

Student Talk

Thoughts from Nina, Soraya, Yvonne and Michael

Over the year at BISC we get to know a great number of students who visit the centre, through trips and events and at our weekly meals. This summer term we have caught up with 4 students. Nina and Soraya are from Bogota, Colombia, and Yvonne from near Nairobi, Kenya. Tell us why you came to Bristol? **Nina:** I was looking for a green city; I love mountains and rivers like in Bogota! Bristol is a medium city, not a capital but not too quiet. **Soraya:** for me I chose Bristol for the university programme that suited me best. My first impression of the UK was being in London – big and loud, too fast! But in Bristol it is a slower pace and less crowded. Bristol is a kind city, filled with kind people. **Yvonne:** I've never been to the UK before. Bristol is an awesome cool city and we can tour to lots of places from here. I feel like I'm in a safe place, especially as an international student. The people have been amazing – my classmates & BISC people, and I have an awesome host through the Local Link scheme! My first impressions of Bristol were the excitement of the first welcome week and I got to know about BISC in my third week here. It was like going home, and coming to a familiar place.

What are you studying this year? **Nina:** I'm doing Public Policy and want to work in national government where we can support the current peace process in Colombia. **Soraya:** yes, we're both human rights lawyers and we want to work in this area of resolving conflict. **Yvonne:** I'm also in Public Policy and would like to work in a public institution as an economist, seeing how the govt. uses and raises its money. **How did you hear about BISC?** **Nina/Soraya:** we heard about the BISC International Reception in October, and then we came to see about other students' household items for exchange at BISC – what a good idea! We started to join the events and trips. **Yvonne:** I saw the BISC noticeboards at the SU International Lounge and was intrigued to join in! I also came to the Int'l Reception! **Nina:** I was fascinated by the programme of events – such a small institution that cares for international students. **Yvonne:** yes, this programme makes us feel it's been organised for us! It's good to have something out of study - to go on a trip and have a breather from study! I felt lucky to be in a city where this organisation exists to welcome and gave me opportunities to travel & have different activities. **Nina:** BISC is really open – you don't have to be religious or anything but we can just share the same set of values as friendship and solidarity. I feel ok to be who I am and share ideas. **Soraya:** BISC is a space for students to be here and do activities – a place that organises things for us and it makes us feel secure – ie, I know this organisation and I can trust them. It's also easy to connect with other students as we're all away from home, we feel comfortable. **Nina:** every trip is well organised, everything works. **Tips for new students?** **Yvonne:** – come to BISC! First place to go to! **Nina:** don't lose your opportunity to have a great time with BISC!

Michael: I'm from Houston, Texas, but my family is originally from Argentina. I'm studying an MSc in Environmental Policy & Management in the Geography dept. Bristol is interesting for me as it's been a Green capital. I'd like to work with Environmental Policy on where we get our energy. **Your first impressions of Bristol?** **M:** I like how "walkable" it feels – all within easy reach, and near the countryside – the Gorge, the sea. It's a small city with a lot of character! **How did you hear about BISC?** **M:** When I first arrived at Temple Meads station, I saw a welcome desk for Int'l Students, was driven to my accommodation and invited to the free dinners. I've been on trips and get along to the teas and lunches. I like it all – how easy it is. You can just come in, meet people, talk about everything. It's nice and it is very homely. **Cosy in winter and lovely in the summer!** **You've been hosted by local people during this year. How has that been for you?** **M:** Oh fantastic! My Local Link hosts are very welcoming. Every time I reach out to them, I can count on them to invite me round for a meal or meet up. **Any tips for new students?** **M:** Plug into BISC as much as you can. Don't be afraid to explore Bristol & the area around. There are a few hidden gems good to visit.



Yvonne (left), Nina and Soraya in the BISC garden



Michael enjoying Soup Lunch in the BISC garden

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Summer News

2017

The End of a Great Year

Once again, we have come to the end of a great year of welcoming and supporting international students who have come to Bristol. The BISC Team (Jacqueline, Kim, Matt and volunteers Ann, David, Martine, Bonnie, Merrow and Eric) have done an amazing job in creating a 'home away from home' for students who joined the BISC community. From the early days of The Welcome, to a huge number of trips, evening events and weekly meals - the BISC Team and dedicated volunteers have valued every international student whom they've met. See the photo gallery on www.bisc.org.uk or all the interaction on facebook (www.facebook.com/biscbristol) to see the fun and generous atmosphere created!

Increase the numbers, the space, the community

In 2015/16 the number of international students coming to study in the UK was 438,010. Numbers of international students studying at Bristol universities continue to increase with 4017 students at UWE (2015/16 figures) and 4139 students at the University of Bristol (2016/17 figures). As numbers increase, there is a great need for showing a generous and kind 'Bristol' welcome to all our friends from across the globe.

We are therefore delighted that work has started on our extension to the BISC building which will give us a more comfortable and welcoming environment for accommodating larger groups at the many social events. The extra space will advance building community and create a comfortable setting for the support of individual students. Works will be completed by mid August and we look forward to growing the Team by January 2018.

Finally, we love to hear encouraging messages and stories from students who have returned home. When you have had an opportunity to reflect on your time in Bristol or if you want to introduce something of the BISC ethos in your home university, town or city - be in touch! We would love to continue to build the BISC community across the world. Please send us photos, video clips, social media/ email messages, sharing your life and all you are experiencing. We are one big supportive family and team at BISC – the place 'where the world meets'.
Stewart North (CHAIR OF TRUSTEES)

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The Welcome 2017
4 - 25 September

International Reception
7 October

Prayer Meetings
1st Thursday of the month, 10.30 - 11.30am @ BISC

6 July
3 August
7 September
5 October
2 November
7 December

bisc Alumni

Join BISC's Alumni & Friends Network!!

As many of you prepare to return to your home countries, after spending a wonderful time at BISC in this beautiful and kind city of Bristol, why not join our BISC Alumni & Friends Network! We would love to keep in touch, organise BISC events and meet-ups whenever we visit your home cities and make sure you continue the lively interaction with one another, you so enjoyed here at BISC. To join, simply email bisc@bisc.org.uk with two contact details (e.g. a recent email address; WeChat, Facebook or Skype account details), referencing *Joining BISC Alumni & Friends* in your subject.

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Down Memory Lane

...Part 3

This work has been led by a variety of wonderful BISC coordinators over the past 40 years. We now hear from Hannah who was Coordinator not so very long ago - and who still lives in Bristol with her husband Peter and their 2 lively boys! She shares with us a few special memories of her time at BISC:

Hannah Hedinger 2002 – 2009

I had the privilege of coordinating the work of BISC from 2002-2009. My first involvement with BISC dates back to my student years from 1994-97 when, as a member of UWE CU, I volunteered for 'The Welcome'. The passion that Robin & Shirley Bragg (the Coordinators at the time) had for supporting international students was infectious, so after graduation in 1997-98 I formed part of the BISC Year Team along with Stewart North (now BISC Chairman!) and Hannah Chandler. I look back at my time at BISC with fond memories, both as a volunteer, a Year Teamer and Coordinator. Some of my favourite and lasting memories include the BISC holidays to Ireland, Scotland and Lake District; the fun and deeper friendships formed were very special and I'm still in touch with a number of friends made on these holidays. Of the many cultural events, the Japanese Evening was my firm favourite, and I'll always remember with a smile the indoor firework displays concocted by the late Dr Peter Timms with his chemistry know-how! It's wonderful to see BISC continue to grow and develop, to reach people's hearts and lives and make a lasting impact. Keep up the good work BISC!



Hannah Hedinger 2002 – 2009



Digging foundations for our Lounge Extension...



Kim Cussans: Leading Monday Afternoon Teas



David Watteau: Our DIY Hero!

Growing the Team

Meet Kim Cussans and David Watteau

Since the Spring Term, our team has expanded – joined by newly appointed Assistant Manager Kim and Volunteer David who both live locally with their families. We are grateful for this increased level of support, added skills and enthusiasm offered to the core team. So, tell us about yourselves!

Kim: I grew up in the US and met my husband in Geneva. We got married in Bristol, and we have a 13 year old son. My parents live in the US and so we spend much of our family holidays travelling to and from there! **My work here?** Well, I love baking with other people and working with the teams of volunteers. I also love meeting people from other countries, and creating community. This is a place where the world is coming to Bristol and where we can support each other and find out about each other's cultures – and a place for the students to find out about the sometimes funny or different British ways of doing things! **Hobbies/interests?** Walking, hanging out with my friends, reading, music. I would like to visit the state parks in USA with my son, and travel to Egypt or Rome. **Fave food:** something I don't have to cook myself – so eating out!

David: I'm originally from Newcastle, but I've lived in Bristol since 1974! I retired recently and wished to make myself useful here at BISC. My wife teaches English as a foreign language and at home we have been hosting overseas students for many years. We have 3 children and one grandson! **My role at BISC?** It's a bit jack of all trades! But primarily doing DIY & maintenance, and some IT & admin. I'm also helping liaise for the current building work. What I enjoy about being here is the friendly atmosphere and working with a very supportive team. I really like meeting internationals and making them feel welcome here. Students are so positive about coming to BISC and the at-home-ness they feel here! **My hobbies?** Tennis, reading social history and spy novels; jazz. **Fave food:** real German cheesecake! And I'd like to visit more of Europe and UK.

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Remembering Our Friend



Gordon (far right) at a BISC social in 1991

Remembering Gordon Landreth

We remember fondly Gordon Landreth, who died in March this year. Gordon led the work as Coordinator of BISC between 1986 to 1991, when BISC was stationed in a first-floor room on Whiteladies Road. Gordon was a gentle loving man, much appreciated by the international students and supporters alike. Here are some of the tributes that friends of BISC have sent us when remembering the time he headed up BISC:

Gordon was a man of "gentle wisdom", a "dear good man" and a pleasure to work with. "We have many special memories of him"; "I can picture his smiling face"; "he was a great help and encourager to so many students". We are indeed grateful for all that Gordon contributed so faithfully to this work amongst students, enabling it to grow and become strongly established in this beautiful university city.

Let's Start Building

Growing Our Funds, Our Building, Our Team

It has been an exciting time at BISC! As we write the diggers have taken up muddy residence in the back garden, and deep trenches have been dug for the foundations of the ground floor lounge extension. The work will continue over the summer months, reaching completion in time for the September Welcome. It is of course only **thanks to you** our supporters and friends that this project has been able to get off the ground (literally!). Since the 40th Anniversary Dinner Celebration back in May last year, the 10K Run both years, the Arts & Crafts Evening, the Art Shows and onwards to the present day, we have just been so overwhelmed by the wonderful encouragement and financial support given by our BISC friends. We have now **raised just over £83 000 of our £145 000 target**. Thank you all for such generosity! This giving will enable the welcome of international students in this place to grow from strength to strength. We also look forward to expanding our core team in the near future, as this is an essential need for operating the centre efficiently. We look forward to advertising for an extra paid position at BISC in October, so watch this space...!!



The BISC 10K Team completing the race in May 2017

The Welcome '17

Let's Help Welcome the World to Our City!

To welcome students arriving in Bristol for the start of the new academic year, the BISC Welcome will run from **4th - 25th September**. If you would like to join us in welcoming students, we would love to hear from you! This year we are going to be particularly busy during the week of 11th September as both universities run their welcome period at the same time. We need: (1) drivers for picking up students from the coach & train stations, taking them to their accommodation or to a university campus; (2) helpers for our BISC Head Chef to prepare & serve evening meals over a 10 day period from Friday 8th – Tuesday 19th September. (3) For students who turn up with nowhere to stay, we also offer emergency accommodation – do sign up for this too if you are happy to host students for a few nights or more. (4) The Welcome ends with the International Reception on Saturday 7th October when we organise a fantastic celebration for 700!! Please email bisc@bisc.org.uk or phone **0117-915 9826** for a form if you are able to help!

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