

## ALUMNI – Robyn Dowson

I waved goodbye to Kenilworth in August 2010, having achieved A Levels in Psychology, English Literature and Theatre Studies. I was accepted to onto a BSc in Psychology at Cardiff University, my first choice university. I specifically chose a course that included a year in industry, as I wanted to gain relevant experience before I graduated. I completed a year in industry as a Research Assistant within the Cerebra Centre for Neurodevelopmental Disorders at the University of Birmingham in 2013. In my role as a Research Assistant I worked along two PhD students who were researching the behavioural phenotypes of rare neurodevelopmental disorders, such as Fragile X and Cornelia de Lange syndromes. This placement was very rewarding as I got to work closely with families whose lives had been affected by these genetic conditions, and I was able to see how research could significantly benefit children with genetic syndromes, and their families. It was during my placement year that my interest in psychological research first began to take shape, and on returning to Cardiff for my final year I applied to a research Masters programme at the University of Manchester to continue my research training. I graduated from Cardiff University in 2014, with a First Class Honours degree, and was accepted unconditionally onto a Psychology MRes programme.



Having completed my Masters degree with a Distinction, I was accepted onto a PhD programme at the University of Manchester. My PhD is looking to understand the first-hand experiences of people living with dementia when they engage with music. I am working with the Manchester Camerata orchestra, who run innovative music projects for people living with dementia in care homes. I love that my PhD has combined many of my significant interests, including psychology and music, and I was very excited when my PhD work was featured within a Guardian article back in February (<https://www.theguardian.com/social-care-network/2016/feb/29/music-projects-cut-cost-dementia-care>). I am now coming to the end of my first year of my PhD, and I have enjoyed every moment of it so far. I never imagined my path following my time at Kenilworth School would lead to me spending 9 years at university in total; but I have embraced every opportunity that has come my way and this is where it has led me. In the future, I hope to work with people living with dementia in order to enhance their quality of life through the use of creative arts activities.

If you are interested in following my PhD journey I blog with a fellow PhD student about our experiences: [www.twophdgirls.wordpress.com](http://www.twophdgirls.wordpress.com)

I also tweet about my research and interesting articles related to the use of the creative arts in dementia care. My twitter handle is @robyndowlen