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Clarkson hit by pie at degree ceremony

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The controversial BBC motoring presenter Jeremy Clarkson today received an honorary degree from Oxford Brookes University - and a banana meringue pie in the face from an environmental protestor.

Mr Clarkson was met by a peaceful demonstration of around 20 activists who objected to his being awarded the degree. During a photocall following the ceremony one campaigner threw the pie, which protestors later claimed was organic, in his face.

Dee Lock, a student of social policy at Oxford Brookes, who has helped coordinate a "loose coalition" of environmental activists and a petition signed by 2,700 people against the awarding of the degree, said: "The problem with Mr Clarkson is that he's a bit of a joke and a bit of a buffoon. The problem with awarding his honorary degree is that Brookes is proud of its environmental and inclusivity programmes and Clarkson is the antithesis to this."

She said that the demonstration was "good natured", and later witnessed the pie incident. "It was all organic and free range and fair trade I'm told," she said.

A spokeswoman for Oxford Brookes, speaking prior to the pie incident, said: "Mr Clarkson seemed very relaxed. He arrived quite early and spent a long time talking to one of the lecturers who runs student car racing programme.

"The whole thing about Brookes is that we're at the heart of formula one country here. We have an engineering course where students can specialise in cars, students can build cars and they came 13th in the world in a competition for student car design and build recently," she said. A different spokesman added later that they had no comment to make about the pie.

Billy Bragg, the leftwing political singer and songwriter, is also due to be awarded an honorary degree from the university later this week. "It's nice to get a vibe off these people so I'm very happy to go along and take part," he told EducationGuardian.co.uk.

"To be honest if I was stuck in that crowd I'd go and talk to [Jeremy] Clarkson. At least I'd have a vibe of where he's coming and we'd have something to talk about."

Other Oxford Brookes honorary degrees due to be handed out this week include Sir Michael Brady, BP professor of information engineering at University of Oxford, Henry Chakava, the chairman of East African Educational Publishers, one of Kenya's largest publishing companies, Caroline Elam, the editor of the prestigious arts magazine The Burlington and the architect Peter Clegg.

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