



## The British Psychological Society

Promoting excellence in psychology



**We dip into the Society member database and pick out...**

**Mike Eslea**  
University of Central Lancashire

### **One treasured possession**

The first thing I would grab if my office was on fire is my beautiful Japanese wooden puzzle box. It was a present from Yuichi Toda from Osaka University, who came to visit Peter K. Smith and his Social Relationships In Schools team at Sheffield, where I was doing my PhD in 1993. I had heard about the Japanese tradition of giving gifts, so I should have been better prepared. I was mortified when he gave me this wonderful box and I had nothing to offer in return, and now it sits on my shelf as a bittersweet reminder of his kindness and my bad manners.

### **One book that everybody should read**

*The Wisdom of Birds* by Tim Birkhead. It sounds dull – it's a history of ornithology, after all – but there's loads in it to interest a psychologist or indeed any scientist or philosopher of science. Superb, clever, creative experiments helped discover the truth about migration, for example. Previously, people had believed that swallows spent the winter underwater, in ponds! Similarly inventive work unlocked the secrets of birdsong, enabling show-off noblemen to trick their pet nightingales into thinking it was spring, and thus make them sing on demand whatever the season.

### **One historical figure who inspires me**

In 2005 the Psychology Department here at UCLan moved to a new building, and when it was suggested we name it after Charles Darwin I was sceptical. It sounded arrogant: I remember saying 'imagine how we'd take the mickey if the physicists wanted theirs to be called the Einstein Building!' but I warmed to it in the end. Then I had the idea of inviting a big-name evolutionist to do the opening ceremony on Darwin's birthday, and was amazed when

Richard Dawkins accepted the invitation. I even commissioned a special beer, Evolution Ale, for the occasion. Since then I have arranged Darwin Day Celebration Lectures every year, and have enjoyed some fantastic evenings with superstar scientists. Nowadays I love the fact that I work in Darwin Building. It's an honour.

### **One band you should go and see right now**

IDLES. Singer Joe Talbot says they are definitely not a punk band, but they make a powerful punky racket to go with their darkly humorous and soul-baring lyrics. Perfect music for this old punk rocker! There's plenty for psychologists to enjoy, too: their first album is a meditation on grief, inspired by the death of Talbot's mother; the second an examination of masculinity and fatherhood in modern Britain. With jokes.

### **One thing I should have done more of**

Experiments! I have somehow ended up doing lots of work based on questionnaires and interviews, despite being happiest when doing experiments. I love the rigour of the design stage, the practical challenges of equipment building, the fun of running the participants. The research I am most proud of is the aggression paradigm I developed with my PhD student Dominik Ritter: 'The Chopstick Game'. This gave us 15 minutes of fame, when we were asked to make a documentary for BBC3 about small men's aggression. We spent a crazy day pitting guys as short as 4'8" against average-height controls in a variety of tasks. To my delight, the so-called Napoleon Complex turned out to be a myth. Taller men were more aggressive.

### **One way to relax in the evening**

Take up archery. It's a very inclusive sport, and also very psychological... lots in common with golf (trying to repeat the perfect shot every time) and cricket (long periods of relaxation punctuated by a few seconds of intense concentration). My club, the Chorley Bowmen, are a friendly bunch, and it's a great way to wind down on a warm summer evening.

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# one on one

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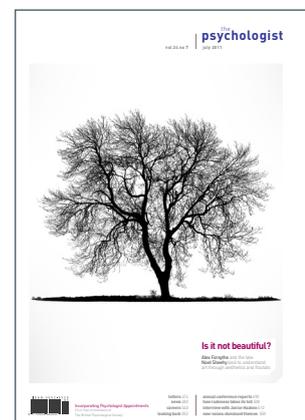
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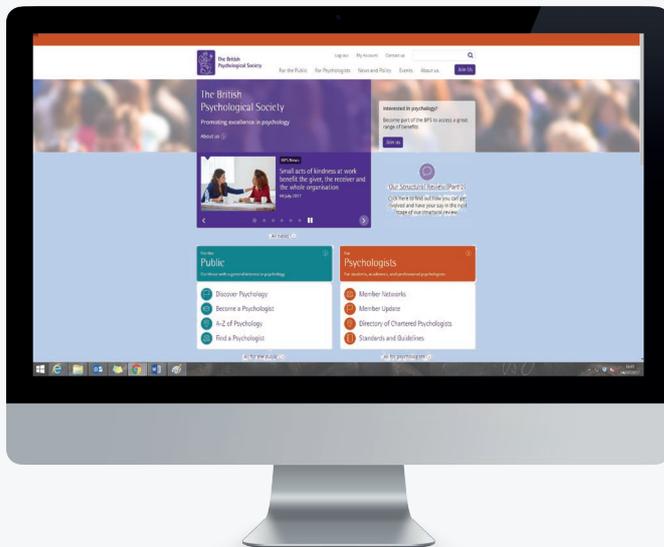
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The Society has offices in Belfast, Cardiff, Glasgow and London, as well as the main office in Leicester (see inside front cover for address).

## society notices

**Award for Equality of Opportunity 2019** *See p.19*  
**Early Career Conference Bursary Scheme** *See p.30*  
**Community Psychology Festival** Brighton, 13-14 September  
*See p.43*  
**BPS conferences and events** *See p.52*  
**Cognitive & Developmental Psychology Sections Joint Conference 2019**  
Stoke-on-Trent, 4-6 September *See p.53*  
**Division of Occupational Psychology Annual Conference**  
Stratford-upon-Avon, 8-10 January 2020 *See p.74*  
**CPD workshops 2019** *See p.79*