood living in Leicester, the city has an incredibly nostalgic and fond place in my heart.

Which is why more than anything I was so incredibly pleased to have been approached by the University of Leicester to produce this series of illustrations, and learn about its rich history along the way.

I wanted to take this opportunity to give a huge thanks to everyone at the University for being so amazing to work with and to shine a light on the team who worked on the book. We hope you enjoy it!"

Amrit Birdi, Art Director of AmCo Studio.

amco-studio.com



Amrit Birdi – Art Director



Hannah Gillingham – Artist



Lucas Assis – Artist



Dee Dich – Artist



Madelaine Salvage – Designer



Leonie Bostock – Project Manager



Our 100
One Hundred Years
of Change
1921-2021

Our 100

100 stories that commemorate our first century, 1921-2021.

Our 100 is the creation of a partnership between the University of Leicester, our community, and award-winning illustrators, AmCo Studios Ltd.

It is an eclectic showcase of things that have inspired us over the years, including people, places, events, objects and discoveries.

Inside, you can discover little-known facts and read personal memories submitted by our students, staff, alumni and friends, all vividly brought to life by illustrations.

Our most famous stories, such as the discovery of DNA fingerprinting and the identification of King Richard III, sit alongside obscure and fascinating tales from the archives and from individual experiences.

The result is a series of illustrations depicting our history as it has never been seen before. They capture the University's changing past and present, and reflect on the possibilities for our second century.

www.le.ac.uk/centenary/our-100

AmCo studio

