Richard Burr has had a busy year. He was the bookies’ favourite to win the BBC’s Great British Bake Off, achieving the ‘star baker’ accolade five times during the series, but he narrowly missed out on taking the title in the final. His outstanding performances and affable personality mean that invitations to appear on television shows and to judge cake sales continue to pour in.

Richard gained a first-class BSc in Biodiversity and Conservation at Birkbeck in 2012. He was in the process of applying to a Master’s degree in Geographic Information Science at the College, when he found out that he would be appearing on Bake Off.

Clearly someone who is not afraid of a challenge, Richard began his first degree at Birkbeck shortly before the birth of his first daughter, and by the time he graduated, he had a second daughter too. He also managed to combine evening study with new parenthood and running the family building business in north London.

Richard recalled: “One evening I mentioned to my wife that the first thing I’d do if I won the lottery would be to go to university and get a degree. From that moment on it became inevitable that I would end up at Birkbeck. My wife Sarah (née Bradshaw) studied for her Master’s degree in London Studies there from 2001 to 2003 and loved it. And of course it’s the ‘go to’ institution for people that work – it’s perfectly set up to support people that have a life outside of their studies.”

Having dropped out of his first degree at another university, Richard was anxious about going back to study. He said: “After my first university experience I’d mentally assigned myself to the academic scrapheap. Birkbeck was so different from my first time at university though – the tutors consistently made studying a joy. “I don’t think I would have applied for the Bake Off if I hadn’t had the confidence boost that Birkbeck gave me and the experience of taking the plunge with something and it working out brilliantly. The Bake Off and evening study crossed over in a lot of ways as well. For both of them you need to be determined, work hard and love what you’re doing.”

The television series may now be over, but there are still opportunities arising from it, and Richard is also “trying to keep the family business spinning”. Nor has he abandoned the idea of coming back to Birkbeck for his Master’s degree. “I’m in a very lucky position,” Richard mused, “I have three avenues open at the moment – building, baking and Birkbeck. At the moment I don’t want to close off any of those, so I’m trying to live three lives at once!”

Richard Burr’s baked goods were a hit on television screens nationwide during The Great British Bake Off in 2014.