

AUTUMN 2000

ISSUE 6

apex

Aston University Alumni Magazine

Aston honours
outstanding
achievers in
degree
congregations

What a performance
looking into the
art of Aston

Building bridges
Aston graduate
seconded to
UN Task Force


ASTON
UNIVERSITY



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Special thanks goes to all alumni who contributed to this issue of Apex. Apex is published twice a year for alumni of Aston University. Letters, photographs and news are very welcome but we reserve the right to edit any contributions. Please address all correspondence to the Alumni Relations Officer. The opinions expressed in Apex are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Alumni Relations Office or Aston University.

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Pictures for What a performance
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Welcome to the sixth edition of Apex, the magazine for Aston alumni all over the world, especially if you’ve only just joined our mailing list. We’re delighted to welcome you as a member of an ever-growing international network of Aston graduates.

Our design makeover in edition five certainly got you reaching for your pens, word-processors and emails! We had a huge response with lots of positive and encouraging comments. If you have any suggestions for future editions of Apex or the work of the Alumni Relations Office, why not write to us at the address on the left.

So, what’s in store for you this time?

There’s been a huge outpouring of public art for the Millennium. But what about the sculptures around the Aston Triangle? We’ve researched their histories and delved into the backgrounds and careers of their sculptors. For those of you who have asked us about such things as the lattice masts, the doors of the College of Technology and the Triangle Cinema, turn to page 13 to find the answers to your questions.

And it’s not just sculpture: drama is also at the ‘Art of Aston’. We feature the showbusiness life of graduate Laurence Saunders, up-and-coming young actor who has already played leading classical theatre roles and appeared in television. His art is also his business – he sees each new role as a contract he has to chase and win. Watch out for Laurence in the future.

All the world’s a stage for Aston graduates and we gain a unique insight into current-day Bosnia as Aston graduate and police officer Nick Jacobs swaps his Erdington beat for the United Nations International Police Task Force in Mostar. Nick brings us his own observations of Bosnia as he works with his colleagues to establish a professional police force.

Got a taste for travel? Turn to page 23 for details of the Aston University Alumni Travel Programme. We’ve teamed up with leading travel companies to offer our alumni tempting itineraries.

There’s also news of your University: read about the latest research and developments in your former School or Department, meet this year’s honorary graduates and get yourself ready for the Students’ Guild facelift. It’s not just Apex that’s had a makeover!

As ever we’ve our regular feature, ‘Where are they now?’, giving you a snapshot of the lives of thousands of successful Aston graduates all over the world. So, whether you’re looking for news on research, reunions or alumni groups, it’s important to keep in touch with us. Fill in the Graduate Update Form in the centre of the magazine, or pass it on to any Aston alumni you know who don’t receive Apex.

Finally, an important interview with the Vice-Chancellor can be found on page 4 regarding the establishment of a small task group to investigate the feasibility and desirability of full integration or merger of the Universities of Aston and Birmingham. If you would like to express your opinions on this or anything else in Apex, please write care of the Alumni Relations Office.



Contents



Aston and Birmingham University in talks	4
Award-winning graduate	5
Building bridges	6
Roundup	8
Aston honours	9
What a performance	10
Aston and the arts	12
Bookshelf	14
True to form	14
And the winner is...	14
Graduate update form	15
TCS Triumph	19
Aston’s hospital life-saver	19
New degrees for the information age	20
Car wars	20
Market leaders	21
One-stop shop for business	21
Language teaching for the 21st century	22
Professor’s grand tour	22
A new departure for Aston alumni	23
Postgraduate opportunities	23
Where are they now?	24
Presidents present practical philosophy	29
Rattle bag	29
Reunions and events	30
Aston University Gifts	32

Merger will not happen if not in the interests of staff and students says Vice-Chancellor



Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mike Wright

Aston and Birmingham University in talks

Aston University and Birmingham University have established a small task group to investigate the feasibility and desirability of full integration or merger of the two institutions into a completely new university. The task group, which consists of senior lay members of each university, Vice-Chancellors and senior academics, has been charged with delivering a recommendation (for or against) as soon as possible, and this is likely to be in the Spring.

In a recent interview, Aston's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mike Wright, said: "One of the key roles of the Joint Strategy Group is to make sure that anything that happens is in the interests of staff and students and, if a merger is not in their interests, we won't do it." Professor Wright also confirmed that, if a merger is recommended, there will be a full consultative process with Aston staff, students and alumni to gauge their response. "We have to encourage people, including alumni, to make their views felt and take note of them. Ultimately of course, it is a matter for Convocation in our case or Court in Birmingham's case, so this isn't something that can be orchestrated behind closed doors. It has to be done openly and that's the right way to do it."

Professor Wright commented on the possible timescale for a merger: "If the

decision were to go for full merger, I don't see that that could be achieved in much less than 18 months or two years. There is potentially a huge prize to be won for the universities and for the city of Birmingham. It's really a question of the net benefit, of balancing the pros and cons and that's why we're looking at the arguments for and against."

If the joint task group does recommend full integration, alumni will be consulted. If, in the meantime, you would like to express your opinions to the Vice-Chancellor, please write care of the Alumni Relations Office.

For several years now there has been government pressure for regional collaboration at all levels as well as efficiency cuts in government funding. Universities are responding by examining how their physical and human resources can be used more efficiently and the joint task group originally set up by Aston and Birmingham looked at areas such as joint programmes, joint projects, student residential provision, management information services, external affairs, IT provision and learning support to see if common sense savings could be made.

On the back of these discussions, which began in June 1999, the discussion of full integration is seen as the logical next step but merger is by no means a foregone conclusion.

Asked about his own personal feelings toward the merger, the Vice-Chancellor had this to say: "I am an Aston man through and through. If you cut me in half like a stick of rock you'll find 'Aston' lettered through me. But, on the other hand, time doesn't stand still. I think being an Aston graduate and an Aston academic actually helps in this process because I know the place, I know the people, I know the strength of tradition here and I know what our students think of the University. They regard it very highly indeed and that's something that has to be taken very much into account. That's why, under no circumstances, is the Aston tradition going to be lost in some kind of amorphous larger institution. And I am sure that the people at Birmingham University have got the same view. We are under no illusions how difficult this is going to be and how tortuous the path might be to full integration and the fact that we might not go all the way to full integration. But unless you look at it sensibly and objectively and coolly, you'll never be able to rationalise the potential for gain and the risks involved. What we're doing at the moment is actually going through that process of cool objective analysis."

Award-winning graduate

Aston Psychology graduate, Petra Boynton, has been nominated for the Cosmopolitan Woman of Achievement 2000 for her outstanding work in education and research.

How were you nominated for the award?

Another Aston graduate nominated me by responding to Cosmopolitan's advertisement. I then gave Cosmopolitan my CV.

When did you find out that you were in the top ten finalists?

When we were at The Four Seasons Hotel in London. I had no idea that I would be nominated in the top ten. When they read out my name, I couldn't believe it. My family is delighted and my parents are still deciding who to phone. It's very exciting for them. It wasn't until I received the letter of confirmation that I realised just how overwhelmed with joy I was.

"Aston Business School is internationally known for business excellence and prides itself on carrying out research that can be of benefit to society. My work will always be associated with that reputation for excellence."

What was your inspiration to head towards research psychology?

Rather surprisingly, my school told me to leave at the age of 16 and look for a Youth Training Scheme. My mother and father were both from a performing background and research wasn't something I'd thought about at the time. A local technical college ran an O-level course in Psychology, but my first inspiration came from a book about an autistic child. At this point I had decided I wanted to help people; I'd always had an interest in caring for people, but not in the traditional

medical sense. I learnt at an early age that psychological illness couldn't always be blamed on one single reason. This idea led me to look at the way society operates and the number of different things that can have an effect on human behaviour.

What was the focus of your PhD research?

I carried out my research in Aston Business School where I explored people's reaction to explicit materials. I felt that this research was often completed in a biased manner, not always suited to laboratory settings. I also discovered that pre-existing knowledge of materials and opinions were important. Reactions changed when new information was gained from the participants. For example,

out research that can be of benefit to society. My work will always be associated with that reputation for excellence.

What's your next step?

Currently I am at The Royal Free Campus, part of University College London, and will probably spend another two years here working on a book about research methodology. I have become editor of *The Psychology of Women Section Review* in *The British Psychological Association Journal*. I am planning projects which aim to get people involved in medical research and to get people thinking about further education. My personal goal and strategy has always shown in my urge to help and care for people and, at the moment, I do this through research.

What is the most important piece of advice you would give someone following in your footsteps?

It's never too late to start, if you feel that there are prospects in a particular subject, don't let people put you off. You do need to be flexible, but overall you need to find out the best people to help you. Ask questions and get to know the right people.



Petra Boynton

"Mostar was once renowned for its beautiful bridge built in 1599 during the days of the Ottoman Empire. Sadly, this was blown up by the Bosnian Croat Army in November 1993. Its remains have been retrieved from the River Neretva and there are plans to rebuild it, but it will be a lot longer before the emotional bridges between the two sides are repaired."



Building bridges

In a city where the east-west divide is so acute that there is little opportunity to mix with other cultures, where the brand of beer you drink identifies your allegiance with a particular social group and where the other side of the city might just as well be the other side of the world, what realistic hope is there for a united and apolitical police force? Apex found Nick Jacobs (1980 BSc Political Studies and French) in the heart of Bosnia striving to realise this hope in the midst of a divided and nationalistic people. He recorded his own thoughts and observations for Apex.

Having worked all my career within a mile or so of the Aston campus, it has been quite an eye-opener to be seconded to the United Nations International Police Task Force in Bosnia – although the local Croats would prefer the more accurate title of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since October 1999, I've been living and working in Mostar, scene of some of the fiercest fighting in the Bosnian War of 1992 to 1995.

The Task Force was established under the auspices of the UN as part of the Dayton Peace Agreement which ended the Bosnian War. There are approximately 1,600 police officers here. The established figure is over 2,000 but, with demands in Kosovo

and elsewhere, we are unlikely to get back to that number.

Police officers on the team here come from all over the world. It's quite interesting to be working with foreign officers every day, some of whom come from countries without a long history of democratic and accountable policing. I have met some really excellent colleagues from such unlikely places as Ghana, Malaysia and Chile. One of the ablest officers under my command at the moment is

"Having worked all my career within a mile or so of Aston campus, it has been quite an eye-opener to be seconded to the UN International Police Task Force."

Hungarian. We come from very different backgrounds – firearms instructors, traffic officers, surveillance experts – but the real need is for practical and experienced street policemen.

Our supposed role is to try and create a professional police force based loosely on Western principles and devoid of political control and influence.

After a vicious three-sided civil war this is no easy task, particularly here in Mostar, the city that suffered more

structural damage than any other and which is now rigidly divided between the Croat west side of the City and the Muslims, or 'Bosniaks', in the east. There were also Serbs here before the War, but very few of them returned at the end of the fighting.

Although there has been a lot of rebuilding since the war, the damage is still widespread. My first home over here, although built post-war, had a garden gate riddled with bullet holes that I first mistook for woodworm! The

main road which a few years ago served as the 'front line' remains the boundary between the two communities on the east and west sides of the city. It looks like Berlin or Dresden in 1945. Mostar was once renowned for its beautiful bridge built in 1599 during the days of the Ottoman Empire. Sadly, this was blown up by the Bosnian Croat Army in November 1993. Its remains have been retrieved from the River Neretva and there are plans to rebuild it, but it will be a lot longer before the emotional bridges between the two sides are repaired.

It never ceases to amaze me how even the most educated and otherwise liberal-minded of people can harbour the most bizarre prejudices about the other 'sides'. The opportunity for the east and west to mix is very limited. Both groups freely accept the myth that if they cross over the divide, they will be attacked or at least followed by the opposition secret police. All palpable nonsense. But even some intelligent people believe such things.

"I'm here as a guest in this country and I think it is a matter of simple courtesy to be able to communicate in the native tongue."

The local people might mistrust each other, but on a personal level are usually very friendly to members of the large international community, and I'm happy to say that I am very good friends with people on all three sides.

Up until recently I had been stressing in all my letters back home to my family that there is less physical danger over here than virtually anywhere back home, provided one is not stupid enough to wander into a minefield, but, last night, during the middle of a multi-ethnic rock concert, someone fired off a large anti-tank weapon from a nearby hillside. The shell appeared to land in a cemetery, but it is possible that it had been aimed at the concert, which is very worrying. I was sitting outside with some friends having a quiet drink about half a mile away and the explosion was strong enough to rattle the windows. Apart from gunfire at weddings and Christmas, it was the first war-like noise I've heard since arriving here.

There are few facilities presently shared between the east and west. Plans are afoot to re-open the pre-war high school to allow students from both sides to study there. But, sadly, it will be in effect two schools, with Bosniaks

on one floor and Croats on another. The Bosniaks will use the school's pre-war name, the Croats will call it something else and there is little possibility of a common curriculum in the immediate future.

They have all stopped describing their common language as 'Serbo-Croat' and insist that it is really three separate languages, Serbian, Croatian & Bosnian. Although there are some important differences, it is like arguing that British, American and Australian English are totally unconnected. There always were differences within the language we used to call Serbo-Croat, but these were to do with geography and not national labels. A Serb living in Zagreb before the war would speak the same language as his Croatian neighbours, not the Serbian spoken in Belgrade. It seems that the whole question of language was hi-jacked by the politicians, particularly in Croatia, where a lot of new words have been created to replace indigenous words.



For example, the standard Serbo-Croat word for 'airport' is 'aerodrom', but this has been replaced in Croatia (and in Croat Herzegovina) by the contrived word 'Zra_na Luka' which is a literal translation of 'Air Port'. I am told that there are so many new words, there is a dictionary available for translating from 'old' to 'new' Croatian. All very confusing. My biggest challenge has been learning what is referred to universally as 'local language' to avoid the possibility of causing offence. I'm able to communicate after a fashion and I think the locals appreciate this. I'm here as a guest in this country and I think it is a matter of simple courtesy

to be able to communicate in the native tongue.

Uniting this country, particularly when there is no functioning central government is a mammoth task. Progress in all areas is very slow and there will be a need for some sort of international involvement in Bosnian affairs for years to come, although the UN Mission itself is working towards the end of 2002 as a withdrawal date.

The issues I get involved with on a day-to-day basis revolve around meeting other organisations and dealing with personnel and administrative issues. The biggest personal change for me is that my outlook is no longer as parochial as it was in the police back home. And I've realised that there is a much larger world.

While I have been here, there has been quite a change in the UN role. More and more of us are now based in local police stations and the emphasis has moved away from mere monitoring of the police towards training and development. Many of the local officers are keen to learn and want to be as professional as anywhere else.

I'm almost due to finish out here soon and, as the Home Office will not normally allow officers to remain beyond one year, it looks like I will be back walking the beat in Sparkhill or Erdington or somewhere as exotic before too long.



Nick Jacobs and colleague receiving UN medals

Roundup Around the world in...one page

Hot on the heels of our alumni all over the world, Apex has caught up with some of you currently living outside Birmingham.

Name: Deacon Daniels Whoknows

Degree: 1984 MSc Public Sector Management

Memories of Aston: It was my second stay in England. Upon arrival I was ushered into the Hall of Residence where I met various people from all around the globe together in one small TV common room. I remember vividly, on World Cup Day, the Asian student whom I politely asked to shift from his chair in order to create room for me. He became a close associate of mine from then on. The relationship was further enhanced when a few days later we met again in the shared kitchen where each of us curiously spied with interest the glaring peculiarities in our native dishes.

Current location: I work for Rivers State Hospitals Management Board in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, as the Director of Administration and Secretary to the

Board. I reside in Port Harcourt, the capital of the oil-rich Rivers State in Nigeria. I am also General Secretary of the Nigerian Alumni Branch.

Challenges: The Rivers State Hospital Management Board manages 37 general and cottage hospitals spread across the State. Currently the Nigerian Government is working towards financing the health sector through a health insurance policy. My office is represented on the Insurance Policy Committee in the State. The State Government has also introduced a free health policy package for specific age groups which my office is assisting to implement.

Message for other alumni: the Aston Alumni Relations programme is doing extremely well in reaching out to past students all over the world. I implore all past students to take advantage of the commendable services of the Alumni Relations Office.



Deacon Daniels Whoknows

Name: Jean-Toussaint Pindi

Degree: 1983 MSc Teaching English for Specific Purposes and 1988 PhD Modern Languages,

Memories of Aston: The introduction of personal computers in the mid 1980s and the positive impact on our lives. The following year the skylift was opened and I enjoyed riding in it in the evenings to have a panoramic view of the neighbourhood.

Post Aston: In early 1989 I was offered a job in Northern France as an ESP Consultant in a local firm providing continuing education in the workplace. I enjoyed doing the job as it allowed me to put into

practice the valuable knowledge I had acquired at Aston from my training on both the MSc and PhD. But in September 1999, I was offered a tenure-track lectureship in English for Economics at the University of Paris, Sorbonne, where I have been teaching ever since.



Jean-Toussaint Pindi

Name: Xin Yuan

Degree: 1999 MBA

Memories of Aston: a small, cosy, busy place; sandwiches for lunch and hot coffee from vending machines.

Current location: I am working as a Business Manager in Beijing for Lucent Technologies (China) Ltd, a US telecommunications manufacturer. The competition in this sector in China is intensive. The telecommunications service market has not opened up yet, but the equipment market has been there for over 15 years. Most of the key world players are in China – Alcatel, Motorola, Ericsson, Siemens, Marconi, Lucent, etc. With the boom in Internet applications, the data and communications market is growing at some 150% pa. Business is good.

Biggest challenge: To try and catch up with the ever-changing telecommunications technology (new products) and to meet the demand of Chinese customers in various industries.

Name: Eduardo de Uriarte

Degree: 1994 MSc Software Engineering and Applications

Memories of Aston: Being at Aston was the best years of my life. It was fun and interesting to share experiences with others from all over the world.

Current employment: District Manager (Operations) for Wal-Mart Stores Inc, Mexico City. New competitors are opening up now – a challenge to maintain our number one place in the retail industry.

Aston honours

At this year's Degree Congregations, Aston welcomed new honorary graduates as members of Convocation, acknowledging their achievement and contribution to their respective fields.



BBC Nine O'Clock News presenter Michael Buerk was awarded an honorary DSc for his contribution to broadcasting. He was educated at

Solihull School and began his career in newspaper journalism with Thomson Newspapers in Cardiff before moving to work on *The Daily Mail* in 1969. He subsequently worked in BBC Radio and HTV before rejoining the BBC. He has reported from more than 60 countries for BBC TV News since 1973 covering political, diplomatic and economic developments.



Jenny Bacon, Director General of the Health and Safety Executive, drafted much of the *Health and Safety at Work Act* in the 1970s. Before her

appointment as Director General, she held operational command of the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and the Offshore Division of the HSE. She was responsible for introducing and enforcing the new legislation on offshore safety that followed the Piper Alpha disaster in 1988. She also led the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate in developing policy on safe decommissioning of nuclear power stations.



Sir Michael Bishop CBE began his airline career at Manchester Airport in 1963 by setting up an aircraft handling business for a locally-based airline. When the

airline was taken over by British Midland Airways, he joined the new company and has remained there ever since holding the positions of General Manager, Managing Director and Chairman. He is also Deputy Chairman of Airtours plc and a non-executive Director of Williams plc. From 1991 to 1997 he was a Board Member of Channel 4 Television and Chairman from 1993 to 1997. He was awarded the CBE in 1986 and knighted in 1991.



Derek Harris, Chief Executive of Aston Science Park, began his career as a Management Accountant for the Granada Group, then Director for John Collier and Group Finance Director of Schlegel's UK operations before taking up various directorial and executive posts for Birmingham Technology Ltd. He was recently appointed President of one of Europe's most prestigious Business Associations, the European Business Network (EBN).



Robert Woolley MBE is Managing Director of Frederick Woolley Ltd, an engineering firm based in Newtown, Birmingham which manufactures presswork and manipulated tube and cable harness assemblies for the automotive sector. Committed to raising the skills base of the workforce in the West Midlands, he set up a learning centre with his wife offering training and the opportunity to learn new skills to re-enter the employment market. He is a founder

member of the Newtown Business Group and Director of Newtown South Aston City Challenge.



Aston's first ecumenical team of Chaplains **Fr Anthony Taylor**, **The Revd Malcolm Goldsmith** and **Canon Richard Bollard** (pictured left to right) commented that their awards brought recognition of the ongoing work of the Chaplaincy teams at Aston. Ordained in 1956, Anthony Taylor came to Aston as the first Roman Catholic Chaplain. Malcolm Goldsmith made history by becoming the first full time Chaplain to join a College of Advanced Technology in Britain. Richard Bollard was appointed to found a Free Church Chaplaincy at Aston in 1968.

Birmingham born and bred **Len Vale-Onslow** became the first centenarian to receive an honorary degree from Aston. This is the latest in a string of awards, from MBE to a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Motorcycle Action Group, which recognises his contributions to motorcycling and the community. He designed and built the Onslow Special Racing Motorcycle which was adapted for use in World War II.



For Laurence Saunders (1993 BSc Society and Government and Public Policy) life is one drama after another. From Shanghai to Scotland, Tamworth to Brookfield Farm in Ambridge, he has masqueraded as a news cameraman, a down-and-out, a pre-eminent biologist and brain scientist and a pesticides expert. Quite an achievement. But, as Laurence points out, success in the glittering world of show business relies on securing the next contract or role.

Highlights

Theatre: Westbury Fair, Macbeth, The Importance of Being Earnest, Up 'N' Under, A Midsummer Night's Dream

TV: Dalziel and Pascoe, Channel 4's Moviewatch

Radio: The Archers, From Blue to Black (www.totallyword.com), VIP

Film: Beach Boys, Still November

"I'm self-employed and have to go out and look for my next contract just like any other businessman."



What a performance

What drew you to tread the boards?

I was lured into the seedy world of show business by Frank Skinner and an offer of a fish supper. I'd responded to an advert in the local paper for extras in Skinner's new sitcom Blue Heaven.. Part-time acting classes at Birmingham's Old Rep followed and I was hooked. I then won a scholarship to train full-time at Birmingham Theatre School and have worked as a professional actor since the end of 1997. Originally, I was interested in writing and I wanted the chance to see the dramatic process through the eyes of the actor, but it now seems that acting has taken over! Nevertheless, it's a job like anything else. I'm self-employed and have to go out and look for my next contract just like any other businessman. Each project is different and so, at the moment, I enjoy getting up in the morning and going to work. When this stops, maybe I'll look for something else.

You've done TV, radio, film and theatre. Do you have a favourite genre?

Each one is completely different and enjoyable in its own way. Obviously theatre is live, so there's always the potential of something being beyond your control which makes it tremendously exciting. I think the idea is to aim for the illusion of spontaneity. The attempt of modern theatre to minimise this is a shame to some degree as this unknown quantity

enhances both the audience's and the actor's enjoyment of the play. Where theatre thrives on communion with the audience, film on the other hand builds up an intimacy with the camera.

Of all your performances, which role is your favourite?

In Diary of a Somebody I played Joe Orton, a playwright in the 1960s who, upon reaching the pinnacle of success, was murdered by his gay partner Kenneth Halliwell, who then killed himself. This production was very powerful. I had the privilege of speaking with Orton's sister. But for me each role is special. I accept those roles which seem interesting and challenging, turning down those which I really don't want to get involved in.

You've been involved with Theatre in Education. How important is TIE today?

I think it's very important. Drama isn't about prancing around in tights, it's about providing people with the ability to make an informed choice. Personally, I feel strongly about good Theatre in Education projects, where you are essentially providing people with information, posing questions and letting them make up their own minds. TIE allows audiences to participate in real-life scenarios, but explore how different reactions can alter outcomes. You are providing a safe environment for people to learn

how to act and react. Consequently, you hope their real-life decisions will be better informed. However, I don't think it should be about delivering a message – there's no quicker way to turn people off than by patronising them.

Are you happy with the current state of the arts?

I think it's a real shame that there is very little emphasis on drama in education nowadays. Drama can be so important in developing life skills, raising self esteem and expressing opinions. Surely this is what our education system should be aiming towards. And it shouldn't be just for young people either. I've worked on a project with adult violent offenders – a kind of anger management course – and the rate of re-offence is drastically reduced amongst those who've attended the programme. Work in film or television may be more beneficial in terms of your career profile, but I think this kind of work is of equal importance. Mind you, the money's better in television!

Laurence has a broad portfolio. He recently appeared in The Stuff That Minds Are Made On, a project funded through the Royal Society and British Association Millennium Awards Scheme to encourage understanding of science, engineering and technology. The play was written by Dr Chris Smith, Visiting Lecturer in Aston's School of Life & Health Sciences.

Aston has a long history of involvement with the arts. Student Guild societies such as the Jazz Club (pictured here in the 1950s) eventually grew into a fully fledged provision for art and culture in The Triangle Arts Centre. When this closed in the early 1990s however, there was no provision for the arts on campus. But, with the University Music Society planning full-scale productions, the arts at Aston are undergoing a renaissance. To celebrate this, Apex takes a look at some of the most famous works of art on campus and how staff and students have celebrated the arts over the years.



Members of the jazz club in the late 1950s

Aston and the Arts

Centre for the Arts

The Centre for the Arts was established in the early 1970s to encourage students and staff to participate in the arts on campus and in Birmingham in general. It was housed in an already famous building in Gosta Green where some of the very first TV transmissions had been broadcast in the 1940s. The studio was taken over by the University after the BBC moved to the regional broadcasting centre at Pebble Mill, but at the time Aston took it over, it was still used for making programmes for Radio Birmingham.

The old television studio made an ideal base for the arts groups already active on the campus. The theatre group was particularly popular, but music and visual arts attracted many members too. Membership of the centre cost 25p per

year, which entitled students, staff and the general public to reductions on tickets and the chance to participate in events and training courses. Both amateur and professional theatre events were staged in the theatre with full technical back up from lighting and sound crews.

Throughout the 1970s, the Centre went from strength to strength staging practical art and theatre classes and even hosting a regular craft market. By the late 1980s, the Triangle Cinema was well known throughout the Midlands as a venue for art-house and low budget British and European films, many of which would not have had a general release in more mainstream cinemas. The Centre for the Arts closed in the early 1990s and the building now houses Waterstone's booksellers.

Aston's monumental public art

The Tipping Triangles

The Tipping Triangles sculpture stands 18ft high and dominates the water fountain at the front of the Nelson Building. In 1987, British sculptor Angela Connor, won a competition to produce a piece of public art for the University in 1987. The finished sculpture was unveiled to the public in 1994.

Angela Connor is an internationally renowned sculptor who is currently working on a piece that will become the tallest sculpture in Europe when it is unveiled. *Irish Wave* will soon be put in place in an industrial estate in Dublin.

Angela's professional sculpture training began in the late 1960s with an apprenticeship to Barbara Hepworth in the thriving artists community at St Ives, Cornwall. She spent around six months there before leaving to live in Chelsea and earn a living as a professional artist. At first, like all new artists, she struggled, but was then introduced to the Duke of

Devonshire who gave her a commission. This led to the start of a long working relationship with the Duke that has continued to the present day. A water-powered bronze sculpture, entitled *Revelation*, was unveiled last year at Chatsworth.

Her portrait busts include Lucien Freud, Noel Coward, Charles de Gaulle and Sir John Betjeman. But it is her large, open-air sculptures that have attracted the most critical acclaim. She works with metal, resin, marble and onyx and manipulates natural effects such as water, wind, shadow and sun to work as integral parts of her sculptures.

Angela Connor in front of the Tipping Triangles sculpture



The Aston Cross

These five inter-linked stone sculptures were commissioned by the University in 1975, supported by an Arts Council Grant. Each piece was designed to be sited at a particular point on the Campus. The artist, John Maine, explained at the time: "The five stone layout is intended to strengthen a sense of a unified campus. By dispersing the work through the site each piece becomes an active part of the sculpture. The relationship of sites and structures is designed to sustain involvement in the sculpture for people who live and work here, and who will pass one or more of the stones every day."



Professor McWhinnie of The School of Engineering & Applied Science (centre) chats to sculptor John Maine (third from right) at the unveiling of the Aston Stones commission

Aston University's Centre for the Arts, which offered a theatre, cinema, concerts and practical art classes throughout the 1970s until it closed in the early 1990s



John Maine was born in Bristol in 1942 and trained at the Royal College of Art from 1964 to 1967, followed by a two-year apprenticeship at the Gloucestershire College of Art. From 1979 to 1980 he was the first artist to be given a Fellowship at Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

His first one-man exhibition was at the Serpentine Gallery in London in 1972. He has since exhibited throughout Britain, winning a host of prestigious awards, including a Henry Moore Foundation Award in 1991. He was elected a Royal Academician in 1995.

John Maine's work is characterised by his public art sculptures. His preferred material is Portland stone and many of his monumental works reflect mathematical systems, solids and surface plains.

Question time

Sometimes we're asked the strangest of things. Most times we can answer your questions about Aston's history in a flash. After all, we meet so many of you that your stories of when you were here stick in our minds. But, sometimes, even we're foxed by your puzzlers. Not wanting to admit defeat however, we've gathered all those queries which we couldn't resolve, done a spot of research and are proud to present our findings here. We think we're more or less spot on, but if you've anything to add, or if you have a contribution to make, please write to the Alumni Relations Office.

Whatever happened to the lattice masts on top of the oldest part of the building?

They're still there! Mr Clarence Stokes (Engineering) was responsible for their design and erection, with a little help from an army of technicians. They were used to suspend aerials which were cabled down to the labs and the wooden shed which used to be on the roof. The ironwork was carried up to the roof and the aerials were bolted together in situ.

When the College of Technology moved from Suffolk Street, what happened to the doors?

The doors were adorned with panels representing trades of the area. They made the move with the College and came to the Gosta Green site to form the Main Building entrance. They were removed as part of a programme of modernisation. The panels were cut out and embedded in stone pillars which now line the avenue in front of the Library.

On a recent visit to Aston, I came across a clock outside La Serre café. What is its history?

The clock is a replica of the oldest clock in England which is in Salisbury Cathedral. Our version is two-thirds

the size of the original. It was made by William Cope of Nottingham and given in memory of Professor Allan Ede, Senior Pro-Vice Chancellor 1972 to 1975.

Where's the Triangle Cinema?

Make your way over to the Students' Guild and you'll see the campus bookshop, Waterstone's. This building once housed the Triangle Arts Centre and the cinema inside used to show new releases and small budget films. We've also been told that the cinema was used by students who made their own films – we'd love to hear more about this.



Bookshelf



A number of publications are produced over the year, all of which are available to Aston alumni. A new addition to the suite is the Aston Business School Review. If you would like a copy of any of the following publications, please contact us at the Alumni Relations Office. Alternatively, you can log onto our web site at www.aston.ac.uk/alumni.

Aston University Annual Review 1998-99

Aston Business School Review 2000

Aston University Guide to making your will

Undergraduate Prospectus 2001

Postgraduate Prospectus 2001

School of Engineering & Applied Science Research Brochure

Back issues of Apex can also be found on our web site. Hard copies can be obtained from the Alumni Relations Office.

True to form

We generally expect a good response from our loyal alumni. And you haven't let us down! We had a staggering response to our new style Graduate Update Form. You've certainly kept us busy with requests for information and changes to your details. We're not complaining though. This is exactly what we want from you.

Keep your forms flooding in! We are increasingly being asked to provide qualitative data on you and your fellow Aston alumni. This information helps market your University and enhance the standing of Aston in the eyes of the world. Any information you send is making our job a little easier. Just as importantly, we want to make sure that Apex reaches you at the right address! If you're a class of 2000 graduate and reading Apex for the first time, then please fill in the form in the centre of this edition of Apex.

Why? Well, we like to know as much about you as possible so that we can tailor our alumni services to meet your needs. We also use the information you give us to let you know about events. If you want to hear about the May Ball, Network Lectures and reunions, then we need to know about you. Invitations to these and many more events come from the Alumni Relations Office. So, do take a few minutes to fill in the Graduate Update Form. If you return your form before 31 January 2001, you may even win a prize!

We've teamed up with LivingWell, the UK's largest health club operator, to offer one of you the chance to unwind and de-stress with a six week membership at one of LivingWell's 78 health clubs throughout the UK.

Although facilities vary, each club normally has a swimming pool, sauna, steam room, spa pool, fully-equipped cardiovascular gym and weights area. LivingWell clubs also offer a variety of 25 aerobic classes ranging from Virtual Spinning and Boxercise to Tai Chi and Yoga.

LivingWell clubs are the perfect choice for Aston alumni who want to keep fit, relax and unwind whilst socialising in beautiful surroundings.



To enter, complete and return your form before 31 January 2001. If you're not the lucky winner, don't despair. To arrange a visit to your local LivingWell club, call free on 0800 136 636.

And the winner is...

A bottle of bubbly goes to these lucky winners whose completed Graduate Update Forms were drawn on 1 September 2000.

1. James Farrow (1978 MSc Construction Management and Economics) **2. Louisa Sheppard** (née West 1979 BSc Building Economics and Measurement) **3. Michelle Green** (1993 BSc Applied and Human Biology) **4. David Rix** (1993 BSc Computing Science) **5. Hannah Bartlett** (2000 BSc Optometry)

Thanks to all of you who returned your completed Graduate Update Forms. The postbag was heaving within days! If you're not on the list above, sorry, yours wasn't the form we pulled out. But we do have another great prize draw in this edition of Apex: a six week membership of LivingWell health clubs. Why not complete your details and send the form back to the Alumni Relations Office by **31 January 2001** to be entered into the draw?



Postroom Supervisor Mike picks the winners

TCS triumph

The School of Life & Health Sciences has just won its first Teaching Company Schemes (TCS). TCS is a government initiative that allows industry to benefit from Aston's academic expertise.

At the heart of one of the programmes is a three year PhD study in conjunction with Advanced Medical Solutions in Winsford, Cheshire which is worth £130,000. The company is currently involved in advanced wound care products, but wants to expand its worldwide customer base into tissue engineering which is still a niche market. This three year PhD TCS is very rare. There are only a handful in the country.

Aston's Dr Helen Griffiths will supervise a PhD student as they develop vascular

grafts, particularly small bore (below 6mm diameter), that could then function as coronary artery bypass grafts. The overall aim is to develop a fibrous scaffold that will support endothelial cell adhesion and growth (the layer of cells that line the vasculature). This scaffold can then be fabricated into a tube that will function as a small bore vascular graft for use in heart surgery. The new principles that are discovered will then be applicable to other tissue engineered devices, so the research could have long ranging

benefits for a host of commercially viable medical products.

Dr Griffiths explains: "The PhD Associate will produce and test different materials that can be integrated with pharmacological agents to promote endothelial cell growth. They will test the molecular basis of this in flow conditions to simulate the movement of blood, so they can examine how the graft material would behave if it was actually acting as an arterial substitute in the body."



Dr Helen Griffiths

Aston's hospital life saver

It is a huge irony that some people who go into hospital end up suffering injury and even death when they are receiving treatment. At the moment, some 7% of hospital admissions turn out to be harmful to the patient. But why do things go wrong, and more importantly, how can patient safety be insured?



Dr Sally Adams of the Neurosciences Research Institute at Aston is co-author of a new ground breaking protocol that aims to investigate and analyse clinical incidents so preventing accidents and enhancing patient safety.

She worked on the protocol in collaboration with the Clinical Risk Unit at University College, London. The team took their initial theory from the aviation, oil and nuclear industries where accidents often happen and systems for their prevention are well established. Surprisingly enough,

before Dr Adams' research was carried out and published, there was no standard text on the subject in circulation in the NHS and private trusts.

The model requires that the investigator starts by examining the chain of events that led to an accident and considers the actions of those involved (such as picking up the wrong syringe or forgetting to carry out a procedure). They then look further back at the conditions in which staff were working and the organisational

context in which the incident occurred. After analysing results, the protocol allows changes to be made to the hospital or healthcare organisation to save lives in the future.

The method has been tested on over 40 incidents in obstetrics, anaesthetics, accident and emergency, orthopaedics, general medicine and psychiatry. The Department of Health has expressed an interest in backing the method and funding an accompanying training package for hospital staff.

Dr Adams said: "Although accidents in hospitals are rare, we'd like every hospital Trust in the country to take up our protocol. Virtually all Clinical Risk Managers in UK hospitals are already starting to work from it. But it will also benefit patients who have come to harm. They can learn real answers and the organisation can show what must be done to put problems right."

New degrees for the information age

As the e-revolution becomes more established, new tools are required for handling the emerging challenges of the information age. Aston is the first university in the UK to develop a BSc degree in Information Mathematics, known as i-Math, and also one of the first to establish the BEng in Internet Systems. Both degrees will tap into the industry demand for graduates with analytical, mathematics and computer skills who have a strong understanding of industry and an ambition to be high flyers.



The i-math degree covers four main industries including Financial, Bio-informatics, Internet and Telecommunications. In the final year students specialise and develop skills essential in combating current problems: Internet confidentiality, creating and managing search engines typically based on the use of data mining techniques, the use of error-correcting codes to compensate for message interference in telecommunications and the use of pattern analysis and data mining of huge DNA databases in Bio-informatics. The skills developed on this degree are also applicable to stock market forecasting and portfolio management, which is based on the time series analysis and game theory skills which the i-math student will have studied.

Aston's new BEng degree in Internet Systems provides broad training in all aspects of Internet network design and delivery, ranging from understanding the hardware through to project management. It will address the technological issues of the internet, such as meeting the needs of different

types of users with varying types of computers and ensuring that web sites are not only pleasing to the eye but also download quickly.

Aston's Professor Keith Blow is one of the course designers. He says: "The Internet is a dynamic component of modern industry that demands constant modification. This degree is designed to equip our graduates with a thorough understanding of the key operational elements of the internet and relevant analytical and problem solving abilities, so that they can keep at the forefront of this fast moving industry sector. It draws on our well-established links with the telecommunication industries and our international reputation for undertaking leading research in communications."

Both degrees are part of the Product Design Suite, which includes many other new and innovative degrees, all of which embrace the idea of a paid year in industry, allowing students to work in their desired area of future employment.

Car wars

What's new in Mechanical Engineering? Aston's very first team of final year Mechanical Engineering students has embarked on a two-year project to design, build and test a single-seater racing car for the European Formula Student Competition.

As this is the first time that a team from Aston has entered, the learning curve has been steep for all involved with a lot of effort, determination and teamwork. The first group completed

the design of the car and began its manufacture. But this is only the beginning. The second cohort will pick up the project, analyse the design of the car, modify it where necessary and complete the manufacture for the 2001 competition.

Final year student James Chives said: "The Formula Student project has been one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences during our time at Aston. We hope that as the team progresses every year others will

get involved." The team was supervised by Lecturer Dr Roger Fittro and Visiting Fellow David Smith.



Members of the Formula Student team, left to right James Chivers, David Etherington and James Blackmore

Market leaders

Aston's Marketing Group has got off to a flying start in a new set of national awards recognising quality research. Aston academics have scooped two out of only three Chartered Institute of Marketing Research Awards.



Ian Lings wins one of the awards for his paper: *Internal Marketing and Supply Chain Management*. This paper presents a model of service quality based on internal and external customer and supplier groups in supply chain partners and looks at their relationship between how services are delivered within an organisation to both other departments and external customers. It is particularly concerned with how internal services can directly and indirectly impact on the quality of services provided to external customers.

The other award goes to a joint paper by Dr Amanda Broderick and Professor Gordon Greenley, entitled: *Utilising consumer involvement for international decision making in the food retail market*. This investigates the marketing issues for food retailers considering expansion into the European market.

Professor Greenley said: "This is yet another accolade for the Marketing Group. Receiving two of only three awards in a competition open to all UK Business Schools is yet more recognition of our work."

One-stop-shop for business

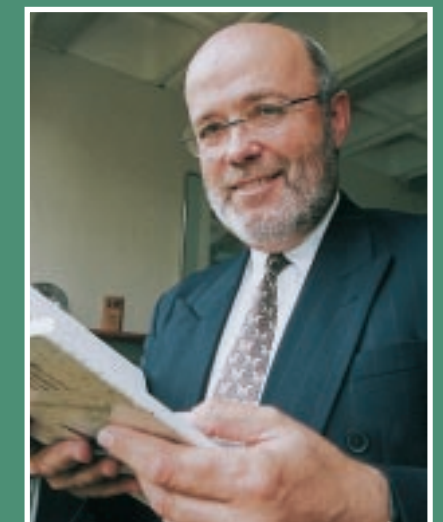
The new Business Partnership Unit is Aston University's one-stop-shop for business. It aims to make it as easy as possible for businesses to benefit from the University's expertise and services. A major part of its remit is to ensure the rapid transfer of ideas, products and processes to industry via research, teaching company schemes, consultancy and training. It will also be building on Aston's strength of providing three-quarters of its students with professional placements by encouraging even more student secondments to industry during their degree programmes.

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mike Wright, commented: "The Business Partnership Unit will be playing a

valuable role in developing the competitiveness of the West Midlands by making sure that businesses fully exploit the tremendous resources available to them at Aston."

John Bailey has been appointed its first Director. He is well-placed to take up this exciting new role and exploit the full potential of the Business Partnership Unit. He has many years knowledge of Aston and a successful track record of corporate liaison. He joined Aston in 1976 to set up the flagship Industrial Placement Unit, he has since held roles as Director of Management Development, Head of Continuing Education Service and Head of Corporate Development Programmes.

To find out more about the Business Partnership Unit, visit the website at www.aston.ac.uk/bpu/ or contact John Bailey directly at the University (j.r.bailey@aston.ac.uk).



John Bailey

Language teaching for the 21st century

With applications to study modern languages at university still on the decline, staff in the School of Languages & European Studies met colleagues from across the country to debate the future of the subject in a conference entitled, 'Is this the end for communications language teaching?' German language teachers from all over the country attended the event. The format was very innovative, allowing secondary teachers and HE practitioners to share best practice. The conference set off a number of debates in the media, including a column in the *Times Higher Education Supplement*.

Speakers included Dr Christian Fandrych from the Department of German, King's College London, and Trevor Stevens from Heinemann's Educational Publishing. There were also workshops and seminars on the use of film and advertising in language teaching.

Teachers had the chance to consult with Aston's Dr Helen Kelly-Holmes about *Curriculum 2000* and how to encourage the uptake of modern languages for A-level and beyond.

Professor Anne Stevens, Head of the School of Languages & European Studies said: "It is brilliant that teachers have travelled considerable distances to be here with us today. Their view of LES as a dynamic department has been reinforced and we have had the chance to have a two-way dialogue with teachers, which is part of our outreach plans."



From left to right: Dr Gertrud Reershemius, Aston University; Dr Christian Fandrych, King's College, London; Dr Helen Kelly-Holmes, Aston University; Kirsten Sarna, Queen Mary & Westfield College, London; and Mr Trevor Stevens, Heinemann's Publishers, London, discuss the conference programme.

Professor's Grand Tour

Professor Nigel-Reeves, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for External Relations, visited five German cities in five days this summer, lecturing to capacity audiences in Rostock, Berlin, Dresden, Stuttgart and Essen.

Professor Reeves had been invited by the Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft to discuss the problems faced by translators of modernist literature. "All the audiences were very lively, reflecting a great interest in the subject. The lectures led to quite intense debates, particularly in Berlin," he commented.

Professor Reeves drew distinctions

between visual art which does not require translation, and literature which can change completely in translation, particularly work as complex as James Joyce's *Ulysses* or Mallarmé's poetry. He went on to draw parallels between the breakdown of realism in visual art and traditional aesthetic concepts, and the decline of traditional narratives in literature.

"The tour was a great opportunity for me to see former East German cities which, until 1990, were difficult to visit," commented Prof Reeves. "Many of them are still evocative of the previous regime though many changes are now underway." The

Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft, which fosters understanding between the people of Britain and Germany, recently marked its 50th anniversary and guests at the celebrations included the Duke of Kent and the new Ambassador to the UK, Dr Hans Friedrich von Ploetz.



Professor Nigel Reeves

Aston University Alumni 2001 Travel Programme

A new departure for Aston alumni

Now's the time to expand your horizons with Aston's Alumni Travel Programme. The Alumni Relations Office has negotiated some excellent offers with two leading tour and cruise operators – Collette Tours and Swan Hellenic Cruises.

The Travel Programme will tempt you with a choice of holidays of a lifetime at preferential rates and excellent discounts. What's more, you'll be helping the University at the same time. For every holiday booking, the travel companies make a contribution to Aston's Development Fund.

There's a tempting selection of destinations – not just the usual travel agent's range

A variety of destinations await the avid traveller: a luxury trip by land and sea from Calgary up to the Alaskan tundra, the colour and splendour of the New England Fall with the roar of Niagara Falls or a relaxing cruise around the coastlines of Italy, Sicily, Elba and Sardinia with Nicholas Kenyon, Director of the BBC Proms guiding you through the music of Italy.

A variety of destinations await the avid traveller

So, if you're already thinking about next year's holidays, then think about Aston's Alumni Travel Programme. You'll be amazed at the choice and you can be sure that everyone benefits. You get a first class holiday for the discerning traveller at a great price and the University receives a contribution to its Development Fund.

For more details contact the Alumni Relations Office.

THE SCHOOL OF Engineering & Applied Science

Currently provides a broad portfolio of advanced programmes leading to MSc qualifications. Many of these courses offer Advanced Course Studentships to well-qualified candidates.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

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OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

RISK MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY TECHNOLOGY

PHOTONICS

PATTERN ANALYSIS AND NEURAL NETWORKS

PRODUCT PROCESS INTERFACES IN PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURE

The following programmes will be available from October 2001

ENGINEERING MANAGEMENT

INTERNET TECHNOLOGY

Contact Professor Roger Kettle on ext 4370 or email r.j.kettle@aston.ac.uk



Where are they now?

A regular feature bringing you bang up to date on the activities of your contemporaries. Here you'll discover who's doing what and where. If you'd like to share your news with your fellow alumni, please drop a line to the Alumni Relations Office at the usual address. Go on, send a photograph!

1960s

John Hutton (1964 BSc Electrical Engineering) retired from National Grid Co. in 1998. He lives in Worcester with his wife and three dogs and is keen to hear from anyone who may remember him.

Peter Cox (1967 BSc Pharmacy) now lives in Holland and is an Emeritus Professor at University Hospital, Rotterdam. He is also Co-Chairman of the International Pharmaceutical Federation's special interest group on Radiological Pharmacy. In 1974, he obtained a PhD from the University of Utrecht and was also International Atomic Energy Agency Visiting Expert on Radiopharmacology to the University of Montevideo, Uruguay.

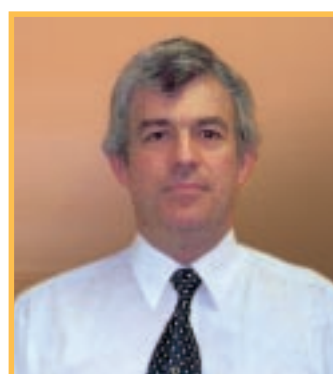
Mike Davies (1967 MSc Industrial Metallurgy and Management Technology) runs a consultancy business from his home in Crete, a traditional stone cottage in the heart of the Cretian hills which he bought spontaneously whilst on holiday with his wife Paula. They have lived there since 1993 and have devoted much time and energy to restoring the property and integrating into the life of the community. Mike and Paula have recorded their adventures in

two books: *Riding the Minotaur* and *Traditional Village Life in Crete*.

1970s

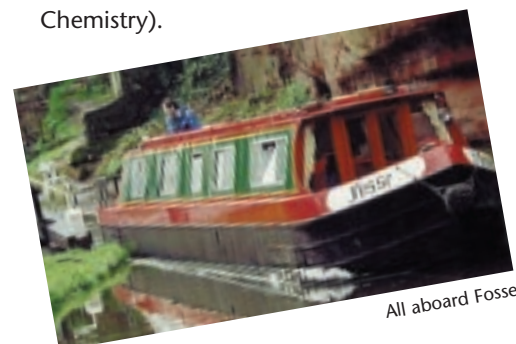
Malati Kanbur (1970 MSc Systems Analysis) has lived in Fiji and Malaysia but can now be found in Birmingham with her husband. She remembers her time at Aston fondly, proud to be a student of one of the first degrees of its kind in the late 1960s.

Graham Cox (1973 BSc Civil Engineering) shared a flat whilst at Aston with a group of pharmacists and the Chairman of the Entertainments Committee. He has worked overseas and in the UK as a Project Manager for international construction management companies. He lives in North Surrey with his teenage family.



Graham Cox

Laurence Leonard (1973 BSc Electrical Engineering) is now semi-retired and actively pursuing an Access to Art and Design course at the City of Bristol College. One of his recent projects is entitled *Spirit of the Canals*, a subject close to his heart – he has owned his own canal boat, *Fosse*, since 1976 pictured below with **Janice Lusby** (née Lond, 1969 BSc Chemistry).



All aboard Fosse

Russell Rollings (1973 BSc Biology and Geology) has worked for Nestlé UK Ltd for 27 years. He is currently based in Croydon as an IS Project Manager. He often travels through Birmingham and, if he has the time, diverts via Aston for a quick 'nostalgia fix'!

Alan Moore (1974 PhD Pharmacology) left Aston and headed for the USA. He joined Norwich Eaton Pharmaceuticals, which was later acquired by Proctor and Gamble. He has now worked at Corporate Headquarters in Ohio since 1993 and is Manager of Cardiac R&D. Alan plays classical guitar and bass guitar in a rock group.

Phillip Styles (1975 BSc and 1980 PhD Biological Sciences) is now living on the Isle of Man, somewhere he never expected to find himself after visiting the island during an Aston fieldtrip back in 1974! His degree stood him in good stead for a successful career. He is currently a Freshwater Biologist which he believes is a true reflection of what he learnt at Aston: "To move back to those fundamental skills after 20 years is amazing!"

David Harrison (1976 MSc Industrial Administration) since turning 60 has enjoyed an exciting variety of holidays – from backpacking through Scandinavia and walking in Sicily, to Skiing in Greece, Scotland and Lapland! He is now retired and has been a Governor of two schools for the past 18 years.

Roger Buckley (1977 MSc Applied Psychology) is now semi-retired but leads an active life. He works part-time as a Regional Manager for the Institute of Supervision and Management. He lectures at Shrewsbury College, is an external examiner for Thames Valley University, carries out independent consultancy and has even had



Roger Buckley

time to write a book called *The Theory and Practice of Training* published by Kogan Page.

Graham Yearley (1979 BSc Communication Science and Linguistics) is now self-employed as Software Consultant and works from his home in Nuess, Germany. His job involves programming nuclear power plants, which requires travelling regularly to Boston, USA.

Unfortunately he has never returned to Aston (much to his dismay) as he used to love watching Aston Villa play!

1980s

Gurdeep Chahal (1980 BSc Pharmacy) constructed and operates what he claims to be the first drive-thru pharmacy in Europe, situated in Norton Canes in Staffordshire. He is currently living in Walsall with his wife **Nirmila** (née Devi, 1987 BSc Pharmacy).

Martyn Wheatley (1980 BSc Production Technology and Management) is now an Account Manager for Honeywell Control Systems, working in aerospace markets. A very keen cyclist, he has cycled from London to Paris, which raised over £1000 for the British Heart Foundation. He enjoys running and walking and has organised an outdoor activity weekend at the Lakeside YMCA in Cumbria twice a year since 1974. As well as this, he still finds the time for local charity work and also runs the neighbourhood watch scheme in his area. Known as Ratty, he is still in contact with numerous Aston graduates and looks back on his university days with very happy memories.



Martyn Wheatley (centre front) in Cumbria with fellow Aston Graduates. Are you here?

Rosemary Jenkin (née Connell, 1981 BSc Modern Languages French and German) left Aston to work for an insurance company, liaising with French, German and Swiss associates. She then took a break, working part-time for her husband's company while raising their two sons. Two years ago she became a secondary school language teacher, after successfully completing her PGCE at Cambridge University's School of Education.



Rosemary Jenkin with her two sons Robert and Andrew

David Maddrell (1981 MSc Applied Psychology) has applied the skills learnt on his degree to the world of training professionals. He has worked in both government and private sector locations as far afield as Europe and Japan. He was an Officer in the Royal Navy for 16 years, after which he joined Natwest as a Training Consultant. He is currently a Senior Associate at CRG and lives in Virginia, USA, with his wife Debra and daughter Elizabeth.

Meiron Jenkins (1983 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies) is Managing Director of Control Group Ltd, an ERP software house he formed in 1994. The company, which is based on the edge of Aston Science Park, is planning to float shortly.

Phillip Davies (1986 BSc Pharmacy) has travelled on a number of occasions to Romania to help with aid to orphanages and other similar projects. After 14 years in full-time pharmacy, he entered a theological college this year to train as a priest in the Anglican Church.

Steve Burns (1988 BSc Pharmacy) has been married to **Janet** (née Wilson, 1988 BSc Transport Management) for ten years and now lives in Derbyshire with their two children.

Sue Gee (née Gallagher, 1988 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies) is now a full-time mother after a successful career as a Computer Software Trainer. She married **Lewis Gee** (1988 Managerial and Administrative Studies) whom she met in Fresher's Week! They married in 1993 and now live in Wiltshire with their two children. They remember their time at Aston with fond memories.



Photo Elizabeth (far right) and Alick (left) dining with friends in St Petersburg

Elizabeth Bell (1989 PhD Management Science and Technology Policy) now lives and works in Moscow, Russia, as Assistant Director Science, Engineering and Technology for the British Council and First Secretary Science (British Embassy). Her husband, Aston graduate, **Alick Nutton**, (1986 BSc Environmental Health) is in Moscow working at the Embassy. They have had a strong joint interest in Aikido for many years, which began in Aston, both obtaining their second dans this summer and run a Ki Aikido club at the Miners University on Leninsky Prospect.

Amanda Collins (1989 BSc IBML French) after graduating began a TEFL career in Lille, France. She then became Regional Manager, covering two language schools in Reims and Epemay. She returned to the UK in

1994 and worked for a language school in Cheltenham, occupying senior posts in several departments, including international sales and marketing. She now runs her own company, Language Solutions, specialising in teaching French to young children.

Martin Gould (1989 BSc Biochemistry and Business) is currently an Audit Manager for Wolverhampton MBC. He enjoys history and listening to country music. He also loves travelling and has visited the USA, Canada, Zimbabwe, Cape Town, India, Australia and most of Europe!

Lesley Procter (née Say, 1989 BSc Pharmacy) now works as a part-time community pharmacist. She married **Jamie** (1992 BEng Mechanical Engineering) and they now live in Hampshire with their two children, Harry and George.

Mohammed-Shafiq A.R. Al-Mefleh Qawasmeh (1990 MSc Teaching English for Special Purpose) is now happily married with four children. He is currently working as a Senior Teacher at the Sceco Technical Institute in Saudi Arabia. His hobbies include swimming, reading and Tae Kwan Do.



Mohammed-Shafiq A.R. Al-Mefleh Qawasmeh

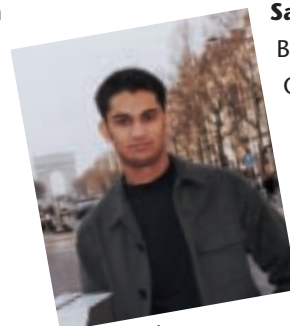
Shirley Caillaud (1990 Business and French) has, this year, brought twin boys into the world! She is now taking a three-year break as a full-time mother of three before going back into full-time teaching for the Chamber of Commerce.

Beverly Riches (née Ricketts, 1990 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies) went on to study singing at the Blackheath Conservatoire. She then moved to Texas, USA, in 1995 where she worked as a Personnel Consultant until her son was born. She has recently turned professional and sings with the Fort Worth Opera 2000.



Beverly Riches

Sanjay Patel (1991 BSc Ophthalmic Optics) secured a position with Boots Opticians after graduating from Aston. He worked there for three years. He then moved to Vision Express where he worked for four-and-a-half years as a Binom Optometrist. He now works for The Optica Clulow Group in Soho, London.



Sanjay Patel

Helen Todd (née Head, 1991 BSc IBML German) is currently living and working in Düsseldorf, Germany as a Marketing Manager for Reed Exhibitions GmbH.

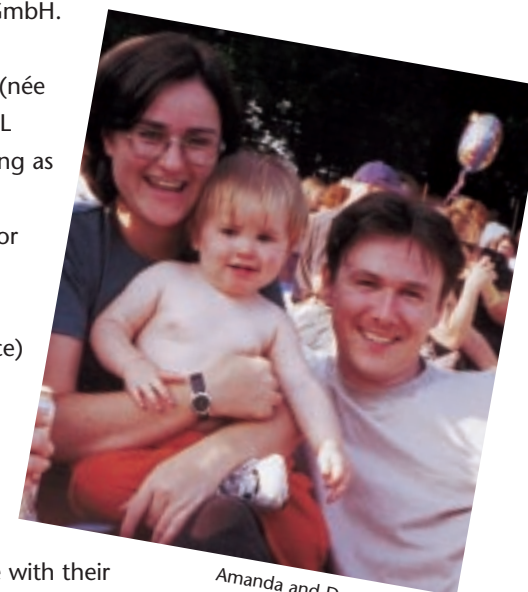
Andrew Llewellyn (1992 BSc French) spent five years teaching English as a Foreign Language in Japan and Thailand. He then married and returned to England in 1998. He now lives in South Norwood, London with his wife and two children and teaches French and Spanish at secondary school level.

Kelsey Offord (1992 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies) joined Bass Brewers on a graduate recruitment programme, carrying out various sales and marketing roles. She moved from Cardiff to Burton to Manchester, and almost moved to Leeds, but decided she needed a change and a more permanent address! She then spent four years working for Anheuser-Busch as a Brand Manager for Budweiser until the opportunity arose to work for BBC Sport as Marketing Manager. She claims: "It's the perfect excuse to legitimately watch sport on TV at work and get away with talking about Newcastle United all day!"

Upkar Pardesi (1992 PhD Management) is now Dean of the University of Central England's Business School. He leads an active life, presenting a live weekly radio programme called *Asian Business Matters* and acting as Vice Chair to the Board of Trustees of Birmingham School of Speech and Drama.

Simon Chambers (1993 PhD Chemical Engineering) now lives with his wife in Ludwigshafen, Germany, where he works as a Process Engineer for Raschig GmbH.

Amanda Roxburgh (née Sawyer, 1993 BSc IBML German) is now working as a Litigation Executive, using her languages, for Pretty's Solicitors. She married **David** (1993 BSc Computing Science) in 1997. After travelling around Europe and South Africa, they moved to Woodbridge in Suffolk where they live with their daughter Amber.



Amanda and David Roxburgh with daughter Amber

Richard Massey (1994 BSc Management and Computer Science) is currently travelling around the world on a two-and-a-half-year sponsorship visa having already visited Thailand, Dubai and the USA. When he isn't jetting off round the world, he works as a Database Consultant for Davids (Aus) Ltd.

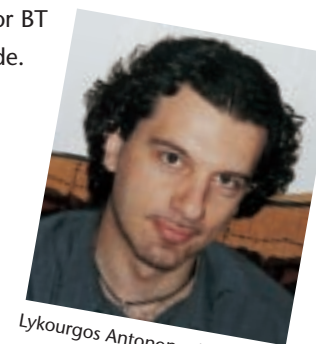
Katie Brown (1992 MEng Electronic Systems Engineering and 1995 PhD Electrical and Electronic Engineering) now works in Ipswich as a Senior Mobility Futures Engineer for BT. She remembers the days when 95 percent of people said they didn't want a mobile phone. How times have changed!



Katie Brown

Valerie Gonzales (1995 BSc Computer Science) now lives in Canada and is working for the telecommunications company AMS.

Lykourgos Antonopoulos (1997 MSc Telecommunications Technology) joined the broadband protocol research team for BT. He quickly moved up the ladder to a more commercial role in BT's Multi-Service. Moving up even further, he now works as a Manager of Global IP Design for BT Worldwide.



Lykourgos Antonopoulos

Ian Bleakley (1997 BSc IBML French) and **Jo** (née Hancock, 1997 BSc Modern Languages) were married in July of last year. They now live in Bath where Jo teaches in a primary school and Ian works for Deloitte and Touche in Bristol.



Ian and Jo on their wedding day

Samantha Whitaker (1997 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies) joined Endsleigh Insurance after graduating from Aston. She then moved to Peacock Stores Ltd as National Recruitment Manager but found the travelling all too hectic, so she moved to Coda International Plc where she is now responsible for the Graduate Recruitment and Development Programme. She has still managed to find time to become a graduate member of the IPD.



Samantha Whitaker

Elaine Garrigos (née Wallis, 1998 BSc French and German) now works as a Quality Liaison Officer for Electricfil Industrie in Beynost, France. Her job often involves liaising with export customers such as Ford and Volkswagen. She now lives in Meyzieu with her husband Laurent, whom she married on Millennium Eve.

Andrew Fraser (1999 BSc IBML German) now lives and works in Nuremberg, Germany, for AB Electrolux. He married Alison Bateson, of Minnesota, USA, in May. They have lived in Nuremberg since June of this year.

Barbara Perryman (1999 MSc Public Sector Management) now works as a Project Development Manager for Walsall MBC. She believes her career has really benefited from the Aston degree and balancing her study and job as well as her family and hobbies presented her with a real challenge.

2000s

Matthew Bonfield (2000 BSc Accounting for Management) is living in Edgbaston, Birmingham and works for PricewaterhouseCoopers as a Trainee Chartered Accountant.

Roy Mulchrone (2000 BSc Logistics) works as a Demand Planner for Xerox Ltd in Gloucestershire.

Kevin Tubb (2000 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies) is based in Leeds and is a Sales and Marketing Manager for BT Cellnet.

Louisa Ziane (2000 BSc Law with Legal Practice Management) lives in Southport and works in Canary Wharf as a Legal Associate for the Financial Services Authority.

In touch

We'd like to find

these people who are no longer in touch with the Alumni Relations Office. If you know of their whereabouts, please contact us.

- Caroline Clear** (1998 BSc French and German)
- Timothy Cooper** (1980 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)
- Richard Davis** (1980 MSc Applied Psychology)
- Jason French** (1993 BSc Psychology and Computer Science)
- Heather Grant** (1985 BSc Ophthalmic Optics)
- Catherine Hayes** (1985 BSc Environmental Health)
- Michael Hemming** (1994 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)
- Shaun James** (1980 BSc Behavioural Science)
- Razia Khatun** (1996 BSc Social Sciences and Psychology)
- Loi Lei Lau** (11980 BSc Electrical and Electronic Engineering)
- Claire Low** (1981 BSc Business and Computer Science)
- Phillip Maddox** (1989 BSc Applied Chemistry)

- Manish Mianger** (1996 BSc Optometry)
- Stuart Muckley** (1997 BSc Computing Science)
- Tin Pong Ng** (1984 BSc Buildings Economics and Measurement)
- Sarah O'Donnell** (nee Dornan, 1992 BSc Business and French)
- Janet Richmond** (1985 BSc French and German)
- Deborah Summers** (nee Knight, 1984 BSc French and German)
- David Thomas** (1997 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)
- Rachel Thompson** (1998 BSc IBML French)
- Kevin Toale** (1978 BSc Pharmacy)
- Ryan Wheeler** (1997 BSc Computing Science)
- Ben Whittle** (1995 BSc Optometry)
- Victoria Walbancke** (1997 BSc Business and French)

You'd like to find

friends, flatmates and research partners. A number of alumni have contacted us wanting to get back in touch with lost friends. Many have been successfully reunited, but others are proving to be a little more difficult to track down. Do you know the whereabouts of any of the following?

- Sue Bates** (1987 BSc Business and French)
- Elaine Carruthers** (1989 BSc Mathematics)
- Cathy Hayton** (1986 BSc Applied and Human Biology)
- Jane Hetheridge** (1987 BSc Business and Computer Science)
- Sidney Horace Humphries** (1965 ACT Production Technology)
- Katharine Munden** (1987 BSc Human Psychology)
- David Scrimshire** (1970 BSc and 1973 PhD Production Engineering)
- A John Wordsworth** (1977 BSc Communication Science and Linguistics)

Looking for someone at Aston?

Contact the Alumni Relations Office.

If we have a current address, you will be invited to write a letter or leave your contact details. We will pass these on to the address we hold. As we rely on alumni telling us when they move on, we cannot guarantee the person you are looking for will still be at that address. We would like to hope, however, that you all keep in touch with us and tell us of any changes to your address. The in touch service does not give out individual names and addresses to inquirers and all mail is treated in strict confidence.

ASTON STUDENTS' GUILD

The Vice Presidents of the Students' Guild at Aston are aware of the need for the Guild to market itself competitively if the £1.5 million organisation is to prosper. The future rests on an interior makeover, an overhaul of communication methods and a change of democratic duties.

Presidents present practical philosophy

The Guild is looking to develop a five year plan, which will make the yearly transition of student officers run more smoothly in years to come. Nathan Tibbitts, VP Communications, commented: "Students are no longer satisfied with cheap beer, the days of students sitting in the pub every afternoon are over. We have to provide our customers with a service they want."

One idea was to restructure the Executive by removing the Deputy President, responsible for democracy and the constitution, and replace this position with a Vice President for Student Affairs. The reason for this relates to the growing importance of extracurricular activities. Communication changes have arisen out of the need for everyone to understand what the Guild Officers do and how they can offer student support.

The introduction of a new magazine *Helios* (after the Greek god of light) will replace the *Birmingham Sun* newspaper. The design of *Helios* will resemble a web page and, in order to ensure all students have a chance of obtaining a copy, it will be transmitted over the world wide web. This also means it will be accessible outside the University. Students will now have no excuses for not keeping up to date with Guild issues and activities.



Café Monks and Monks Bar, the day and night hub of the Guild, will change to 'The Blue Room'. Its interior will be bright yellow and blue, to create a light and airy atmosphere during the day. There will be changes in Einstein's menu and also a new cocktail, can and bottle bar in 'The Blue Room'. These revamps aim to reclaim the student clientele which has been opting for the bars of the city centre.

Helene Patounas, the current President of the Guild, is particularly interested in security, as she explains: "When you live and study at Aston, with its lush green surroundings, it's easy to forget all the threats that lie just a stone's throw away and the same applies for taking for granted all the friends and social opportunities you have at your disposal. In order to make the transition from student to graduate, the Guild offers an array of clubs, societies and social occasions to help build crucial life skills, as it takes more than a degree to ensure success in the modern world."

Rattle Bag

There's a commotion down in the AU Office at the Guild! There's a new team on the block to challenge the Cobras and Vipers. The Rattlers are born.

Are you an ex-Aston rugby player? Fancy the idea of 'old boys' and 'old girls' tours and events? If you're missing your student rugby days or want to challenge the current teams, contact the Chair of the Rugby Club through the AU Office for more details. D&D planned for March 2001.



In the scrum!

PAST PRESIDENTS

1973-1974	Robert Saunders
1974-1975	George Proctor
1975-1976	Ian Minnis
1976-1977	Elizabeth Brian
1977-1978	Anton Schwarz
1978-1979	David Cunningham
1979-1980	Graham Hilton
1980-1981	John Young
1981-1982	Alastair Whittington
1982-1983	Steven Gwilt
1983-1984	Neil Matthews
1984-1985	Duncan Brindley
1985-1986	Joanna Herterich
1986-1987	Steven Parker
1987-1988	William Box
1988-1989	Jane Potentier
1989-1990	Lisa Tweedie
1990-1991	Alexandra Toomey
1991-1992	Jennifer Smallshaw
1992-1993	Jamie Woodhouse
1993-1994	Michael Eaton
1994-1995	Christopher Calver
1995-1996	Angela Willoughby
1996-1997	Anthony Marcou
1997-1998	James Dolan
1998-1999	Nick Eaton
1999-2000	Emma Browning
2000-2001	Helene Patounas

Reunions and events

What a gregarious lot you are! Aston alumni reunions and get-togethers are the perfect opportunity to meet up with other Aston alumni in your home-town or back on campus in the heart of Birmingham. Here's an overview of the reunion programme since the last edition of Apex.



And for those of you who'd love to know what they're all up to now, who's working where and just how kind the years have (or haven't) been to all the others who graduated with you, there's also advance notice of upcoming reunions on the notice-board. Grab your diary and read on!

Reunion 2000, our first reunion weekend of the century, kicked off on Friday 19 May. It proved to be the biggest yet with Aston graduates from all over the world, including USA, Pakistan and Bulgaria, making the journey back to their alma mater. For some of you, it was your first experience of an Aston reunion weekend. For others, the alumni weekend has become a regular event in your calendar. 'First-timers' and 'loyal devotees' had a fantastic time back on campus and were treated to a full programme of exciting events and activities throughout the weekend. Here's a taster.



Uncovering research in Engineering & Applied Science



A grand reunion by the Chancellor's Lake



Under the MEG Scanner in Life & Health Sciences

This year saw the first Convocation Lecture. It was given by Aston graduate, Dr Ashok Kumar, MP for Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland. Entitled 'Science and Politics: a view from a politically motivated scientist', the lecture focused on the symbiotic relationship that science has long had with the state.

Saturday culminated with a Reunion Dinner in Nelson's Restaurant where many an old memory was relived. And it didn't stop there!

Early birds clubbed together on Friday evening for a special welcome reception in Nelson's Lounge – a chance to seek out lost friends and catch up on times gone by.

Saturday's main event was the AGM of Convocation chaired by Sir Adrian Cadbury. Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mike Wright gave an overview of the year and a glimpse of the exciting opportunities for the future. Friends and family not attending the AGM were treated to a 'Saturday Serenade' from Aston's very own Music Society.

Alumni were welcomed back to their former Schools on Saturday afternoon to see examples of pioneering research and the advancement of academic life at Aston.

Some of you who made it through to Sunday went on a tour of the City and spent most of your time trying to spot your old student haunts. Others took a trip down memory lane – an exhibition and series of talks celebrating the life of Aston from its origins as Birmingham Municipal Technical School to the present day. For Helen Davies (née Thomas, 1973 BSc Pharmacy) it was a chance to return to the Martin Luther King Centre where, in June 1973, she married Dennis.

All in all, a very successful and enjoyable weekend. And we'll be doing it again on 10 March 2001.

Don't miss it!

Seven year itch

The dust settled for seven years and then Keith Palmer's thoughts began to turn to his fellow 1993 Electronic Engineering and Computing Science graduates. Recourse to the Alumni Relations Office helped him track down over half of his former EECS group who all turned out for a summer reunion on Saturday 1 July. They met up in a local pizza restaurant and then went on to join in the fun at the Students' Guild. "As well as having a good night catching up on what's happened over the last 7 years," said Keith,

"we've exchanged email addresses and intend to meet up again and track down the missing few!"



Left to right: Ian Underhill, Mark Harris, Rob Collis, Philip Butler, Mark Nunn, Steve Boardman, Keith Palmer

Worldwide

All over the world Aston alumni regularly meet up. Here's what some of our groups have been up to recently.

HONG KONG

Our group co-ordinators Vanessa Bird (1990 BSc IBML), Chi Lo (1987 MBA) and Charles Lam (1980 MBA) met with Aston's International Office Staff during the British Council Education Fair in August. An event is being planned for all our alumni in Hong Kong. If you're an Aston graduate living in this area join the alumni group now! Alumni Members' Directory out soon.

Contact the Alumni Relations Office or visit www.aston.ac.uk/alumni for details of an alumni group near you. Hey, group members! Don't forget to send us some photos and a few lines of what happened at your last get-together.

NIGERIA ALUMNI GROUP

Our fully established alumni group in Nigeria holds regular meetings and events for Aston graduates in Nigeria. If you'd like more information, contact the Alumni Relations Office.

Singapore

If you are living in Singapore and would like to join the Alumni group, please contact the Alumni Relations Office now!

If you'd like to organise a reunion for your year group (or if you'd like us to do it for you) contact the Alumni Relations Office. Although we want to meet as many of you as we can, you don't have to come back to Aston. Why not meet up with other Aston alumni in your hometown? Give us a ring or send us an email and we'll take it from there.



Notice Board

Is there a reunion planned for you?

Classes of 1991 and 1996 will be hearing from us shortly. Make sure the Alumni Relations Office

has your current contact details.

14th Annual CEAC Ball will be held on Saturday 17 February 2001 at the Burlington Hotel on New Street, Birmingham. Full details out in November. Enquiries to Val Franklin on biostuff@aston.ac.uk.

Coming up over the next 12 months

Are you a pharmacy graduate from the 1980s? Martin King and a few other alumni are organising a mass reunion in October 2001. Seems a long way off? It'll soon roll round. So, if you know any Pharmacy graduates from the 1980s who don't receive Apex, tell them to contact us at Aston so they don't miss out on their invitations. Thanks to all of you who have returned your update card. Send yours back if you've still got it, we need your address for your invitation.

Never sampled an alumni weekend? Then come along and join us 9-11 March 2001. Full details from the Alumni Relations Office or www.aston.ac.uk/alumni.

Aston University Gifts

An exciting new range of Aston University branded gifts is now available from the Alumni Relations Office.



To order your Aston University gifts, please complete the order form below and return it to: Alumni Relations Office, Aston University, Aston Triangle, Birmingham, B4 7ET, UK. All prices include postage and packing.

Payment can be made by credit card or cheque made payable to Aston University in sterling and drawn on a bank in England. All orders must be accompanied by full payment. Refunds will only be given if the goods are faulty. Please allow 28 days from receipt of order.

Item description	Quantity	Unit price (£)	Total (£)
Cufflinks		15.00	
Tie		10.00	
Scarf		15.00	
Desk-clock		20.00	
Key-ring		4.00	
Mug		3.00	
Paperweight		20.00	
Parker Rollerball		3.00	
Umbrella		15.00	
Lapel Badge		1.00	
The Origin and Development of Aston University 1895-1996 by Professor George Parker (hardback)		10.00	
		Order total:	

Title	Name	Address
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		Country
Telephone		Email
Tick as appropriate		
<input type="checkbox"/> I enclose a cheque in pounds sterling drawn on a bank in England for £		
<input type="checkbox"/> I wish to pay by MasterCard/Visa/Switch/Access/Delta/Solo. Please charge to my account.		
Card number	Expiry date	Name on card
Cardholder's signature		Issue number