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ISSUE 7

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Aston University Alumni Magazine

In the bag

Alumni bring real
world issues to
Aston students

Spatial awareness

Designing the
extra-terrestrial workplace

Presidential address


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.

Editor Sarah Pymm
Designed and produced by NB Group.
Cover photography and page 4
by Mike Kelly

Welcome to the seventh edition of Apex, the magazine for Aston alumni all over the world, and a special welcome to everyone from the Class of 2001 who are celebrating their graduation this summer. You'll receive Apex twice a year to keep you in touch with Aston and your fellow graduates. Don't forget to keep us up to date as well. We enjoy hearing your news. Contact us if you have any suggestions for future editions of Apex or would like to appear in the magazine yourself. So, what's in store for you in this edition?

We're spanning time with a foray into the history of the University and a leap into the future. Why did a famous queen ride through Gosta Green and Aston in the 1850s? Who was Garibaldi Beetlestone? If you'd like to know the answers to these questions and more, turn to page 11 where we introduce our very own Heritage Trail around the campus. A quick turn of that page will launch you into the future as we explore plans for the new conference centre on campus – opening soon with some special offers for Aston alumni.

Amongst the latest research and development news from the Schools of Study, Dr Christina Schaeffner, School of Languages & European Studies, explores the future of translation. There's also an overview of the work of the Alumni Relations Office. Page 13 looks at how our valued alumni have helped, not only with marketing the University, but also with external QAA reviews and audits. You can also see how the qualitative data on the Graduate Update Form feeds into the work of the Alumni Relations Office and the life of Aston today. Don't forget to make use of the services listed on page 14: Library, Guild, In-touch, web pages, e-groups... If you're based in the UK, look out for your e-group chat pages coming this summer at www.aston.ac.uk/alumni.

And finally. Don't miss out on your anniversary reunion. This year sees the start of a reunion programme celebrating 5, 10, 20 and 25 years since graduation. If you're from the Classes of 1976, 1981, 1991 or 1996, round up your Aston buddies and send the booking form back to Anouche who is organising your reunion. If you've lost touch with them, contact Anouche who will probably be able to reunite you all for a reunion to remember! If you didn't graduate from these years, hang in there! Your anniversary reunion will be coming up soon! If you really can't wait, contact us or come along to the Alumni Weekend 8-10 March, 2002.

Whatever you want to know about Aston is bound to be here or close at hand. Keep in touch. Fill in the Graduate Update Form if you want to change any of your details, or pass it to an Aston graduate who doesn't receive Apex. We're waiting to hear from you all.

Happy reading!

Alumni@home

Have you visited www.aston.ac.uk/alumni yet? Everything you need to know will be posted here: reunions, Network Lectures, Travel Programme and the on-line Graduate Update Form makes it easier for you to keep in touch with us.

But what about keeping in touch with fellow Aston alumni in your own country? E-groups are up and running for many countries. Follow the "Join an international alumni group" route on the web page and subscribe today. Members receive newsletters, competitions and can email other group members about anything and everything – setting up get-togethers, meals, reunions, networking...the list is restricted only by your imagination. Living in the UK? Watch this space. In the summer we will be launching a web-based chat page just for you.

www.aston.ac.uk/alumni

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Network lectures

The Network Lecture Series brings together Aston graduates and Aston students in an exciting discussion forum. Aston graduates are invited back to their alma mater to address an invited audience of professionals and undergraduates interested in their particular area of expertise.

Current students can gain a valuable insight into the real world of their chosen careers. They can make that important business contact or discuss issues related to their studies at Aston. These key events in the Alumni Relations calendar are organised termly and previous Network Lectures have included:

Creating A Better Lifestyle: 150 Years of Engineering Contribution to the Quality of Life, Pam Liversidge, President IMechE 1997 to 1998.

Marketing the Transport of Last Resort, David Leeder, the then Chief Executive of Travel West Midlands.

A Hitch Hiker's Guide to Optical Fibre Networks, Professor Stephen Ferguson, Photonics Market Strategy Manager, Marconi Communications.

Cyborgs – The Future for Humans, Kevin Warwick, Professor of Cybernetics, The University of Reading.

Education Today for the Manufacturers of Tomorrow, Terry Hanley, Chairman of the Manufacturing Division of the IEE 1999 to 2000.

Strategic Considerations for the Financial Services Industry, Douglas Black, Chief Executive, Towry Law Independent Financial Services.

Mobile Communications: Three Generations in a Decade, Katie Brown, Senior Futures Engineer, British Telecom.

Successful Marketing on the High Street, Heather Cooper, Head of Marketing, Etam.

"As competition increases and companies run out of ways to put new graphics on a cardboard carton, they have to look to real innovation of the product itself. If the product is truly innovative, then it is unlikely a machine is out there to make it. That's where my business comes in."



Real world solutions

In the bag

With a number of patents, including the PG Tips Pyramid Tea Bag machine, to his name, David Seaward (1986 BSc Energy Technology and 1990 PhD Electrical and Electronic Engineering) still gets a deep satisfaction from seeing his new packaging concepts appear on the supermarket shelf. From the engineering frontline, this Business Development Manager of Molins Internal Technology Centre talks us through the world of patents and high-speed machinery.

"Our main role is to design and develop high-speed packaging machinery and then install it around the world. I make contacts with major multinational companies to sell my team's specialist skills – the ability to bring new packaging concepts to the market quickly. Less than 5% of our work deals with packaging concepts, the majority is machinery design and development.

I have a number of patents, including the Pyramid Tea Bag machinery patent, documented as one of the hundred most important patents of the last century in *Inventing the 20th Century*. The design brief was for a three-dimensional tea bag, which could be made at 1000's per minute. PG had seen their market share decrease in response to the Tetley Round Bag, which, although it may look nicer in a round mug, doesn't deliver any real consumer benefit. In a conventional flat bag, the tea expands and cannot move around in the water because the bag constrains it. A 3-D bag allows the tea to infuse better. (This is why purists prefer loose-leaf tea.) A pyramid shape was a

natural progression and it also saves around 20% of the paper. The difficulty of how to make these bags at high speed is resolved by our patent.

The greatest risk to any project is market acceptance. If the consumer doesn't buy a product, we won't sell any machinery. I'm always looking for product ideas which give real consumer benefits. We designed a round tea bag machine which attaches a string and tag for green tea and individually wraps each tea bag. The product sells at a premium because of the consumer's perception of quality and attractiveness. The Pyramid Tea Bag and the Australian squeezeable tea bag offer the consumer real benefits, either a stronger cup of tea in less time, or a bag which doesn't drip when removing it from the cup – less mess!

Other patents I have been working on include our method of applying holograms to bank notes. In that particular industry, it is regarded as the most elegant technical solution. We are now in the process of marketing a radical new type of coffee bag which we invented ourselves.

As competition increases and companies run out of ways to put new graphics on a cardboard carton, they have to look to real innovation of the product itself. If the product is truly innovative, then it is unlikely a machine is out there to make it. That's where my business comes in, designing machinery from scratch in shorter and shorter timescales.

What does the future hold? I'm fortunate as, in many respects, I have already satisfied my career ambitions. From the age of 16, I wanted to run a small engineering team. I achieved this when I was 30. During my studies at Aston, the mix of electrical and mechanical engineering stood me in good stead for my career. The next natural career progression is to Engineering Director. But I enjoy frontline engineering too much to give it up!"

David Seaward's Network Lecture was held early May



Holograms for bank notes

Brand aid

Heather Cooper (1987 BSc Business Administration and German), Head of Marketing for Etam, describes the retail market as "exciting, yet frustrating". Her Network Lecture, *Successful Marketing on the High Street – a look at the theory and practice of retail brand positioning*, explains why.

have 2,000 lines but not one of them will be the same." Despite this, Heather believes that with the right approach the future can only be promising.

So how can companies like Etam survive with this level of change in a retail brand? No easy task. But, for Heather, the rules are fundamentally the same as those for

"The challenge is to build a consistent brand image while the product is constantly changing."

Clothing retailers continue to find trading conditions difficult in the face of weak consumer demand and heavy discounting. The recent popularity surge in Internet shopping has also contributed to the decline in overall retail spend.

Etam is no different. The biggest challenge confronting Heather is the need to build a consistent brand image while the principle product being sold is constantly changing. She explains: "There are 2,000 lines in our shops at the moment. In six months time, we will still

FMCG brands and this is where her wealth of experience and knowledge lies.

Heather left Aston and headed for Noxell before moving to Procter & Gamble, marketing Cover Girl and Mary Quant cosmetics. She then joined Wella, developing local and international hair care marketing initiatives, involving the launch of Experience shampoos in the UK and creating the highly successful ShockWaves relaunch and 'Gorilla' campaign. She joined Etam in May of last year.

Her experience suggests that the secret to a successful brand lies in understanding your customer. In addition, it is essential that a clear, consistent image is communicated through every element of the marketing mix. Etam has already done this very successfully with Tammy, its fashion range for girls aged eight to fifteen. Launched in 1974, the Tammy range is extremely well known now among mothers and daughters. In light of this, Heather is certain that, although it cannot happen overnight, Etam has the potential to achieve the same. The challenge: developing a stronger brand in a highly competitive market.



Heather Cooper

Etam

TAMMY

A seamless connectivity

What lies ahead for the mobile? If we look into the future ten years from now the possibilities are astounding. Services such as WAP are showing the way towards the third generation of mobile communications, but how long will they survive?

Katie Brown (1992 MEng Electronic Engineering and 1995 PhD Electrical and Electronic Engineering), Senior Futures Engineer with BT, is at the forefront of cutting-edge research that has begun the push towards what she describes as ubiquitous communication – a seamless connectivity.

Katie returned to her alma mater last November to give the seventh in the series of Network Lectures, *Mobile Communications: Three Generations in a Decade*. Speaking to both students and professionals about the future of mobile communications, she confessed that even she was not sure whether it would be WAP or something completely different which people would be using in five years time. One thing she is certain

about, however, is that the desire to communicate anytime, anywhere, will be even stronger.

"In a world of ubiquitous communication, future seamless communication may be limited only by our imagination."

Her lecture introduced the concept of the 'Virtual Home Environment' which she claims will give its user a common look and feel interface and service experience. So, whatever device you have, wherever you are and whatever you're doing, you still have that common set of connections – the ability to pick up emails, use the Internet and talk to anyone you choose.

What's more, the fourth generation of mobile communications may not necessarily rely on the traditional mobile phone device. Its attractiveness lies in the fact that location and a handset won't be a hindrance. We may in fact be seeing the birth of objects other than phones used as communication devices: touch-sensitive panels, even jewellery. In a world of ubiquitous communication, future seamless communication may be limited only by our imagination.



Katie Brown

Nicholas Colford (1988 BSc Ergonomics and Computer Science) has his feet on the ground and his head in the stars. "Aston gave me an excellent grounding in ergonomics and systems analysis. I've been involved in ergonomically designing equipment to fit out space modules and developing astronauts' clothes and personal equipment."



Floating weightless inside the Zero-g Airbus 300 testing the Mirsupio waist bag.

"The placement year was crucial. I really learned what work was all about."



Nicholas Colford

Spatial awareness

Designing the extra-terrestrial workplace

Zero gravity. Disorientation. Restricted space in which to move around. Not the most welcoming of work environments by any measure. But put yourself in the shoes, or spacesuit, of the astronaut who has to work in these conditions aboard space stations orbiting the Earth. This harsh, challenging work place becomes a perfect environment for the expertise of Aston graduate Nicholas Colford (1988 BSc Ergonomics and Computer Science).



Filming underwater demonstrations for live TV

How long have you been associated with developing and testing equipment for astronauts?

I've been working in the space ergonomics business since 1991 when I joined the Human Factors Engineering Office of the Italian state-owned aerospace company, Alenia Aerospazio. But my association with matters astro goes back to my time at Aston. Back in 1985, I obtained NASA's *Human Factors Engineering Standards Document* which I used as a reference work for a few ergonomics assignments during my course. I then applied for the first session of the International Space University in the summer of 1988. Unfortunately, I wasn't successful at that time. I did, however, win a Japanese Education Ministry Scholarship and studied in Tokyo for two years. On my return, I

settled in Italy and found employment with Alenia Aerospazio.

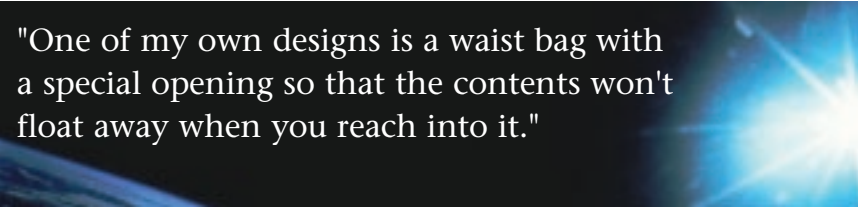
What did you do in Tokyo?

After a six-month intensive Japanese language course, I investigated the use of object-oriented programming in the modelling of human posture. The modelling program I wrote then wasn't developed further, but I have carried on working in this field, as has the University department where I studied.

consultants may sell their services primarily to the ESA and secondarily to other contractors for the agency. As a rule, ESA doesn't contract directly with individuals these days, only companies.

So, what's the relationship between ergonomics and space travel?

Ergonomics is the study of the relationship between people and their working environment. I work as an Ergonomist and System Engineer. I've



"One of my own designs is a waist bag with a special opening so that the contents won't float away when you reach into it."

Now you are Director and Consultant with Mare Crisium SRL.

Yes. Mare Crisium SRL is a limited responsibility company based in Milan. I helped an English engineer to set up the company in 1996 as an Italian base for his consultancy operations for the European Space Agency (ESA). I joined the company in 1998. The purpose of the company is, and always has been, to provide a minimal-overhead corporate identity through which

worked on the design and outfitting of several modules for Mir, the International Space Station, looking at the layout of the modules and the location of the astronauts' restraints and mobility aids both inside and outside the module. I have also worked on the development of astronauts' clothes and personal equipment. One of my own designs is the Mirsupio waist-bag with a special opening so that the contents won't float away when you reach into it.

When you're testing out your designs, how do you re-create the conditions you'd expect in space?

The conditions in which an astronaut works are regularly simulated in two ways. The most frequently used way is 'neutral buoyancy'. A scuba diver in a large tank of water can adjust buoyancy to float without rising or falling. Although this is only a very rough approximation of the weightlessness that astronauts experience in space, it's close enough to be very useful for training purposes, especially training for space-walks or extra-vehicular activity (EVA). The resistance of the water is similar to the resistance of the spacesuits they wear and it's possible to get disoriented underwater almost as easily as in space. The less frequently used method is a 'parabolic flight'. This produces a much more realistic simulation, but is used less because it is much more expensive and can only provide around twenty seconds of weightlessness at a time.

How do you achieve weightlessness with a parabolic flight?

A specially modified airliner flies in a steep climb at full power and then the pilot reduces the power to just enough to overcome the air resistance. The aircraft's climb peters out and it falls into a dive. At just the right moment the pilot throttles up the engines and recovers horizontal flight. In theory it's like driving over a hump-backed bridge. In reality, it's like nothing else I've ever experienced: smooth and reassuring, it doesn't feel like falling at all.

Simulation is important, obviously. But how do you explore the real effect of zero gravity?

The experiment on human posture in microgravity looked at both basic human science and applied ergonomics. A European astronaut and a Russian cosmonaut collected the

"I've worked on the design and outfitting of several modules for the International Space Station, looking at the layout of the modules and the location of the astronauts' restraints and mobility aids both inside and outside the module."

data on each other following several separate protocols. Some protocols measured how very basic motor-control strategies changed once they were in space. The other protocols measured their resting and working postures. Although some of the protocols were possible only in weightlessness, we performed many of the same measurements on the astronauts before and after the flight to compare with the data they measured on each other in space. We used a measuring system for human posture and movement called ELITE. I oversaw and engineered its modification for use in space and it was sent up to the space station, Mir. ELITE is a system of pairs of TV cameras which, through optical filters and image-recognition hardware, can identify special reflective markers in the camera's field of view. When the pairs of cameras are carefully calibrated, the ELITE software can compare the images and, with the help of an operator, can track the markers and calculate their locations in three dimensions to an accuracy of a few millimetres.

What are the highlights of your career?

The technical highlight of my career was when the astronauts sent down the first calibration data from the ELITE

equipment. The data it produced were excellent.

Your degree was Combined Honours Ergonomics and Computer Science. How has your time at Aston helped your career?

I work as an Ergonomist and a System Engineer and I learned the theory behind all that at Aston. My studies gave me a very good grounding in both ergonomics and systems analysis. I also valued the transport planning course from my first year. A lot of what is now called 'macro-ergonomics' or 'ergonomics of the built environment', was part of the studies into how people reacted to and used transport systems. The placement year at British Telecom Research Labs was absolutely crucial. It made all the difference. I really learned what work was all about.

What does the future hold for you?

I'm looking to diversify into terrestrial ergonomics and systems engineering consultancy. I'm currently writing three chapters for two books. One is a handbook of aeronautical and astronautical engineering. The other explores the issues of working with display units.



Testing the 'bubble' helmet with new voice communication link

Roundup Around the world in...one page

We continue with our worldwide search for Aston alumni. Letters now come to us from the far-flung reaches of the globe: from Algeria to Zimbabwe, Athens to Zürich. Apex is hot on the heels of four Aston alumni who have settled some distance from their alma mater.

Name: Ifeoma Okoye

Degree: 1987 MSc Teaching English for Specific Purposes

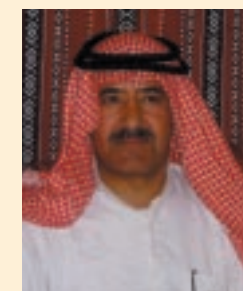
Prizewinner: My first two novels, *Behind the Clouds* and *Men Without Ears*, were first published by Longman. *Men Without Ears* won the Association of Nigerian Authors' Best Fiction of the Year Award and has been translated into Russian. My last three children's books were published by Heinemann Oxford in 1995 and have been translated into African languages: Swahili, Ndebele and Shona. The titles are *Chika's House*, *Ayo and His Pencil* and *Neka Goes to Market*. My books are sold in Nigeria, Africa, Britain, a few in America, Germany and other countries.

Career: When I left Aston, I went back to teach at the Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu. In October 1992 I left the Institute for Nnamdi Azikiwe University at Awka. I was with the English Department of the university until I retired last August. While teaching there, I made good use of my knowledge of ESP. I designed and taught English for Law, English for Mass Communication and English for Engineering courses. I also taught Pragmatics, Semantics, Stylistics, Discourse Analysis, and Creative Writing, attended conferences and wrote papers and articles on ESP.

Ifeoma Okoye



Name: Mohamed Bensahraoui



Mohamed Bensahraoui

Degree: 1980 MSc Occupational Health and Safety

Memories of Aston: Aston years were among the best, if not the best, of my life: Stafford Tower, Vauxhall Court, sports and a green campus which looks even greener now.

Coming back for more: I came back with my wife a few years after graduation. Would you believe for our honeymoon? I even had the chance to meet an old classmate!

Employment history: Ten years with Algerian National Gas and Oil Company Sonatrach where I progressed to Assistant Manager (Safety). Then I joined UAE and worked for ADNOC and then ADCO in the desert. Looking for shorter leaves away from home and my family, I joined ADMA-OPCO working offshore.

Name: Shahira Abdel Shahid

Degree: 1993 PhD Management

Memories of Aston: My memories are great – supervisors Professors Davis and Buckland and the School Secretary Pam Lewis. I remember vividly that I was so enthusiastic to finish my PhD in two years – one of the greatest achievements in my academic career. It



Dr Shahira Abdel Shahid

was also a pleasure to know Drs Duan and Santrupt who shared the same room on the 15th floor of the tower blocks. We're still in contact.

Current employment: I am Director of Research and Market Development in Cairo and Alexandria Stock Exchange (CASE). The Alexandria Stock Exchange was officially established in 1888 followed by Cairo in 1903. In 1991 the Egyptian government embarked on an aggressive economic reform and restructuring programme. The move

Name: Athenodoros Charalambous

Degree: 1996 MSc Risk Management and Safety Technology

Memories of Aston: I still remember Aston as good academically and socially. The city centre location was so convenient to enjoy the thriving city. As an overseas student I made the best of my time there. There was so much happening on campus but my best memory was the Greek night on 7 February 1996. I had been actively involved in the organisation of the whole event which took place in the Leicester Room with live music from the Pambos Greek Tavern and a belly dancer.

Current employment: Internal Adviser for Health and Safety, Security and Environment of the Laiki Group and the Head of Risk Surveying Department of Laiki Insurance, the largest insurance group on the island of Cyprus.

Challenges: To develop and maintain a positive safety culture both in my organisation and in my country, the latter as the President of the Cyprus Safety and Health Association.

Athenodoros Charalambous



towards a free-market economy has been swift and the process of deregulation and privatisation has stimulated stock market activity. Egypt is the second largest capital market in Africa in terms of market capitalisation, second to South Africa and the first in the Middle East. My work involves keeping abreast of all current market developments and making proposals to the Chairman for the Egyptian market itself. I review the content of all the publications produced by the Exchange.

Sitting on the airport runway at Doha, capital of Qatar, Kevan Baker (1990 MBA) began to wonder what lay in front of him on a six-day trek in the foothills of the Himalayas in Nepal, climbing to an altitude of 13,500ft.

When men and mountains meet

Kevan, a self employed Consultant with the company Marketing Problem Solving, took up this trekking challenge in aid of Whizz-Kidz, a national charity which provides special mobility aids to give disabled children the independence and freedom other children take for granted. "One of my cousins has a physically handicapped daughter who is unable to walk

"We were supposed to have a two-hour stop in Doha to change plane. But we were there for nearly 24 hours. We were put in a hotel, but Doha isn't the best place in the world to be stuck. This delay meant that our trek would start a day late and we would have to forfeit our relaxation time in Kathmandu." Finally, the Himalayas lay ahead and the trek began.

The evening was then spent having dinner and generally relaxing before going to bed early. On one day we were woken at 4.30am and started to trek in the dark as it wasn't light until around 6.30am. On that day we trekked to an altitude of 13,500ft, not arriving at our camp until 4.30pm. Most days were clear with blue skies and sunshine. We walked in T-shirts and shorts but at night it was freezing. Temperatures plummeted to -10°C and, at the highest camp, there was frost on the inside of the two-man tent!

"I'm thrilled to have done it, though. It was a fantastic experience for a good cause," enthused Kevan.

"We trekked to an altitude of 13,500ft... there was frost on the inside of the tent!"

unaided. She was given a powered wheelchair which transformed her life. The difference it made to her independence is incredible and I decided I wanted to do something to help other children in a similar situation," explained Kevan.

"Although I already played squash, I had to be fit to take on this challenge," he explained. "So, I embarked on a rigorous fitness programme of running, swimming, walking and hours in the gym." With all the preparations made, both physical and mental, Kevan was ready to meet the Himalayas head on. But he hadn't planned on the first hurdle.

Most mornings we were woken at 6.00am with a cup of tea and a bowl of warm water for washing. There were no showers, bathrooms or toilets. Breakfast consisted of cereal and some sort of bread and then more tea or coffee. Trekking began at 7.00am and most days we arrived at our next camp around 4.00pm after stopping for a lunch break.



Merger off

The discussions between Aston and Birmingham University have reached a conclusion with Aston withdrawing from further merger talks. The meeting of Aston's Council in March voted by 20 votes to 8 not to continue discussions with Birmingham about a possible merger.

The Council was once again a forum for impassioned debate with many different views being expressed articulately and with great feeling. It was clear that there is a great deal of pride in Aston's reputation and members wanted to do everything possible to guard this for the future. Secretary-Registrar, David Packham, commented: "In recent years, Aston has had spectacular success in meeting its targets, increasing income and growing student numbers. We will now put all our energies into pursuing our independent strategy for growth and success." The

regeneration of Eastside, which will put Millennium Point, the City Library and Science Museum just across Jennens Road, will form a key part of our strategy in future years.

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mike Wright, concluded: "The vision of an entirely new super university for Birmingham, which Maxwell Irvine and I put together, was a very exciting idea but it has unfortunately proved impossible to make that a reality. As far as a merger is concerned, the moment has passed, although collaborating closely with Birmingham remains a priority. We will now put all our efforts into making the next few years the most exciting in Aston's history, building on our record of success. The motto of the City of Birmingham is 'Forward'. That is also Aston's motto. I can think of no better watchword than that."

Our heritage

Interested in Aston's history? Then you may want to follow the University's Heritage Trail, which takes in over nine hundred years of the history of Birmingham. An illustrated leaflet showing a map of sites of historical interest around Aston campus is now available.

Mary Bodfish, local historian and member of staff in Languages & European Studies, devised the trail. She explains: "Few people walking around the Aston University campus and seeing the names of the buildings and roadways are likely to realise

that they sum up centuries of history. Streets on the Aston Triangle site were once thronged with people who lived in some of the worst housing in the city, made a living in the small workshops that were typical of Birmingham's industrial past and drank in a choice of dozens of public houses. There were schools, places of worship, shops and a library long before Aston University was established here."

Copies of the Heritage Trail leaflet are available free of charge from the Alumni Relations Office.

Hidden photos reveal secrets of lost Brum

Why did a famous queen ride through Gosta Green and Aston in the 1850s? Who was Garibaldi Beetlestone? What did the very first Council Houses in Birmingham look like?

Answers to these and many more questions can be found in a new book called *Aston Through the Lens*, written by Sally Hoban and Jean Hasson with a foreword by acclaimed local historian Carl Chinn.

The book features photos discovered at the University last year by the Marketing & Communications Department. The images span over a hundred-and-fifty years and were found in the collection of a retired member of staff and the University's archives. The photos include views of

Gosta Green and Aston, images of students and staff at the University and other unique images of old Birmingham, mainly from Aston's collection but also from the archives at Birmingham Central Library.

Sally Hoban explains: "Once we'd got over the initial excitement of discovering the collection, we selected the best and most unusual images for publication. We then asked Mary Bodfish, a local historian, to research the history of Gosta Green and Aston from the middle ages to the present day and put it all together for the book."

Aston Through the Lens is available at the special price of £6.00 to alumni including postage and packing. Order form on the back of this magazine.



Bookshelf



A number of University publications are produced over the year, all of which are available to Aston alumni. A new addition to the suite is the Pharmacy Review 2000. If you would like a copy of this or any of the publications below, 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 2000-2001

Aston Business School Review 2000

Undergraduate Prospectus 2002 entry

Postgraduate Prospectus 2002 entry

School of Engineering & Applied Science Research Brochure

Pharmaceutical Sciences Research Institute Report 2000

Aston Through the Lens

Back issues of Apex can also be found on our web site.

Conference Aston is undertaking a multi-million pound project to construct a state-of-the-art non-residential conference and meeting venue at Aston.



£2.2 million Conference Centre for Aston

The new £2.2 million Lakeside Conference Centre will provide a convenient and accessible location for small or large events when it opens in summer 2001. The contemporary new development, which features an eye-catching glass frontage, will further enhance the extensive conference, training and meeting facilities at Aston University and will include a range of dedicated meeting, training and hospitality areas, with the latest hi-tech audio visual equipment for up to 450 delegates. The Centre is the perfect complement to the University's £18 million Lakeside Residences, which will be used

for conference accommodation throughout the summer months.

Conference Aston Manager, Eddie Kealey, said: "The second stage of the overall Lakeside development, the non-residential Lakeside Centre, will ensure that we are firmly placed to capitalise on Birmingham's continued growth as the meeting place of Europe. The new centre will provide an excellent facility offering users a range of first class meeting, exhibition and hospitality facilities in the very heart of Birmingham."

As a direct result of the new Lakeside development, Conference Aston has been able to sponsor other exciting changes on campus. Firstly, the Londis shop has been relocated to larger and more accessible premises in the base of Dalton Tower. Secondly, the Martin Luther King Centre has moved to Lawrence Tower, providing the Chaplaincy with a self contained suite and thirdly, a vibrant new Café Bar has opened across the Lake.

Bar Lago, situated in the Sumpner Building, is a modern, stylish food and drink outlet, open between 8.00am and 11.00pm. The food at Bar Lago is very cosmopolitan. Offering a range of food from around the world including chargrilled burgers, fajitas, lasagne, pizzas and stir-fried oriental dishes. Beers, wines and spirits are on sale during licensing hours. Local award-winning contractors Thomas Vale carried out the refurbishment work.



CONFERENCE ASTON BIRMINGHAM

If you would like more information about our extensive conference, training and meeting facilities contact Conference Aston direct.

Aston graduates can enjoy preferential rates in this new state-of-the-art non-residential conference and meeting venue.

To discuss your requirements, contact Conference Aston direct.
Eddie Kealey, Conference Aston, Aston University, Birmingham B4 7ET
Tel 0121 359 7293 Fax 0121 359 5267
www.conferenceaston.co.uk conferenceaston@aston.ac.uk



12,000 students found off campus

Incredible, but true! Since the Alumni Relations Office was founded in June 1997, a staggering 12,000 former students have been traced all over the world and have joined the Aston Alumni Network. As you read this, we will be in contact with over 19,000 former Aston students – an increase of almost 250% in just over three years. But why does the University want to keep in touch with you?

Most of you will be familiar with Apex, the alumni magazine, and our programme of reunions over the year. But you may not be aware of the other projects we involve our graduates in. We are developing new and exciting ways to support the University and feed into the vibrant life of Aston today. We do far more than collect names and addresses. "Alumni Relations work is so important to the life of Aston today," explains Anouche Newman, Alumni Relations Assistant. "It can feed directly into the core activities of the University."

"Alumni Relations work is so important to the life of Aston today. It can feed directly into the core activities of the University."

From a marketing point of view, our alumni are our valued ambassadors. Many of you have friends and family who may be thinking of higher education. Some of you have encouraged these people to visit Aston and to obtain information about our degree programmes. We are beginning to meet alumni who have a family history of studying here. There are also those amongst you who, having completed your first degree here, have Aston as your number one choice for

postgraduate study. Some of our alumni also support Aston at fairs and exhibitions overseas, recounting first hand the benefits an Aston degree has brought them.

We also have alumni who are willing to talk to undergraduates about their career choices and progression. Our students can find out what it's really like at the cutting edge of their chosen profession. Many of our alumni provide students with placement opportunities in their companies and return to Aston to give lectures which have a relevant bearing on our degrees.

Over the past four years, our alumni have assisted Registry by willingly giving their time to take part in assessment panels for subject areas as diverse as Chemical Engineering, Transport Management, German and Combined Honours. Alumni have also played an important role in the latest raft of QAA assessments, which have consistently returned high-ranking scores, by commenting on their time at Aston.

There is an incredible generosity of spirit among our alumni who want to put something back into the life of Aston today. If this has given you food for thought and you'd be interested in offering your support, contact the Alumni Relations Office or complete the

Graduate Update Form. You can express your interest by ticking the relevant boxes.

Some highlights of where we are now:

- a large and growing membership
- a programme of Network Lectures providing a networking forum for students and professionals
- international e-groups
- support of overseas marketing and recruitment through the International Office
- liaison with the GradCons Register managed by the Careers Advisory Service
- point of contact for information on postgraduate opportunities, Library, Guild and Sport Centre membership
- assisted Registry and Schools in QAA assessments and feedback panels.

This is only a taster of the work of the Alumni Relations Office. More details can be obtained from Sarah Pymm, Alumni Relations Officer, or by visiting the website at www.aston.ac.uk/alumni.



Get on form

Why not spend a few moments completing the Graduate Update Form in the centre pages?

We are increasingly asked to provide qualitative data on alumni, for example, what kind of jobs you have and salary levels. We will need to collect this from you in the coming months and on a regular basis. It helps us make a case to government as well as assisting in marketing Aston and getting us into (and further up) the various league tables that are produced in national newspapers. I am sure you, like us, would like to see Aston regularly appearing among the best universities in the country because we know how good it is. The challenge facing us is to communicate this fact to the rest of the world so that the standing Aston enjoys, and by implication the standing of your degree, is enhanced in people's eyes. All data freely supplied is kept under secure conditions in accordance with the University's registration under the Data Protection Acts.

It's not too late to expand your horizons.

If you've not yet booked your holiday this year, or if you're thinking of another break to get away from it all, why not consider the Alumni Travel Programme. Aston has negotiated some excellent travel offers with two leading tour and cruise operators – Collette Tours and Swan Hellenic. You can have a holiday of a lifetime and enjoy preferential rates and discounts. What's more, you can help the University at the same time. For every holiday booking, the travel companies make a contribution to Aston University's Development Fund. For more details, contact the Alumni Relations Office.

'Canada and New England' departs 10 September for a 14-day Collette tour of picturesque New England and beautiful Eastern Canada. Beginning in the Big Apple, New York City, you will experience all the spectacle and excitement America's largest city has to offer before continuing on to Niagara Falls, through Toronto, Montreal and Quebec before concluding the trip in the famed city of Boston, home of Beacon Hill, the USS Constitution and Faneuil Hall Marketplace.

'The Delights of Italy' Swan Hellenic cruise departs 21 October for a 15-day cruise of a lifetime aboard *Minerva*. See the canals of Venice, ascend Mount Etna by cable car, explore Palermo and shop in Rome. In addition to taking in famous sites and little visited towns and villages, you will be accompanied by a team of guest speakers, including Nicholas Kenyon, Director of the BBC Proms.

Alumni Travel Programme 2002 is coming soon with another tempting selection of destinations: **cruise Greece and visit New Zealand.**

Net working

Welcome to all our new alumni – recently found graduates and the entire Class of 2001.

The net is certainly working amongst Aston alumni as we weave our way ever forward. As an Aston graduate, you are automatically a member of a global network of Aston alumni which is becoming increasingly more active throughout the world. Membership of this network is free and new members are joining all the time.

What's in it for you?

If you're new to the Aston Alumni Network, or if you've been a member for some time and now want to participate more, here's a rundown of the benefits you can enjoy:

- social networking events for like-minded alumni – get your year group back together again
- reunions back on campus (or nearer home) to mark landmark anniversaries of your graduation from Aston
- an In-Touch Service to help you find faces from the past – whatever happened to what's-his-name?
- Associate Membership of the Students' Guild*
- Library membership*
- Woodcock Sports Centre membership*
- preferential rates with Conference Aston
- special room rates in our superbly appointed Nelson Building accommodation
- the Aston Alumni Travel Programme: travel offers with top companies
- membership of international alumni groups – wherever in the world you find yourself, there's bound to be more like you nearby
- opportunities to put something back into the life of Aston today by supporting your former School, the Careers Service or current students
- and, of course, regular editions of Apex.

*Membership fees apply. Contact the Alumni Relations Office for more details.

Winning form



In the last edition of Apex we teamed up with LivingWell, the UK's largest health club operator, to offer a prize of a six week membership at one of LivingWell's 78 health clubs throughout the UK. All you had to do was complete your Graduate Update Form to be entered into a draw.

Congratulations to **Rebecca Conway (2000 BSc IBML French)** who was the lucky winner.

Anouche Newman picks the lucky winner

Business boasts top scores

Aston Business School has achieved top marks – 24 out of 24 – and acclaim from the Quality Assurance Agency for the high standards of its provision. The report details the flexibility, quality and professionalism of the School, its staff and students.

The review, conducted in January, adds to the continued success of ABS with its AMBA and EQUIS accreditation.

The report highlighted the School's teaching, learning and assessment strategy as well-articulated, clear and effective with outstanding placement provision and excellent progression to employment and further study.

Head of Aston Business School, Professor John Saunders, commented: "This is a great achievement that is consistent with our aim to excel in all we do. By itself, the excellent Quality

Assurance Agency result will not influence what we do, although it is an important measure of our move to become one of Europe's leading business schools."

ABS scored well in each of the six categories that were assessed by the agency:

- Curriculum design, content and organisation
- Teaching, learning and assessment
- Student progression and achievement
- Student support and guidance



Professor John Saunders scores top marks with QAA.

- Learning resources
- Quality management and enhancement

The University's Support Services were also commended for the clear guidance and support strategy, personal tutor systems, high quality LIS and IT provision, highly professional and supportive administrative staff.

Unique offering in e-business

With e-business revenue growing faster than any other business, most companies are looking to make the transition from traditional trading to the e-business on-line marketplace. A new MSc programme in e-Business at Aston Business School will enable students to successfully explore careers such as Internet consultants, general business, e-business specialists or dot.com start-ups.

The programme starts in September and focuses primarily on the business elements of an on-line company, in addition to an IT grounding, preparing graduates for the global workplace in electronic business. It is designed specifically for existing businesses that want to develop into the electronic marketplace either through developing new electronic services or implementing their business process on-line.

Aston is the only premier league Business School nation-wide to offer this specialist

full-time MSc course which is complemented with a new state-of-the-art e-commerce studio worth £1/2 million.

Studying for 10 months, students will develop e-business expertise relating to customers, society, the internal organisation and technology alongside the necessary management skills required through close links with local, national and international industrial partners.

Course director, Dr Amanda Broderick, explained: "The course provides a comprehensive and innovative portfolio of e-business disciplines. With the focus of the programme on managing the electronic network of business activities, graduates will develop the necessary technical and business skills to be highly competitive in the global electronic marketplace."

Modules include e-marketing, law and

ethics of e-commerce and e-business, logistics and operations and are designed to address business information needs and skills shortages in the e-Business arena.



Dr Amanda Broderick

Aston hosts new Bioinformatics Research Institute

Medical diagnostic systems took a significant step forward with the opening of a new research institute in Bioinformatics at Aston University. Funded by life-sciences company, Cardionetics Ltd, and formed as their long-term research arm, the Cardionetics Institute of Bioinformatics (CIB) was officially opened in February by University Chancellor, Sir Adrian Cadbury.

The £1/2million initiative will develop technologies for advanced pattern analysis of ECG and other clinical biosignals, web-enablement to allow remote monitoring of patients over extended periods and the analysis of large bodies of clinical data. The emphasis of this research will be on developing and applying data modelling, visualisation and analysis algorithms to biosignals to generate clinically valuable information.

Cardionetics focuses on both products and services for screening, diagnosing and monitoring cardiovascular diseases for every party involved: patients to the pharmaceutical industry, healthcare professionals, hospitals, private insurers and HMOs (Health Management Organisations).

The company has produced the C.Net2000, the world's first fully automatic ambulatory electrocardiograph monitor which is specifically aimed at Primary Care use to enable better informed patient referral decisions where cardiac arrhythmia are suspected. It has been shown in clinical evaluation to reduce the referral rate by 67% without a single adverse outcome amongst the patients not referred. The device won a Millennium Product Award and was runner up in the 2000 BBC Tomorrow's World Awards.

The electrocardiogram (ECG) is the best non-invasive method of monitoring the health of patients with known or suspected heart conditions. Currently, most commercial ECG systems use either visual inspection of short 10-second traces or the semi-automatic analysis of 24 hours of ECG captured from the patient at rest. But the algorithms used require a lot of skilled manual intervention from a cardiologist, detect many false positives – heart beats that are incorrectly labelled as abnormal – and the systems are not practical at the primary care level in GP surgeries.

The C.Net2000 uses neural computing, a method of extracting non-linear information from data, to analyse the ECG on-line and supply the GP with a short summary report of all the abnormalities detected. Of particular importance is the fact that the patient wears the device for 24 hours, so that if any of their normal activities triggers symptoms, they will be detected. This benefits both the NHS, through



Sir Adrian Cadbury (front left) opens the Cardionetics Institute of Bioinformatics

reduction in waiting lists, and the patients, who no longer have to wait to see a consultant only to be told that their condition is benign.

The research will build on previous work in the Neural Computing Research Group in bioinformatics, particularly in the analysis of electromagnetic signals from the brain (EEG and MEG). Ian Nabney, Director of the Institute said: "Although ECG signals are much cleaner than EEG, there are some very difficult challenges ahead. In daily activity, the heart rate varies by up to three times changing the shape of each beat dramatically and making it impossible to clearly separate individual beats. In addition, a very detailed analysis of different phases of each beat is necessary to separate different clinical conditions."

The CIB is a mechanism for putting state of the art technology into products based on real patient needs and in this way will keep a leading UK knowledge-based company ahead of global competition. Vice Chancellor, Professor Mike Wright, said: "Cardionetics is a young and small company now. It is very encouraging to see its strong vision for the future, and we look forward to working with the group as the company grows over the next three years and beyond."

Research grows on

Researchers in the Pharmaceutical Sciences Research Institute (PSRI) have received funding for two new tissue engineering research projects. Tissue engineering is one of the fastest moving and exciting new areas of scientific research.



Dr Peter Hanson (left) and Dr Allan Coombes of the PSRI discuss their new research collaboration.

Tissue engineering involves polymer techniques that allow growth of human tissue outside the body by using a fine, 3-D polymer matrix that provides a platform for cells to grow on. The cells are allowed to develop in a special cell culture medium that is rich in nutrients. The matrix and the new cells can then be implanted into the body to help the body's repair system. A variety of different cells have already been

grown on 3-D matrices in labs across the world, including bone, blood and skin cells. Scientists are already able to grow new sheets of skin that can be used to help repair severe burns. Aston's new research will concentrate on specific cell types that occur in soft tissue.

The first grant, which is from Astra Zeneca, will support the team as they produce models of the gastric epithelium (the layer of cells that line

the stomach). These models will be used to test oral drugs in the lab and may eventually help in tissue reconstruction in the body.

The second grant is from the EPSRC and it will enable the researchers to develop new novel biodegradable fibres that go into making the 3-D matrix itself. It is hoped that these will eventually lend themselves to soft tissue engineering such as skin and blood vessel recreation.

Kings of education support the queen

Sir Adrian Cadbury, Chancellor of Aston, and Professor Graham Harding, Head of the Neurosciences Research Institute at Aston, are two of three new patrons of the Queen Alexandra College in Harborne, Birmingham, along with Robert Taylor, who is Lord Lieutenant of the West Midlands.

The Queen Alexandra is a residential further education and training college which caters for students aged 16-63 from all over the UK. Most students have a visual impairment but the college also welcomes people with additional disabilities and learning difficulties.

Mrs Veronica Wootten, Chairman of the Governors at the College, said: "The Governors and staff of Queen Alexandra College are delighted that Sir Adrian Cadbury, Professor Graham Harding and Mr Robert Taylor have agreed to become patrons of the College. Patronage from people with such a diverse range of significant achievements in business, public and professional life will undoubtedly enable us to raise the profile of the College and its achievements even further on a national and local level. We look forward to many enjoyable years in association with our new patrons."



Sir Adrian Cadbury, Chancellor (far left), and Professor Graham Harding (far right) with students from the Queen Alexandra College.

The brave new world of language translation

The globalisation and internationalisation of political, economic, educational, and cultural communications has been accompanied by increasing demands for translations. The School of Languages & European Studies at Aston was the first in England to introduce an undergraduate programme in Modern Languages with Translation Studies. It also offers a postgraduate MSc in Translation in a European Context. Students are actively encouraged to pursue careers in this field.

Translators are expected to produce cost-effective, high quality texts very quickly. However, critics of the industry predict that, in future, machine translation systems (MTs) will do the job much faster and more effectively than humans can. But will they?

In a recent seminar, Donald Harvey, Consulting Associate in Globalisation and Internet Translation Services to Lernout & Hauspie Ltd, presented an overview of machine translation systems. He explained that although MT systems are very quick, none are

100% accurate. Good systems can achieve up to 85% accuracy – provided they have been adapted to specific subjects and customers (for example, the limited vocabulary and conventional text structure in French and English weather reports leads to a highly accurate MT translation).

For some situations, a 'rough' translation will be sufficient. However, when high quality is required, a human translator will be better than an MT system. This is because humans are experts in interlingual and intercultural communication. Translation isn't a

mechanical process but rather a complex social and cognitive activity that requires decision-making. For the future success of the industry, it is necessary to build a supporting infrastructure involving machine translation, subject specific glossaries, translation memory systems, terminology management, and pre- and post-editing of the text by human translators.

Tim Martin, who is Language Co-ordinator for English with the Translation Service of the European Commission, also believes that machines alone will never be as effective as human translators. He visited Aston recently to talk about the translation industry to language students considering the industry as a career. He said: "Translation very definitely can't be done just as well by machines. They have a role to play but they'll never replace human intelligence. Machine translation in particular will have difficulties coping with the subtleties of politically sensitive issues, as are translated by the Commission's service."

'Developing Translation Competence', co-edited by Christina Schäffner and Beverly Adab, was published in 2000 by Benjamins and gives further information on translation studies.



Tim Martin and Dr Christina Schäffner pictured during his recent visit to Aston

Presidential address

The final speech delivered. The last campaign battled. What happens to Students' Guild Presidents when they leave office? Apex caught up with a few of them to see how they have fared outside the hallowed corridors of power and asked:

1. Where are you now?
2. Why did you run for President?
3. What was the major student issue during your term of office?

4. If you were running for President today, what would your campaign focus on?

Lisa Tweedie 1989-1990



London in "Human Computer Interaction".

2. I ran for President because I had enjoyed being on the executive the year before. I was editor of the SUN and

wanted to continue the good work that had been done by my predecessors.

3. Trying to stop student loans and getting the initial plans approved for the Guild refurbishment.

4. It probably wouldn't be that different. I'm still an idealist who values education! As a working mother, my emphasis might be on flexibility. For instance, we should have a modular system across all the educational establishments in the country so that people can build up their education over time where and when they need to. Education needs to be a life-long process which is affordable and accessible for all.

Angela Willoughby 1995-1996

1. Human Performance Consultant with Hay Group in London essentially advising organisations on how to get the most out of their people.

2. I had some strong opinions and ideas about the Guild and the University – it looked like a fantastic opportunity.

3. Nationally it was about changing the policy of the NUS. There was no

overriding issues locally but Aston students will recall Euro96 coming to Birmingham and Einstein's promotions.

4. The role of the President is to represent the peer group. A President today is best placed to focus on what the student body wants.

Nick Eaton 1998-1999



1. I was head-hunted for the WHSmith Group Graduate Scheme. After several moves around the country, I landed in London working in an HR Internal Recruitment role. I left WHSmith and am now working as a Recruitment Consultant with HWC Consulting, recruiting recruitment professionals for other recruitment businesses!

2. I ran for President because I felt that the year could offer me great experience.

3. The main issues were the introduction of tuition fees and modularisation of courses.

4. It would ensure that as many students as possible leave Aston with those all important skills employers look for. As someone who recruits graduates, it's great to see just how important Students' Guilds and Unions are in providing opportunities for people to develop life skills.

From RAGs to riches

Aston Raise & Give (RAG) has earned itself a golden reputation for raising money for charity over the years. Once again the society has performed tremendously and boosted the current total of monies raised to £36,809.69

Among the charities to benefit were the Meningitis Research Foundation, the Anthony Nolan Bone Marrow Trust and the Imperial Cancer Research Fund. Here's a taster of some of the latest RAG events.

In the run up to Christmas, RAG, the Juggling Society and the Music Society joined forces to host the traditional "Kids' Party" for a local group called the Second City Lone Parents, which was set up for lone parents in the Birmingham area to bring them together to support each other.

RAG members fasted for 24 hours and followed this with the ultimate chocolate challenge – learning chocolate tricks of the trade at Cadbury World on a very empty stomach. The Queen Alexander College (QAC) in Harborne benefited from funds raised. Sir Adrian Cadbury, in the Cadbury Cream Egg car, presented QAC students with a giant heart-shaped chocolate. The QAC is a further education and training college for students aged 16-63, many of whom have visual impairment. The College also welcomes people with learning difficulties and disabilities.



RAG members performing the chocolate challenge

The Aston Campus Residents Association (ACRA) also contributed over £600 to the New Boot Shelter. President of ACRA, Helen Mullen, and Aston student, Paul Douglas with Dave Lewis from the Black Horse camped out in extremely cold conditions on 6th December last year – and sleeping rough still didn't deter them from lying in!



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

Noel Stephens (1966 BSc and 1972 PhD Physics) is now Director of Aberlink Technology Ltd involved in meteorological products. He enjoys his job, which involves a variety of challenges including manufacture of linear encoders. The company encourages his interests in products as diverse as sun dials and wind turbines. He has recently won an award presented by the British Sundial Society for designing and manufacturing 100 Millennium sundials, and a two metre diameter wind turbine is currently undergoing field trials. He is married to Barbara, a secondary school teacher, and they have two daughters: Catherine, in her second year at the University of Southampton and Rachel in her final year of A-Levels.

Jurek Piasecki (1967 BSc Mechanical Engineering) is now Chairman and Chief Executive of the jewellery chain Goldsmiths Group, the UK's largest single distribution network for Rolex, Cartier, Ebel and Omega.

Clifford Waters (1967 BSc Engineering) is now retired and lives in Kings Norton, Birmingham. Since leaving Aston, he has worked in a number of different countries including South Africa, where he worked as a Consultant Engineer. He retains a professional interest and is a fellow member of various engineering institutions including the IEE and IME.

1970s

Stephen Clifford (1972 BSc Behavioural Science) is Head of Procurement at Express Dairies Plc, a post he took in June 2000 after working in France for two years. Since leaving Aston, he has had a variety of jobs in purchasing for companies including Cadbury Schweppes and Electrolux. He now lives near Stamford, Lincolnshire with his wife and two sons who are both at university.



Stephen Clifford

Paul Collier (1972 BSc Administrative Science) worked as a Chartered Accountant until 1980 when he became a lecturer at Aston Business School. In 1985 he moved to the University of Exeter, where he became Dean of Social Studies in 1995 before taking up his current position as Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor.

John Bance (1973 BSc Metallurgy) on leaving Aston worked overseas for 14 years in South Africa. During this time he spent seven years working for Anglo American/De Beers in gold and diamond production. He also found the time to complete a full-time MBA at

Cape Town University before moving into sales and marketing and then general management. He returned to the UK in 1987 and currently works as General Manager for a capital equipment company in the water and waste water industry. An ex Cobra, "now too old to play rugby," lives in Derbyshire with his wife, Lindsey, and teenage children Lara and James.



John Bance (left) and son James

Brian Moore (1976 BSc Civil Engineering) has been working with Japanese company Penta-Ocean Construction Co since 1993. He is currently a Project Manager and has spent most of his working life on overseas contracts, having recently returned from Weno in Chuuk State of Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) where he worked on a water supply scheme. All a far cry from his home in Cleveland where he lives with his wife and twin sons.

Edwin Hadden (1978 BSc Mechanical Engineering) is currently working as a Master Control Engineer for Carlton Television, based in Birmingham.

Hamid Habibi (1979 BSc and 1983 PhD Biological Sciences) is now a researcher at the University of Calgary, Canada. He recently received the Pickford Medal and a United Nations/UNESCO Professorship in Science and Sustainable Development for his research in the field of endocrinology.

1980s

Dave Barber (1980 BSc Energy Technology) spent a year at Heysham 1 Power Station in Morecambe, Lancashire as part of his studies at Aston. He has now returned as their Director.

Charles Lam (1980 MBA) now works as a Management Trainer and Consultant for Information and Management Systems in Kowloon, Hong Kong. He is also one of the co-ordinators for the Hong Kong Alumni Group.



Charles Lam

Roger Evans (1981 BSc Chemistry) worked as a Sales Manager for B.A.S.F before becoming Managing Director of Shakespeare Monofilament, a plastics company. He has been there since 1995. Aside from his work, he also finds time to give lectures on plastics at the University of Central England.

Simon Shipley (1981 BSc Chemical Engineering) now works for the John Zink Company as a Product Director and General Manager of the UK office, based in London. Since graduating he has worked primarily for process engineering equipment suppliers and contractors, having spent periods living and working in the Netherlands and Bahrain. His current position takes him all over the world, with recent visits to South Africa and Kazakhstan. Married to

Helen with three children, he now lives in Tring, Hertfordshire. Simon would love to hear from anyone who remembers him.



Simon, Helen and children Ben, Rhys and Sarah

Tavinder Chana (1982 BSc Chemical Engineering) has been working for Birmingham City Council since leaving Aston. He is currently in charge of the Ladywood and Winson Green Neighbourhood Offices. The work is very demanding but he enjoys the variety of challenges his post requires – and has done for the last 15 years!

Charlotte Engmann (1982 BSc Building Economics and Measurement) left Aston and went on to complete a MSc in Public Health Engineering at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. She now lives and works in Ghana as Water and Sanitation Systems Co-ordinator for the Community Water and Sanitation Agency.

Caroline Whelpton (1983 Business Administration and German) is currently working as a Marketing Manager for Atrium Communications, an IT company. In 1999 she gave up work for



Caroline Whelpton

two months to back-pack over 5,000 miles across Australia and as well as this she still finds the time to study for a CIM diploma.

Nitin Shah (1984 BSc Pharmacy), inspired by the former Aston lecturer Professor Malcolm Stevens, completed the Flora London Marathon in April 1997. He raised more than £1,000 for the charity Cardiac Risk in the Young

whose patron is the former British No.1 tennis player Mark Cox. He said afterwards: "Although it was hard work, it was something I had wanted to do for a long time." Nitin is now self employed at Fulham Pharmacy, London.



Nitin Shah

Andrew Hopkins (1985 BSc Electrical and Electronic Engineering) is now working as Head of IT Infrastructure for Government Communications. He is married and living in Gloucestershire with his three children. When he left Aston, Andrew completed the New York Marathon and claims he still manages a few miles a week! He is still a keen Aston Villa fan and returns as often as possible with his son, Tom, to see them play.



Andrew Hopkins

Christina Lausevic (1986 BSc French and German) is currently studying to become a Kinesiologist (a unique way of accessing the body's 'bio-computer systems' to ascertain exactly what treatment the body needs). As well as this she still has time to be a Lecturer and Course Director (TESOL) at the University of Newcastle.

Sylvie Piroulas-Pairon (née Pairon, 1987 MBA) works part-time as Project Manager in the e-business division of the French bank Société Générale. She juggles this with the responsibility of being a mother of four children, aged eleven, nine, seven and two.

Peter Feltham (1988 BSc Business Administration and French) now works as a Freelance Professional English Trainer and Translator in Strasbourg, France. He also plays the clarinet and is Vice-President and Secretary of a 50-member strong 4-voice choir, as well as Vice-Conductor for Schiltigheim Concert Band.



Peter Feltham

Rosemary Harradine (née Whitley, 1988 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies) is currently studying for an MSc Management Accounting degree at the University of West England. She is married with two daughters and works as a Management Accountant for the UK Hydrographic Office. She is also Chair of Governors at a local school and an active founder member of her local amateur dramatics Group.



Rosemary Harradine (right) as Maid Marion

Christopher Squires (1988 BSc Applied and Human Biology) is now living in Worcester with his wife Sharon and their two daughters Siobhán and Georgina. He currently works for Shering Healthcare as a Regional Sales Trainer in West Sussex.

Kate Chacksfield (1989 BSc Business Studies and Computer Science) now lives in London and works as a Television Reporter for Sky News.

Karen Dequidt (née Bennett, 1989 BSc IBML French) is an Assistant Credit Manager for Fortis Banque in Lille, France. She lives with her husband Bruno and their two children Manon and Olivier.

Catherine Jones (née Coleman, 1989 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies) works as an Infant Leader at St George's Prep. School in St Peter, Jersey. She lives in St John with her husband, Michael, and their baby, Frankie.



Catherine, Michael and baby Frankie

Cameron Teague (1989 BSc IBML French), after graduating, spent one year as an English and French teacher in Barcelona. He returned to the UK in 1991 and has had various jobs over the last nine years. He now works as a Business Analyst for an IT consultancy where he designs applications for credit risk management in banks.

1990s

Joanne Osborn (1990 BSc French and German) now works as Promotional Services Manager for Hoffman-La-Roche at their HQ in Basel, Switzerland. She joined the company in 1992 at the German Office in Grenzach. She started out as Assistant in the Marketing Department and was promoted to her current position in 1999. She is responsible for multimedia promotional activities in the HIV Marketing Team – Intranet and Internet.



Joanne Osborn

Ros Jinks (née Benton, 1991 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies) spent four years after she graduated with PriceWaterhouseCoopers in Southampton where she became a Chartered Accountant. She then moved to Lewmar Marine Ltd in Hampshire and became Group Financial Controller. She then relocated with her husband to

Guernsey as Practice Manager of the English Solicitors Wedlake Bell Guernsey. In 1999, Ros qualified as a Chartered Secretary and Administrator (ICSA) and joined Milvus, a banking software Group. Now, as Finance Director, she is the first female Director of the Group.

Robin Harper (1992 BSc Manufacturing Engineering) joined Renishaw Plc after graduating and now works as Senior Production Engineer in the Machine Tool Programming Department. In 1999, he ran the London Marathon for the Whizz Kidz charity to provide mobility aids for disabled children. He also completed the 'Three Peaks Challenge' in June 2000 to raise money for his local sports foundation. He now lives in Tetbury, Gloucestershire with his wife and their five-year old son.

Elaine Waterland (née Jones, 1993 BSc Society, Government and Psychology) and her husband have just moved to Houston, Texas in the USA after having spent the last two years in Equatorial Guinea, West Africa. She is currently looking to return to work to follow her career in management which began after leaving Aston when she worked for Marks and Spencer for five years.

Kate Howard (1994 BSc French) has worked for Bloomberg LP since leaving Aston. She never quite envisaged working in a position related to the financial markets but finds her job as an Account Manager fast-paced and challenging.

Sacha Gomez de Zamora (1995 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies) and **Ester Edwards** (1998 BSc French and German) were married last year in Lapland, Sweden. They now live in Spain with their two young children. Sacha is a Brand Manager for a fashion importer/distributor and Ester works in the ladies division of the same company.



Ester & Sacha

Jennifer Smith (née Wilson, 1995 BSc French) now works as Sales and Marketing Manager for the food service company Compass Group in Croydon. She married **Tony** (1995 BSc IBML French) in July 1998 and honeymooned in Malaysia. He now works for Nestlé, also in Croydon, as Business Development Manager. They live in Epsom Downs, Surrey and would love to hear what their old friends are up to.



Tony and Jenny Smith

Sarah Storey (née Shaw, 1996 BSc French) works as a Programme Co-ordinator for Merrill Lynch International Bank Ltd. She married **David** (1995 BSc Applied and Human Biology) in 1998 and they now have a daughter, Maisie, born in January of this year.

Vanessa Cook (1997 MSc Public Sector Management) is now working for Welwyn Hatfield Council as Head of Policy and Information.

James Fallon (1997 BSc Pharmacy) now lives in Co. Westmeath in Ireland and works as a Locum Pharmacist.

Rob Garlicki (1997 MSc Telecommunications Technology) now lives in Bristol where he works as a Senior Service Design Engineer for Orange in the Value Added Service Design Team in Engineering.



Rob Garlicki

Clare Hill (1997 BEng Mechanical Engineering) is currently at Nestlé working as a Senior Research Scientist. Her job involves developing new confectionery and has taken her as far as Russia which she found exciting and interesting. She says: "It just goes to

show how widely applicable an engineering degree can be – starting off in the steel industry I never imagined I would be working with sugar and chocolate!"



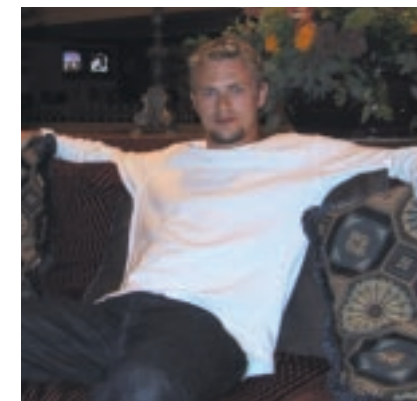
Clare Hill

Dexter Lee (1997 BSc French and German) since leaving Aston, has completed an MA in Modern European Studies at North London University, graduating in December 1999. He enrolled in September 2000 to do another MA, this time in Playwriting, at London University's Goldsmiths College.



Dexter Lee and Natasha Lee (no kin, 1997 BSc French and German)

Callum Bridgeford (1998 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies) is currently working for Accenture (previously Andersen Consulting). The post has taken him to various countries, benchmarking computer systems. Since joining the Financial Services area two years ago, he has travelled to Luxembourg, Geneva and California. He is now based in Chancery Lane, London and lives in Wellingborough, Northamptonshire.



Callum Bridgeford

Su (née Rix) and **Jon Pickerill** (both 1998 BSc Psychology and Management) married in September of last year after getting together during their placement year at Aston. Their wedding, attended by 130 guests, included 50 friends from Aston. According to Jon, a good time was had by all and a drunken time by most! Su now works for 3M Healthcare in Bracknell as a Business Systems Developer and Jon as a Data Manager for IBM in Basingstoke.



Su and Jon Pickerill on their wedding day

Megan Wellens (née Marks, 1999 BSc French and German) and her husband **Richard** (1999 BSc European Studies with French and German) met in their first year at Aston and were married in August 2000. Richard now works for CHP Consulting Ltd in London as an IT Consultant. Megan is currently studying for her PGCE at Homerton College, Cambridge University, before she takes a full time position at Queen Elizabeth's School in Barnet this coming September.



Megan and Richard Wellens

2000s

Shazia Butt (2000 BSc Human Psychology) spent July and August of last year travelling across the USA. Tempted by postgraduate education and career opportunities in her area of interest, Clinical Psychology, she is currently applying to various universities in the USA for courses commencing this autumn. At present she is working for NSF (Befriending) on a six-month minimum contract and plans to move over to the States in August or September of this year.



Shazia Butt

Katherine Hobbs (2000 IBML French and German) spent last summer working for Disneyland Paris which she describes as: "A great experience that did wonders for my language abilities". She now works for Kimberley Clark having obtained a graduate position in the IT Department on the European Helpdesk.

Pauline Moogan (2000 BSc Social Studies and Business) now works for automotive company Magneti Marelli as a Product Manager. Some of you may remember Pauline – she completed her placement year as Alumni Relations Assistant here at Aston in 1998/99.

Renata Scarr (2000 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies) set off on a two-year trip around the world this February. Starting in Katmandu in Nepal, she will visit India, Asia, Australia and New Zealand before returning to her home in Rochdale, Lancashire via the Pacific Islands and South America.

If you've lost touch with your friends from Aston, or would like to contact your former lecturers here, why not get in touch with us. It worked for **Nick Bennett** (1985 BSc Computing Science). **"Thanks for putting me in touch with a couple of old friends from Aston who I haven't seen or heard from since we parted company in 1985. Two of the three people I was looking for have made contact and we're catching up on 15 years of news!"**

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.

Graeme Anderson (1970 BSc Production Engineering)

Kay Anderson (1984 BSc Pharmacy)

Helen Brown (1989 BSc French)

Amanda Burt (1994 BSc Business and French)

Peter Buzzard (1983 BSc Production Technology and Management)

Nicola Card (1979 BSc Human Psychology)

Helen Daniels (1993 BSc French)

Ian Davies (1985 MSc Teaching English for Special Purpose)

Mark Eadie (1986 BSc Transport and Operation Planning)

Craig Farquhar (1995 BSc Optometry)

Michael Fenn (1977 BSc Communication Science and Linguistics)

Melissa Fleming (2000 PhD Chemistry)

Antonis Koumi (1983 MBA)

Julia Lock (1994 BSc German)

Rakesh Mistry (1996 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)

Nicola Peace (1990 BSc French and German)

Jane Pratt (1993 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)

David Preston (1995 BSc French and German)

Linda Read (1998 MBA)

Rita Shah (1988 BSc Pharmacy)

Constantine Spanoudis (1983 MBA)

Michael Stacey (1997 MSc Telecommunications Technology)

Zoe Such (1999 BSc Public Policy and Social Studies)

Clifford Thomas (1983 BSc Civil Engineering)

David Walker (1976 PhD Management)

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?

Anthony Beves (1985 BSc Computing Science)

Corrieane Blades (1980 BSc Biology and German)

Paul Clarkson (1981 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)

Barbara Evans (1994 BSc IBML German)

Claire Gordon (1989 BSc French)

Andrew Taylor (1985 BSc Civil Engineering)

Glen Wells (1980 BSc Civil Engineering)

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 let us know 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 the strictest confidence.

POSTGRADUATE COURSES IN THE SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES & EUROPEAN STUDIES

MA in Comparative European Politics and Cultures
MA in German Cultural Studies
MA in German/Jewish Studies by Research
MA or PgD in Translation in a European Context
Advanced Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages/Teaching English for Specific Purposes

Contact Dr Christina Schaeffner on ext 4224 or email c.schaeffner@aston.ac.uk

Language Studies Unit

MSc/Diploma in TESOL/TESP

Distance Learning, 2-5 years

Contact MSc Course Secretary, Language Studies Unit or visit website www.les.aston.ac.uk

Advanced Certificate in TEFL

Flexible distance learning: six months to one year plus one week practical classroom experience

Contact Course Secretary on ext 4236

Postgraduate courses in 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
Internet Technology
Polymer Engineering and Science
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 2002

Industrial/Project Management
Internet Technology

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

Postgraduate courses in the School of Life & Health Sciences

MSc/Postgraduate Diploma in Community Clinical Pharmacy
Available part-time as a part-taught/distance learning package
MSc in Community Pharmacy Practice
MSc in Hospital Community Practice
MSc in Hospital Clinical Pharmacy

Contact Sylvia Rowe on ext 5533 or email s.r.rowe@aston.ac.uk

Postgraduate opportunities in Psychiatric Pharmacy
Available via a variety of learning methods

Contact Celia Feetam on ext 4751 or email c.l.feetam@aston.ac.uk

Certificate/Diploma/MSc in Evidence-Based Pharmacotherapy

Available full-time and part-time as a distance learning package

Contact Professor Alain Li Wan Po on ext 5530 or email a.liwanpo@aston.ac.uk

Reunions and events

What a gregarious lot you are! Aston alumni reunions and get-togethers are the perfect way to meet up with other Aston alumni in your home town or right back on campus in the heart of a newly-developed Birmingham. Apex has been all around the world dropping in on your reunions to see what went on...

Aston: Biology of Man and his Environment Class of 1980

Biology of Man and his Environment class of 1980 enjoyed their reunion on 15 July last year. Rob Hynes contacted the Alumni Relations Office with a plea for help. Could we help him track down the rest of them? "We had a very enjoyable day," said Rob. "It was quite informal. We met at the Faculty & Firkin where we spent quite a few hours! Then we had a tour of the campus, some of it has changed a lot, whilst some of it is spookily familiar! Then we went off for an Indian meal in a restaurant in town."



Pictured left to right: Rob Hynes, Paul Hand, Mervyn Burrows, Ian Featherstone, John Edwards, Sue Purkis (née Higginson), Delma Wilson (née Pitt) and Julian Foster.

Brecon: Building Class of 1971

Stephen Bowden (1971 BSc Building) and his fellow alumni regularly stay in touch. "This is our recent get-together in Brecon, May 2000. We have been meeting annually since 1974, making it a weekend for our families." The group would be glad to hear from other Building graduates and the parallel BEM course.



Back row left to right Alan Mills, Paul Hetherington, Ken Redman, Terry Goodman. Front row left to right Steve Bowden, Dave Hankin, Doug Chalmers.

France: MBA Class of 1991

Incredible! Ten years after meeting at Aston to do our MBA, a "core bunch" of us still stick closely together – some married each other (Ian & Carol Woodroofe), others travel the world and have survived many adventures (Paul, Christel, Christine, Luc and Patricia). Nine of us now live and work in Paris – Ian and Carol, Paul, Patricia, Luc, Christel, Christine, François and Silke – so we see each other regularly: cinema, Chinese food (always Paul's favourite), gym (Paul & Silke) or travel (Luc and Patricia went to Guatemala in 2000). We also stay in contact with other Aston MBA alumni like Wendy Wong, Pete Morgan, Anntah Koh, Rennie Bennigton and many others. Last September, for our 10th Anniversary, we organised a big reunion in Paris where we were joined by Edmund who came over from England for the event.

(Left to right) Luc Molinier, Paul Morrison, Ian Woodroofe, Patricia Huc, Silke Todt (née Asmussen), Christel Koehler, Carol Woodroofe, Christine Truillet, Jagendra Edmund Jayasuriya



USA: Football UAU team

In 1976 Aston won the Football UAU and since the graduation of most of these students in the late 70s early 80s, a team reunion has been held each year. Errol Walker (1980 BSc MAS) contacted us to tell us that this year's reunion was held in San Francisco partly because it was some 20 years since most of the group left Aston and partly because one of the group now lives over there and runs The Mad Dog in the Fog, which is a successful bar with a football theme and listed in the *Rough Guide to San Francisco*.

Hong Kong Alumni Group

The 15 December meeting in the Bull and Bear pub went down a storm. And this proved to be the start of so much more. A Spring Dinner for alumni, Professor Nigel Reeves (Pro-Vice-Chancellor) and Dr Dennis Crumpton (Head of the International Office) was organised on 9 February at Butterfields, Taikoo Shing. A major alumni gathering has been scheduled for 18 May for all alumni and partners, not forgetting the 5-a-side match and golf trip. More information is available from the group co-ordinators. Don't forget that you can join the e-group to talk to fellow alumni in Hong Kong and get first hand information on events – see www.aston.ac.uk/alumni.

STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS

Did you graduate in 1976, 1981, 1986, 1991 or 1996? Then don't turn the page. Special anniversary reunions are planned for you. Full details are pinned on the noticeboard at the foot of the page. **Get in touch with us now!** Calling all ex-members of the Surf Club. Allister Haynes (1992 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies) is organising a reunion. **Contact the Alumni Relations Office for more details.**

Cyprus

Sunday lunch was arranged for Aston alumni who were joined by Dr Keith Dennis (Combined Honours) and Lyn Cottrell (International Office). It was a very enjoyable occasion. The meal brought together good friends and new faces. Everyone found it enjoyable to hear how fellow alumni were faring. An alumni group is forming in Cyprus. Contact us for more information. Don't forget that you can join the e-group to talk to fellow alumni in Cyprus – see www.aston.ac.uk/alumni.



Lyn (right), Vrahimis and Keith (1st and 3rd from left) join Aston alumni for Sunday lunch in Cyprus

AGA

If meeting up with other graduates appeals to you, but you can't wait for the next reunion, why not consider joining AGA? AGA is celebrating 51 years of organising visits, meals out, talks and other social events for Aston graduates and their friends. In the coming months, we're hoping to arrange a visit to an English vineyard and play boules against our arch rivals at Tamworth. We have a joint meeting with Birmingham Graduates' Association in June to see how Gosta Green changed from an area



AGA members and friends enjoying the annual cheese and wine party.

of back-to-back houses in the 1960s, to the green campus we have now. Members are also considering a day trip to Boulogne in the summer. A talk about life on the local canals and a visit to the newly refurbished Hippodrome Theatre are also planned.

The aim of AGA is to help all graduates maintain links with Aston, provide an interesting social calendar and mark important University anniversaries by suitable donations. Amongst AGA's most recent donations was the significant contribution towards the installation of the clock on the South Wing which marked 100 years of technological education in Birmingham. AGA also awards an annual prize at the AGM of Convocation to the student, considered by Students' Guild, to have made the most significant contribution to the life of the University. It is hoped that members will soon be able to access the

AGA web-site via the alumni web-site and so keep up-to-date with news and events.

Quite a few alumni already belong to AGA. We have members of all ages, from all departments within the University and from all corners of the world. If you would like more information, why not contact us through the Alumni Office at Aston. For a subscription of £5 per year you can widen your circle of friends and join us in an interesting and varied social programme. We look forward to adding your name to our membership.

Has that given you a flavour of what reunions are all about? If you'd like us to help you organise one for your crowd, contact us at the Alumni Relations office. Our details are on page two of this edition of Apex or you can go to our website at www.aston.ac.uk/alumni.

Notice

Board

Coming up over the next 12 months, a fun-packed and informative selection of open days, conferences and special reunions to entice you back to your alma mater.

9 June: 10 years on since the Class of 1991 graduated.

27 June: Conference for French Teachers. Details from Schools & Colleges Liaison on ext 4812.

5-6 July Birmingham Education Convention: a major event aimed at prospective higher education students and their advisers with over 130 institutions exhibiting. Details from

Schools & Colleges Liaison on ext 4812.

19 September: Aston University Open Day. Details from Schools & Colleges Liaison on ext 4812.

September: a 15 year celebration since the Class of 1986 graduated from Aston. Date to be confirmed but look out for details.

8-10 March 2001: Alumni Weekend 2002. Put it in your diaries now.