

THE CISS ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE CISS ALUMNI COMMITTEE



PHOTO: BRODIE LAWRENCE



IN THIS ISSUE:

ACCOMPLISHED ALUMNI: NANKAI UNIVERSITY; MORGAN STANLEY

STUDY ABROAD OPPORTUNITIES

INTERVIEW WITH MARTIN MCDERMOTT, HEAD OF SCOTTISH OFFICE IN BEIJING
ALUMNI OPINIONS: CHINESE RESTAURANTS, BOOKS AND MORE!

UPCOMING EVENTS

WELCOME!

In our newsletter this month, you will find:

- Update from CISS.....1
- Interview with Martin McDermott..2-4
- Academic profile - Ariana Hardie.....5
- Career profile - Rhianna Leonard.....6
- Past CISS events.....7
- Upcoming CISS events.....7
- Celebrations8
- Restaurant reviews.....8
- Book review.....8
- Chengyu of the month.....8
- TV show review.....9
- Study/work opportunities9
- Get involved with CISS Alumni10

UPDATE FROM CISS

Hope you and your families are all keeping well!

Over the last two years we've all discovered the flexibility and potential of digital events, something which we've been pleased to see the CISS Alumni continue to leverage to great effect. The delivery of employability webinars and digital gatherings has shown a real commitment to community building, yet I was also excited to meet Ana in person, while she was speaking in person at the recent SCEN Youth Summit in Boroughmuir High School in Edinburgh.

We have heard countless stories of opportunities gained or valuable advice shared via the scholars' network, and it is through sharing your knowledge, experiences, and successes that this community builds in value. The newly formed newsletter is a fantastic way to encapsulate your work: recording both your contribution to raising the profile of Chinese language learning, and providing inspiration to future scholars and globally-minded students.

We will continue to pass your messages and knowledge to the Mandarin learners in the CISS schools network. We would love to hear from you with your creative ideas how we can do this more effectively. We would also like to know if there is anything we could do to help you with your career development and your Mandarin learning. Please feel free to contact me, Calum and Ellie even just for a casual chat.

2022 marks 10 years of CISS and we have some exciting projects, competitions and events lined up. We look forward to celebrating this milestone with you all, so keep your eyes peeled for more information on how you can get involved.

Wish you all a lovely Easter break and look forward to seeing more of you in person soon

- Wendy Green

INTERVIEW WITH MARTIN MCDERMOTT

This month we had the privilege of speaking with Martin McDermott, Head of the Scottish Government's Office in China. We discussed his role in the British embassy, the challenges posed by COVID, and the future of Scotland-China relations.

Having studied law at undergraduate level, how did you end up living and working in China?

The two things are entirely unrelated! I studied Scots Law with European Law at the University of Glasgow, with the intention of becoming a lawyer. During my degree, I also had the opportunity to study abroad in Holland which was great because I had always been interested in the international dimensions of law.

After graduation, one of my good friends moved to China to teach English. At the time, I thought it was crazy - China seemed so far away and so different. She had a great experience; maybe that was what planted a seed.

After I graduated, I began looking for jobs and received an offer to work for the Scottish Government. I have now worked for the Scottish Government for almost 18 years. In that time, I have worked in a variety of policy areas, including education, justice, corporate services. I also had the opportunity to work for the European Commission - I was interested in understanding how Scotland was viewed on the international stage.

The position of Head of the Scottish Government's Office in China was advertised within the Scottish Government, I applied, and I was lucky enough to get it. We arrived here in China in May 2017.

What did you know about China before you arrived? Had you studied Chinese before?

I had never visited China before I got the job. We came out for a week before the move to explore the city which was a great experience. I had taken some Chinese lessons with CISS before I arrived.



For posts with the UK government, some are "speaking" posts. In these posts, you are expected to be able to use the language in a work capacity. Applicants are supported to get their language up to the level required. My post is not considered a "speaking post".

Once I arrived in China, I took Chinese classes and made a lot of progress - I was then able get around in easily in China e.g., ordering in restaurants, directing taxi drivers. However, two years after being in China, my wife and I had baby twins which made it a lot more difficult to continue learning Chinese at the same rate as before!

What does a normal day look like in your job?

The answer is that there isn't really a normal day - that is one of the reasons I love this job.

A key part of my job is to build on existing people-to-people exchanges to showcase and raise the profile of Scottish culture, of Scotland as a tourist destination, and as a place to study.

I also work with Chinese companies and organisations to help them to think about Scotland as a business centre, and a place to grow their company.

Another priority is to talk more about Scotland's progressive policy interventions with Chinese audiences. For example, Scotland's policies on mental health, approach to child poverty, period poverty, protection of LGBT rights, our race to net-zero and focus on climate. We want to find ways to have these conversations in China and present Scotland as a progressive nation. I work with organisations across the Scottish public, private and third sectors to deliver a wide and varied picture of what Scotland has to offer.



However, in terms of day-to-day work, it is probably easiest to split my answer into two - pre-COVID and post-COVID. While the priorities in my work might not have changed, the way we do business has had to.

Pre-COVID, for each of these priority sectors: business, tourism and education - I would facilitate delegations from Scotland to come to China to work with provincial governments and organisations in Beijing and across China, and seek interested Chinese partners to visit Scotland.

Post-COVID, travel has obviously been restricted.

Instead of the travelling we were used to, we have worked with the local community and Scottish expats in China to maintain the visibility of Scotland, and the future aspiration to travel to Scotland. We have facilitated a lot of Zoom and Teams webinars and worked with local authorities to maintain their connections with provinces and cities.

It has been a tough time and we hope that things will open up soon so we can get delegations back to China to maintain the people-to-people contact.

What are the aims and objectives of the Scottish office within the British Embassy?

As I said, my priorities are about maximising people-to-people connections between Scotland and China and seeking to promote our economic interests; be that through and advancing education, innovation and research, or through cultural and policy exchanges.

For my work in China, there are many areas where those priorities align with UK government aspirations, and I work with colleagues across the British embassy to support our shared goals. I help UK government colleagues to understand why what Scotland has to offer is often some of the best of what the UK has to offer - for example, Scotland has some of the highest ranked universities in the UK - and we find opportunities to present this together to Chinese partners and promote Scotland and the UK.

How do you see the future of Scotland-China relations?

UK-China relations have shifted in the last few years and are more challenging, for a variety of reasons.

So, what does this mean for the future of Scotland-China relations and the work of the Scottish office here? There are still a lot of positive things happening. We still work to maintain links and promote Scottish and Chinese culture.

In Scotland, there were fantastic celebrations across the country for Chinese New Year, as well as an amazing light show at Edinburgh Castle. In China, we host an annual highland games, celebrate Burns Night and St Andrews Day to engage with both the Scottish expat community and Chinese people.

How would someone work in Scotland-China relations?

The most direct route to working in the embassy in China is to join the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). It represents all of the UK, and their network is massive. Representatives from other government departments also work within the embassy, for example, from the Department of Transport, Department for Education, Department for Food and Rural Affairs. The civil service is becoming more internationalised, with more of a focus on opportunities abroad.

Normally posts in the embassy in Beijing or other international posts are done on a 3-year basis, with the option to extend for one more year. However, because of COVID, I had an extra year added on. I am now coming to the end of my time in China. By the time I leave in the summer, I will have been here 5 years. It has been a good run and a great experience.

Working in China is not only possible with the embassy, but also with British companies in China. For example, working for the Scottish Chamber of Commerce and British Chamber of Commerce. Also, big companies in banking and consulting have graduate training schemes that often have a China office.

Why should young Scottish students learn Chinese?

I think it is vitally important for Scotland that we engage with language more broadly, whether that is Gaelic or more traditional European languages.

But Chinese is spoken by 1.3 billion people and China's impact on the world is becoming more prevalent. Although many Chinese businesses conduct business in English, I think it is vitally important that we are able to present ourselves in Chinese. As more businesses look to China as part of their growth strategy, they are going to be looking for people with language skills and knowledge about how to work with China. Having people who have an insight into China and with Chinese language skills will not only be beneficial for those individuals, but also for Scotland as a whole.



We are incredibly grateful to Martin for giving up his time and speaking with us!

Interview conducted by and written by Ailsa Brown (2017-2018)

ACADEMIC PROFILE

Ariana Hardie (2017-18), Chinese language with Business, Nankai University

What are you currently studying and where?

After completing the scholarship with CISS, I decided to continue my studies at Tianjin Foreign Studies University for one more year. I then decided to pursue a bachelor degree at Nankai University, also in Tianjin, majoring in Chinese language with Business. Upon completing my first year at Nankai, I successfully passed HSK 5. As a result, Nankai University not only granted me a scholarship, but also allowed me to skip into third year. I'm now in my final year of my degree, having now passed HSK 6 and preparing to graduate.



What has your academic career been like so far?

So far, it's been a great experience learning Mandarin. Before coming to China, I couldn't speak any Chinese so I had to start from the basics. Moving university also brought some challenges. Not only was I unfamiliar with the environment and the teachers, but I also didn't have any friends or people who could speak English. Although it was a bold decision, being out my comfort zone definitely forced my Chinese to improve much faster. I now speak Chinese 100% of the time in daily life.

What is your research focus?

The main focus of my degree is Chinese Business, including e-commerce, international business negotiations, and marketing (all classes are taught in Mandarin). After graduating I hope to seek a business career in the Chinese fashion industry.

What led you to focusing on fashion and business?

Since I was younger, I always wanted to have a career in the fashion industry. After coming to China, I realised how much I enjoyed learning Mandarin and how booming the Chinese market is. I chose my degree, which covers various business aspects, in order to gain a deeper grasp of the Chinese market, as well as improving my Mandarin. The Chinese fashion industry is filled with lots of creative people, and it's definitely an exciting career.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to do a degree in China?

Don't wait around for an opportunity. If you want it, put yourself out there. You're responsible for making your own dreams happen. If you want to learn a language, buy that plane ticket and go. If you don't know how to do something, just ask. Don't be ashamed to ask questions, don't be afraid to take risks and don't be afraid to start from the beginning. Be open minded to learning new skills, always improve yourself.

What is your favourite part about your degree?

Meeting people from all over the world & using Chinese to connect to one another. It's great making relationships with people where Mandarin is the common language.

CAREER PROFILE

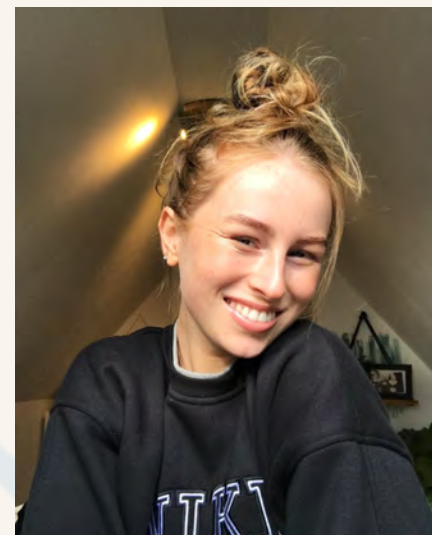
Rhianna Leonard (2015-2016), Operations Analyst, Morgan Stanley

What is your job? What did you study?

I am an Operations Analyst at Morgan Stanley. I studied Chinese at Edinburgh University.

What led you to working in this job?

Honestly - to say I tripped and fell into this industry wouldn't be entirely inaccurate. That being said, what originally attracted me to this job was the fact that MS was a global firm, and I knew I wanted to work somewhere where there were plenty of opportunities for relocation and working internationally. To say I lucked out would be an understatement as I truly enjoy the fast-paced nature of the industry and have found learning about the different intricacies of the global markets surprisingly fascinating.



What does a normal day look like in this job?

Staying true to the cliché - overall, no two days are really the same. My work is largely project based, working on a number of different projects in parallel. Depending on upcoming deadlines, you could spend 5 minutes or 5 hours working on one particular project's tasks. A focus of mine of late has been Client Account Openings in Asia markets. This involves reaching out to agent banks to get different forms approved and learning as much as possible about the process for each specific market in order to best serve the client. The variance of tasks ensures I am constantly learning on the job which I love.

What is one thing you really like about your job?

My favourite thing about my job is that I am able to use my language skills. China is one of the only financial markets which largely doesn't operate in English. It also operates in a completely different way to any other market - typical - but I genuinely find it so interesting.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to pursue a career in this area?

Be adaptable, and don't worry if you have no background in finance - I certainly didn't. The most important thing is your attitude, be willing to learn and work hard and you'll go far!

What skills do you need for this job?

Again, adaptability. Time-management is also really important, as is the ability to make quick decisions, and handle a large workload. I think a big one is working well in a team. Jobs like this (and jobs in general) can be really stressful - especially when you are mid-pandemic and trying to phone China from your living room. Working well and forming relationships with your colleagues will alleviate a lot of this stress and knowing when to ask for help will always come in handy.

PAST CISS EVENTS

CISS Alumni Chinese New Year Party, 3rd February 2022

Our amazing events team organised an online CNY party to give alumni to catch up, following on from the success of last year's zoom party. Cocktail recipes were sent out in advance ("The Tianjin Tiger", "The Hong Bao"!) and many tried them and enjoyed them! It was a nice, chill time to talk to everyone and see what people are up to now. We are looking forward to seeing more people in-person at future CISS Alumni events!



SCEN Youth Conference, Boroughmuir High School, 15th March 2022

Ana Scougall (2017-2018) represented CISS Alumni at the SCEN Youth Conference at Boroughmuir High School. She shared her Mandarin journey, discussed the role of CISS Alumni and what it can offer young people. Ana was really impressed with the number of students at Boroughmuir High School studying Chinese - incredibly inspiring!

Bubble Tea and Baozi Picnic, The Meadows, Edinburgh, 19th March 2022

In March, our Edinburgh Events team put on their first event, which was also our first in person event since 2019! Alumni from different years joined us on The Meadows in Edinburgh for a catch-up in the glorious sun fuelled by Sister Bao Baozi and bubble tea. It was great to hear about what people have been up to and the exciting academic and career developments on the horizon. We're looking forward to our next one!



UPCOMING CISS EVENTS

As you can see, CISS Alumni have been super busy in the last couple of months! If you would like to be part of future events, make sure you are following us on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, where future events will be advertised. Links to our socials can be found on the last page of this newsletter.

Keep an eye out for LinkedIn 101 Part 2 which will be taking place on Zoom in the next few weeks.

CELEBRATIONS

Congratulations to **Nathan Epemolu** (2016–2017) for his new job! Nathan will be starting the Commercial Sales and Leadership Grad Scheme with Diageo. Diageo is a British multinational beverage alcohol company, one of the world's largest producers of spirits and beers. Nathan has also been nominated for NUS Student of the year. So much good news!

Congratulations to **Ariana Hardie** (2017–2018) who passed her HSK 6 exam. HSK 6 is one of the hardest HSK exams and is currently the highest level. It has over 5000 characters!

Good luck to all our CISS Alumni who are going into the exam season. A lot of alumni are sitting their final university exams. It is going to be an intense exam period but we are sure our alumni will all do amazing and we will have a lot to celebrate in a few months!

RESTAURANT REVIEWS

Real Wan, South Side Glasgow, 5/5 stars

Their dumplings were incredible. Definitely have a look at their specials menu as I had lamb dumplings from the special menu with a mint dipping sauce

Din Tai Fung, Covent Garden, London, 4/5 Stars

Taiwanese restaurant. Kind of spenny but soo good! Handmade dumplings, worth the money. Gorgeous restaurant, you can watch the chefs make the dumplings. Xiao long bao, baozi and jiaozi - they are all so delicious! Definitely try the red bean buns!

BOOK REVIEW

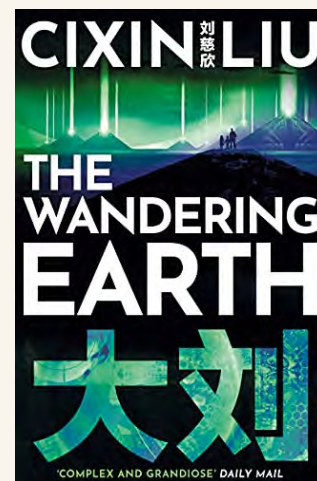
The Wandering Earth by Liu Cixin, 4/5

A collection of short stories by the popular sci-fi author Liu Cixin. I don't normally read short stories but I found that it was incredibly well-written and the concepts were very original. Here is rating of each story:

The Wandering Earth- 3, the ending ruined it for me; Mountain - 5 - thought the concept of the other planet was so original; Sun of China - 3; For the Benefit of Mankind - 3; Curse 5.0 - 4; The Micro-Era - 2 ;Devourer - 4

Taking Care of God - 3; With Her Eyes - 4; Cannonball - 5, liked the link to With Her Eyes

- Ailsa (2017–2018)



CHENGYU OF THE MONTH

塞翁失马 sai4weng1shilma3 - a loss may turn out to be a gain, a blessing in disguise

Literal translation: an old man living at the frontier of his country lost his horse

Story: A man lived on the northern frontier of China. One day, his horse ran away. He was upset, his father tried to console him. His father said it may be a blessing in disguise. Several months later, his horse returned, and it brought a splendid nomad horse with it. The man was very happy. His father said that this may end in disaster. One day the man was riding on his horse, and he fell and broke his hip. The man was very upset. His father said it may be a blessing in disguise. Several months later, the nomads came across the border and all the young men had to go into battle. In the war, nine of every ten men were killed. It was only because the man was unable to walk that he did not have to go to war.

Moral of the story: A blessing can become a disaster, a disaster can become a blessing.

Example: 他失去了那份稳定的工作后被迫做起了小贩，谁知道竟然发了大财，真是塞翁失马，焉知非福！ - After she lost that stable job, she was forced to become a vendor, who would have thought that she would actually make a fortune? It really is true that misfortune can be a blessing in disguise!

Source: "500 Common Chinese Idioms," by Liwei Jiao, Cornelius C. Kubler and Weiguo Zhang

TV SHOW REVIEW

爱很美味 Delicious Romance, YouTube, 5/5 Stars

A new TV show which follows the lives of 3 30-year-old women as they navigate through difficult relationships and problems at work. Sounds very basic but this show will honestly make you laugh out loud! The characters and situations are hilarious. Unlike some romance TV shows, the characters are not annoying. The show has had good reviews, with people saying that the female leads do not fall into the "superhero-girl-boss" trope which is evident in some shows. Also, the start of the series is set in lockdown in China which is very interesting to see. Cannot recommend this show enough! Available on YouTube with Chinese subtitles.



STUDY / WORK ABROAD OPPORTUNITIES

Peking University Pre-university Programme

A two-year preparatory course for high school graduates who wish to pursue an undergraduate degree at Peking University. After the two-year programme, those who pass the final examination will automatically be admitted to Peking University's undergraduate programme.

Must be aged 17 to 23 years old, applications close **15th May 2022**.

https://www.isd.pku.edu.cn/HOME/ADMISSION/Non_degree_Programs/Pre_University.htm

GET INVOLVED WITH CISS ALUMNI

Hey guys, we want to thank all alumni who have given time, effort and ideas to make this newsletter happen, we hope it's been an insightful read and gives a glimpse of the expertise, passion and achievement of the alumni since inception. But that's not everything, we are working harder than ever this year to create something truly professional and unique here in Scotland. And we'll need as many of us as can to get involved to see the CISS Alumni grow from strength to strength. There are multiple ways you can do this!

Subcommittees

Even if you have a spare hour a week, this can be a way to get involved without having to commit to a full committee role. This is an informal role, helping with the current work of the CISS Alumni committee. We have subcommittees in the following areas:

- Social Media
- Glasgow Events
- Edinburgh Events
- Alumni Liaison
- Newsletter

If you are interested in getting involved with a subcommittee, drop as a line at: ciss.alumni@outlook.com or message our Facebook or Instagram pages (both found at "cissalumni")

Newsletter

If you would like to contribute to the next newsletter, you can write reviews or give someone a shoutout for the celebrations page using the following Google Docs:

Celebrations:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeU8IfcftN9wzlmkyyy6TCpIPzU8ImX8qxEWTJNDjG5bMl4Gw/viewform?usp=sf_link

Book recommendations (any books!):


https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScHszIsO8rd9yFTqo4Av-5pLgNgG0vnITohLYFGrGwlbTewIQ/viewform?usp=sf_link

Restaurant recommendations (any restaurant!):

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeO6NjPJs8-cl5O6cnVhcfzG7vtNE7OJQYTrNDXr-aRFbEzQ/viewform?usp=sf_link

We are really keen to make sure this alumni makes and creates things that at first instance, interest the alumni, if you want Chinese classes, say so, help us plan them! **Get in touch** via:

@ ciss.alumni@outlook.com

 <https://www.strath.ac.uk/humanities/confuciusinstituteforscotlandsschools/scholarship/cissalumni/>

 <https://www.instagram.com/cissalumni/>

 <https://www.facebook.com/CISSalumnischolars>

 Group (for scholars): <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1931393547136913>

 LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/ciss-alumni>