

apex[®]

Thirsty Work

• Inventing the revolutionary coffee bag

From pillar to (gate) post p4

**Dear Petra – introducing
Aston's agony aunt p6**


ASTON
UNIVERSITY

you must remember this...



Charter Ball on 6 May, 1994

Can you tell what it is yet? Rolf Harris, headline act at the Charter Ball on 6 May, 1994. Here he is pictured with revellers from the Ball all ready to have a go on his didgeridoo. As you'll all no doubt remember, each Charter Ball has its own unique theme. What was it when you were here? The year Rolf joined us for the Charter Ball, the campus was shrouded in 'Myth and Legend'. But this wasn't Rolf's first visit to campus. Back in 1977, he was kidnapped from a book signing in town and held captive on campus – all in aid of RAG, of course.

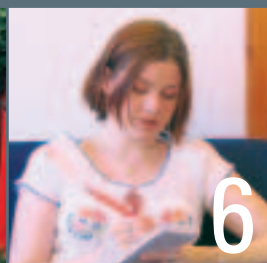
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Special thanks go to everyone who contributed to this issue of Apex. Apex is published twice a year for alumni of Aston University. Letters, photographs and news are very welcome but we reserve the right to edit any contributions. Please address all 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.

Apex is also available via our website in html or pdf formats, but please contact us if you experience any difficulties accessing our publication.

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Plus

All the latest news from the Alumni Relations Office, international networks, the Students' Guild and the Societies and Sports clubs.

The great British pillar box is a classic icon of British design and heritage. Along with red telephone kiosks, the pillar box is a much-loved item of roadside street furniture. It represents the first nationwide communication system and occupies a special place in the heart of the British people. But, for Stephen Knight (1982 BSc Biochemistry and Chemistry), the pillar box occupies a rather larger place. Apex visits the third largest collection of pillar boxes in the country – in Stephen's back garden.

From pillar to (gate) post

When asked how his collection started, Stephen admits that his first pillar box purchase was definitely an impulse buy from an antique centre in Ely. Completely hooked, he then started to contact Royal Mail directly to enquire about redundant boxes, but scrapyards and architectural reclamation yards have also proved to be good hunting ground. "Of course," he points out, "I also trade boxes with other collectors."

Stephen's collection of 30 bright red pillar boxes is now the third largest in the country. The other two big ones are Ink Pen Post Box Museum in Taunton which boasts 70 boxes and a collection held by his good friend Arthur Reeder who has just acquired numbers 130 and 131 for the soon-to-be-established Isle of Wight Postal History Museum.

Nestling in his back garden, Stephen has a collection which dates from 1861 to the present day. He has boxes from every reign except Edward VIII who is represented by a facsimile enamel plate from the only surviving wall box from his reign at Bawdsey in Suffolk. The collection includes five Victorian boxes and three Edward VII. George V is the most widely covered as there were many variants during his 26-year reign and some of these are now reaching the end of their useful lives. Elizabeth II and George VI are well represented.

Amongst the oddities are a Victorian private posting box from a country house or hotel and the 'anonymous' wall box which formerly stood in the foyer of Northampton General Hospital. Stephen's most unique box dates from as recently as 1984 and is made of ABS plastic. It was installed in Halstead as a temporary measure and survived for 16 years. Quite a comprehensive collection, but Stephen still longs to acquire a hexagonal Victorian Penfold.

Pillar boxes are a valuable source of research material for historians and scholars worldwide and it is our duty to protect, restore and interpret them for future generations.

We had to ask Stephen the obvious question. Why does he feel it necessary to restore and keep pillar boxes? It appears that this isn't just an unusual hobby – the Letter Box Study Group (www.lbsg.org.uk) meets twice a year and has a regular newsletter for its worldwide membership. Although in 2002 Royal Mail acknowledged the humble pillar box as a national icon worthy of preservation, Stephen claims: "They don't understand why we want to collect them. They've closed the National Postal Museum, sold off the buildings and put the boxes in deep storage in a closed warehouse in Hackney. Pillar boxes are a valuable source of research material for historians and scholars worldwide and it is our duty to protect, restore and interpret them for future generations. Since the dawn of writing, sending letters has been a basic social function and the letter box is an integral part of that. They are of their own time, designs reflect the thinking of their age and embody the spirit of each era as well as showcasing some of the best design and manufacturing skills across the last 150 years."



Widening opportunity to study

Widening Participation is about widening the opportunities for a broader range of students, making higher education a possibility for those who are not well-represented in the sector. Mandy Ingelby, Outreach Manager, explains how Aston's achievements in this area are opening the doors to students from non-traditional backgrounds.

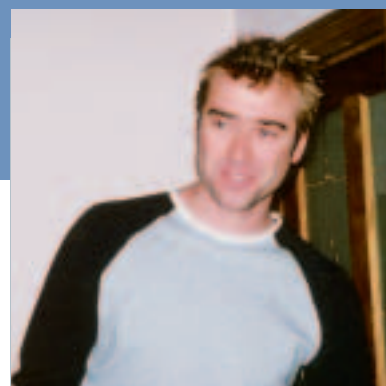
Aston University is one of the top 30 universities in the country that provides for the needs of students from non-traditional backgrounds. The 'Access Elite' as described by the THES 18 Jan, 2002, defines Aston as one of the universities that takes a flexible approach to meeting the needs of students, offering a climate in which non-traditional students can succeed.

A combination of factors is considered to contribute to Aston's success in Widening Participation. These include the nature of its professional and vocational programmes, its proactive work with schools and the community and its excellent graduate employment record.

Aston's achievement lies in recruiting students from lower socio-economic groups and from areas where participation in higher education is low, whilst maintaining entry standards and retention rates. Aston's dual-track approach, in which research excellence and a comprehensive system of access work together in mutual respect, is its hallmark.

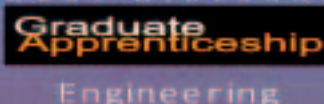
Foundation Programmes delivered by The School of Engineering & Applied Science are specifically designed to help students from a diverse range of backgrounds who have an interest in these subjects, have the necessary enthusiasm, but need additional support to join a mainstream programme.

Aston has also invested support in easing the transition of mature students studying a Foundation Year at Matthew Boulton College. The Peer Mentoring Scheme is specially designed to aid the transition of Foundation Year students on programmes in the School of Life & Health Sciences.



Adam Shadbolt

“After completing the STEPS Foundation Year at Aston I found myself extremely well-positioned to begin the Chemical Engineering degree. Three years later, I graduated with first class honours. I am now a Process Engineer for BNFL Environmental Services and thoroughly enjoying my graduate life. Aston's excellent links with industry meant that companies actively came to the University to recruit Aston students. As a result, I was offered a job just before my final exams.”



Graduate Apprenticeship Scheme

This is a new and exciting initiative designed to attract and develop high quality engineers, IT and telecom technicians for satisfying careers with companies in the West Midlands. Aston is leading the West Midlands consortium, already recognised as a regional champion.

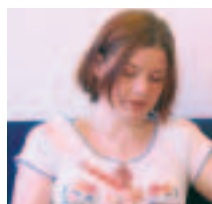
More than ever, UK industry needs enthusiastic and intelligent people to drive business forward. However, companies frequently find that newly recruited graduates, whether from a technical background or otherwise, need further training on-the-job before they are fully able to contribute to company performance. The Graduate Apprenticeship (GA) Scheme is a relatively new, nationally recognised initiative which combines academic study with comprehensive work-based training in a structured framework and aims to bridge the skills gap between higher education and first employment. The GA scheme is uniquely designed to bring together the best of academia and the best of industrial training for the benefit of the workforce and business competitiveness. The scheme offers each apprentice comprehensive work-based training leading to a professionally recognised qualification.

Aston University leads the West Midlands consortium of universities, colleges of further education, industries and the Engineering Employers Federation (EEF) in managing and delivering a range of GA schemes. The schemes are funded by HEFCE and the regional development agency, Advantage West Midlands, and they are supported by the large and influential EEF. The West Midlands GA is nationally approved by the appropriate Sector Skills Councils for Engineering, IT and Telecom, the Engineering Council and DfES. Perceived to be progressive and a regional champion, the project has received national recognition as a GA best practice model.

The aim of the West Midlands GA is to develop fully-qualified graduate apprentices each having a mix of skills and competencies and whose training programmes have been tailored to meet the needs of the employing organisations. Through a combination of academic achievement and work-based learning, the GA scheme also aims to improve competitiveness and future business prospects by developing skills in the workforce which meet agreed industry-accredited standards.

The agony aunt is a familiar, sympathetic ear in many teen and women's magazines. More recently she has pioneered the pages of men's publications offering sound, reliable advice to a new audience of troubled readers. In today's highly-informed, fast-moving society does the agony aunt continue to hold down a useful job? Petra Boynton (2000 PhD) discusses how her role as agony aunt dovetails with her academic research to make a positive impact on people's lives.

Dear



Petra

"I was taught by several people who convinced me that work had to be practical and have a useable outcome. Aston's Professor David Wilson showed me that research was more than something you did for publications – it had to make a difference to other people's lives as well." This inspired Petra who had become interested in social psychology during her undergraduate days at Sussex University. Disillusioned at finding that much of psychology didn't seem to be about people and being frequently discouraged from getting involved in social issues, Petra found that many people were marginalised and unheard. She became determined to use what she'd learned to enable these people to get better help and support. This became the underpinning motivation of her subsequent research.

At Aston, Petra completed community-based research on women involved in prostitution, before moving to Chelsea and Westminster Health Authority to work as a research co-ordinator evaluating intermediate care for older people. In 1999, she began work in the Department of Psychiatry of University College Medical School, London, where she was involved in interviewing over 1500 people on their physical and mental health as well as views on relationships. Petra acknowledges that her research work has put her in the unusual position of being a social scientist with wide experience of working in the community. She is now Lecturer in Health Services Research at University College London where she teaches postgraduate students how to carry out research in community settings.

The role of agony aunt means that Petra is working very close to a community of people she strives to help and support. "I am very much in the 'aunty' role for the users of the teen website mykindaplace.com as I can remember going through the same things they ask me about. So, in a way, I'm on the same level which is not as easy as it sounds since I have to give them advice not just my opinion or experiences."

Petra has joined the ranks of agony aunts called to the pages of men's magazines. "I'm sex editor at Men's Health," she explains. "Most of the letters come from men my age or older. I'm not in the same 'aunty' role as I am with mykindaplace.com The Men's Health work is easier in some ways as it relies solely on evidence – they ask a question and I provide information."

She claims not to have encountered many problems in being a woman working with men. "As a society we don't make it easy for men to admit they have worries or concerns. To admit these to another man can feel threatening. I've been told that guys find it easier to tell me things. As both advice sites are online, it makes it far easier to retain anonymity."

Petra is involved in research which has grown out of her agony aunt role. At mykindaplace.com hundreds of letters were received mentioning that readers were deliberately self-harming. A study followed into why teenagers felt the need to self-harm and an advice pack has since been produced from her results.

Once more in an 'aunty' role as part of UCL's widening participation unit, Petra responds to young people's questions around stress, anxiety or coping with student life. Her own background is testament to how someone can excel with support from others. She admits she was an average student who wasn't picked to do well at school and who was discouraged from further education. Taking a different path to study and battling through illness has opened up many doors to success.

"I consider myself an academic who also works with the press," she points out. "For me research, teaching and writing are all interlinked. People can only hear about research if we talk directly to them."

“Research was more than something you did for publications – it had to make a difference to other people's lives as well.”

Welcome to the class of 2003

If you've graduated this year, you might not yet know the extent of the work of the Alumni Relations Office. You will have seen us around campus and you might have been to one of the Network Lectures which we organise. You might even have come to us to be put in touch with a graduate for an insight into a particular profession. Now you have graduated, there's so much more open to you.

As an Aston graduate you are automatically a member of a global network of Aston alumni which is becoming increasingly more active. Membership of this network is free and new members are joining at a remarkable rate – we're always finding 'lost' alumni with whom we've lost touch and we're ready to welcome every graduate who left Aston in 2003.

Keep in touch with Aston through the Alumni Relations Office and enjoy the programme of activities and benefits arranged for you.
Log on to www.aston.ac.uk/alumni to find out more about us.

SPOT YOUR LECTURER...

3,648 years of service to Aston were celebrated earlier this year. Long-serving members of staff were treated to a special evening celebration and awards ceremony hosted by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mike Wright. Many of you will recognise some of the faces in these photos.

There are lecturers, support staff and estates management staff – see who you can find.



Profile on...

John Penny

Mechanical Engineering graduates will be delighted to hear that John Penny was recently awarded a personal chair. Since joining the University in 1963 as a Research Fellow researching aircraft flying control systems, he has seen many changes on campus. He has worked under four VCs and seen the University's departmental structure change into the four Schools of Study we have today.

When quizzed further, he will talk about the transformation in computing on campus from the arrival of one lumbering slow monster to today's hi-tech systems, how the profile of the typical student has changed and how Engineering syllabuses have broadened in the time he has spent lecturing. With numerous papers, journal articles and three co-authored books (one translated into Chinese) under his belt, Apex wanted to introduce alumni to a side of Professor Penny they might not know.

His spare time passion is astronomy. He is a past President of the Birmingham Astronomical Society and soon plans to embark on a distance learning programme which promises him a weekend of experiments at Jodrell Bank. Some of our readers will remember him as Chairman of the Visual Arts Group in the 1970s. This facility was open to all staff and students and at that time he enjoyed oil and water colour painting – something to which he hopes to return. He also enjoys rambling with a local association and has a keen interest in railway history. Professor Penny still finds time to contribute to the life of the University as Mace Bearer and an active member of the Standing Committee of Convocation.



John Penny

Profile on... will be a regular column in Apex. Let us know if you'd like to catch up with one of your former lecturers.

Astonishing develop



'Picture courtesy of The Birmingham Alliance, developers of Bullring, which opens September 2003'

If you were on campus at the moment, you would find yourself at the heart of exciting new developments both in and around the University and on the east side of the City. Apex looks at Birmingham's vision of the future and the plans for the University which are just around the corner.

ments



Birmingham's market has been traced back to the twelfth century, marking it as one of the country's major trading centres. Over the centuries, Birmingham has emerged as a great industrial city with the Bull Ring at its heart. In the 1950s, the Bull Ring boasted the largest Woolworth's, a Chapman's and an Army and Navy Store. Redevelopment took hold in the 1960s and the Rotunda reached upwards to become a much-loved feature of the Birmingham skyline.

It wasn't until the 1990s that the Bull Ring found itself once more at the heart of major redevelopment plans aimed at bringing the east side of the city in line with the new, exciting and vibrant image of modern Birmingham. Work on the Bull Ring began in June 2000 with full-scale demolition which took eight months to complete. The Bull Ring was set to transform the face of retail in Birmingham.

The historic street patterns of the city are once again creating a link between New Street and High Street to St Martin's Church, the market area, Digbeth and beyond. Street names found on 1731 and 1795 plans of the City will once more lead shoppers along Swan Passage and Spiceal Street.

The new shopping area, due to open in September 2003, will take advantage of the natural shape of the City which drops 60 feet from New Street down to St Martin's Church. Three levels of shopping streets and open spaces will unfold under a virtually invisible glass skyplane roof. Carefully designed to integrate with the City centre, the Bull Ring will draw people from all around to a superb range of shops and cafés.

The Bull Ring redevelopment is part of a wider £800million partnership investment by The Birmingham Alliance which also plans to transform the old Moor Street railway station into a new gateway to the City, carefully and sympathetically restoring it in the style of a 1930s station.

Exciting redevelopment plans are also afoot for the University, which has revealed its most ambitious development plans for Aston Triangle (including Aston Science Park) since the 1970s. Two major projects have already been agreed – Aston's Academy of Life Sciences, a unique facility for biomedical research and an extension to Aston Business School's Nelson Building.

Other proposals focus on remodelling the Main Building, providing new residential facilities on campus, pedestrianising Aston Street which runs through the centre of the campus and developing the land along Jennens Road. This area is directly adjacent to Eastside, where Matthew Boulton College is planning to relocate as part of the vision for the new Learning Quarter. The development of the campus complements the City's plans for Eastside and the surrounding area and there is huge potential to benefit from improvements in metro, bus and cycle links as well as pedestrian walkways and boulevards. One of the major considerations of the development plans will be to retain Aston's green campus and enhance the landscaping.

Apex plans to keep alumni abreast of the changes on campus and around the City. Why not make time to return to your University and see things at first hand?

Geoff Wright (1979 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies) knows from first-hand experience the real impact a successful brand can bring to a company. He has worked on some of the most memorable branding and advertising campaigns to hit our high streets and has seen companies and product lines turn round to face profitable success head on.

Keeping tradition with the Fentiman•snail



Currently MD of AHG Management Ltd, a young, specialist, consumer sales and marketing project management company, Geoff Wright can sit comfortably on an impressive CV that starts with his first job at 3M and takes him through posts with top companies such as Kimberley Clark, Derwent Valley Foods and Unichips. His product portfolio includes Kettle Chips, Quaker Puffed Wheat, Kleenex Toilet Tissue and the well-travelled Phileas Fogg brand.

Claiming one of the most unusual campaigns he's worked on is using a skeleton to promote Scotch Videocassettes, he is now celebrating the fame that snails have given ginger beer with a virtual gastropod promoting the traditional taste of the Fentiman's brand.

In 1900 an unpaid loan provided Thomas Fentiman with a unique and original recipe for botanically brewed ginger beer. That recipe holds good today and The Independent voted it 'Best Soft Drink of the New Year' alongside Victorian Lemonade (Runner Up in the BBC Good Food Awards), Seville Orange (which contains more than 30% pure mandarin juice, enhanced with natural Seville orange flavour) and the newest drink Curiosity Cola. With the Paisley Snail campaign, Fentimans Botanically Brewed Beverages is raising its profile in the market.

"Our Ginger Beer has the highest loyalty of any brand in the market-place – and to use jargon that is perhaps inappropriate for the little guy – the highest category expenditure per capita, which underlines the extent to which consumers appreciate that our original production methods deliver superior quality."

A visit to the website www.fentimans.com suggests the company has a firm hold on tradition. "There is a belief that products used to taste better than they do now," suggests Geoff. "Today, with efficient manufacturing systems and large scale production, the taste of food and drink can be manufactured out of a product. So, perhaps there is some truth behind the premise, perhaps traditional products do taste better. In Fentiman's case the original production process is adhered to and delivers a noticeably different product."

In order to stand out in the crowd of beverages, Geoff wants to move fast, be unique and fun. But why choose a snail as the star of the Fentimans current campaign? "I remember a law lecture at Aston on the classic Donoghue v. Stevenson case where it was claimed a bottle of ginger beer contained remnants of a snail. Although Fentiman's Ginger Beer wasn't connected with the original case, it seemed like a good idea for our promotion. A bold move to try and gain publicity out of a negative. We didn't run with our original idea of putting plastic snails in the beer, but instead we introduced a game mechanic on our website. We have had a tremendous response to the snail promotion and website traffic has doubled."

We didn't run with our original idea of putting plastic snails in the beer, but instead we introduced a game mechanic on our website.

An inspired read

Loyal readers are bound to sense something a little bit different about this issue of Apex. It doesn't look the same, it doesn't feel the same – what's happened? Apex has gone through a dazzling transformation to encapsulate more of what you want to read about.

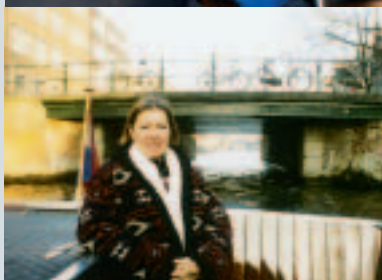
It all started with a group of alumni gathered around a table discussing what they liked about Apex and what they wanted to see more of between the pages. On the whole, Apex came out of it pretty well. But the group came up with some interesting ideas on how they saw the publication developing. Not being the sort of people to stand still in the Alumni Relations Office, we gave some thought to the group's comments and embarked on a project to re-design Apex with the aim of introducing some new features.

So, what's new? We've visited the Societies and Associations in the Guild, we've introduced some new gifts (go on, spoil yourself – Ed.) and we've welcomed Combined Honours and the Language Studies Unit to their very own pages. There's the traditional mix of research and University news as well as all those faces from the past. As the east side of the City of Birmingham develops, Apex will bring you news of the changes on and around campus.

As ever, back issues are on the website and the new-look Apex will sit alongside these. We'd love to hear your comments on Apex so do get in touch. Happy reading!



Competition time



Gillian enjoys the sights of Amsterdam

In the last edition of Apex we ran a competition in conjunction with MyTravelLite. For those of you who returned your Graduate Update Forms by 6 January, you had the chance to win two return tickets to any of MyTravelLite's destinations. We packed all the forms into a huge black suitcase, duly trekked along to MyTravelLite's desk at Birmingham Airport and held the prize draw. MyTravelLite cabin crew member, Sarah Donnelly, picked the winner who turned out to be 1977 BSc Human Psychology graduate, Gillian McGillivray (née Hartley).

Gillian was delighted with her win and, in need of a well-earned break, booked two return tickets to Amsterdam for herself and her husband. She had a fabulous time and filed her report on her return:

"We had a fantastic time in Amsterdam! The weather was bitterly cold but at least it stayed dry and sunny. I had never been to Amsterdam before and was amazed at all the museums and galleries there were. I think the highlights for me were Anne Frank's House, which was very poignant and moving, the architecture of the old canal houses and the Van Gogh, Rembrandt and Vermeer paintings. It was also an art to try to cross the road without getting knocked over by all the trams and cyclists! All in all, it was a perfect location and provided us with an excuse to get away at a time in the year when we both needed a break. All I can say is a huge thank you to MyTravelLite and I can't wait to get away again! See what you've started?"

Now it's your turn

Not visited Birmingham for a while? Interested to see all the developments taking place in and around the City centre?

Here's your excuse to return. Simply complete and return your Graduate Update Form by 31 July and you'll be entered into a prize draw to win a weekend break for two at Birmingham's Quality Hotel. It may not be Amsterdam, but there's still plenty to do here! Why not come back and see Eastside's Millennium Point (home to Birmingham's new Science and Technology Museum), spend some money in the new designer MailBox or Selfridges (opening September) and finish off with a meal in one of the City's many bars or restaurants. Whatever your tastes, Birmingham will have something to suit you. There will also be four runner-up prizes of an Aston University shot glass, so get filling out those forms!

The main prize includes Friday and Saturday night accommodation for two people and can be taken any time before 31 December, subject to availability.



Email Directory

You may remember in the spring edition of Apex 2002 we told you of our plans to develop an email directory for Aston graduates and asked you to sign up for it if you were interested. Having collected your responses, the email directory has finally arrived and can be viewed at www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/directory/index.php

So far we have over 400 graduates signed up to the directory, many of whom are already reaping the benefits and getting back in touch with old friends. Aston graduate, Diane Lee (née Leggett 1971 BSc Pharmacy), couldn't wait to tell us of her success story:

I just had to tell you this! There are only a total of 11 names listed for 1970 and 1971, one is mine and another is not only a fellow Pharmacy graduate, but someone who also lived in the same flat as me in Sutton Coldfield. Needless to say, I've emailed her. So, thank you for your work. I hope you hear of many such re-connections!

If you aren't registered and would like to get in on the action and track down your old pals, simply email c.l.hidson@aston.ac.uk or write to Caroline Hidson at the usual address with the following details:

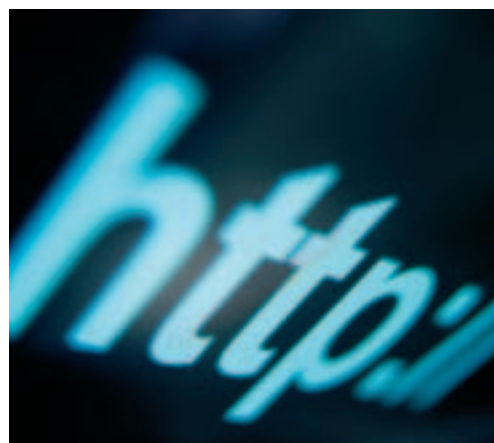
- I Your full name
- I Name at Aston (if different)
- I Date of birth
- I Year of graduation
- I Subject of study
- I The email address you would like to be contacted on

So go on, join up – you never know who you might find!

(Please note that by signing up to the email directory you are agreeing for your email address to be made public to other graduates who may be searching for you. The database is NOT password protected at this point in time.)

International networks & e-groups

Just to remind you that if you are living or working abroad, it doesn't mean that you can't keep in touch with Aston and each other. Our international e-groups and networks are designed to keep you informed of the latest news from Aston and around the campus as well as providing a link to fellow alumni in your home country. So, what are international e-groups and networks all about, and how can you benefit?



International e-groups

We have fifteen international e-groups for Aston alumni living abroad to join. They are: Australia, Canada, China, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, Spain, Turkey and the USA. Once you are a member of one of these groups you will receive a newsletter or a competition each month from the Alumni Relations Office. Most importantly, as a member, you can post messages yourself to be read by everybody in the group. For more information and for instructions on how to join, visit www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/emailgroups.htm.

International networks

We currently have six thriving international networks. These groups are different to e-groups as members actually meet up for events and dinners. The networks established so far are: Hong Kong, Cyprus, Kuala Lumpur and Southern Peninsula, Penang and Northern Peninsula, Shanghai and Beijing. If you would like to become a member of one of these groups, please contact the Alumni Relations Office for a members' directory listing names and contact details of group members. There are co-ordinators for each group who organise and inform fellow members of forthcoming events and dinners. Check out what some of the international networks have been up to on page 30 of this edition of Apex.

Web pages are now available for each international network to advertise their forthcoming events and news. These pages can be viewed at www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/networks/index.htm. If you are already a member of one of the networks, send us your news or advertise your events on these pages. Email c.l.hidson@aston.ac.uk with anything you want posted on the site.

British Council

Some of the British Council Offices are setting up alumni networks in their home country for graduates of any UK university. We have links to those currently available on our international networks page www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/emailgroups.htm. They are:

Australia www.britishcouncil.org.au/alumni/
Hong Kong www.uk-alumni.org.hk/
Japan www.keepintouchuk.net/
Malaysia www.ukan.org.my/

Alumni Advantage

The Alumni Relations Office has negotiated a range of discounts and promotions both on and off the campus for alumni

Off-campus discounts

Tussauds Group is offering 25% off entrance to their four attractions: Alton Towers, Thorpe Park, Chessington World of Adventures and Madame Tussaud's. Tickets must be booked five days prior to your visit. All major credit cards are accepted. Please call the following numbers, quoting 'Aston' along with the date of your visit:

Alton Towers: 0870 444 4455

Chessington World of Adventures: 0870 444 7777

Thorpe Park: 0870 444 4466

Madame Tussaud's: 0870 400 3000

For information on ticket prices, please visit our website www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/tussaudsgroup.htm
Prices are dependent on the date of your visit.

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra is offering a 10% discount on tickets for CBSO concert promotions at Symphony Hall, Birmingham. Alumni wishing to purchase tickets should call the Symphony Hall Box Office on 0121 780 3333 and quote 'Aston University Alumni Offer'. For details of CBSO concerts visit www.cbso.co.uk or call CBSO offices on 0121 616 6500 for a brochure.

Avis Car Rental Ltd. is offering Aston alumni 10% off Supervalue rates in Europe; 5% off inclusive Holiday rates in the USA and Canada; 10% off Avis Chauffeur Drive; 10% off Avis Prestige Cars and up to 10% off Standard rates in Asia, Pacific, Middle East and Africa. To book, call 0870 60 60 100 and quote Avis Worldwide Discount Number K626925.

Green Flag motoring assistance is offering a variety of discounted packages to Aston alumni, with Recovery Only starting from as little as £40. Call 0800 800 662 for further information and quote reference D-3A01.

On-campus discounts

Library Membership

As an Aston graduate you are able to register to use the University Library for just £24.50 a year. This entitles you to borrow one medium loan item and five long loan items subject to the library's normal loan rules. Access to Aston's web catalogue is also available. Contact the Alumni Relations Office for an application form and a list of terms and conditions on 0121 359 3611.

Management Development Centre

Aston alumni can enjoy preferential rates on overnight accommodation in the Management Development Centre, starting from just £55.22 for bed and breakfast including VAT. For further details, or to make a reservation, contact Maureen Wood on m.p.wood@aston.ac.uk or telephone 0121 359 3011.

Students' Guild

Membership of the Students' Guild is £5 a year and is essential if you and your friends are thinking of returning for a cheesy night out as you won't be allowed in without it! Becoming a member will entitle you to take advantage of discounts on room hire, use of Guild facilities and free subscription to the Guild newspaper *The Aston Times* (one copy per term). Contact the Alumni Relations Office for an application form.

Sports Facilities

There are a variety of discounts available to alumni for use of the University's sports facilities. The Woodcock Sports Centre has recently been refurbished and has a new fitness facility equipped with the latest Cybex gym equipment. Contact the Alumni Relations Office for an application form and details of the discounts available.

Further details on all of the above benefits can be viewed at www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/benefits.htm

The above information is correct at the time of going to press. Aston University accepts no liability for any losses incurred by alumni resulting from these offers or any reliance placed upon them.



Thirsty work

Inventing the revolutionary coffee bag

“With an understanding of the market place and experience of relevant technologies, Molins was able to rise to the challenge of inventing the ‘perfect’ coffee bag.”



For the connoisseur, the perfect cup of coffee relies on meticulous attention to detail: selecting the finest beans, perfecting the roasting process and achieving the perfect grind before storing the coffee in a way which protects the flavour and aroma. David Seaward (1986 BSc Energy Technology and 1990 PhD Electrical and Electronic Engineering) believes engineers at Molins Innovation and Technology Centre Machines (ITCM) have captured this art in a revolutionary new coffee bag, the first to deliver fresh-brewed coffee every time in one simple, clean and easy step.

Traditionalists will ask why the world needs a coffee bag. Apparently there is a genuine need, as David explains: "I spent a few years in the mid 1990s working on the design of a high speed machine to vacuum-pack coffee into traditional 'brick' packs. As a result of this work and discussions with experts in the coffee market, I knew that there was a real need, and hence a market, for a single-serve coffee bag. Research showed that consumers wanted the convenience of a single-serve method and a fresh coffee taste with every serving."

The coffee bags on the market at the time were little more than large, modified teabags. Coffee requires better infusion than tea and so these coffee bags tended to give a very weak taste. To overcome this, a little instant coffee was sometimes added to roast and ground coffee to improve the taste – somewhat defeating the object of a single serving of pure roast and ground.

David's team at Molins had been working on a variety of teabag projects over the years. They are best known for the PG Tips Pyramid Bag but also have Tchae round teabags and Liptons Squeezable Teabags under their belt. With an understanding of the market place and experience of relevant technologies, Molins was able to rise to the challenge of inventing the 'perfect' coffee bag.

"The real breakthrough was our discovery of the improved extraction gained by 'Pour thru™' technology," explains David. "If you pour the hot water through the coffee rather than pouring over a bag as you do with a conventional teabag, you get a significantly faster and stronger cup of delicious coffee. Once we had this initial concept, product ideas followed quickly."

The coffee bag works like a mini disposable cafetière. A tag is used to locate the bag on the rim of a cup which can be squeezed to fit many different cup sizes. Hot water can then be poured directly onto the fresh ground coffee and a double chamber filter provides the maximum surface area for the coffee to infuse.



As grateful consumers, we probably don't understand the efforts and costs associated with bringing a new product to market. "We carried out a lot of time-consuming testing in our labs to refine the product," David explains. "The paper type, shape, size, coffee blend and roast all have an influence on flavour and product function. We had to devise methods to make the bags by hand and many thousands were made. We had test rigs to measure the amount of water that dripped from the bag, test rigs to measure seal strengths of the various product parts to one another, test rigs to measure the residual oxygen in the sachet after filling so we could understand freshness. The list goes on."

But does the coffee bag work? Does it give a cup of coffee with the same flavour and quality you'd expect from a cafetière or traditional filter?

"Once we thought the bag was near optimised, we applied for patents and looked for a coffee company to partner with. Sainsbury's is one of the largest retailers of coffee in the UK and we wanted a local factory to try the first machine. We were very fortunate that Sainsbury's producer, Finlay Beverages, was very receptive to the idea. In turn, receptive ears were found in Sainsbury's. A UK market trial was commissioned and our product scored the highest that had ever been measured for any of the previously tested coffee ideas. In blind taste tests it scored similar to a cafetière."

In January 2002, Molins received the go-ahead to manufacture a machine to make the revolutionary coffee bags. Mike Cahill, Head of Molins and also Visiting Lecturer at Aston University, had also been actively involved in the project and David led a team of engineers who brought together a working system delivering the product to Sainsbury's shelves by October. Sales have since been better than anyone on the team could have hoped for and the product is living up to the original desire of the convenience of a single-serve method and a fresh coffee taste with every serving. The product has been featured in a number of daily national newspapers. Molins has won trade prizes for the innovation and is now looking to sell more machinery around the world.



Some are born great, some achieve greatness and some realise greatness by cheating. The question is, does Shakespeare fit into this latter category? Did the man universally regarded as the finest writer the English language has ever known start out by plagiarising the works of others? This was the question at the centre of Robert Matthews' lecture, *The Bard, the Spy and Thinking Computer*.



Was Shakespeare a fraud?

As visiting reader in Aston's Department of Information Engineering, Matthews has research interests that lie in applying maths, physics and computer science to questions people rarely think of as 'mathematical' such as how courts deal with evidence and assessing the plausibility of new research findings. He was at Aston for the Alumni Weekend on Saturday 15 March.

It is nothing new to debate whether all those plays attributed to Shakespeare were actually written by Stratford's most famous son. Academics and theoreticians have for some time had their doubts and have subsequently proffered their reasons why certain of the plays, or the plays' plotlines, were unlikely to have been penned by Shakespeare. Hints that not all his work was original appear in Greene's *Groatsworth*, published in 1592, which accused the Bard of padding out the work of his contemporaries for personal gain.

Other theorists have concentrated on the fact that a word or two does not sit well in an otherwise exemplary Shakespearean line, or that the tone echoed something written by his contemporary, the Cambridge University educated playwright Christopher Marlowe.

Much of the evidence stacked up against Shakespeare, however, was either vague or unsound. Matthews recognised that those able to probe the accusations further belonged to one of two camps: English scholars, well versed in Shakespeare's works and computer scientists with an array of pattern recognition techniques.

Matthews brought the two disciplines together with the help of the Shakespeare scholar Dr Tom Merriam and Aston's internationally-renowned Neural Computing Research Group (NCRG).

Soon after contacting the NCRG, Matthews was invited to meet the group to discuss the

issues he was encountering and the software needed to apply state-of-the-art neural computing methods to help solve the problem.

The collaboration proved successful. Matthews used neural computing, a very effective pattern-recognition system, to reveal evidence that Shakespeare based several of his early plays, like the Third Part of Henry VI, on pre-existing scripts written by Christopher Marlowe. In collaboration with the NCRG's Professor David Lowe, further research also backed long-time suspicions of English scholars that Shakespeare co-wrote several plays with John Fletcher.

Further information on Robert Matthews can be found on his homepage: <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/rajm/>

Further information on the Neural Computing Research Group can be found at: www.ncrg.aston.ac.uk/People/index.html

Postgraduate Developments in the School of Engineering & Applied Science

Professor Roger Kettle introduces the latest courses in the School's portfolio.

Over the past three years the School has significantly extended its portfolio of postgraduate programmes. Three programmes in Internet Technology, Photonic Network Systems and Polymer Engineering and Science had a total intake of over 40 students in October. Four more programmes are being

added covering engineering management, advanced technologies in biomedicine and applications in informatics. As with our existing programmes, they build on the research expertise and experience within the School.

Two new MScs are now available in Engineering Management and Industrial Enterprise Management. These are targeted primarily at experienced graduates or non-degree professionally qualified candidates, but more recent graduates of an engineering or related discipline may also apply. Both courses aim to develop the overall management skills of candidates into areas such as strategic finance, managing change, project management and strategic management. The emphasis of the Engineering Management programme is directed towards engineering organisation, whilst the Industrial Enterprise Management programme concentrates more on the commercial aspects of business in a world of rapidly changing technologies.

The new MSc in Informatics Applications extends our existing work in pattern analysis and data modelling and is aimed at preparing graduates for an academic or industrial research career. Students select individual pathways after completing core modules. Each pathway reflects the current needs of industry and academia in informatics applications. These four pathways cover Biomedical Application, Coding and Cryptology, Financial Applications or a more general combination of modules.

The new MSc in Advanced Technologies in Biomedicine utilises specific modules based on the current biomedical research being undertaken across the School. The prime aim of the programme is to prepare high standard graduates for a career in medical technology and it is structured so that students can select specific pathways in Biomedicine, Biomaterials and Bio-Systems.

The region's business community can soon benefit from Aston Business School's new £3/4million multimedia lab, which opened on 12 March this year.

Aston Laboratory for Multimedia & Interactive Research, known as ALMIR, has facilities which combine with hardware, software and technical support to provide the most extensive, innovative and up-to-date research laboratory of its type in the UK.



Test before you invest

ALMIR will allow new ICT-enabled research to be carried out while acting as a focal point for deepening understanding of E-business and its impact on the business value chain. Every aspect of business management can profit from the new research facilities, from planning and control to organisation and direction of commerce.

ALMIR, developed with a grant from the Scientific Research Infrastructure Fund, incorporates state-of-the-art equipment for the design and implementation of new research methodologies including online and observation research. Its features include:

- management group and consumer experimentation (including virtual reality scenarios)

in-depth interviewing

- observation research (through eye-camera tracking, webcam data capture and log file analysis)

ALMIR's director, Dr Amanda Broderick, said: "The centre's capabilities are phenomenal and its research possibilities are endless. For instance, the state-of-the-art eye-tracking camera equipment allows users to capture data on attention and arousal, allowing them to identify their customers' experience and interest in their website."

This equipment, which is also used in advertising and psychological research, provides access to hard-to-reach actual customer behaviour. Eye movement provides information on how customers are likely to react in given situations.

Dr Broderick continued: "Our virtual reality facilities will allow retailers to visualise customers' reactions to new products or shop layouts they are trialling. Traditionally, it was shopkeepers who said to their customers, 'try before you buy'. Now business people can test before they invest – find out the viability of their ideas before making a financial commitment."

ALMIR facilities are available to businesses either through hire agreements or collaborative research ventures.

New suite of offices for **ABS**

Aston's Pro-Chancellor, Sir Michael Bett CBE, visited the University in November last year to unveil Aston Business School's prestigious new offices.

The office space, which cost almost £1½million to complete, is the hub of the largest undergraduate business programme of any of the top business schools in the UK with 2,500 first degree students. ABS also has the country's largest industrial placement programme, finding jobs for 450 students each year with the best companies in the UK and continental Europe.

Taking up a whole wing of the University's main building, the new suite houses 20 administrative staff and is also the focal point for 100 of the School's academics who teach on the undergraduate programme.

David Johnson, Director of ABS undergraduate programmes, said: "Our new office suite sets the seal on the most successful period in the School's history with a series of top ratings for teaching and research and a string of accreditations from prestigious bodies such as EQUIS.



The new offices will enable us to provide an even higher level of service to our many visitors from industry and commerce, as well as our staff and students. It is very fitting that they have now been officially opened by Sir Michael Bett with his strong connections to the worlds of both academe and industry."



Professor Graham Harding, the world's foremost authority in photosensitive epilepsy, celebrated his Festschrift on 27 March. Having officially retired from the University in the summer of 2002 to take a (supposed) rest as a visiting professor, Graham was joined by colleagues and friends from across the world to celebrate his career at Aston.

From wiggly lines to Pokemons

In a career that has spanned over four decades, Professor Harding has achieved some of the highest honours in medicine, including the award of Honorary Membership of the Royal College of Physicians in 1988. He graduated in psychology from University College in London in 1961 and obtained a PhD in EEGs and Psychiatry from Birmingham University and a DSc from Aston. He was President of the British Society for Clinical Neurophysiology, is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society and a Chartered Psychologist and is Secretary of the International Federation of Clinical Neurophysiology. He has delivered numerous named and invited lectures across the world.

It was an accidental moment that led to Graham's lifelong fascination with brain activity. He explains: "I first discovered EEGs by accident in the Library at University College, London. I was looking up a symposium and on the following page was a paper by somebody called Grey Walter on electroencephalography. As I looked at this paper I became more and more fascinated by the concept of wiggly lines and the way these potential changes could reflect brain activity and function. Here at last was the 'hard end' of psychology that I had been looking for."



Professor Graham Harding in Japan

He established the Clinical Neurophysiology Unit at Aston University in 1963. Over the years he has graduated 45 PhD and MD students and has published more than 350 publications in the field of electroencephalography and visual evoked potentials. His subjects have ranged between premature babies and elderly patients with senile dementia. Graham developed the use of magnetoencephalography (MEG) at Aston and in 2000 the MEG team became the first in the UK to explore the activity of the whole brain when Aston's whole-head MEG scanner was officially opened. Over the years at Aston he has been Head of the Clinical Neurophysiology Unit, the Department of Ophthalmic Optics, Vision Sciences, Psychology and Human Biology and was the first Director of the Neurosciences Research Unit.

Perhaps Graham's greatest interest is photosensitive epilepsy, a subject on which he has published two books and many papers. He has also carried out the largest study of a photosensitive population in the world. In his role as consultant advisor to the British Broadcasting Corporation on problems of photosensitivity and televised material, Graham is responsible for making sure that the adverts you watch on television are safe. He drafted the Independent Television Commission guidelines, which prevent the transmission of provocative material for photosensitive individuals. But after years of tapes arriving at his house at all hours and at all times he decided that something needed to be done so developed a machine which carried out the safety checking procedures. The Harding FPA machine was developed in conjunction with Cambridge Research Systems and was nominated for the Royal Television Society Technical Innovation Awards in 2001.

Graham has a certain affinity with Pokemons, the Japanese cartoon characters. Several years ago, following a four-second sequence in one of the episodes of Pokemon, 685 people were admitted to hospital in Japan. Graham was immediately contacted by the Japanese Government and drafted the guidelines for the Commercial Broadcasters' Association of Japan, and NHK (Public Broadcasting Corporation).

Graham is certainly no stranger to the other side of the camera. He has appeared on television programmes about photosensitive epilepsy in many countries of the world and is always on hand to help promote Aston and the Neurosciences Research Institute in the media. With all this experience it may seem that a rest would be well deserved. But as Graham said in the conclusion to his Festschrift speech: "In the words of Winston Churchill, this is not the end, it is not even the beginning of the end, but it may be the end of the beginning."



On Tuesday 11 March, Catherine Hall, Professor of Modern British Social and Cultural History at University College, London, gave a fascinating lecture which explored issues around the social and cultural history of 19th century Birmingham. 'Metropolis and Empire: Birmingham Past and Present', also included a discussion on the legacy of Empire and the experiences of the descendants of colonised peoples in contemporary Birmingham.

Lost empires of Birmingham revealed

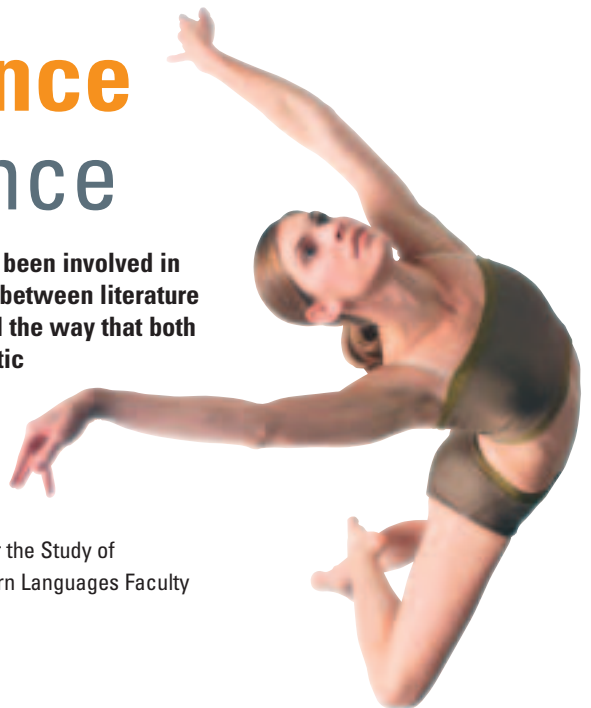
Catherine Hall has spent many years researching issues related to the social and cultural history of 19th century Birmingham, Birmingham's contribution to the anti-slavery campaign and attitudes towards the British Empire and colonised people in 19th century Birmingham.

The lecture was chaired by Professor John Breuilly from the Department of History, University of Birmingham. It was organised by Dr Georgios Varouxakis, who is Co-ordinator of the "Centre for the Study of European Politics and the History of Ideas" in Aston's School of Languages & European Studies. He is now working on a conference to be held at Aston this summer. 'Modernisation of the Left or pensée unique? The Fondation Saint-Simon and the modernisation debate in France, 1982-1999', will take place between 6-7 June.

A Question of Balance – Literature and Dance

Academic staff from the School of Languages & European Studies have been involved in an innovative new conference which aims to explore the relationships between literature and dance, from the Renaissance to the modern day. Speakers explored the way that both art forms can be mutually dependent, with themes including the aesthetic parallels between dance and literature and compositional similarities. Dr H  l  ne Stafford co-ordinated the conference at Aston, working in conjunction with Edward Nye, Lincoln College, Oxford and Michael Freeman, University of Bristol.

This conference was sponsored by L'Institut Fran  ais du Royaume-Uni, the Centre for the Study of Literature and Society (CSLS) at Aston University, the British Academy and the Modern Languages Faculty at the University of Oxford. It took place at Lincoln College, Oxford 14-16 April.



If you were an on-campus student or a participant in the distance learning MSc program in TE, TESP, or TESOL, then this page from Jane Willis and Sue Garton is for you. Here you will read news from LSU which will bring you up-to-date with all the latest developments from your former department. LSU would love to hear about your experiences since Aston. Please send any contributions to Sue (s.garton@aston.ac.uk) or via the Alumni Relations Office.



Welcome to the new LSU page in Apex

Life after the MSc

We've designed a questionnaire to find out more about 'Life after the MSc'. If you haven't filled yours in yet, you can do it on-line at www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/isuquestionnaire.htm. It need only take you 3 or 4 minutes. All completed questionnaires will be put in for a lucky draw for a prize of £50 on 21 June. The November edition of Apex will contain some of your responses.

So what goes on after an MSc in Teaching English? Carole MacDiarmid (1999 MSc TESP) reminded us of the value of networks in Istanbul: "Some of us initially kept the same jobs, others moved on. A number of us meet twice a year for tea on Aston open days at the local Aston Resource Centre. But the main thing that has kept us together and kept us developing as professionals is our special interest group. Initially we started out with a common interest in teaching ourselves about Neuro-Linguistic Programming and since then we have expanded our horizons to cover a range of things. We support each other in practical areas of work. We help each other prepare for conference presentations. We try to write articles for publication. It is a great support mechanism and very reminiscent of the group we formed to meet and discuss Master's work while we were studying. I can thoroughly recommend it!"

Who's who?

And now for a test. Here is a photo of the LSU team at the beginning of the new modular course, launched in January 1998. How many of these faces can you recognise?



Front row, left to right: Tom Bloor, Sue Wharton, Keith Richards, Peter Roe, Sue Morton. Standing: Julian Edge, Steve Mann, Rose Hunt, Muna Morris-Adams, Heather Philips, Nur Hooton, David Charles, Jane Willis.

There are some faces missing: Mary Bodfish, Fiona Copland, Sue Garton, Sue Wright, and International House tutors: Maureen McGarvey and Paula de Nagy. Did you know that some of the LSU staff are your fellow alumni? Keith Richards, Steve Mann, Muna-Morris Adams, Nur Hooton (née Kurtoglu) and Sue Garton.

News from Tom Bloor in retirement

I joined Aston in 1979 and was here at the inception of the MSc in TE(SP) as an on-campus course in 1981. I officially retired in 1998, but continued teaching on the MSc until 2000, retaining a link as an Honorary Fellow.

One of the advantages of being retired is that I feel free to randomly follow up a wide range of linguistic interests from the history of linguistics to languages in Ethiopia. In 2000, I was invited to speak at a teachers' conference in Addis Ababa, a long-dreamt of return after an absence of nearly 30 years.

I have continued to maintain an interest in academic life by writing, reading and participating in conferences and email discussion groups. My favourites are Sysfling and Sysfunc (the systemic linguistics groups), Discourse and, last but by no means least, Tesptesol, the collective voice of the Aston LSU MSc. I believe this last to be one of the more intellectually stimulating outcomes of the electronic age. I also review articles for academic journals. I am currently working with my wife Meriel on the second edition of *The Functional Analysis of English*.

There is no point in retiring if you are only going to do what you always did – work all the time. Chomsky once argued that the sentence, 'He performs his leisure' is deviant, but it seems to me to sum up my current programme, which involves a lot of swimming, some t'ai chi, fairly basic Spanish lessons and a computer skills course. My plans to become a master of folk, jazz, classical, and flamenco guitar have been put on hold for the foreseeable future and I am stuck with the same few chords.

My first academic love was literature, and I am now able to indulge in everything from Chaucer to Elmore Leonard, with occasional more ambitious excursions into Voltaire in French, for example. As a serious film fan, if not buff, I have a hard time keeping up with all the new films I want to see as well as pursuing my enthusiasm for 1940s and 1950s classics, especially *films noirs*. I also watch The Simpsons on TV and listen to jazz.

Most significant of all, I am a fairly full-time grandfather of six – two girls and four boys, the latest one arriving on 16 February this year. I have no complaints.

Letter & website

You should all have heard from LSU staff in April. The new brochure sent with the letter will have introduced you to new courses and new staff. You can find out more about us from our web page which Steve Mann is currently working on. He would welcome your suggestions, so go to www.les.aston.ac.uk/tesol/ to see more.

The year 2003 is set to be one of expansion and development for Combined Honours. We already have a very successful teaching programme (with over 800 students taking a variety of subject combinations) but a higher profile within the University and even more subjects for the next academic year look set to make Combined Honours an even bigger asset to Aston.



From left to right: The new Combined Honours Team: Lindsay Batt, Roy Smith, Sue Perry, Miranda Cleal, Jo Hamilton-Jones.

A successful combination

A little bit of history

Degrees involving subjects from more than one School have a long-standing place in Aston's history. Combined Honours has existed in various forms for over 40 years and has proved to be a highly successful and buoyant area of recruitment, development and innovation.

Since 1969, there have been five Directors (Dr A. Barnsley, Dr A. J. Cox, Dr G. Briscoe, Dr K. Dennis and Dr R. Smith). The structure and ingredients of the interdisciplinary degrees has varied over the years. Until 1992, it was possible to study three subjects in level one and then select two of these subjects to continue to two and three. Since then, only two subjects have been studied through the undergraduate degree. Subjects too have varied with demand and new curriculum areas have developed, illustrating the flexibility and adaptability of this type of degree.

Combined Honours today

Interdisciplinary degrees (Combined, Major/Minor) have traditionally recruited between 15-20% of the annual undergraduate intake to Aston University. There are now over 20 subjects involved: Biology, Business Administration, Chemistry, Chemical Process Design, Computer Science, Environmental Science and Technology, European Studies, French, Geographical Information Systems, German, Mathematics, Politics, Psychology, Public Policy and Management, Sociology.

Combined Honours is an active area of curriculum development and, working with the Schools, we have developed a range of major/minor combinations in specific subjects.

These will be in addition to our present programme of equally-weighted subjects. Major subjects comprise 80 credits per year. Minor subjects 40 credits per year, comprising 10 credit modules.

The first combinations are:

French (Major)
Economics (Minor)
Marketing (Minor)
German (Major)
Economics (Minor)
Marketing (Minor)
Politics (Major)
Public Policy (Minor)
Law (Minor)
Biochemistry (Major)
Economics (Minor)
Marketing (Minor)

Further new programmes are under development – check www.aston.ac.uk/combhons/ for details.

Future Developments

Combined Honours is linking with Matthew Boulton College to develop a Foundation Degree in Management Studies for part-time students. This will enable students who are currently employed in certain vocational areas to study for a new qualification. After successful completion, they will have the option of transferring to study in Combined Honours for the level three part of their studies. We are currently investigating options to enable these students to study at Aston part-time which would provide these students with unique opportunities of obtaining an undergraduate degree whilst still continuing in paid employment.

Who's who?

Combined Honours is located on the fifth floor of the Main Building. This location provides an academic link for staff and students involved in lecturing and studying on an inter-school degree programme.

The department now has its full staff complement for the first time in 18 months. Miranda Cleal arrived in November 2002 as Departmental Secretary/Admissions Officer, having previously worked in Aston Business School and Engineering & Applied Science.

Working closely with colleagues in the Schools and Matthew Boulton College, planned developments in Combined Honours during the next year include:

- continuation of current subjects;
- major/minor subject combinations in French, German, Economics, Law, Marketing, Biochemistry;
- foundation degree with MBC in Management Studies (and exploration of further integrated degrees).

Raising our profile

To raise the profile of Combined Honours throughout the University, we've been working on initiatives including new signage, an updated website, and a new Combined Honours logo which will be used on all internal and external printed material. The website for Combined Honours can be found at www.aston.ac.uk/combhons



Students' Guild: Meet the President

Hi, I'm Shamir Patel, President of the Students' Guild this year. As any past Presidents reading this will know, my main duty is to co-ordinate the Executive Committee and act as the main point of contact for the outside world. As President, I am the face of the Guild and representative of the students so I often have to speak at Open Days, Guild events and at various other occasions. I really enjoy my job and certainly do not regret standing for Presidency – I'm very flattered that people think I can do a good job, and I hope that I am.



Shamir Patel

It can be very stressful though, not least because of all of the meetings I have to attend with the Guild General Manager and with other executive and Standing Committee Officers, just to ensure I am always up-to-date with things going on at the Guild and around the University. This year has also had plenty of ups and downs so far, mainly due to the increased competition from pubs and clubs in Birmingham taking away our business. It is tough, but the advantages do far outweigh the

disadvantages, and NO, they are not the sort of advantages you are thinking of! I simply mean that it is fantastic for someone of 22 to be the Head of an organisation. The only sad thing is that I am only in post to 31 July and will not be at Aston forever. It will be hard not to see projects followed through – there is a planned extension of Einstein's and a refurbishment of the Guild foyer – and I will be genuinely sad to have to hand over to my successor. What advice would I give to the new President?

Well, they will have to be able to put up with students pointing and saying: "That's the Guild President!" (You no longer have a name once elected.) Seriously though, it can be difficult to get your voice heard, so as long as the next President is determined and perseveres they will do just fine. I'm just going to enjoy my last few months in office and I'm trying not to think about how much I'm going to miss everyone when I leave. Plans for the future? Oh, travel – and then, who knows?

Changing times for Aston's student newspaper

Aston's student newspaper has changed name – again – and is now called *The Aston Times*. After a brief transition two years ago to the glossy magazine *Helios*, Editor-in-Chief, Dave Barrie, has turned it back into a newspaper similar to the well remembered *SUN*, which started back in the 1960s. As a tribute to the newspaper, Martin Kirke (1978 BSc Behavioural Science) reminisces about his time as Editor of the *SUN* in the 1970s, while Dave Barrie talks about working on the newspaper today – oh how times have changed!

Martin Kirke:

"When I started at Aston in 1974, the *SUN* hadn't been published for a while and I, along with some other students, helped to re-launch it. I became Assistant Editor and News Editor and some of the stories I covered were the first look inside the new library and the Students' Union's decision to leave the NUS. Charles Clarke (Education Minister) was the NUS President at the time. I interviewed him and reported back a packed meeting at which he tried to persuade us to stay in the NUS. Ian Minnis was the Guild President at the time. He proposed we leave and he won! I seem to remember some of the benefits of writing for the newspaper were all the free records, books and tickets we got. It was great and we got to meet some quite famous people. There were disadvantages too, mainly because of the lack of technology back then. We had to teach ourselves page layout and setting and it was all manual as computers were only known to a few engineering students! Once we had a mock-up, we used to trek to Derbyshire to an ancient family printers in the SU minibus. We waited in the pub while they printed a few thousand copies, though proof-reading was a joke after a few pints of some strange local brew! One thing I've always wondered about is the name *SUN*, short for *Students' Union News*. Is it true that the name was a copyright before *The Sun* was launched and they had to pay Aston to use the name? It was a popular story at the time but could be an urban myth – I'd love to know though! I decided against a career in journalism in the end and, after working in Sydney and an MSc from Cardiff, I am currently Director of a telecoms company and enjoying life with my family in Sussex."



David Barrie:

"One of my election promises as Vice President, Marketing & Communications was to return to a student newspaper. This was after two years with the glossy magazine, *Helios*. The idea was born out of two factors. Firstly the advertising market for students has faltered recently, making it difficult to break-even on an expensive glossy magazine. Secondly, the two-week turnaround on production of an issue made it hard to cover recent events. In conjunction with the editors Kate Wells and Jenny Harris, we decided to call it *The Aston Times* to try to give it more of an Aston feel.

Things have certainly changed since 1974. We now lay up the paper on the industry standard QuarkXPress and photos and stories all arrive digitally and are stuck straight into the paper. We use printers in Swansea but, alas, do not get to sample the local brew whilst proofing! In fact I don't even leave my desk as we send *The Aston Times* electronically via email. We will be laying up right until the print deadline, or whenever the printers start calling and shouting at me!

My role is Editor-in-Chief, which basically involves me mucking in whenever and wherever necessary. We have built up a fairly solid editorial team and list of contributors, but we're always on the lookout for fresh blood. As you can imagine this year we've focused a lot on the changes in education funding. We aim to keep Aston students informed of the news that affects them. We send out *The Aston Times* to anyone who would like to receive a copy. If you are interested in reading what's going on at Aston then don't hesitate to get in touch with me at v.p.comms@aston.ac.uk."

New Musicians Society

The New Musicians Society has recently changed name to the Live Musicians Society. We caught up with one graduate, Chris Nettleton (1990 BEng Engineering), who remembers his time with the New Musicians Society, while Live Musicians Society Chair, Nick Ljustina, reports on the activities of the society today.

Chris Nettleton and his days with the New Musicians Society

"When I came to Aston in 1987 there weren't really any Music Technology or Performing Arts degrees in Britain, as there are now. I was studying on the BEng Engineering course and, as a keen guitarist/keyboard player and budding singer/songwriter, I was anxious to somehow find a way of getting involved with music while I was in Birmingham. The obvious thing seemed to be to join the New Musicians Society (I never did figure out why it was called 'New'... what happened if you were a member for more than a year?) It seemed quite small at that point, with only a handful of people turning up on a Tuesday night to jam, exchange riffs and hang out. I remember learning a few new tricks from other guitarists and the day we went to buy a second hand drum kit for the society. We had a concert in the bar of the Guild and it seemed that a lot more people came out of the woodwork to get up on stage in various bands than ever went to club nights. In my second year I'd sort of lost touch, which was probably a symptom of

living off-campus. By then I was getting more involved with my band, Hollyweird, back in Wales. I was close to leaving Aston to do it full-time, but ended up staying and graduating in 1990, after which I worked with them for another two years before moving to London, 'Dick Whittington' style, and then moving to Oxford to form a band called The Nubiles. We released records on Lime Street Records (signed to Chrysalis 1995-96) and toured the UK twelve or thirteen times between 1994 and 1997. We supported many of the big bands of the day – Oasis, Elastica, Blur, and Supergrass – before finally splitting up in 1998. These days, alongside freelance work behind the scenes in the entertainment industry, I still tour with a group called Sack Trick, write and record my own songs. I also indulge in a spot of journalism for the music website www.drownedinsound.com

Nick Ljustina and Live Musicians Society today

"The Live Musicians Society provides a dedicated practice facility and the opportunity for bands formed throughout the year to



Live at the Guild

demonstrate their talents. This year over 70 members have organised four events within the Guild, the showcase of which will be 'Astonbury' in the final term. Other events are organised in external venues and not at Aston. Typically we get around 200-250 people attending the events, which I think proves there is a strong interest in live music at the Guild. Most of the music we play is on guitar and is based on whatever style the members are into. We generally like to think we offer an alternative music style to the mainstream played in the Guild or in town on a Friday or Saturday night. Incidentally, a jazz band has just started within the society and looks set to be popular. This year has also seen the re-equipping and redecoration of the practice room, though none of this could have been possible without the commitment of all this year's committee members. We all love being in the society because it's all about the music, being in a band with friends and getting to play in front of people you've never met before – it's an electric feeling!"

Who were the Beverley Sisters?

The answer may seem obvious but, no, we're not talking about the pop trio that sang songs such as 'Daddy wouldn't buy me a bow-wow'. The Beverley Sisters, explains David Cooper (1974 PhD Chemistry), was a five-a-side football team back at Aston in the 1970s. Intrigued, we asked him to tell us more.

"The Beverley Sisters started as long ago as 1972, so the accuracy of what follows may be challenged. The Sports Hall had been open a few months when Manager Barry Melling decided to start eight five-a-side leagues, each with eight teams in them. Games were played between 4 and 5pm and they were an enormous success. Huge crowds used to appear on the viewing area overlooking the hall. In fact, the matches became a focus point for a lot of campus conversation. Everyone got involved and students from all disciplines and all ages got to play together, even if some of the teams did range in skill from the brilliant to those with players who'd only just learned to kick a ball! It was when a group of Chemistry research students decided to get a group together that the Beverley Sisters was born. Other teams were called Harry's Hard Men, Bother Boys and Norman's Nutters, but to get a bit of a balance we thought a more feminine name was needed. Founder members included Derek Pedley, Rob Molloy, Andy Johnson, Mike Walls and myself, with Phil Barker joining a couple of years later. I have to say that my involvement in the Beverley Sisters made my time at Aston all the more enjoyable and I bet all my old team will say the same!"

THE HYBART TROPHY

I'm sure that a great deal of you will recall representing your department in Aston's internal sports competition, the Hybart Trophy.



The game gets under way

Apart from one year's break, the Hybart has now been running for close to thirty years. Over recent years the structure of the University has changed which has had an effect on the Hybart Trophy. Twenty years ago we would have had seventeen departments competing in over sixteen sports. We now have eight teams playing eight sports. Matches are played on a league basis rather than a straight knockout. Two teams have tended to dominate in recent years – the ultra efficient Central Admin & Estates team along with the hardworking postgraduates from Civil Engineering. Both these teams have won the trophy twice in the last five years.

"This is the first year I've taken part in this competition," said Lucas North, who plays football for current league leaders, Central Admin & Estates. "It's great to be involved, especially as we've been winning our games. We're unbeaten with one game to go so, as long as we can keep it up, we can win the trophy. I just hope that, in saying this, I haven't given our team the kiss of death."

If you want to have a look at this year's results so far, log onto Aston's new sports website www.aston.ac.uk/sport/hybart.htm

Itching to find out what your friends from Aston are up to? Looking to see who's up to what and with whom? Well look no further because 'Where are they now?' is *the* place to find out the latest news from Aston's thriving alumni network. You never know, you might just spot someone you want to get in touch with. If you want your face noticed in November's edition, contact us at the usual address with your news – and go on, send a photograph!

Where are they now?

1960s

Peter Hegedus

(1964 BSc Civil Engineering)

was President of Gilbert/Commonwealth International Inc, one of the largest consultant engineering companies in the US, before moving to Budapest, Hungary, where he now works for ABB as their President and Country Manager. Peter has travelled extensively for his work to Canada, the USA, Africa, the Far East and the Middle East. Peter is also President of the American Chamber of Commerce in Hungary and Chairman of the European Round Table of Industrialists' local group in Budapest. Married with three boys, he enjoys scuba-diving, opera, classical music and strategic computer games.

Eric McCoy

(1967 BSc Industrial Administration)

"I retired in 1996 as Managing Director of Ransomes Simms and Jeffries Ltd (now Textron). Since retiring, I have served as Chairman of Governors for University College Suffolk and Suffolk College driving a major expansion in higher education in the county. I am also an active Justice of the Peace, sitting in both the family and criminal courts, and was awarded the degree of Doctor of Civil Law by the University of East Anglia in 2002. In my spare time I am a keen member of the

Rolls Royce Enthusiasts Club, participating with my wife in both the Jordan and Malaysian Rolls Royce Rallies."

Rob Chapman

(1969 BSc Geology and Chemistry)

emigrated to Canada after graduating, completing a Master's degree in Geology and Computing at the University of New Brunswick. Rob retired in 1999 from Shell Canada where he had worked for more than half of his 26 years as Strategic Advisor to the Senior Vice-President (exploration). He is currently President of his own consulting company, Petro Planners, and has been on exclusive contract to Shell for the last three years.

Rob Chapman

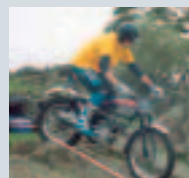


Chris Leighfield

(1969 BSc Mechanical Engineering)

lives in Melbourne, Australia and is married with two grown-up children. He moved there in 1972 having transferred from British Leyland to Ford Australia. During his career he has been involved in many power-train related projects taking him across many parts of Europe and the USA. He currently works for GM Holden as a Team Leader in the Engine Design Group. Always a motorcycling enthusiast, Chris continues to compete in trials and rides in the Classic Class for machines produced prior to

1965, for which he has won the Australian Championship four times.



Chris at the 2002 Australian Championships in the Barossa Valley

1970s

Colin Forsey

(1970 BSc Mathematics)

joined the Aircraft Research Association Ltd in Bedford after graduation and is still with the company. Starting as a Programmer in Computing Services he moved to the Research Department in 1972 and worked for the next 20 years developing Computational Fluid Dynamics techniques and codes. In 1994 he moved back to Computing Services as Head of Department. Outside work Colin enjoys folk and country music, folklore, social history and forteana.

John Lyons

(1972 MSc Construction Management and Economics)

"I really enjoyed Aston in the early 1970s, especially the concerts, and at the other end of the scale, the non-politically correct girl auctions! You had to bid for a female and she was yours to do as you wished for a whole week. Most ended up doing the cleaning and cooking as we were a more reserved bunch back then! Whilst I was taking my degree, I worked on the then new Bank of England building as Commercial Manager with an office in the Rotunda. Since then I have worked for the Trafalgar Group and the NHBC as a Director. I retired in 1998 and am happily married with four children."

Robert (Bob) Turner

(1973 BSc Metallurgy)

lives in Staffordshire where he is Managing Director of Quadcom Ltd, a marketing and business consultancy he established in 1999 after 26 years in the steels and engineering

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Christine Allsopp (née Goddard, 1968 BSc Chemistry)

is Team Rector of the Bourne Valley and Rural Dean of Alderbury (diocese of Salisbury) and in November last year was installed as a non-residentiary Canon of Salisbury Cathedral. Chris was ordained as a Deacon in the Church of England in 1989 and was one of the first women priests ordained serving first in Reading and then in Bracknell. Married to **Dennis Allsopp** (1968 BSc Biological Sciences and 1973 PhD Biology) they have three grown-up children and live in Porton just outside Salisbury. Dennis (in so-called retirement) is a Consultant Biologist, writer and Justice of the Peace.



Christine Allsopp

sectors. Married with two children, one who is currently at Aston studying Business Administration and European Studies, Bob's interests include industrial and social history, steam railways and fine wine as well as being a long suffering supporter of Wolverhampton Wanderers!

Bob Turner



Antony Ip

(1976 BSc Building Economics and Measurement)

"Since completing a four year contract with the Hong Kong Construction Industry Training Authority (CITA) as Assistant Director, I am now the Managing Director of a fitting-out contracting company in Hong Kong. I worked as the Contracts Director for a listed property developer for the preceding seventeen years, and in the six years after I graduated I worked for Birmingham City Council, the Property Services Agency (PSA-DOE) and QS consultant practices. My younger son also studied at Aston on the Chemical Engineering course before he decided to change direction and study architecture. My eldest son and his wife are practising doctors in London. My wife and I still have a house in Solihull and we frequently fly from Hong Kong to see our family members. I have devoted my life to my career and my family so I am looking forward to retirement when I can enjoy some more leisurely pastimes."

Antony Ip



Chris Alexander

(1978 BSc Geological Sciences)

has spent the last 24 years in IT, selling IT solutions, building them and managing them. As Programme Manager for Syntegra UK Ltd, Chris' job has taken him from the depths of Hull to the wilds of Zimbabwe and plenty of places in-between! Outside of work, Chris enjoys travelling the world with his beautiful wife, Amanda, looking after his ten-month-old son, Max, geology (as a hobby), running and climbing. Chris would welcome the opportunity to get in contact with his old course mates, so contact the Alumni Relations Office if you would like to be put in touch with him.

Cem Dilan

(1978 BSc Production Technology and Management)

gained a BSc in Civil Engineering from Bogazici University, Istanbul, two years after graduating. He lives in Buyukada and has worked in the

construction industry all his life. He is currently Director of Yapi Projeleri a.s. Cem played basketball for the University team when he was at Aston and in his spare time he still enjoys many sports, particularly tennis and sea sports.

Linda Kernan

(1978 BSc French and German)

"I got an MA in 1994 from the University of Kent. I moved to Hong Kong in 1995 and recently became a Hong Kong resident. I taught EFL for the British Council in Hong Kong from 1994-2000 and from 2000 to date have taught English for Academic Purposes at Hong Kong Polytechnic University. I really enjoy my work as I love the Chinese people and also, when I walk across the campus, it reminds me of when I was 18 years old and at Aston! With regards to hobbies, I love going to the gym and studying Chinese, though Cantonese is the hardest language I've tried to learn. I also love travelling and have visited many of the South East Asian countries."



Linda in Hong Kong with the Victoria Bridge in the background

George Kissick

(1979 BSc Civil Engineering)

"Yes, I am the George Kissick who was reasonably quiet but had bad taste in carpet slippers – can you believe I used to go to the bar and perform Auntie duties in them! I joined Baha'i and the women's water polo society (along with just about every other fellow that had a swimming costume) and my claim to fame was that I played the only quarter that Birmingham University failed to score in a 22-0 trouncing. After graduating I looked outside of the UK for employment and found work in the Republic of Ireland, Saudi Arabia and eventually London. Just less than 20 years ago I moved 'home' to Northern Ireland and have worked in the civil engineering industry ever since. I am married to Ethel and have three boys aged between 13 and 17. Probably my favourite moment at Aston was Mr Corbett trying to say the surname Bough, as in Frank, with no success for at least two years – though we never were sure whether or not he was fooling us around!"

George Kissick

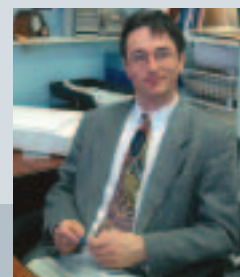


1980s

Duncan Veal

(1980 BSc Biology of Man and his Environment)

Married **Christine Nunnick** (1980 BSc Pharmacy) and they have two daughters aged 16 and 12. Duncan completed a PhD at Reading in 1984 and then a Post-Doctorate in Cardiff. He took up a short term contract as a Lecturer in Microbiology at Macquarie University in Sydney in 1988 and is still there! Having worked up the ranks he was recently promoted to Professor in 2001, and in the same year he became CEO of FLUROtechnics (www.flurotechnics.com) a University spin-off Biotech company. Duncan's pastimes revolve around water and his family.



Duncan Veal

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Angela Green

(1983 BSc Human Communication and German)

has been living in Germany since 1991. After four-and-a-half years as P.A. to the Ambassador of Sri Lanka in Bonn, Angela joined the United Nations Volunteers in 1996 (see www.unvolunteers.org). Her day-to-day tasks include administering the U.N.'s own language examinations and language classes for colleagues and protocol work. Highlights so far have been accompanying the U.N. Secretary General, Kofi Annan, on three tours to various cities in Germany and working in the Press Office at the U.N. talks on Afghanistan, held at Petersberg, near Bonn in 2001.

Angela (far left) and her colleagues pictured with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and his wife Nane Annan at the Hotel Adlon, Berlin, in March 2002.



Stuart Barley

(1983 BSc Biology of Man and his Environment)

"After graduating, I left to do a PGCE at Loughborough University and have taught Biology and Games at boarding schools near Ipswich ever since – I am currently at Royal Hospital School (I've been here for the last 17 years). I have often returned to Brum for exam board meetings but have not been back to Aston for about fifteen years. Sorry! I do always recommend it to my sixth form tutees though! I played football for Aston but have unfortunately lost touch with most of my team-mates – get in touch if you remember me. The Alumni Relations Office will pass on my details."

Ian Fryer

(1987 BEng Civil Engineering)

"After graduating, I joined a company called Kier Construction. I worked here for eight years on-site before moving to RMD Kwikform, a leading global supplier of temporary works equipment, where I am now Chief Engineer. In 1992 I married a fellow Civil Engineer, Miranda Helme, and we live in Staffordshire with our four children, Samantha, Matthew, Lucy and Theo."



Ian Fryer and family
(photo courtesy of Venture, Lichfield)

David Thomas

(1987 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)

began his career in Human Resources working at British Steel as an Employee Relations Specialist in South Wales. He moved into the financial services sector working in a variety of HR management positions for three separate global banks, including a period spent as Regional Head of HR for NatWest/RBS in the USA. David currently heads up HR for all global support functions for Standard Chartered Bank, a position which means that, although based in London, he is a frequent traveller to the Bank's fifty or more countries. David is married with two children and lives in St Albans.



David Thomas

Mark Ridolfo

(1989 BSc French and German)

taught at the Université François Rabelais in Tours for two years after graduating and, to his surprise, he caught the teaching bug. Mark joined Bournemouth University as a Language Training Officer in 1992 and is now a Senior Lecturer. He has also diversified from French and TEFL to Cross-Cultural Communication and Personal Development and is Programme Leader for undergraduate Business Information Systems Management.

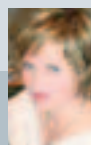


Mark with wife Harriet on a recent holiday to New Zealand

1990s**Nathalie Damiens**

(née Taylor, 1990 BSc International Business and French)

"I went to work in London after graduating and found work in TV production for a few years. I then got into TV distribution (selling TV programmes to TV stations around the world) working for companies such as CBS Broadcast and MTM. In January 1998, I moved to Paris (married a Frenchman) and am currently working as Senior Sales Executive for Tele Images International. During my time in sales, I have worked with clients from all over the world – exactly what I wanted to do when I was at Aston. In October 1999, I gave birth to our baby daughter who is now just over three years old. My free time is happily spent with her, painting, playing and singing and dancing. I loved my time at Aston and fondly remember the wild nights at the Guild. I still visit the UK every six months, so I will have to drop by to the campus next time!"



Nathalie Damiens

Stephanie Shellabear

(née Roberts, 1991 BSc International Business and German)

"I've been living in Munich since 1992 and have worked for The Boston Consulting Group for most of that time in the Time and Billing section of the Accounting Department. I took up learning Swedish in 1996 and managed to get a two month stint in the Accounting Department of the Stockholm office of BCG in 1998. I then spent two years as Assistant Director of Financial Systems Integration at Compaq, before returning in summer 2000 to BCG. I am married to Mike who has a PhD from Loughborough, and eight months ago I gave birth to our first child, Lucy. I have no immediate plans for the future, but we do intend to stay in Munich long term. Maybe there will even be a little brother or sister for Lucy!"



Stephanie and Lucy

Alan Mills

(1993 MBA)

is the Managing Director of Falcon Global, a firm specialising in the supply of training, management systems, recruitment and consulting services for the oil and gas industry. Alan began his career in the oil industry as an engineer in the 1970s and resumed after graduation when he joined a multi-national oil company in Jakarta. Here he had the good fortune to be able to pilot a programme for major change within the organisation. News quickly spread about his work and he was invited by the state electricity company to implement a similar strategy for their organisation of 57,000 employees. Alan returned from Indonesia in 1996 and his career has since gone from strength to strength with Falcon boasting customers from all over the world.



Alan Mills

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Sital Kotecha

(1996 BSc Pharmacy)

"I obtained my pre-registration placement with Moss Pharmacy (formerly Moss Chemists) after graduating, and having successfully qualified as a Pharmacist in August 1997, I went on to manage the second largest branch of Moss in West Drayton, Middlesex. I remained there as the Pharmacist and Manager for three years, during which time I optimised the store's working practices, did some external audit work for the Local Health Authority, worked part-time in a local GP Practice, engaged in some IT support work with Head Office's IT Department and further completed a Master's degree in Business Information Technology. I left Moss in summer of 2001 and undertook a six month placement with Alliance-Unichem plc, developing Pharmacy Dispensing and EPoS software. After this placement I started work on the Accenture Graduate Scheme and have just been promoted to Consultant. I got married in April 2002 and have since spent some time travelling the world, including Hong Kong, Australia, Thailand, US, France and Mexico. When I am not working I often visit the cinema and play basketball with a local league."



Sital Kotecha

He also gives English lessons to a national newspaper and writes for Time Out magazine.

Hussene Keshavjee



Ann Bicknell

(1997 BSc Human Psychology)

"I currently work part-time as a Consultant Occupational Psychologist for West Mercia Constabulary in New Learning Strategies. I am also part-time self-employed with a number of public sector clients, including teaching one Forensic Psychology module on the undergraduate programme at Aston! I have been working for the police for over five years and since starting my PhD, which is now nearly completed. Before my PhD, I gained a Distinction on an MSc in Organisational Psychology from a London University. Recently I secured a £15,000 research fund for West Mercia Constabulary after writing a proposal which was picked from national applicants to receive a Queen's Award from the Home Office, approved by Her Majesty. In my spare time I enjoy meditation, yoga, and I grow my own organic veggies. I also have a penchant for great shoes!"



Ann Bicknell

Fiona Bland

(née Byrne, 1997 BSc Business Administration and Public Policy and Management)

"I relocated to Connecticut, USA, to work with Cendant International Assignment Services after graduating. Here I worked for four years as a Relocation Consultant and for the last two years as an Account Manager. During this time, my boyfriend (of nine years) and I took a trip to Vegas in April 2001, where he proposed to me and the next day we were married in a helicopter flying over the Vegas strip! He had arranged it all without my knowledge – I had no idea! We both reassessed our lives shortly after and realised we were bored of the 9 to 5 and went looking for adventure. We spotted an advert looking for someone to lease a small

hotel on the Caribbean island of Bequia in the Grenadines, we went to check it out and by January 2002 were the proud new leaseholders. You can see the hotel at www.theoldfort.com"

Fiona and Ian



Dexter Lee

(1997 BSc French and German)

recently obtained an MA in Playwriting from Goldsmith's College, University of London. He has also, during his travels, picked up a couple of certificates from New Zealand – one in jet-boating and the other in bungee-jumping! Both were hard-earned, Dexter tells us.



Dexter Lee bungee-jumping in New Zealand

Sarah Pearce

(née Hobbs, 1997 BSc International Business and German)

and **Sean Pearce** (1997 BSc Public Policy Management and Business Administration) were married in July 2002. Sarah and Sean met at Aston and now live in Birmingham, Sarah working for Deloitte and Touche and Sean for PricewaterhouseCoopers. Both Best Man and Chief Bridesmaid were also Aston graduates. The wedding day was a fantastic celebration and a great time was had by all.



Sarah and Sean on their wedding day

Sarah Bates

(1995 BSc Applied and Human Biology and 1999 PhD Pharmaceutical Sciences)

lives in Boston, Massachusetts. Since graduating, Sarah has worked at Harvard Medical School investigating the neuroendocrinology of obesity and diabetes. Whilst at Harvard, she has been awarded for her work by the American Diabetes Association and the European Association for the study of diabetes. Her recent work has been published in Nature and the Journal of Biological Chemistry. In her spare time Sarah loves shopping.

Hussene Keshavjee

(1996 BSc International Business and French)

lives in Istanbul, Turkey. After graduating he travelled around Europe before returning to develop the family business, establishing contracts with multi-national enterprises such as the Metro Group. Since 2001 he has developed an export company using his marketing knowledge and six languages to supply textiles to over twelve countries. In his spare time he is involved in Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Wing Tsun and Scuba Diving.

Jonathan Pearson

(1998 BSc French and German)

"I am the Managing Director of Jonathan Pearson Projects Ltd, my own company of independent management professionals offering a range of services including IT Consultancy, Risk Management and Project and Programme Management. Based in Paris, much of my work is concentrated on business development and strategic direction for large Blue Chip companies. Previous clients include Reuters, Hewlett-Packard and Vodafone. I came up with the idea for my business having worked for British Telecom in Amsterdam where I realised that many professionals would much rather offer their services at a fixed daily rate than be tied to a large company. I am so glad I progressed with the idea as the freedom and financial rewards have made up for all the hard work. The company has recently expanded as far afield as Gibraltar, New York, Frankfurt, London and Brussels."

2000s**Pauline Moogan**

(2000 BSc Social Studies and Business Administration)

"I now work for the NHS Information Authority as a Project Support Officer. I provide administrative support for the development of clinical messaging projects in the NHS, such as Pathology and Radiology Messaging, electronic GP to GP record transfer and electronic booking of appointments. I still keep in touch with some old mates from Aston and we meet up every six months or so."

Nicola Derrer

(2002 MSc Work Psychology and Business)

"After graduating, I joined the Work and Organisational Psychology Department of Aston Business School as a researcher. I was a member of a team that carried out various pieces of research within the NHS. In September 2002 I was lucky enough to get a lectureship at Newman College of Higher Education in Birmingham, where I lecture in Psychology (specialising in Work Psychology) to single and joint honours undergraduate students. I am really enjoying teaching and get a lot from seeing students gaining and enhancing their knowledge. I am still living locally and I am still with my boyfriend,

Christopher Price (2001 BSc Computer Science and Business Administration).

I have high hopes that I will finally be able to do a bit more travelling in the next twelve months, now that I have finished all the studying (well at least for now!) It would be really nice to hear from the MSc class –

contact the Alumni Relations Office for my details."

SPOTLIGHT ON...**Peter McManus**

(2001 BSc French and German)

"Following graduation I spent three months travelling around Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and the Balkans. I then returned to my home town of Watford, where for the past 18 months I have been working as a German Network Sales Specialist for Fluke Networks. This German-speaking role allows me to put my degree into practice on a daily basis and has taken me as far afield as Munich, Frankfurt, Cologne and Amsterdam. In March 2002 I was delighted to be voted onto Aston University Council with a three-year mandate and I frequently make the trip up to Aston to attend Council meetings. In my spare time I swim regularly and display chronic symptoms of wanderlust, which I try to alleviate as often as possible. I also have the dubious honour of being a season ticket holder at Watford Football Club where I am regularly seen sobbing into my Bovril!"

Peter participating in a Fluke Networks team-building event in the Netherlands.

**Matthew Olsen**

(2002 PhD Chemistry)

"Until recently I was working for Amersham Biosciences (I joined while writing up my PhD in January 2001) as a Product Associate. My portfolio included Hybond membranes and Hoefer blotting products that I had actually used during my PhD. I finally managed to complete my thesis in January of 2002 and graduated the same year. I am now working as a European Product Manager with a company called SSL International, who produce products including Durex, Marigolds, Resolve and Scholl Foot Care. I would love to hear from anybody, so please contact the Alumni Relations Office and they will put you in touch with me."

Jim Rawlings

(2002 BSc Logistics)

"After leaving University, I enjoyed a laid back summer doing casual work before taking on a position within CAT Logistics in Desford, Leicestershire, as a Global Transport Planning Executive. This is a strategic transport-planning role within the Commercial Department where I act as the interface between CAT Logistics and client MG Rover, managing the worldwide distribution of automotive spare parts via the XPart brand name. One of the major series of projects I am involved in is the development and introduction of ITTs for all European markets and the contract negotiations thereafter. The new job meant a move to Leicester and I'm now living with girlfriend Debbie. I'm still mad on VWs and am now busily getting my camper van ready for the warm summer months so I can enjoy the beaches of Cornwall as often as possible! Would love to hear from my fellow Astonites, so contact the Alumni Relations Office if you want my details!"

Want to be in Apex?

If you would like to be featured in 'Where are they now?' in the November edition of Apex, please send some information about yourself either by email to c.l.hidson@aston.ac.uk or by letter addressed to: Caroline Hidson, Alumni Relations Office, Aston University, Aston Triangle, Birmingham, B4 7ET. Should you wish to send a photo to accompany your profile, please either post an original, which we will return, or email one at high resolution (260-300 dpi). We are waiting to hear from you – don't be afraid!

Rounding up old Stags

Saul Gray is looking to make contact with any graduates who played for the Aston Stags Football Club.

He would like to establish an old boys' network and hopefully develop some sort of reunion programme. He would also like to hear more about the history of the club – who came up with the name and who scored the first goal etc. If you are an old Stag and would be interested in forming a network, contact Saul on 07968 198 880 or email villastag@hotmail.com.

Your reunions

Christopher Ruffley

organised a reunion at the Fiddle and Bone in Birmingham for his fellow 1992 Civil Engineering graduates on 14 September 2002. Fourteen graduates and their partners turned up along with three lecturers, making over thirty people! They enjoyed a delicious buffet lunch and reminisced for the whole afternoon. A great day was enjoyed by all.



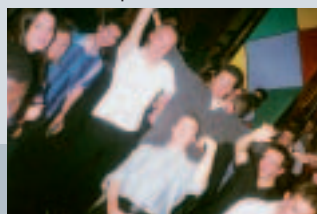
Left to right: Richard Bonner, Philip Ogden, Neil Short (Lecturer), David Collis, Guy Gregory, David Collis' partner Denise, Matthew Last, Gavin Chadbourn, Ann Cheung (née Kerswell) and baby, Chris Ruffley, Chris Ruffley's partner Leena, John Sutton, Rina Horne, Joanna Armitage (née Cole) and baby, Rob McDermott and baby, Rina Horne's fiancé Carl Housby, and Jacqui Vale (née Mayall 1992 BSc Transport Management)

The Old Vipers and Cobras

met on Saturday 22 February for the annual get-together of former Aston rugby players. The day started with a noon kick-off for both the Cobras v Old boys and Vipers v Old Girls matches. The Old Girls scored a high-paced 0-5 victory over their student opponents, while the Old Boys narrowly lost 22-19. The Old Girls win was all the more exceptional as many hadn't played for some years. Once the games were over, it was back to the Guild to take in the Italy v Ireland match and later to a pub along Broad Street for the Wales v England match. The dinner and dance in the evening was held at Jury's Inn, Birmingham. It was a fantastic event overall and was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended. If you would like to become a member of the Old Cobras and Vipers, email John Bance at johnbance@darleydale99.fsnet.co.uk for more information. He's waiting to hear from you!

Chris Hampton

(1999 BSc Information Technology for Business) met up with his friends in October, not that they can remember much about it, though they do vaguely remember it involved visiting various pubs and clubs in the MailBox and along Birmingham's Broad Street. Chris believes it's important to stay in touch with his old friends: "We all keep in close contact with each other. The best friends I have were made through Aston. You experience so much at university and get to know people really well. We always have a great time when we meet up, but maybe it's due to the copious amounts of lager, zambucas and the occasional dry sherry. Live for the moment!" People who attended were Helen Benton, Mike Connelly, Greg Howes, Tim Pearson, Richard Hacking, Brian Scofield, Chris Hampton and Jo Clubbe.



Out on the town!

Forthcoming alumni events...

6 June 2003

House of Commons Reunion Dinner
For Aston graduates living in the South East.
Tickets £40 per head and selling fast!

14 June 2003

Class of 1978 25-Year Reunion
Dinner and dance at the Nelson Building.
Tickets £30

21 June 2003

Class of 1983 20-Year Reunion
Dinner and dance at the Nelson Building.
Tickets £30

28 June 2003

1973 Pharmacy Reunion
Dinner and dance at the Nelson Building.
Contact Peter Rue at peter.rue@virgin.net for further details.

July 2003

1973 Chemical Engineering Reunion
John Mee is trying to organise a reunion some time in July.
Email meej@pullenpumps.co.uk for further information.

18 July 2003

Class of 2000-2002: Fondue Memories
Come back to the Guild for a cheesy night out! Tickets £7 and accommodation in the towers £25 for B & B.

20-21 September 2003

Sports Reunion
For all alumni (that we know were) from a sports society. Come back for an afternoon knockout of sporting activities followed by a dinner and a knees-up in the Great Hall.

4 October 2003

1969 Chemical Engineering Reunion
Dinner and dance at the Nelson Building.
Contact Julian Masters at j.g.masters@btinternet.com for further information.

Christmas Reunion

Class of 2003 Christmas Reunion in the Guild

Nigel Balchin is organising a reunion for 1973 Maths and Computing graduates. Date and venue to be confirmed.

Email nigel.balchin@ukgateway.net for more details.

Coming in 2004...

- I Paris Reunion for alumni living in France
- I Class of 1974 30-Year Reunion
- I 'Forty-five years of combined experience' – reunion for all Combined Honours graduates. (Dates to be confirmed)

Unless otherwise stated, please contact the Alumni Relations Office for further details about any of the above events. Call 0121 359 3611 or email c.l.hidson@aston.ac.uk. Details are also available at www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/reunionsandevents.htm

International Networks

Shanghai

On 25 November 2002, the Aston Shanghai Alumni Network held their first meeting at Lu Lu Restaurant. Wendy Yip, Deputy Head of the International Office, was there to meet everyone and an enjoyable evening was had by all. If you would like to join the Shanghai Alumni Network, a directory of contact details for the network members is now available. Email alumniinfo@aston.ac.uk



From left: Wendy Yip, Tony Jiang, Jessica Xing and Julia Liu

Malaysia

The KL and Southern Peninsula Network held their first ever dinner on 15 November 2002. Dennis Crumpton, Head of the International Office, reports: "On behalf of the Alumni Relations Office, I attended the first gathering of the Malaysian Alumni Network. It was an informal dinner at the Barn Thai Restaurant, organised by Dr Hoi Why Kong. Seven alumni were present, all of whom had never met previously, so it provided an excellent opportunity for them to get to know one another and to swap stories about Aston. The evening went very well and another gathering will be planned very soon."



Beijing alumni at the SAS Radisson

Beijing

The Beijing Alumni Network has been busy recently. On 8 November 2002, Wen Liang held a reunion dinner at his hotel, the SAS Radisson, for Beijing alumni. It was a fantastic get-together, everyone engrossed in various conversations about the past, present and future of Aston. Then, on 4 December, Pro-Vice Chancellor Professor Nigel Reeves officially launched the Beijing Network at the Palace Hotel. After a GanBei (a toast) he talked about Aston's achievements and its soon-to-be-changing skyline – much to the awe of those present!



Professor Nigel Reeves at the official launch of the Beijing Alumni Network

Want to be a member of an international network? See page 12 to find out more!

News from AGA – Jenny Martin reports

October: In October a small group visited the Aston Tram Museum and was treated to a detailed and nostalgic tour of the transport housed there. Lorries, buses, trolley buses and trucks together with all kinds of other memorabilia have been lovingly restored to provide a wonderful visual record of the way we were. The museum is housed in the old tram sheds and some track remains. A model is used to explain how the system worked in Birmingham, but the two trams housed here are currently undergoing restoration and are not on show. A very well stocked shop proved a delight for all old boys and the restaurant was a respite for the rest of us on a cold afternoon.

November: Over 50 members and friends visited the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery for a guided tour in November. Our professional guides used the wonderful collection to exemplify the development of all types of painting over the last 500 years. We were introduced to works in tempera, oil and watercolour and shown how ideas of composition have changed over this period.

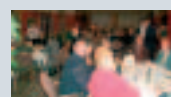
We were able to study paintings by Canaletto, Constable and Degas amongst others and compare their approach. Our visit also included a discussion of the development of tiles as decoration over the centuries using the fine collection at the gallery. Most of us vowed to revisit the gallery to discover more about the treasures that are housed here.

December: Charles Steiner, our vice-chairman, gave an illustrated lecture on the Romantic History of the Fountain Pen in December. He brought examples from his own large collection to show how the pen has developed over time. Charles, a graduate from the Department of Metallurgy, has spent a lifetime making his collection and is particularly interested in the variety of materials used and the different methods of construction. He showed us pens made from glass, casein (a compound found in milk), titanium and precious metals. The talk was followed by suitably festive refreshments and a chance to renew old friendships.

February: In February AGA members and friends dined at the College of Food in Birmingham. The

menu was described as including dishes from Bordeaux to Bangkok and there were certainly some unusual combinations.

The event provides an opportunity for the students to gain experience of restaurant service in the real world and our members are delighted to act as guinea pigs. A very popular event which once again was oversubscribed.



AGA members enjoy their meal!

Forthcoming AGA events: **6 June** Joint meeting with Birmingham Graduates Association at Aston. Professor Penny, from the Department of Engineering, will give a talk about Astronomy (for the uninitiated). **12 July** Annual pétanque competition at Hints. (Refreshments included.)

All Aston graduates are entitled to join AGA. The annual subscription is £5. Due to administrative difficulties, some newly qualified graduates have not received application forms. If you would like to join, please contact the Secretary, Ray Parry, on 0121 502 1964.

In-Touch – We'd like to find

The Alumni Relations Office has lost touch with the following graduates. Do you know any of them? We need your help to track them down...

Jonathan Adam (1992 BSc Ophthalmic Optics)
David Adams (2000 MSc Telecommunications Technology)
Dawn Anderson (née Pursglove, 1989 BSc Psychology and Business Administration)
Mira Balac (1995 MBA)
Robert Borgars (1991 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)
Robert Bullen (2002 MSc Pattern Analysis and Neural Networks)
John Capes (1979 BSc Mechanical Engineering)
Robin Chittenden (1984 BSc Environmental Health)
Christopher Curtis (2001 MSc Hospital Clinical Pharmacy)
Harvinder Dhillon (1987 BSc Ophthalmic Optics)
Abigail Duke (1995 BSc Optometry)
Gillian Eyre (née Rudduck, 1994 PhD Ophthalmic Optics)
Sarah Fitton (1995 BSc Business and French)
Lewis Grant (2001 MBA)
Jeremy Hadfield (1994 BSc Computer Science)
Stephen Hyde (1999 BSc Computer Science and Business Administration)
John Ingram (1998 MBA)
Rowena Jacka (1989 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)
Mark Jopling (1988 BEng Electrical and Electronic Engineering)
Giorgios Krikelas (1999 BEng Civil Engineering)

Mayank Ladd (1994 MSc Software Engineering and Applications)
Navin Lutchmun (1999 MEng Chemical Engineering and Applied Chemistry)
Jackie Madden (1998 BSc Pharmacy)
Emma McQuillan (1999 BSc International Business and French)
Gillian Munday (1995 BSc Human Psychology)
Davina Nagington (2001 BSc Biology and Chemistry)
Simon Naylor (1998 BSc Chemistry and Business)
Zoe O'Brien (1999 BSc Business Administration and French)
Alan Officer (1993 BSc Ophthalmic Optics)
Alistair Patrick (1973 BSc Metallurgy)
Sarah Pealing (1997 BSc Optometry)
Arthur Priestner (1979 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)
Lise Rajagukguk (2001 MSc International Business)
Fiona Rusby (1991 BSc Human Psychology)
Said Shebak (1981 PhD Mechanical Engineering)
Carolyn Smith (1997 MSc Information Technology)
David Thain (2000 MBA)
Hasham Ullah (2002 BSc International Business and German)
Frederic Viot (2000 MSc By Research in Neural Networks)
Jennifer Wilson (1989 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)
Andrew Woolf (1993 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)
Michele Young Brunwin (1987 BSc Transport Operation and Planning)
Antonios Zompolas (2001 MEng Electronic Systems Engineering)

In-Touch – You'd like to find

A number of you take advantage of our In-Touch Service to track down long lost friends. Whilst many are happily reunited others remain far more difficult to locate. Do you know any of the following?

Mike Ashwell (1975 BSc Mechanical Engineering)
David Banton (1986 BSc Mechanical Engineering)
Nazan Boysan (1977 BSc Chemical Engineering)
Ian Edwards (1978 BSc Mechanical Engineering)
David Henery (1977 BEng Electrical and Electronic Engineering)
Zaman Madarshah (1973 BSc Maths and Computing)

Imogen Moody (1986 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)
Hatice Oral (1979 BSc Chemical Engineering)
Colum Rooney (1993 BSc Ophthalmic Optics)
Sarah Schwab (née Carwithen, 1990 BSc French)
Deena Shalan (1996 BSc Human Psychology)
Pavittar Singh (1973 BSc Maths and Computing)

Are you looking for somebody from Aston? If they aren't listed on our email directory on the website www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/directory/index.php then contact the Alumni Relations Office and we will see if we are in touch with them. 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 of confidence.

1973 BSc Chemical Engineering

We are out of touch with 26 1973 Chemical Engineering graduates. Here are their names – do you recognise anybody?

David Austin	Clifford Dimond	Philip Mead
Donald Bell	Philip Dunning	Dilip Mehta
Madan Lal Bhandari	Neil Fenn	Amir Meskin
Philip Blakey	Roderick Howe	Ramanan Mylvaganam
Michael Braniff	Howard Hunt	John Tregillgas
Neil Burt	Geoffrey Irlam	Roger Westwood
Andreas Constantinides	Patricia Jacobs	Richard Wilkinson
Douglas Davies	Anthony Jandrell	Quentin Williams
	Javed Khan	

Class of 1978 graduates

We are out of touch with over 900 graduates from 1978.

Do you know the whereabouts of any of them?

A few are listed below:

Penelope Ablett (1978 BSc Business Administration and French)	Stephen Hennell (1978 BEng Electrical Engineering)	Carol Phillips (née Baker, 1978 BSc Pharmacy)
Susan Banks (1978 BSc Pharmacy)	Melanie Jampel (1978 BSc Urban Planning and Transport)	Charles Tuck (1978 PhD Chemistry)
Janet Davis (1978 BSc Pharmacy)	John Medland (1978 BSc Geological Sciences)	Philip Wheating (1978 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)
John Ferla (1978 MSc Educational Studies)	Laurence Nesbitt (1978 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)	Chaaban Zeidan (1978 BSc Ophthalmic Optics)

Class of 1983 graduates

We are also out of touch with over 1,000 graduates from 1983.

Do you know any of the following?

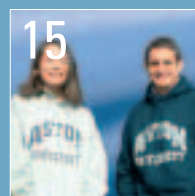
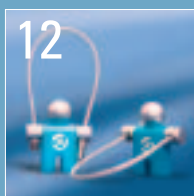
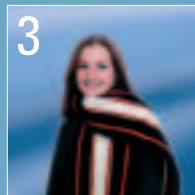
Pauline Enyioma (1983 MBA)	Mehran Hashemi-Sabour (1983 MSc Mechanical Design Analysis)	Susan Jarvis (1983 MSc Computer Science Applications)
Jonathan Fowler (1983 BSc Environmental Health)	Ahmad Hassan (1983 MSc Metals and Materials Management)	Jovan Savic (1983 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)
Gillian Grace (1983 BSc Pharmacy)	Kurstan Hill (1983 BSc Mechanical Engineering and Production Design)	Mandy Than (1983 BSc Pharmacy)
Susan Graham (1983 BSc Pharmacy)		Carol Whitby (1983 BSc Environmental Health)
Catherine Groves (1983 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)		

Are there any more like you?

To help in our search for lost alumni, please tell us who you are in touch with from Aston! We would welcome contact details of anyone you are in touch with if they are happy for you to pass on their address details. Send any information to:

Caroline Hidson
 Alumni Relations Office
 Aston University
 Aston Triangle
 Birmingham
 B4 7ET

Alternatively, give me a call on 0121 359 3611 ext 4525.



To order your Aston University gifts, please complete the order form and return it to:
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5	Aston keyring	£5.00			
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7	Umbrella	£18.00			
8	Lapel badge	£1.00			
9	Waterman pen set	£30.00			
10	Bookmark	£1.00			
11	Coaster set	£12.00			
12	Jumper keyring	£5.00			
13	(3) Aston branded Titleist PTS Solo golf balls	£5.00			
	(6) Aston branded Titleist PTS Solo golf balls	£10.00			
	(9) Aston branded Titleist PTS Solo golf balls	£15.00			
	(12) Aston branded Titleist PTS Solo golf balls	£20.00			
14	Shot glass engraved with University crest	£3.50			
15	Sweater blue or grey s/m/l/xl	£25.00			
16	Crest keyring	£2.00			
Total					

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