Why did you choose to study at Royal Holloway?
Well my story starts in Holland, as I studied at the British School in the Netherlands. So for me, choosing a university was initially confined to judging a prospectus by its cover.
There I was, browsing the various information booklets in the library, when all of a sudden Founder's building on the front cover of the prospectus caught my eye.
I then discovered the College's excellent credentials and facilities, as well as being part of the University of London and indeed only a short train ride from the capital.
When I arrived on campus for an interview, I felt immediately at home. The beautiful setting and the excellent English department made it clear that Royal Holloway was the place for me.

What is your fondest memory of Royal Holloway?
There are so many to choose from, but my favourite memory is one that actually takes place in Nepal in 1996.
I had joined the College's Expedition Society and we embarked on a project to study in the impact of the British Gurkha army on Nepalese hill tribes. Six of us spent two months in a remote village in the Himalayas, and had an unforgettable time that I still think fondly of to this day.
To help fund our trip we looked for sponsors, we collected money on the streets of Windsor and we also applied to be one of a handful of university expeditions who would be paid to record their experiences. It was for an independent radio documentary company contracted to BBC Radio 4 to produce a series on the adventures on student expeditions. We were successful and I volunteered to be responsible for the radio reporting.
I will also never forget a certain night out – one that led to lasting friendships. A group of us on the English Literature course had, for some reason, never socialised. We'd know each other by face and in lecture halls, but none of us suggested going for a group drink in the Stumble Inn until the second year. An uproarious evening led us to the Students' Union.
The last song the DJ played was Hey Jude by The Beatles. The lights had come on, the music had stopped, but our group had locked arms and continued singing the La La La bit at the end. The instant camaraderie of the night sealed our friendship.
Every time I hear that song I am taken back to that night. We've all got kids and jobs now, but back then we were care-free students having a ball.

What did you enjoy most about studying in the English Department?
Apart from the pleasure of studying under learned academics, I enjoyed the variety of the modules offered, from American Literature to Stylistics. I also enjoyed spending hours doing research in the beautiful Founders library.

Why did you decide to also study a Masters at Royal Holloway?
At the time I was very keen on embarking on an academic route and wanted to hone in on analysing the language of literature. I remember really enjoying the smaller seminar discussion groups and talking with my fellow students about certain aspects of a novel, or a play.

What is the most important thing that Royal Holloway has taught you?
In short: writing and researching. Looking back at my rather flowery essay style in my first year it's perhaps hard to imagine it's the same person writing concise clear stories for BBC News Online. But with the one-to-one sessions with tutors I learnt not only about my subject, but also the art of researching a topic, and then writing about it with an argument clearly set out.
What has been your career path since leaving Royal Holloway?
Well I travelled round Australia for a year after my Masters – and from working at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation there I landed a job at my local newspaper in Reading. From there I applied to become an online journalist at the BBC. After developing a passion for unsigned bands and supporting the local music scene I ended up presenting a show about it – which then became BBC Introducing Berkshire.
I now freelance at BBC 6music and have presented two BBC Introducing shows on there. I also compere on the BBC Introducing stage at the Reading Festival.

What inspired you to become a journalist?
Journalism is famously incredibly hard to get into, but thanks to my reporting stint on the Royal Holloway expedition to Nepal I had caught the bug early.
Out there in Nepal I had to interview different people – despite a language barrier, as well as report on how things were going within the RHUL team. Tempers could get frayed, and we were thrown in at the deep end, so I cut my teeth not only reporting hard news but also covering the more human interest angles.
I like writing and researching, approaching stories from different angles as well as holding people/companies/government bodies to account. We are the voice of the people, we report what goes on in our world and our communities. That gives me a real buzz.

What do you enjoy most about your work?
I have to be honest and say that presenting a music show on radio is the favourite part of my job. Music is my real passion, and I love broadcasting that to whoever wants to listen. I love people and finding out about their stories, I love giving young unsigned bands a platform on the BBC – I enjoy the idea of communicating to people who listen to my show for enjoyment.

I also have a great sense of pride in working for the most respected broadcaster in the world. We are at the forefront of journalism, music and broadcasting innovation. It's an incredibly exciting environment to be working in.

What do you hope to achieve in the next ten years?
I sincerely hope I’ll still be with the BBC – I’d like to do more radio presenting and continue on with my online journalism. I also hope to expand my family.

What exciting projects or pieces are you working on at the moment?
I’ll be heading up BBC News Online South’s Paralympics coverage, and we’re busy preparing coverage for the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee and of course the Olympics itself. On the music front – the major summer festivals are just around the corner, so I’ll be getting involved in the selection process for getting bands to play on the BBC Introducing stages.

What advice would you give to aspiring journalists?
Set up a blog or a podcast and keep it updated. There are so many ways of getting your articles read and getting your voice heard nowadays. Employers like seeing that you’ve taken your own initiative, and it means you’ll have more to put on your CV.
From there, start applying for work experience – ring your local newspaper, your local radio stations – email them without badgering them too much. Offer to phone bash, work the graveyard shifts, make the tea – anything!

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