



Alumna Subject Graduated Dr Helen Warren
BSc Mathematics with Statistics
2007

Place of Work London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM)

Position Research Fellow in Statistical Genetics & Epidemiology



Dr Warren studied a Statistics PhD in Experimental Design. She then became a Research Assistant in Statistical Genetics & Epidemiology before being promoted to Research Fellow in 2012. Helen is a researcher on an MRC-funded project grant, researching into genetic risk prediction, with applications to cardiovascular disease and breast cancer, and also continues to publish her own research.

Did you apply to other universities, and what were your reasons for choosing RHBNC?

Yes, I attended several other UK university open days. They were all great fun as a Sixth former, and I'd recommend every prospective applicant to go to them. Royal Holloway was by far the friendliest, and even from walking around the beautiful campus that first time on the Open Day, I already felt a sense of home and belonging.

One of the other universities I applied to was Oxford and the interviews were at a similar time, so I think I appeared super-organised at my RHUL interview! So I'd also recommend all applicants to go prepared. The RHUL interview day was more informal and all the staff took a genuine interest in each of us as individuals, as well as our academic abilities, which I think is really important.

Even before starting at RHUL, between the Interview Day and the start of term, if I had any queries, the Maths Admissions Tutor was really helpful, and you already felt as if you had got to know some of the staff before term had started.

Why did you choose to study your particular course? What were your favourite aspects?

The best bit about the Maths course was the flexibility. As the course progressed, most of the study units were optional modules, so you could

choose your preferred topics, and there was such a variety to choose from.

The department was a perfect size. There were enough students to be able to offer this subject diversity, but also a small enough community of staff and students, so that everyone was known by name. I was also able to study one unit of French as an extra module, to continue my languages after A Level.

Were you involved in any clubs or societies? Do you have any anecdotes from your time here?

Yes, I certainly kept my diary full! There was something for everyone. I performed in shows with the dance society and I also had the opportunity to try new things like Cheerleading and Ballroom & Latin Dancing. In my 2nd year I was on the Cheerleading Committee, which as a Maths student, inevitably made me the Treasurer! We toured the country competing successfully in national competitions as well as performing in the SU and supporting our RHUL American Football team with sideline cheering.

At Freshers' Fayre I was excited to discover a German Drama Society...I'd done both German and Theatre Studies in Sixth Form, but there wouldn't have been enough days in the week to do both

clubs separately! The production in my 1st year was "Die Physiker", so when they found out I was a Maths student, I was cast as Isaac Newton!

The Christians Together Society was also a great way of meeting people, and provided very good links for students between the university and local Churches in the community.

What was life like at Royal Holloway?

Like anywhere, what really makes a place is the people. By being a campus university, you have the ideal environment to form close friendships with other students you live with in halls, study with on your course and socialise with in clubs and societies. This provides such a friendly atmosphere, which would be much harder at city universities spread across towns.

Do you have an outstanding memory of your time at College?

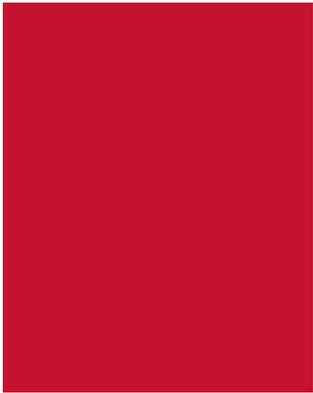
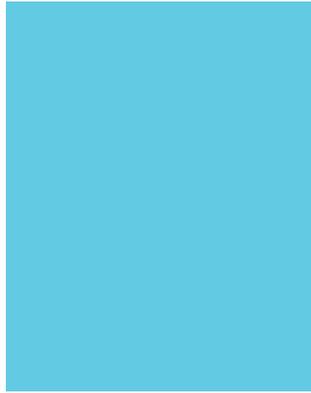
As well as the daily campus community life that I enjoyed, some highlights of my time at RHUL are the Summer Balls and Graduation Day. These are great ways to celebrate your achievements with your peers. At RHUL we are so lucky to have the Founders Building on campus as such a magnificent location for these, with its traditional chapel, grassy quads and grand turrets. This makes the days extra special.

Great minds *go on to* great places



people with passion

“Before I knew it, I was being given the encouragement and support to challenge myself.”



Was your passion for Maths/your career found whilst at the College?

Definitely. When you study Maths at university, you appreciate it more. At school, everything is textbook focussed. It's fascinating to discover the history of Maths, rather than just taking it for granted and there's a lot more to explore than just Pure/Core, Statistics & Mechanics from A Level! In the final year in particular, some of the lecturers gave us an insight into the current research questions related to this topic. That's when I realised that Maths is an ongoing subject and still has unanswered questions needing to be researched.

I hadn't always aspired to being an Academic! In the Summer after my 2nd year, I participated in the University of London's City Course, which our Careers Service had advertised. This actually helped to confirm that a job in the financial sector wasn't for me! Then after especially enjoying the statistics courses and seeing interesting applications to medical statistics, I plucked up the courage to say to my lecturer "This is what I want to do!" to which the response was, "Let's chat over coffee" and before I knew it, I was being given the encouragement and support to challenge myself and apply for a PhD, as many such careers, whether in research or pharmaceutical industries, for example, prefer postgraduate experience.

Have you kept in touch with any of your lecturers?

Yes, it has been useful to keep in contact with some of my lecturers. They're always interested to hear our latest news. I heard from one Senior Lecturer not long after leaving RHUL, to inform me that I had won the University of London Sherbrooke Prize, which was a lovely surprise!

During my PhD I went to a seminar hosted by the Maths Department. Then, as a visiting colleague, it was fun joining them for coffee in the staff room!

In August 2010, I married Alex Warren, whom I had met on my Maths course. We had the same Personal Tutor, Dr. Christine Davies, and she and our statistics lecturer, Ed Godolphin, attended our wedding ceremony.

What has been your career path since graduating?

After my BSc, I studied for my PhD in Statistics. I developed a real passion for research, so I applied for academic jobs. London had the best choice of positions and I was luckily successful for the first job I was interviewed for, at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM). I began as a Research Assistant in Statistical Genetics & Epidemiology, and was then promoted to Research Fellow. I am still also continuing to publish journal papers related to my PhD topic to increase my publication record.

Please tell us about your current role.

My main project researches into statistical methods for genetic risk prediction and is applied to real-life datasets. It is exciting to work within a multi-disciplinary team and collaborate with other universities. As an applied statistician, I have enjoyed learning about genetics, biology and medicine along the way. This work focuses mostly on cardiovascular disease, but I've also had the opportunity to be the primary analyst for a large breast cancer genetics study.

In addition to my research, I also have lots of teaching responsibilities, which as well as being great career experience, also provide a nice variety to my job. Other aspects to academia that I enjoy are presenting at conferences and reviewing other people's journal papers.

Why would you recommend us as a place to study? Do you recommend us to your contacts?

Yes, I have already recommended RHUL to others. A family friend was considering maths at RHUL, so I gave him a tour and was proud to show him my Halls of Residence and my department. He was amazed how friendly the campus was, as I knew and waved to so many people as we walked around campus! He has since enjoyed his Maths degree here and successfully got a graduate job, so he is very grateful for my recommendation.

For more Alumni Profiles visit: www.rhul.ac.uk/alumni/profiles/