

# Non Nobis Solum

*Thank you for your support in 2025*

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Professor Wendy Powers

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### University College Development Office

T: +44 (0) 191 334 4104

E. [castle.alumni@durham.ac.uk](mailto:castle.alumni@durham.ac.uk)

University College Durham Castle  
Palace Green Durham DH1 3RW



## Welcome

This has been another remarkable year for Castle, with vibrant student engagement across leadership roles, clubs and societies, the Chapel community, and volunteering in the local area. Your support makes these opportunities possible, and we are deeply grateful for the role our alumni and friends play in sustaining such a rich student experience.

Your generosity has once again been extraordinary. This year, our supporters committed £1.4m to our College. This, among other projects, enabled 114 students to access scholarships and opportunity grants. After six years of development and support from more than 100 donors, we have recently re-opened Fellows' Garden to students as part of a transformation which will help them make the most of this beautiful outdoor space.

The year also brought challenges as financial pressures across the higher education sector led Durham University to initiate a Voluntary Severance scheme affecting colleges and departments.

In such times, your support helps us remain resilient and enables us to shape student lives and strengthen our community. Thank you!



Guests at the Fellows' Garden Opening Ceremony, photo courtesy of Shoaib Islam

# Fellows' Garden

In October, we celebrated the official opening of the newly redeveloped Fellows' Garden. The event featured the première of *Begin Again*, a poem by Castle postgraduate Shambhavi Sharma, set to music by fellow postgraduate Chris Massa, and performed with panache by the Chapel Choir and Castle Orchestra.

The Garden project was made possible thanks to the vision and generosity of more than 100 University College alumni and friends, and we were delighted to welcome many of them back for this special occasion. It was a pleasure to see our alumni James and Vanessa Riley officially open the performance space alongside Professor Wendy Powers and Olivia Grace Smith, our JCR Senior Woman. Guests also heard from the Vice-

Chancellor, Professor Karen O'Brien, who spoke about the importance of Colleges and the potential of Fellows' Garden to cultivate and strengthen local partnerships.

The redeveloped space will provide opportunities for students, staff, members of the local community, and visitors from around the world to connect with nature and make the most of the limited space on Durham's Bailey. The project also includes enhanced facilities for staging music and theatre productions by both student and local performing arts societies.

Colleges offer unique opportunities for co-curricular learning: from project management, event planning, debating, and leadership to fostering creativity. We are honoured that so many of our alumni chose to support the redevelopment of this vibrant new space, which will continue to nurture these invaluable life skills for years to come.



Castle Students performing at the Fellows' Garden Opening Ceremony, photo courtesy of Shoaib Islam

# Scholarships

This year, we were very fortunate to receive £1.25 million to support scholarships at University College, thanks to two extremely generous alumni legacies from Dr Bryan Johns (1957-60) and Paul Dunkley (1952-55). These gifts will enable us to establish endowed scholarships, helping talented students make the most of their time at Durham. By permanently endowing these awards, we can offer a more secure and lasting source of support for our students, benefitting future generations for many years to come. The scholarships will help us attract some of the most gifted individuals who might otherwise face barriers to accessing higher education.

The impact of these gifts is truly transformational for our College, enriching not only the experiences of individual recipients but also the wider student community around them. This could not be more evident than in the story of Jessica, a recipient of the Bell Scholarship. As a local student with caring responsibilities, receiving a scholarship gave her the financial freedom to take part fully in College life. It also allowed us to showcase what Castle truly stands for — that we are *not for ourselves alone*.

For Jessica, the award was more than financial support; it was a message that there are alumni who believe in her and in her potential. In turn, she has become a champion for local students, helping to organise initiatives that celebrate local culture, raise aspirations among children and young people, and strengthen our College community through her work as Welfare Officer.



Jessica and Evie during the Northern Week, a campaign aiming to raise awareness about local culture and support a sense of belonging



Nesryn, Bell Scholar

For students from less affluent backgrounds, scholarships open doors to new opportunities without the constant worry of financial pressure. We are deeply grateful to all our donors and legacy pledgers who make these transformative experiences possible.

## Access to Opportunities

“With the financial security this scholarship provided, I have been able to dedicate myself fully to both my academic work and the wider life of the college and university. I found myself exploring different societies and clubs, no longer hesitant to try. I am a member of the International Affairs Society, Durham Union and more. The confidence to step into something new has been one of the greatest gifts of this support.”

-Nesryn, Bell Scholar

# Travel Bursaries

“Thanks to the Michael McCarthy Bursary, I had the incredible opportunity to travel to the United States this September with Durham University Spaceflight (DUSF) for the launch of our latest rocket, *Rosemary 3*, in the Mojave Desert.”

- Isabelle, First-Year PhD Physics

In recent years we have been fortunate to benefit from the generosity of our alumni, their families, and friends who have left legacies and established travel bursaries in memory of their loved ones. These gifts create incredible opportunities for our students to challenge themselves, broaden their

horizons, and grow — both personally and academically — by exploring new experiences that might otherwise be out of reach.

Isabelle is a fantastic example of this: as former president of Durham University Space Flight, she has seen the society grow from launching their first model rocket to a record-holding team. She now serves as the postgraduate advisor to the team while also running Launch 4 Change, a national outreach programme supported by £700,000 in funding from the Advanced Research and Invention Agency, that combines rocketry and climate science to inspire the next generation of scientists.

Thanks to the support of Michael McCarthy Memorial Bursary, established in memory of our alumnus Michael McCarthy (2000-03), Isabelle had the opportunity to travel to Mojave Desert to launch their latest rocket, *Rosemary 3*, named after Rosemary Coogan, a fellow University College alumna and astronaut. *Rosemary 3* reached an altitude of 12.3 km and a top speed of Mach 2.5, breaking the UK Open Altitude Record for amateur rocketry, a record Isabelle’s team already held!

We are also particularly grateful to have recently received a legacy from the estate of Dr Duncan Bythell and the Thomis Bursary, established in memory of Godfrey and Marjorie Thomis. Dr Bythell was a long-standing SCR member and Castle resident who served the College as Senior Tutor until 1996, while Godfrey Stephen Thomis read Music at University College and graduated in 1956.

These kind gifts support student travel for a wide range of purposes, including research, conferences, cultural exchange and opportunities that contribute to the recipients’ academic development. We warmly thank our alumni, friends of the College and their families for their generosity and thoughtfulness, which ensure that the memory of loved ones lives on and continues to benefit future generations of Castle students.



The launch of *Rosemary 3* in the Mojave Desert



Members of the University College Chapel Choir at the CD recording, Ushaw College

# Spotlight on University College Chapel Choir

We are incredibly proud of our University College Chapel Choir. In recent years, the group has gone from strength to strength — from their unforgettable tour to Rome in 2023 to their latest CD recording in memory of our distinguished alumnus, David Knowles (2010-16).

Thanks to the generous support of alumni, friends of the College, and the Choir’s loved ones, the group successfully raised £9,000 to cover the cost of the recording. The CD is set for release in early 2026, and we can’t wait to see what these talented musicians achieve next!

## What the Choir means to me

“Singing with Castle Chapel Choir has without a doubt been the centerpiece of my university experience. In the year and a half that I have been a member, my confidence as a musician and an individual has flourished, a testament to the unwavering support of my fellow members, and through being able to perform both chorally and as a soloist. It is a privilege to be able to share our music with the wider community of Durham, especially with the knowledge that we are following a long reigning and cherished tradition of choral singing. The choir has given me opportunities unlike any other, such as recording a CD in memory of alumnus and journalist David Knowles, our tour to Sweden and Denmark, singing in St Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey and, of course, the Castle itself. Although I myself am not a member of University College, I certainly feel I have made a family there.”

-Edie Tunnicliffe, Assistant Manager



University College Chapel Choir at St Bartholomew the Great, London

University College Chapel Choir practising in Tunstall Chapel

Having enjoyed a wonderful three years studying law at Durham I wanted to re-connect with the College and the Law School in a positive way to assist young aspiring lawyers with practical help by giving them opportunities to see the legal system in action, and to help where I can by way of connections and in a very modest financial way. As I constantly observe when I meet so many engaging students, they are the future and their enthusiasm and vibrancy is so rewarding and reassuring.

-The Hon. Mr Justice Goss (1971-74)

## A Gift of Time

We are very fortunate to have such an inspirational alumni community that gives back so generously to support our College, both within and beyond the Castle walls. Recently, we had the privilege of hosting the Hon. Mr Justice Goss, who met with several of our undergraduate law students, taking time to answer their questions and share insights from his professional experience.

In addition to being exceptionally generous with his time, Judge Goss has also, kindly offered practical opportunities for our students to see the legal system in action. Experiences such as these are truly invaluable, helping to encourage and inspire our students to follow in the footsteps of our alumni. We are deeply grateful to Judge Goss and to the many other volunteers who nurture our students' learning and curiosity while offering thoughtful, practical advice.

Over the past year, we have also seen the Castle Society Executive Committee flourish, supported by dedicated volunteers who have helped us reach more alumni, reform our operations, and explore new ways to better serve our alumni community as a whole. It has been wonderful to exchange ideas and benefit from their fresh perspectives and innovative thinking.



Current students and representatives of the Castle Society executive committee during the 2025 Alumni Reunion in Durham

## A volunteer's perspective

“Having attended reunions and as a subscriber to *Castellum*, I've kept in contact with college over the years and seen how the work of the Society supports the college and various student bodies. Last year I volunteered to become a member of the Committee as a way to get more involved.

It's been a really interesting period - with much work going on behind the scenes to ensure the Society remains valid in the coming years. My input has been varied - from simply contributing ideas at Committee meetings, updating the Society website to more detailed analysis of *Castellum* subscriptions and strategic planning.”

- Paul Everson (1985-88)  
Treasurer, Durham Castle Society



# Final Thoughts

- Julia Bonner, Alumni & Development Manager

It has been another incredible year for University College and our alumni community. Choosing just one highlight is no easy task, but at the very top of the list must be the opening of Fellows' Garden after years of careful planning and consultation. Our alumni played a vital role throughout the process—providing thoughtful feedback on the design, naming, and technical specifications of the space, as well as offering the crucial philanthropic support that made the project possible.

Another standout moment was seeing our community come together to support the Chapel Choir's music recording, following the untimely death of our alumnus and talented young journalist, David Knowles. In just a few short months, we raised £9,000 for the project and were delighted to welcome over 160 guests to the Choir's performance in London this September.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks for your continued support of our College—through your wisdom, your time, and your financial generosity. It is truly inspiring to see our community remain so strong and actively involved in shaping the future of University College while supporting the next generation of students.

Thanks to your generosity, we have been able to award £85,410 in student support this year. More importantly, we have shown our students that, despite rising living costs, a challenging job market, and the pressures of academic life, they are part of a community that genuinely cares.

Your continued support gives us the resilience we need to face these challenges, and for that, we are deeply grateful.

We hope you will continue to support us in whatever way you can. Please do keep in touch—let us know how you are getting on and if you are planning a visit. It is always a pleasure to connect with our volunteers and donors.

Wishing you and your loved ones all the best for 2026!



Alumni and College staff following a formal dinner. Left to right: Dr Natalie Craig, Prof Wendy Powers, Dr Jessica Ogilvy-Stuart (2009-14), David Mallett (1962-65), Timothy Sykes (1973-76), Julia Bonner and Dr Ellen Crabtree



**£1.4m**

In new philanthropic funds raised for University College



**181**

Students supported by access, opportunity & ball funding



**339**

Number of alumni actively engaged with College last year



**119**

Donors to University College Durham Trust



**13**

Different philanthropically funded awards and bursaries available to Castle students



**£85,410**

Given to students via College scholarships, access, opportunity & ball funding