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LA Story

**Reading between the lines
Alumni in the media**

 **ASTON**
UNIVERSITY

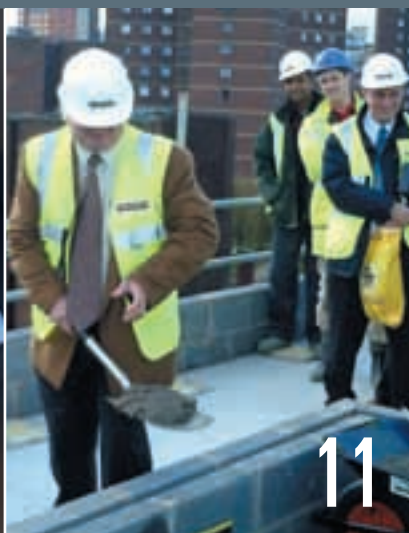
You must remember this...



A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, Princess Leia and R2-D2 welcomed the first arrivals at the May Ball.



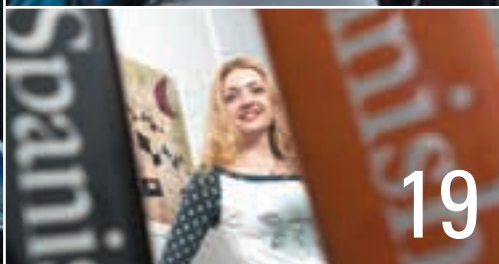
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Special thanks go to everyone who contributed to this issue of Apex. Apex is published twice a year for alumni of Aston University. Letters, photographs and news are very welcome but we reserve the right to edit any contributions. Please address all 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 the website in html or pdf formats, but please contact us if you experience any difficulties accessing the publication.

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How much do we give away in our handwriting? It's a serious question for those engaged in the science of graphoanalysis. Handwriting may not simply be a way of communicating ideas, but a representation of something deeper – our individual personality traits. Owen Williams (1966 BSc Industrial Administration) invited Apex to discover more about what he feels is often a neglected science.

Reading between the lines



The history of handwriting analysis can be traced back to at least the fifteenth century when the Roman Catholic Church was searching for a way to measure an individual's ethics and moral code. People could say what they thought you wanted to hear, references and personal judgements could be too subjective and potentially unreliable. What was needed was something that was unique to an individual – handwriting seemed to offer a possible solution.

It was left to the French to establish the art of graphology and to the Germans to develop and add to the evolving theory surrounding it. Probably the most notable development was when handwriting ceased to be thought of as simply handwriting. Supporters began to suggest that if the hand is moved by impulses from the brain and the brain is obviously unique to each individual, the assumption can be made that there must be some unique trait associated with the brain's output; in this case the impulses that cause the hand to move in a certain way to produce script. This development in thinking led Wilhelm Prayer to coin the term 'brain writing'.

Last century a similar idea began to evolve in the States from work associated with teaching shorthand. Although there are agreed symbols for shorthand script, each individual develops his or her own style to the extent that it can be difficult, if not impossible, to read another's shorthand script. Research was undertaken and theories established and accepted. The art of graphoanalysis gained in credibility, a body of theory began to be established and a professional institution grew up. The International Graphoanalysis Society (IGAS) which teaches, assesses and accredits practitioners of handwriting analysis.

"My work is all about personality assessment," explained Owen who goes to great lengths to insist that in the UK the whole discussion of handwriting analysis has been sensationalised into something it isn't. "Here we have psychometric testing to help recruitment, why not employ graphoanalysis with the aim of identifying a person's strengths and aptitudes?" Reading more than between the lines, rather deep into the way each letter is formed on the page, Owen can identify traits which signal the ability to work

in a team, aspects of temperament, reliability and commitment to the task in hand – all laudable indicators of career success or compatibility with a work or social environment.

When analysing a sample of handwriting Owen looks for around two hundred different traits – thin or thick lines, large or small curves, open or closed loops, even the amount of space between words can tell a story.

“My work is all about personality assessment”

Owen has been practising his science for over fifty years and has taught nearly 200 people. In 2004 the IGAS acknowledged Owen's contribution to his field of study by awarding him International Graphoanalyst of the Year. An Honorary Member of IGAS, President of the British IGAS Chapter in 1993, a Fellow of both the Chartered Institute of Management and the Institute of Management Services and a long serving member of the AGA Committee, Owen continues to promote this discipline widely to help raise its profile in the UK and increase general acceptance of the methodology and practice.

Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor Graham Hooley, shares Aston's good news with alumni at a time when applications across the HE sector as a whole are showing relatively slow growth.

Applications to Aston on the increase

Back in January, the Department of Schools and Colleges Liaison undertook some quantitative analysis to compare the level of applications to Aston with applications across the HE sector as a whole. On 5 January it was reported that Home/EU applications were 32% up on the same time in 2004 and that international applications were up a huge 44%. These figures were particularly exciting for Aston at a time when applications across the HE sector as a whole were only marginally up by 9% (with some evidence of a last minute rush to beat the introduction of variable fees). Our showing at over 21% above the national average is excellent news, and is down to a number of factors:



- All Schools of Study across the University had a very successful programme of innovation. New programmes in areas such as Biosciences, Multimedia Technology,

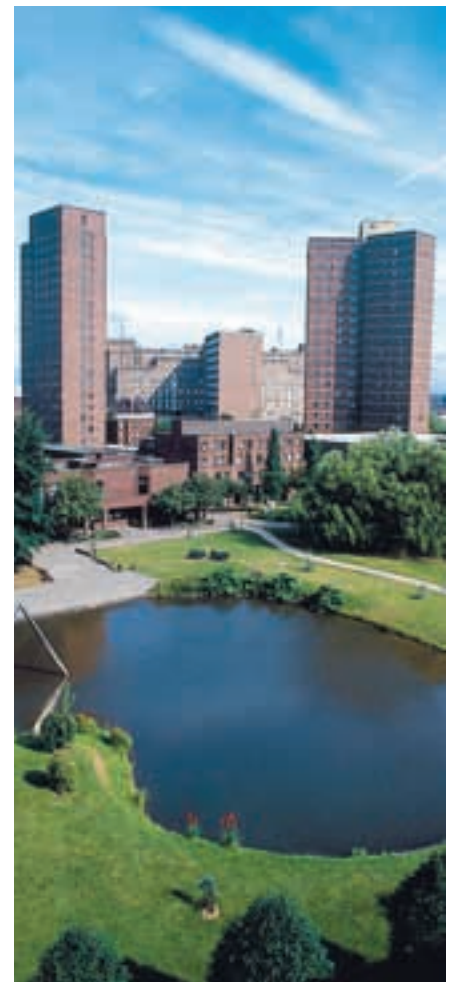
Politics, Spanish, International Business and Management, Economics and Management, Audiology and our new major/minor combinations through Combined Honours are all drawing strong interest from prospective students.

- Enhanced and positive marketing campaigns have also helped raise our profile. These have included renewed direct mailing, a successful pre-application open day in September (a record 3,000 attendees) and good relationship marketing. Over 200 teachers and careers advisers attended the 10th Annual Admissions Conference hosted at Aston early in the year and significant work has been going on with student ambassadors and colleges locally and nationally.

- There has been a greatly enhanced international student recruitment drive both through the International Office and within Schools. This has been coupled with the creation of the Aston Graduate School under the direction of Dr Mark Oakley that now co-ordinates the applications for postgraduate taught programmes across the University. Many of our postgraduate applications are also from international students and Mark and his team work very closely with the International Office to attract applicants to Aston.

- Our improved positions in the University and subject specific league tables, in particular our jump to 22 in *The Times Good University Guide 2005* and 13th overall in *The Guardian 2004* table, have had a major impact on our reputation and standing among prospective students and those that influence them.

Through innovation in programmes, enhanced reputation showing through particularly in the league tables, and improved marketing effort, it is clear that across the University demand for our programmes is more buoyant than it has ever been.



Profile on...

David Upton

David studied a sandwich course at Aston in Mechanical Engineering in the late 1960s and obtained his degree in 1970. He then took a 12 year sabbatical working for Tube

Investments in manufacturing research prior to returning to Aston in 1982 to undertake a research programme into new designs of cutting tools. He completed his PhD in 1987 and has been at Aston ever since, continuing with additional research, particularly in materials and machinability of car components for Ford Motor Company. His work in this area was recently rewarded when Aston's contribution was recognised on the launch of the new V6 Lion Diesel Engine.

A Lecturer in Engineering programmes, he is very interested in failure analysis, having undertaken investigations which have formed the basis for some of the lectures and case studies sometimes on everyday objects like a broomstick!

David is also the Industrial Placement Tutor for Engineering Systems and Management. Aston has always been keen to promote the benefits of a year in industry to its students, and David helps engineering students to obtain a placement of up to 12 months. One perk of the job, he says, is that he gets the opportunity to undertake some really interesting industrial visits to companies like BMW, Toyota, Rolls-Royce, Bentley Airbus, BAE, Jaguar and Vauxhall, where some of the students are based.

So, David seems to keep busy at work, but what are his interests outside of Aston? He informs me that he is keen on cycling and canals, which he combines by cycling to work along the canal towpath. He describes this as an excellent way to keep fit, providing you don't fall off, fall into the water, or get attacked by Canadian Geese!

A recent new role is apprentice Mace Bearer at Aston's Degree Congregations, a job which Professor Penny has held for a number of years, but is reluctantly giving up in the near future.



David Upton

Careers services for Aston graduates

How much time and effort did you put into getting that first job? And how much more will it take to make the next step? Aston alumni can still use the careers service for up to three years after graduation. Maureen Tibby, Head of the Careers Service, answers some of your FAQs.

Q: Do you provide information via a website?

www.careers.aston.ac.uk gives details of services and facilities, provides advice and offers links to useful career-related sites and employers.

Q: What other facilities do you provide?

You are welcome to use many of the (free) reference resources in the Careers Information Room. Computer facilities include Prospects Planner (a computerised guidance programme) and access to the Internet (for careers-related information only).

Q: Can I arrange to see a careers adviser?

You can book an initial 15-minute appointment on the Aston Careers Service website, by telephone or by calling in. Longer appointments would normally be arranged following the initial consultation. However, if you are travelling a long way phone in advance and ask to book a 45-minute interview. Waiting times will vary according to the time of year.

Q: Do you provide vacancy information?

You can register with our Vacancies Online service www.careers.aston.ac.uk/vacancies. We will email you directly with vacancies which match your requirements. You can also register with TargetedGRAD. This is a web-based graduate recruitment service run by a group of top university careers services, including Aston. Registration is free at www.targetedGRAD.com and employers will email you with opportunities relevant to your degree and interests.

Q: Can I telephone or email the Careers Service?

We are happy to respond to telephone calls or emails but cannot send out large quantities of information to you or give careers advice via email. If you want to speak to a careers adviser we can arrange for someone to call you. We can be contacted on 0121 204 4757 or careers@aston.ac.uk

Q: Can I use other university careers services?

If you no longer live in the West Midlands you may be able to use the facilities of other university careers services although this is not guaranteed. Priority will be given to their existing students, particularly during term time. Further details can be found at www.prospects.ac.uk

Q: Any other sources of help you would recommend?

Graduate Advantage (www.graduateadvantage.co.uk) is a regional scheme supporting graduates wishing to work in the West Midlands. Registration allows you to search for vacancies or submit your details to potential employers. The Graduate Placement Programme provides project-based employment in smaller companies for six to nine months. Training and support is available to participants.

Prospects Web Site (www.prospects.ac.uk) has comprehensive information and advice for graduates, including contact details for all university careers services, graduate careers advice, CV checking service, details of careers fairs across the UK, occupational information and graduate labour market information and a business knowledge bank.

Provision of training schemes for unemployed graduates varies by region and you will need to check in your area for details. Details may be found by contacting your local university careers service or job centre.

Local Connexions Services (www.connexions.gov.uk) offer a range of support services to young people. Many provide or have links with services for adults and some of these may be free of charge if you are unemployed. Some also offer paid-for services ranging from CV production to individual guidance and psychometric testing. Check with your nearest Connexions Service or Job Centre to see what is available.

Profile on... will be a regular column in Apex. Let us know if there's a member of staff you'd like to read about from your days at Aston.

With an impressive portfolio of customers and an outstanding track record of successful projects including work on the Olympic Village in Athens in 2004, Management Force is a leading company in the safety management services sector. Based in Greece, MD Georgios Panopoulos (2004 PhD Health and safety) opened up the doors of his specialised client-centred consultancy.

M for Safety

Management Force is a leading company in safety management services and has a significant presence in the oil and gas industry, construction and the service industry in both the public and private sectors. Although the company is based in Greece, it has a remarkable international presence in the UK, North Africa and Cyprus.

"Our mission statement is to provide quality services working together with our clients for the benefit of our clients, proving any investment they make in safety, health and the environment to be a good investment in both non-economic and economic terms," explained Georgios who specialises in management systems, specifically costs and safety. "Our solutions ensure the safety of a project over its life-cycle through design, construction, start-up, operation, maintenance and disposal."

Management Force's major clients are large, Greek construction companies, but it also works with businesses in other sectors such as retail, services, utilities, food industry, petrochemicals and the steel industry.



"We were very much involved with the Olympic projects for the Athens 2004 Olympics," continued Georgios. "For example, the Olympic Stadium roof and the Stadium landscape which was designed by the famous Spanish architect Calatrava."

Management Force is not lacking in top accreditation either. Georgios was proud to announce that recently, among other developments and success, Management Force was accredited by the British Standards Institute as an associate consultant to OHSAS 18001 BSI Safety Management System for central and southern Europe and ISO 14001 Environment Management System. The company also employs experienced full-time professionals and associate expert consultants who have a broad range of scientific, engineering and management skills.

"My greatest challenge in my professional life," mused Georgios, "was the Natural Gas Project in Greece where I worked as Safety Manager, Sub-Project Deputy Project Manager and Project Co-ordinator before setting up Management Force. It was during that time I

came across modern management techniques in construction."

A different challenge must surely have been his PhD research. "My thesis was entitled *The economic aspects of safety in the construction industry in Greece* and was completed alongside the many commitments I had in my company and also in my life outside work – I am married and have two children. People at Aston were very encouraging and helpful," remembers Georgios. "Everyone in the Health and Safety Unit were very good and helpful to me. Above all, my internal supervisor, Professor Richard Booth, has significantly supported me in my work."

What does the future hold for this successful Aston graduate? "I would like to be more involved with top management and decision makers in safety matters and safety policy in big brands and the public sector. I also believe that my PhD will give me more opportunity in an academic field and allow me to combine my extensive practical experience and my academic abilities."



MANAGEMENT FORCE

Susannah Streeter (1995 BSc French and Society and Government) and Michael McNamee (1992 BSc French) both work in the media, Susannah as a reporter and presenter for BBC THREE's 7 o'clock news and 60 Seconds, and Michael as a presenter on BBC Radio Ulster, based in Belfast. We interviewed them to find out a little more about their careers.



Alumni in the media

How did you end up in your job?

Susannah: "I had always been interested in the media and during my first year at Aston I started writing for the Birmingham Sun. I soon decided I would like to be a journalist, so spent my student loans on getting work experience during the holidays. At graduation I was the only one of my friends who didn't have a job, but I soon started freelancing as a local radio journalist, then went into regional TV and two years ago joined BBC THREE."

Michael: "A media training course in 1993 run by a group called CSV (Community Service Volunteers) set me on my way. This was a nine-month course based at the BBC in Belfast, which offers young people training in radio, TV and print media. As part of that, I did a month's work experience in the Sports Department in BBC Northern Ireland and that led to me doing a few football match reports on Radio Ulster and the odd shift compiling and broadcasting radio sports news desks. To cut a long story short, many early starts and late finishes brought me my first short-term contract and today I'm still a freelance working on an annual contract. Along with sports commentaries and reports, I present a live non-sports magazine show *Your Place and Mine* on BBC Radio Ulster on Saturday mornings. I've been doing that show for four years."

Describe a typical day

Susannah: "A typical day starts around 8am when I monitor radio and TV news output at home. I arrive at work at 11.30am by which time the news editor has already decided the story I will be doing, but I can often pitch an idea I think we should be covering. I report on national and international news and can be sent anywhere in the country or abroad if necessary, but usually I am based in London. I go out and film between 11.30am to around 4.00pm, then I head back to the office to edit from between 5.00pm and 7.00pm, when our programme starts. If I report live, I usually send back voice

track and rushes from a satellite truck and then stay at the scene to report into the programme at 7.00pm. If I am presenting the programme, I start at 4.00pm. I research the stories we are covering, including the backgrounds of guests I may be interviewing. After the thirty minute programme I go on to present *60 Seconds* updates every hour until midnight."

Michael: "There is no such thing as a typical day. The great days will see me out in the fresh air interviewing someone for *Your Place and Mine*. The items are mainly rural-based so recently I was in County Armagh reporting on Northern Ireland's big ploughing match. We talk to anybody and everybody on the show. I've spoken to undertakers, goalkeepers and people who collect pottery pigs! I have learnt so much about Northern Ireland and met so many delightful people since starting on the programme."

What are the most rewarding and challenging parts of the job?

Susannah: "The most rewarding part of the job is meeting so many different and interesting people every day. The most challenging is getting people to talk on camera when they don't want to!"

Michael: "The most rewarding aspect of my job is getting feedback from listeners who've heard something that they've enjoyed. The most challenging is attempting to come up with a good interview or item on the 'slow' days or trying to invigorate a sports commentary at a dull match when you're frozen solid or soaked through."

Are there any news items/topics that you have covered that have particularly interested you?

Susannah: "One of my most interesting jobs was reporting from Pristina airport in Kosovo during the summer of 1999. It was quite a tense time as both the Russians and NATO soldiers were trying to control the airport. I was working for Southampton based Meridian TV at the time and I was reporting on the role of troops from the

South of England. We flew back with an aero medical evacuation team who were taking a little boy with leukaemia for emergency treatment in the UK."

Michael: "Sadly my favourite memory is a sports one, the Ulster rugby team winning the European Cup in 1999. The best moment was not the final in Dublin but the semi-final at Ravenhill in Belfast. Stade Français were Ulster's opponents and they were undone by the sheer passion of the 15,000 home fans. The atmosphere at the game was incredible. The success of the team briefly brought a magic to both communities in Northern Ireland, not just rugby fans, and it was just a wonderful bright spot amidst the general gloom."

Have you ever experienced any embarrassing moments on air?

Susannah: "When I was working at Meridian TV, the gallery cut back to me early while I was reading the news and I was rubbing my nose quite vigorously. I just had to stop and read on."

Michael: "Broadcasting live inevitably leads to the odd slip – some you don't even realise you've done. I was doing a piece on the Mummerys of County Fermanagh, who go around people's houses performing a traditional folk play. Unfortunately at one stage live on air I substituted a B instead of an M at the start of Mummerys. You just have to laugh and move on."

What are your future career plans?

Susannah: "I really like working on the 7 o'clock news, but I would like to take the opportunity to work elsewhere in BBC news such as on BBC One's *Breakfast* or *News 24*. I've worked in radio and print before but at the moment I am really enjoying television."

Michael: "I have never had any plans or great schemes. The business is too precarious for that. I've been lucky so far with the things I've been offered. At heart I'm a radio fan as I have a face for it. It's more personal and fun and the people who work in radio tend to be nice. If I wasn't doing this job I have absolutely no idea where I would be."

The Net works

We are responding to requests for more networking opportunities by creating virtual groups online so you can meet with fellow Astonians, friends, colleagues and peers for social or professional reasons from the comfort of your own home. Here we focus on two new online groups, but don't forget the already established international E-networks at www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/emailgroups/index.jsp

MBA Online Community

A new strategy for Aston's MBA alumni programme is emerging. In summer 2004 MBA alumni all over the world took part in email discussions and focus groups to explore how networking might be facilitated. The most important consideration was the vehicle through which we channelled the alumni programme and almost without exception an electronic communication system seemed to be most desirable. So the MBA Online Community has been launched at www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/mba

www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/mba is open to all MBA alumni of Aston University and we have already had a successful start to the programme. Here's a taster of what members have enjoyed since January.

Does corporate governance really matter?

The answer to this question was hotly debated when Sir Adrian Cadbury led the first of our MBA alumni networking evenings.

An audience with Sir Digby Jones, Director General of the CBI

Sir Digby held a capacity audience spellbound for nearly two hours and responded to questions on the current pension crisis, difficulties faced by black and minority ethnic businesses and the UK economy (in conjunction with the Chartered Management Institute).

Networking with fellow MBA alumni through three online forums: The Ideas Forum where you can post questions or discussion topics relating to issues in the business world today or ask MBA peers for their views; Career Management and Vacancies dedicated to careers and vacancies for MBA alumni; The MBA

Lounge is a virtual Base Room where you can relax and chat with fellow MBA alumni – find out what really happened to them all and where they are now.

Being part of the online MBA alumni community means web links to newsletters and your Business School, the latest research from Aston's top academics, seminars and look-up directories.

Upcoming events include:

Myths and Realities, Ministers and Civil Servants – a story of everyday life in the Westminster Village, Professor Rod Rhodes from the Australian National University will be presenting a public lecture on the work of Government ministers and senior civil servants, arguing that the political elite in the UK use story-telling rooted in the beliefs and practices of the Westminster model to manage everyday life and domestic crises.

MBA refresher courses. Professional development opportunities to ensure your skills and knowledge remain at the cutting edge.

The MBA Online Community is only in its infancy, it will grow and develop around you and your requirements as you take advantage of what the community offers you and participate in this exciting new development. To register: visit www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/mba and 'Register'. We will then activate your request and your online community is only a mouse click away.

Network

Did you know that you can now attend alumni events designed exclusively for professional networking and career skills development? Over the last few months Aston alumni have been doing just that, as the new Network for Aston alumni takes off. Network, the new membership service for professional alumni, is currently being piloted with graduates of Aston Business School, but non-ABS graduates are more than welcome to join!

A few weeks ago about 20 alumni came back to campus to spend a Saturday learning 'The Art and Science of Effective Networking'. The course combined seminar style learning with role playing in pairs and groups to help members hone their relationship-building skills and gather useful techniques. Laura Stansbie, Network Administrator, organised the

event. She said: "I came back to work on Monday morning to an email from a Network member who had attended the event. It began: 'Can I firstly thank you for putting on a truly outstanding event. Rarely is a course so enjoyable and beneficial at the same time.' This really made my day! This and the other feedback I have had from members so far shows that our alumni are really finding this new service useful!"

Last December, more alumni gathered in London for 'Taking Charge of Your Career'. David Willcock, executive coach, gestalt psychological consultant and Aston alumnus, led the workshop. The event provided a comprehensive strategy for taking stock of your career and deciding what to do next. It seemed to hit the spot – some members have since commented that they consider their direction in life like never before!

In May, Network is running 'Effective Negotiation Skills for Work, Rest and Play'. If you fancy improving your business skills, or networking with other alumni, find out how Network membership can benefit you at www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/network or by emailing alumninetwork@aston.ac.uk. We look forward to hearing from you!





This year's AGM was held on Saturday 19 March and was attended by over 130 alumni representing graduation years from the 1940s to the early 2000s. For those of you unable to attend, here's a fuller report of the day's activities.



The day began with morning coffee – a chance to meet up with friends and colleagues.



The Officers of the University and the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Convocation prepare for the AGM. Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mike Wright, presented his annual report and a detailed account of the future plans of the University. Treasurer, Dr John Parnaby, presented a report on the published accounts and explained the financial climate of the Higher Education sector in which Aston functions.



Chancellor, Sir Michael Bett, presented Simon Lemin and Peter Johnson with the AGA prize for their excellent contribution to the social life of the University.



Secretary-Registrar David Packham announced the results of the elections to Council and the Standing Committee of Convocation. We are pleased to welcome Mr David Harrison to Council and Dr Seewoosunkur Gopaul, Mrs Suzanne Kirby and Mr Roger Malcolm Sheppard to the Standing Committee of Convocation.

Many of our alumni take the opportunity to bring their families with them. There is always an alternative session organised for anyone who does not attend the AGM. Whilst this event is intended for the families of our alumni, we also notice a few of our graduates who join in, obviously preferring this event to the AGM. But that's the idea of the programme – choose to go wherever you please! This year we invited Graham Stubbs (2001 BSc Environmental Science and Product Design and a current postgraduate student at Aston) to exhibit his photography of Birmingham and to talk about his art and what motivates him to take stunning views of the City from original angles.



A buffet lunch was the ideal time to catch up with lost friends, take in the morning's activities and prepare for a tour of the Academy of Life Sciences in the afternoon.



2006

Next year the University will be celebrating 40 years since its charter was granted in 1966. What better reason to make an effort to come back to campus? The AGM will be a key event of the celebrations and will be held on Saturday 11 March. Put the date in your diary now! Don't forget, you can bring your family with you as well. We will be publishing the full programme in early January next year so make sure we have your up-to-date contact details.

If you would like to be more involved in the life of the University, why not consider your nomination for the Standing Committee or Council? All Aston graduates are members of the Convocation which also includes representatives from industry and commerce, local government and professional bodies. The Standing Committee of Convocation is your opportunity to be involved in Aston's future and is also the recognised route for alumni to raise any issues they have about the University's operations. The Committee meets six times a year in the evenings. If you would like to discuss this further, contact Sarah Pymm in the Alumni Relations Office.

Long Service Awards

Aston held a quarter of a century celebration recently when the 2005 Long Service Awards took place on 25 January. The ceremony was attended by Aston staff that have served 25 years or more at the University. An introductory speech from Professor Nigel Reeves reminded staff that had started in 1978 and 1979 of the University as it was then and how, through hard work and dedication, it has grown into the establishment that it is now. Dr Ed Doolan presented prizes with the Vice-Chancellor and afterwards, staff took the opportunity to catch up with old friends.



Can you see anyone you recognise?



Topping-off Ceremony

On 6 December, Lady Susan Cadbury conducted the official Topping-off Ceremony at Aston Business School's advancing extension which celebrated the building reaching its full height and marks the beginning of a new era for the ambitious School.

A topping-off ceremony is one of the construction industry's oldest customs, and is thought to date back into the mists of Scandinavian mythology. Traditionally, a branch or a small tree is hauled to the top of the roof frame for good luck. The ancients believed our souls returned to the trees after death, thus giving each tree a spirit of its own. When a house was completed, the top-most branch of the tree was set atop the roof, thus providing the tree spirit with a home.

The ceremony took place on the rooftop of the £22m extension and was beamed down via satellite to an audience watching on a big screen in the Business School's lounge.

"This building marks the success of our strategy in recent years. We have grown 150 percent over the last six years and the new building will allow us to accelerate that pace," said Professor John Saunders, Head of Aston Business School.

Brian Cheshire, Managing Director, Laing O'Rourke Midlands added: "We are delighted to be working with Aston University again having been involved in the construction of the Lakeside student residences and are pleased to have reached this significant phase of this project. This has largely been achieved through a positive teamwork approach and we look forward to achieving completion of another successful project for the University."

From Aberdeen to Zimbabwe, Aston alumni are literally all over the world. We understand it's difficult to make the journey back to campus to attend some of the events which take place at the University so, whenever Aston staff are travelling overseas, we try to take every opportunity to meet up with as many of you as we can. Here are a few of the recent alumni dinners across the globe.

International News

New York, USA

New York hosted an MBA recruitment fair in February of this year and MBA Course Director, Gareth Griffiths, went to represent Aston. After a busy but successful fair, Sunday brunch with Aston graduates was all too appealing.



Gareth Griffiths with Elisa Harca, Simeone Daeschner and Paul Smedley who now live in New York

Chiang Mai, Thailand

Last year, Chiang Mai University celebrated its 40th Anniversary, a highlight of which was the official opening by HRH Princess Sirindhorn of the Faculty of Science's new Science Complex Building. Designed to encourage integrated research as well as provide much needed extra laboratory space, the impressive new building will support not only the Faculty's future expansion but also its growing reputation as a regional research centre. Its close links with Aston's School of Engineering & Applied Science continue, mainly in the field of biomaterials.

In October last year, Aston alumni at Chiang Mai University hosted a reunion party to celebrate the official retirement of Associate Professor Dr Prasak Thavornyutikarn after over 30 years of service to Chiang Mai's Chemistry Department. Dr Prasak obtained his PhD from Aston in 1972 in the field of Inorganic Chemistry, having worked under the supervision of the late Professor Bill McWhinnie in the former Chemistry Department (now a part of Chemical Engineering & Applied Chemistry). Despite having reached his 60th birthday, Dr Prasak still remains very active and is continuing to work part-time in Chiang Mai's Environmental Science Program.



Dr Prasak Thavornyutikarn (front, 3rd from left) at his official retirement

Paris, France

Caroline Silva Ariza, Marketing Support Co-ordinator in Aston Business School, went to Paris in March. With stunning views across the City, the Panoramic Bar of the Hotel Concorde LaFayette welcomed Aston alumni.



Colombo, Sri Lanka

Simon Hall of the International Office is a frequent visitor to Colombo on behalf of the University. When he was there in October last year he was warmly welcomed by our alumni who are currently residing in Sri Lanka. "Everyone was extremely enthusiastic about Aston and shared many fond memories," said Simon. One of the highlights of the evening must have been the Aston Quiz – alumni pitted their wits to see how much they remembered about their alma mater. Simon will be in Colombo again in June and Professor Saunders of Aston Business School will be visiting in the summer at which time we hope to arrange another meeting.



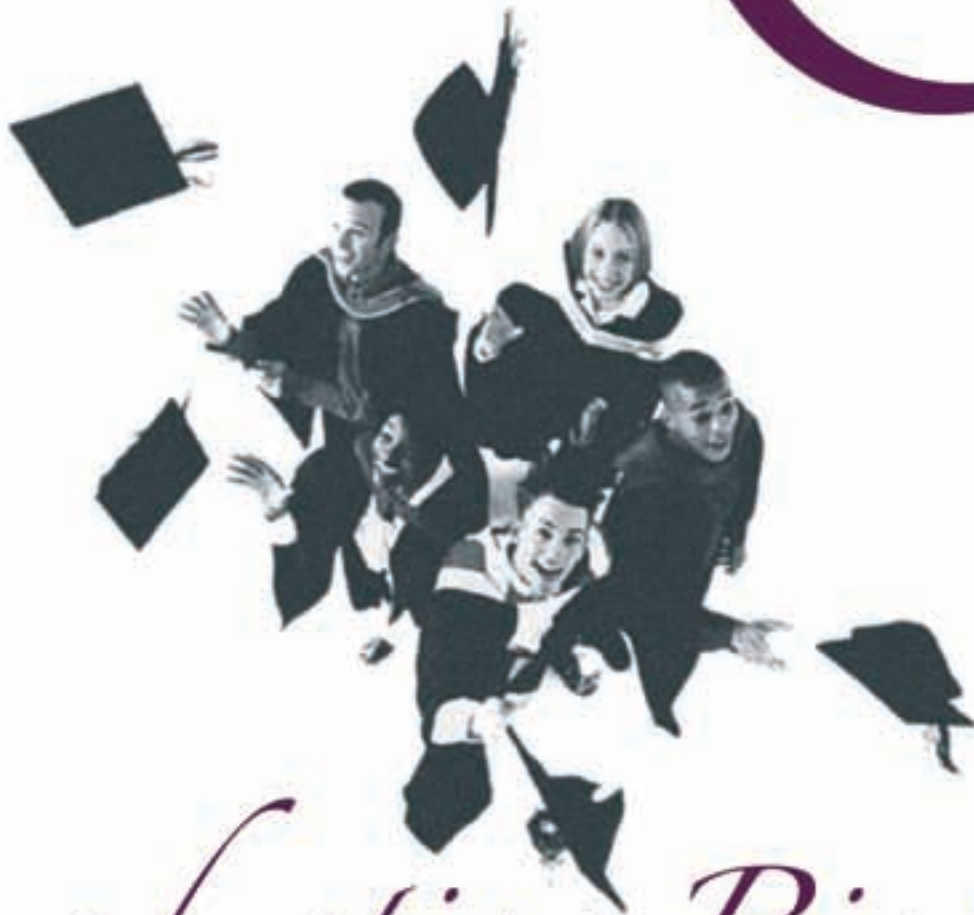
E-networks

When you can't get back to campus but would like to be in touch with other Aston graduates, why not join one of the E-networks set up through the web site at www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/emailgroups/index.jsp?

Just because you are a distance away doesn't mean that you should be feeling at a distance! Join an e-group and post a message to see who else is around. The e-networks work like a simple email message. When you post one email to a country, everyone who is a member in that country receives a copy of your email. You can arrange socials, ask your peers for their opinion on current affairs generally or related to specific issues and be the first to hear when Aston staff are travelling in your region and wanting to meet you. Just to keep you informed, we send out a regular newsletter with all the latest news from Aston. A simple way of bridging the miles between campus and where you are. Join now!

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LA story

It's not often we hear about our alumni living and working in Hollywood, so imagine our excitement when we found that Peter Byrne (1983 BSc Business and German) was over there working as Executive Vice-President, Licensing and Merchandising at 20th Century Fox – producer of *The Simpsons*, *Star Wars* and *Robots*, to name a few. We caught up with him to find out what his job involves and how he is finding life amongst the stars.

“We sold 5,000,000 Simpsons Hit and Run video games last year – you can't plan for that – and that's in a business where a million units puts you in the 'Top 20'.”

On making contact with Peter, I am informed that he will get back to me just as soon as he has returned from a trade show in Las Vegas and a toy fair in New York – a job made in heaven, some might think. It didn't take me long to inquire just how Peter had ended up working in Hollywood. “I always had a real passion for film and music, but it was really a chance phone call from a head-hunter that brought me to 20th Century Fox. At the time, I was working for Sara Lee Personal Products, running five companies in Northern Europe, working with brands such as Hanes, Champion and Polo Ralph Lauren. I wasn't looking for a new challenge. The job with Fox was basically a start up for their consumer products business in Europe as Managing Director, Licensing and Merchandising, much smaller than what I'd been used to doing. But it was the challenge of building something and the buzz of the industry that attracted me – it doesn't get faster than in entertainment. Plus, my background before that was with major corporations in the toys and apparel sectors – which are two of the biggest

revenue earners in licensing – so it was a natural fit for me.” That was eight years ago, and after two years of setting up Europe, Peter was given the international business to look after. Then, four years ago, he was relocated to Los Angeles to restructure the company and head up the business worldwide.

As Executive Vice-President, Licensing and Merchandising for 20th Century Fox, Peter oversees all the worldwide consumer products business both for film and TV properties. He works with about 800 manufacturers (licensees) worldwide, who produce anything and everything from toys and video games to household goods and soft furnishings. He has also recently set up a division to license properties for the themed entertainment business, including such things as theme park rides, location-based entertainment and museum tours. In fact, he recently opened their first venture in Germany in March this year – an *Ice Age* dark ride – which is a preamble to the *Ice Age 2* movie, due to launch worldwide in spring 2006. On top of this, he also

oversees all third party promotions such as Burger King/Pepsi tie-ins on all of their TV brands.

I ask Peter if there's such a thing as a 'typical day', to which he says: “I wouldn't know where to start,” and instead emails me a very long list of projects that he is working on. These include finalising negotiations on the next generation of *Simpsons* video games; starting the creative development/brand look of *Ice Age 2* so that licensees can start creating products; developing a merchandise strategy for the DVD launch of *Robots*; and working on James Cameron's next major movie *Battle Angel*, based on a series of Japanese manga novels set in the 26th Century. Peter certainly seems to have his hands full.



The Simpsons

The only thing typical in his day is getting up at 6.00am to take the dog out (or vice versa), and spending his evenings catching up on TV shows and watching pilots for potential future licensing opportunities.

Talking of licensing opportunities, I wondered how Peter and his team went about deciding on whom to give a licence to. He explains: "We usually select licensees based on a number of key criteria – strength of retail distribution, marketing, product quality, market position and creative vision. We've had some funny suggestions in the past, especially from people wanting to produce a *Simpsons* 'Duff' beer, but it's a no go area with the creators. Most of the talent we deal with have certain categories excluded in their studio deals and we respect that." Incidentally, *The Simpsons*, Peter informs me, is the biggest brand they manage and shows no signs of slowing down. The biggest single product sale they have had was the book *Titanic – The Movie*, and film-wise their biggest franchise is *Robots*, something they are just starting out with. Technology is also opening new avenues in terms of merchandising, mobile phones/ wireless content being a big area for Fox, though Peter explains that video games are the greatest in terms of revenue, especially with the new generation of consoles such as Playstation 3 and Xbox 2. "We sold 5,000,000 *Simpsons Hit and Run* video games last year – you can't plan for that – and that's in a business where a million units puts you in the 'Top 20'."

I ask Peter if he is a collector of his own merchandise and if so, what his



Robots

favourites are: "Yes, I do collect bits of our merchandise, but it does get rather overwhelming. I have to keep clearing out my office periodically, but fortunately I have two very grateful boys at home! My favourites are the *Alien* plush face-hugger, *Simpsons* petcare products, a Canadian ice cream brand we launched with Breyers (Unilever) called 'Cookie Doh – tastes fantastic!', and the *Robots* Playstation 2 game. We are also soon to be creating a range of Pinot Noir wines to accompany the film *Sideways*, so I am very much looking forward to sampling those!"

And finally, any plans to move back to the UK? "Nope! I've recently found a pub with draft Boddingtons – it's not a great pub but at least I'm making progress. I always knew I'd end up in the States one day. Life in LA has a lot to offer – very much an outdoor way of life, which I love. In fact, if I wasn't doing this job I would happily be spending my time skiing or snowboarding in Mammoth, California every day. The only thing I miss is a good pub and a curry, but that's not enough to attract me back just yet!"

Phillip Scott and Paul Joels, part of the Aston Formula Student Team, update readers on their success at the 8th Formula Student Competition in July of last summer.

Aston Formula Student Team



Car 46, the latest car designed and built especially for the competition, enjoyed high placing in many of the events and finished in an overall position of 35th out of 54 cars from all over the world.

The team's second car, car 246, was a development of an older car and had even more success. With an entire year of development of the Constantly Variable Transmission (CVT), chassis set-up and weight saving methods, the car was able to set the fastest acceleration time of all of the cars in its class – 0 to 60 mph in three seconds, an outstanding feat considering that it was by no means the lightest car in the field.

The CVT used on car 246 was a ground-breaking development for this competition and was the first entry to use this type of gearbox. The CVT is an automatic gearbox that works by having no 'gear change'. This means that in other automatic gearboxes there is a noticeable change of gear in the system and a drop-off in performance. By using a belt drive between two expanding cones the power is delivered at a constant engine rev speed and the gear change is a smooth progression with no loss in power or time.

For this year's competition a new car is currently being designed and manufactured using an F1-style carbon fibre monocoque

chassis to replace the steel space frame chassis design that was used in previous competitions. This will give a much lighter and stronger car, resulting in a greater all round performance. This team is being headed by a postgraduate student, Edward Goodman, who recently graduated from Mechanical Engineering at Aston University.

The Aston team was sponsored by The Royal Navy, Metabo, Red Line Synthetic Oil, Nitrotech and Ole Buhl.

More information on this project, sponsorship or CVT is available from Paul Joels on joelspde@aston.ac.uk.

Aston taps into France Telecom

Members of Aston's photonics research group (PRG) were delighted with the recent news that their collaboration with France Telecom was extended by a further two years in a deal worth £75,000.



The news consolidates Aston's PRG as one of the leaders in its field. The group has a well-established track record of important breakthroughs, having in the past achieved world distance records in optical fibre transmission experiments and carrying out many first demonstrations of novel devices and

theoretical principles for high-speed optical fibre communication. The popular telecom magazine, *Fibre Systems/Lightwave Europe*, has recently distinguished results obtained within the framework of this collaboration as an important direction of research that takes into account commercial aspects of fibre technologies.

The current state of the optical communications industry, still recovering from an economic crisis, has led operators to look for new ways of optimising their existing networks, maximising the optical signal-to-noise ratio while minimising other impairments.

Such a goal is achievable by using methods such as a proper management of fibre dispersion and non-linearity, which consists of combining optical fibres with different properties in an optimal order along the transmission link.

With this in mind the Aston PRG-France Telecom team examined theoretically and experimentally the impact of optical fibre type and non-linearity/dispersion management on the performance of high-speed (640 Gbit/s) transmission systems over a distance of 300km.

Research leader of this project, Aston's Dr Sergei Turitsyn, was keen to point out that working with such a major player brings great opportunities beyond the financial benefits: "I would like to note that in the area of optical fibre transmission we are the only UK university supported directly by the French telecom giant," he said. "I believe this is some indication of the high level of our research in the field."



Another first for Aston Business School. In February ABS was officially installed as the first UK chapter of Beta Gamma Sigma. In our regular news from the Schools section, Apex brings you up to date with the latest successes and highlights of Aston Business School.

Beta Gamma Sigma

Beta Gamma Sigma is the honour society for students of business schools accredited by The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International and is the highest recognition a business student, faculty member or professional anywhere in the world can receive.

Many people misunderstand the importance of honour societies because of their Greek names. Honour societies are not social clubs or political organisations, they are groups of people with

similar interests that have been honoured for high academic achievement.

Aston Business School gained its AACSB accreditation in 2003 and is one of only a handful of UK schools to win this international recognition. It is also the first UK institution to be allied with Beta Gamma Sigma. AACSB International assures quality and promotes excellence and continuous improvement in undergraduate and graduate education in business administration

and accounting. Beta Gamma Sigma encourages and honours academic achievement in the study of business and fosters personal and professional excellence amongst its members. Membership of Beta Gamma Sigma sets our students apart from the crowd. Corporate recruiters actively seek individuals who have accepted membership of Beta Gamma Sigma and membership itself conveys academic excellence and a commitment to high principles and superior achievement in professional life.

'Sketch and Search' a potential money saving find



"A simple sketch will make endless savings for manufacturing companies wasting time and money on redesigning new components," says its creator Dr Doug Love of Aston Business School.

He is the inventor of CADFind, a unique software package that allows engineers to sketch and search for existing parts. "There is no need for people to retrain," said Dr Love, "this package utilises their existing skill to draw the part they need. If the part is already available then CADFind will locate it."

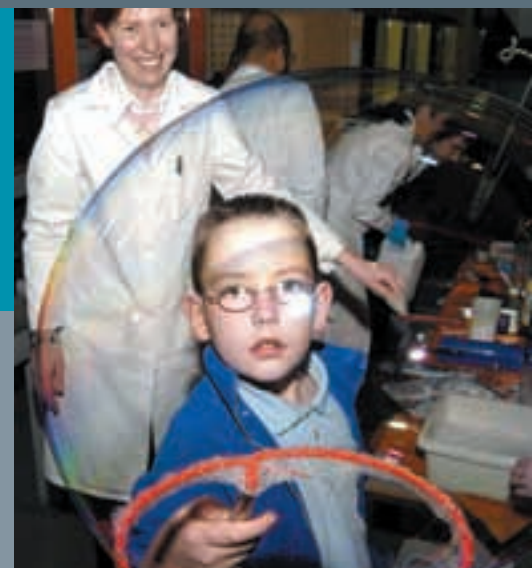
Claims for CADFind's potential are based on calculations made by the US Department of Defense's costings for redesigning new parts: \$20,000 (£11,173) for avoiding a new design and \$33,000 (£18,436) where new manufacturing tooling is needed. One academic study found that 20% of existing parts could be re-used and another 18% could be used with some modification. Using the 20% figure as an example, a company that creates 5,000 new parts a year is creating 1,000 of them

unnecessarily. Multiplying 1,000 parts by the US Defense Department's lower costing for creating them (\$20K or £11.173k) means the company can make a saving of £11.173m a year. It does not take a genius to work out that potential savings relative to the output of any company are huge.

Recycling existing designs for parts also avoids the incidental costs involved in introducing new ones, including data management, testing,

release management, production engineering, supplier selection and purchasing, tooling and planning, inventory and warehousing and after-sales support. What originally appears to be a small decision to design a new part has potentially massive cost implications for the business. More information at www.sketchandsearch.com

To show that science can be fun and accessible, Thinktank, Birmingham's science museum at Millennium Point, has invited some of the brightest young scientists from the region's universities to give demonstrations and perform experiments for visiting school parties and the general public.



Come and meet Aston's scientists!

One of the first academics to take part was Dr Yvonne Perrie from Aston's Pharmacy School, which is based within the School of Life & Health Sciences. Yvonne is one of a growing number of scientists from Aston who are recognising the importance of communicating the fun and wonder of science to the public in an exciting and accessible way.

From 13 January visitors have been able to 'Meet the Scientist' on one of the ten exhibition galleries. Activities organised by Yvonne and her team of Aston academics included blowing giant bubbles – an activity that proved particularly popular with the visiting school children!

Dr Kenny Webster, Thinktank's resident scientist explains: "Science does have an image problem and there's no doubt it is losing out to allegedly more 'sexy' subjects at school and in the media.

We're seeing fewer young people studying the traditional science disciplines and that's having a knock-on effect on further education.

"Our job at Thinktank is to show that science and technology affect all our lives – past, present and future. Being a scientist can be one of the most fulfilling careers imaginable, while what scientists do can make a huge difference to the way we live and the world at large. With more and more technologies, such as GM foods and stem cells, involving ethical issues, we as consumers and citizens need to know at least a bit about the moral, economic and environmental challenges involved."

Kenny has brought together lecturers, researchers and postgraduate students from Aston, Birmingham, UCE and Warwick universities. Over the coming weeks they will

be covering a wide range of topics including medicine, pharmacy, genetics, chemistry, computer science, space science and immunology.

For further information visit www.thinktank.ac

“Our job at Thinktank is to show that science and technology affect all our lives - past, present and future.”

Life Sciences Laser Institute

The Life Sciences Laser Institute at the Aston Academy of Life Sciences provides refractive and ophthalmic eye surgery procedures to private patients.

The Institute houses four different refractive laser operating systems each with its own Wavefront aberrometry system. This allows treatments to be carefully tailored to individual patient needs. Other state-of-the-art ophthalmic imaging devices support the comprehensive assessment of ocular health. Surgery is only carried out by consultant and specialist ophthalmologists supported by highly experienced optometrists, orthoptists and ophthalmic nurses. All procedures are undertaken in one of two large full-grade operating theatres. With this combination of

outstanding facilities and clinicians, the Institute offers a premium refractive eye surgery service.

Aston Academy of Life Sciences, a part of Aston University, is the brand new medical research facility that houses the Life Sciences Laser Institute. The centre was completed in the summer of 2004 at an overall cost exceeding £10m and offers unparalleled clinical ophthalmic research facilities. Other areas of the Academy include MRI scanning, a medical retina diagnostic and treatment facility and part of Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Trust.

These are complemented by excellence in clinical research from academic staff in the University.

If you are an optometry graduate and would like to attend one of our optometrists open evenings, please contact us for details of our next event. Similarly, if you are interested in surgery for yourself or a relative, contact us for details of our patient open evenings.



A new campaign to promote language learning in the West Midlands was launched at Aston recently. Operated by the Regional Language Network and supported by DfES, Languages Work aims to raise awareness of the true value of languages in the workplace and beyond, to encourage more students to opt for languages – whether at GCSE, A level, degree, or outside formal education.



Languages really do work

Speakers from the worlds of education, international trade and commerce and government emphasised the relevance of language learning and the need for language skills in all aspects of modern life, illustrating the three key messages of the Languages Work campaign – that English is not enough, a little language can make a lot of difference and that languages improve the quality of your life.

Alan Feely, manager of the Regional Language Network in the West Midlands, is passionate about the importance of languages in business at all levels. He said: “In today’s global economy it simply is not enough to speak only English and expect our businesses to compete effectively on a world stage. Even basic foreign language skills can mean the difference between winning and losing that new contract abroad. You don’t have to be bilingual, but the ability to converse at some level in your host’s own language speaks volumes for your commitment to the business relationship. For individuals aspiring

to a career in international business, a knowledge of French or German, for example will put them on an equal footing in the jobs market with their European contemporaries. Failure to offer language skills will often limit their options in climbing the management ladder.”

On a personal level, it seems languages are for winners in every way. Recent surveys claim that employers in all sorts of sectors value the communication and analytical skills that languages graduates display and are more willing to hire them and pay them more for their ability.

The audience at the Aston event included a wide representation of professionals actively involved in careers and language guidance in the region’s schools, colleges and universities, Education Business Partnerships, Connexions advisors and head teachers from secondary schools across the West Midlands.

Annie Bannerman, who is based in the School of Languages & Social Sciences at

Aston said: “Although languages are not currently part of the core curriculum in British schools, the government’s National Language Strategy will see children aged eight to 14 learning languages in school again from 2010. The regional launch of Languages Work provided plenty of opportunity to find out about how to encourage and inform students’ decisions to learn languages until then, with information on the extensive range of materials developed to help promote language learning among students of all ages.”

Languages Work is operated by CILT, the National Centre for Languages and supported by DfES under the National Language Strategy. CILT manages major national and regional initiatives in support of languages, including Regional Language Networks throughout the UK. For further information visit www.cilt.org.uk or www.languageswork.org.uk

Ongoing developments in Combined Honours abound with the overall aim of ensuring that we are able to respond to our students and offer the curriculum through the most appropriate medium of teaching and learning.



New horizons

The addition of further Combined Honours subjects in English Language, Spanish and International Relations from 2005 will offer new students an enriched opportunity to combine language-based studies with business, science and engineering subjects. Feedback from our recent Open Days indicates that new applicants are regarding these developments as very positive steps in broadening the Combined Honours portfolio.

The development of a Minor in Law as part of the Major/Minor Honours portfolio was a major success in the 2004 recruitment operation. Although students are not able to claim any exemptions having studied the course, this has not been a deterrent and recruitment has been very buoyant with some excellent students studying the course. A new Minor in Economics will be added to the portfolio for recruitment in 2005 and recruitment interest in that too has been active.

Another course hot off the press for 2005 will be the new integrated degree course in Society and Government. Linking the popular areas of Public Policy, Sociology and Politics, this course aims to provide Combined Honours students with the opportunity to study three subjects at each of the three levels of study. In returning the Combined Honours curriculum to this broader form of offering, Dr Roy Smith, Director of Combined Honours said: "This is a really exciting development for us. Research has demonstrated that students often wish to keep their studies as broad as possible and delay making any significant choices as late as possible. This course provides an excellent opportunity for us to offer students a wide ranging course covering three areas of the curriculum."

The development of a part-time provision in Combined Honours is an area that Dr Smith and the Assistant Director, Dr Jo Smedley,

are both keen to establish. In today's working environment, it is important that educational institutions can be responsive to customers, whether old or new. Part-time study is a first attempt to respond to this. To date, a small number of Combined Honours students have taken up the opportunity to study on a part-time basis, often combining their studies with employment or other responsibilities. Along with this, the Foundation Degree in Combined Business Applications continues in its development, providing an academic link for Combined Honours with local employers. The development of a more flexible curriculum and improved accessibility through innovative styles of teaching and learning, promises much for Combined Honours.



Placements are now becoming more important than ever in a world which demands application and experience as well as simply a degree. These attributes are becoming integral to our students gaining a well paid job after they graduate.

In Combined Honours, students face two decisions: whether to take the optional placement and in which of their subjects. The placement is then arranged through the School delivering that curriculum subject. To encourage students to take up this opportunity, we are using creative and innovative ways to promote

A place for earning and learning

placements through lunchtime briefing sessions, a placement website and more sources of information to raise awareness of its value.

During 2004/5, Combined Honours has practised what it preaches, employing three placement students from other areas of Aston, adding to their overall learning experience and employability for the future.

Shakil Imam, a Marketing student from Aston Business School, is the Marketing Assistant in Combined Honours, actively promoting placements to Combined Honours students as well as a multitude of other marketing related tasks to continue to raise the internal and external profile of Combined Honours. Zaid Hameed, a Computer Science student, is the Computer Systems Developer teaming up with Bruno Rebelo from Aston Business School's Business Computing and IT degree who is the

e-Marketing Assistant. Together they have been working on two funded WP and TQEF projects "e-ntering Combined Honours" and "e-xperiencing Combined Honours". "e-ntering Combined Honours" is a new online learning development focussing on study skills for students' post-acceptance but pre-entry to prepare them for their first year at University. "e-xperiencing Combined Honours" is a blended learning course which continues this study skills approach for on-course students. As part of their placements, all three will have the opportunity to attend conferences in the UK to report on their work, giving them invaluable experience of networking in a national environment and developing their public presentation skills. Together, they have formed a successful team in assisting the staff of Combined Honours to promote and develop the interdisciplinary operation at Aston.

Aston University has set up an Office of Advancement with the aim of helping the University diversify its income sources. Brian Porter, Aston's first Director of Advancement, introduces Apex readers to two new initiatives – a tele-fundraising campaign in conjunction with the Students' Guild and a planned legacy gift programme, both of which will make it possible for alumni to support the work of Aston University far into the future.

Guild helps students in new ways

Aston Students' Guild exists to enhance the student experience at Aston University by identifying, anticipating and satisfying the needs of its membership through student democracy, representation and involvement. The student support services are in part financed by a generous University grant and also by a range of commercial activities. However, changes in student demographics have forced the Guild to redefine its target markets. Today's student requires new products and new services. If these are not made available at the University, with the amount of aggressive competition on our doorstep, students may go elsewhere.

With this in mind, Vice-President Nick Barnes explains: "The Guild has been working on a number of initiatives, but one of the most exciting is that of Annual Giving through a telephone fundraising campaign which asks our alumni to support an important need of the Guild. When you think

back to your time at University, the Guild played a vital role in helping you meet new people, offering confidential advice, providing sports facilities and ways for you to learn skills to improve your CV; the Guild involves students and helps integrate them into University life. Annual Giving will offer alumni, parents and staff the opportunity to



help future students by giving back something from which they themselves benefited."

A key area of need for students is transportation. The Guild currently owns three 17-seater minibuses which were bought second-hand after reaching around 150,000 miles. These ageing buses cannot cope with the high usage from sports clubs and societies so students have to take taxis, hire buses or use private transport to get around. Annual giving of a small donation will help finance a newer minibus – one that has disabled access – and it will free up money currently spent on transportation for use in other important areas. As a loyal supporter of this initiative, Nick leaves this request with all alumni who value the work of the Guild: "Please help this urgent need of the Guild!"

Planned legacy giving programme

Each of us is presented with many opportunities in life. The choices you make have a profound impact for yourself and for those around you. The work you do, the friendships you form, the causes and institutions to which you are committed. All of these are part of your identity and your legacy for the future. Many people have found that the achievements of a lifetime can gain added purpose and recognition through a contribution towards the future of other human beings, especially to those younger than you and in higher education. This is the way you can give back – one way of recognizing how others helped you along the pathway of life. It's also a way you can ensure a better future for all of us by investing in our young people and in excellence at Aston University.

The additional financial benefits associated with many types of planned 'legacy gifts', as encouraged by the UK Government, make it possible for you to support the work of Aston University and its students and staff to a greater extent than you thought possible. A planned legacy gift is one which helps you to:

- ensure that your personal and financial objectives are met;
- realise tax benefits in your current financial planning and/or lower taxes for your estate;
- achieve your philanthropic goal of ensuring excellence at Aston University and for its students and staff.

Your commitment to the future of Aston University, its students and staff may come in

different forms of planned legacy gifts, all of which may have significant financial benefits to you. For example, a charitable donation left to Aston University in your will is completely free of inheritance tax and may well save you significant future inheritance taxes. You may want to consider other types of legacy gifts such as land, valued possessions or life insurance. We welcome the opportunity to work with you, and your financial advisors to determine which planned legacy option would be most appropriate for you.

If you are interested in discussing this further, please contact Brian Porter 0121 204 3026 or e-mail: b.w.porter@aston.ac.uk



The RAG committee and Professor John Saunders surround the car, which forms the top prize of the Birmingham Children's Hospital raffle.

Aston RAG is an organisation of students who give up their spare time to put on a series of events throughout the academic year, all to raise money for charity.

Give and let give

Last year the Aston RAG committee raised an impressive £30,000 for their designated causes, but this year's team has already surpassed this amount and look well on their way to exceeding their target for the year of £50,000.

“If we are recognised as being a society that has fun, people will be keener to get involved and the money will soon roll in, as we have shown this year.”

“We’ve had some really successful events so far this year,” commented RAG Officer Ed Barrow. “Among other things, we have fasted, done a fire-walk and organised two 1000-people pub crawls down Broad Street and around the Arcadian. We’ve also been collecting in many UK cities including Bristol, Manchester and Edinburgh. I think one of the reasons that Aston RAG does so well is that it has a reputation across the country as being the RAG Society that has the most fun – we are not obsessed simply with the amount of money we raise for charity. If we are recognised as being a society that has fun, people will be keener to get involved and the money will soon roll in, as we have shown this year.”

Currently, RAG is arranging its annual charity hitchhike to Dublin and is selling raffle tickets in conjunction with the Birmingham Children's Hospital in which the top prize is a car. They have also

managed to enlist the support of two of the University's most recognised figures – Head of Aston Business School, Professor John Saunders, and Sir Adrian Cadbury, who recently retired as Chancellor.

“This year has been fantastic in terms of the links we have formed and maintained, both here at Aston and outside the University Community”, explains Ed. “Our committee shirts are now proudly co-sponsored by Aston Business School and Cadbury's. We have also had considerable success in terms of our business partners including *Nuts* magazine and DCN promotions. Part of the success of this year's committee is down to the hard work of our kind benefactors. Cadbury's have even donated 7kg of Dairy Milk for one of our upcoming collections!”

Among the charities that this year's RAG committee is donating to are Barnardos, Meningitis Research Foundation,

Birmingham Children's Hospital, Cancer Research, Christies Cancer Care and the Anthony Nolan Leukaemia Trust.

Current trends show that the amount of money that Aston RAG is raising is on the increase. In fact if RAG reaches its £50,000 total it will be approximately 35% up from the amount raised last year. The committee hopes to see this increase replicated in future years so that, hopefully, they can be one of the highest raising university RAG societies in the UK, despite Aston's comparatively small size.

The University saw in The Chinese Year of the Rooster in style with a series of special events on Wednesday 16 February, kicking off with a traditional lion dance across campus.

Aston sees in the Chinese New Year



The event was conjointly organised by the Aston Chinese Student Society, the Aston Singaporean Society and Aston Students' Guild to give the opportunity to all Aston students and staff, regardless of their cultural heritage, to celebrate and experience the profoundness of Chinese culture during this symbolic occasion. Chinese and Singaporean students from Birmingham and Warwick universities had also been invited.

The celebrations began with firecrackers and the decorative lion dance outside the Aston Students' Guild. The lion, with its painted tail and dotted eyes, is used as a sign of good luck for the following year, while drums and firecrackers are used to drive away bad luck. Special guest, Aston University Pro-Vice Chancellor and International Consultant to the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Examination Board, Professor Nigel Reeves, accompanied the dance and then gave a short speech to open the event.

Other activities that took place throughout the afternoon included Kung Fu demonstrations, bamboo dancing, Chinese horoscope reading, translation of English names and Chinese calligraphy. Stalls were set up by locally invited companies providing samples of freshly prepared Chinese food, traditional games and decorations and an information desk to answer any questions on Chinese New Year traditions.

Wendy Yip, Head of the International Office at the University, said: "We are pleased that the Students' Guild, along with the Chinese Society and the Singaporean Society, has chosen to celebrate the Year of the Rooster with such a diverse range of events. Aston University is a truly international institution with students from over 70 countries and these events both highlight and celebrate the diversity of our campus culture."



Over the years, Aston has seen many societies come and go. Whilst it would take too much time to list all of them, here are some of the more recent departures...

Lost Socs

Extreme Ironing

Last year there was quite a buzz surrounding the Extreme Ironing Society, described by those involved as 'an outdoor activity that combines the danger and excitement of an 'extreme sport' with the satisfaction of a well-pressed shirt.' In its first year, it got over 100 people to sign up, with promises of excitement and adventure from the use of household appliances. Sadly, the momentum was not to last and though the first term went well, by the start of the second term things had started to drop off as the Society's popularity began to wane. When asked about the demise of the Extreme Ironing Society, its President, Nick Barnes said: "We just ran out of steam."

Irish Society

The 1998 guide to Aston referred to the Irish Society as 'Leprechauns, Shamrocks and Guinness – whether you are Irish or not, the Irish Society enables you to appreciate all that is good about the Emerald Isle.' Whilst not a typical cultural society in the same way as the Chinese Society, it still managed to enjoy some success in attracting members based on its more 'social' roles. Sadly, as past members began to leave, no-one took up the reins, leading to a case of 'Eire' today, gone tomorrow!

Football Supporters' Association

If you couldn't be bothered to join the Stags or Sharks, then this was the society for you – enjoying all the excitement of football without burning any calories. The Society seems to be making a bit of a comeback in the guise of the Villa Supporters' Society, which is rumoured to be on the verge of being formed.

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

Jim Perkins

(1962 BSc Physics)

"A holiday job in 1961 led to my joining the Rover Company, Solihull, in 1965 as a Noise and Vibration Research Engineer. In 1961 I had worked on prototype number 9 of what became the Rover 2000. By the time I returned in 1965 the Rover 2000 was a huge success. After 12 months as an Industrial Researcher I became the Electronics Research Group Leader – a job I held until 1967 when I left the company. The next stage of my career took me briefly into teaching and Coventry Technical College was looking for someone to teach instrumentation. After two terms and a long holiday though I realised it wasn't for me and I moved into the training profession. My first job in the training profession was as an Operator Training Officer back at Rover, Solihull, where I worked for ten years.

Further positions were held with an American multinational computer manufacturer as well as with the Engineering Industry Training Board where I was to secure the necessary numbers and standards of skilled manpower for the future needs of the industry. I was made redundant from there in 1990. Having spent eight years tracing my own ancestry, I ended up teaching the subject for a while at various centres across Birmingham and Solihull. I also spent some time teaching basic electronics to unemployed men at Solihull College, before setting up in business on my own prior to retiring. I have a keen interest in travelling and because of my interest in photography I only like to visit places that are photogenic! So far my travels have taken me to Amsterdam, Finland, Norway, Portugal, Canada and Uganda, to name a few. I am also keen on music, my favourites being Mozart, country music and the works of Gilbert and Sullivan.

To find out more about me, visit <http://www.btinternet.com/~jimperkins>."



Jim Perkins

SPOTLIGHT ON...

James Keith Robson

(1966 BSc Biological Sciences)



"When I started at Aston in 1963 it was the College of Advanced Technology, but by the time I graduated it had become a University. During 1965 to 1966 I was President of the Students' Guild, a role which left me with an ambition other than going back into Agricultural Research, which is what I had been doing for two years before joining the College. I found a position as a Marketing Analyst with the Export Sales Department at British Motor Holdings, Longbridge. I stayed there a year before joining Rootes/Chrysler in Dunstable as a Product Planner in the Commercial Vehicle Division. In 1972 I joined Perkins Engines in Peterborough in a more senior position and after six years and promotion to Director of Marketing Planning I was given the opportunity to move to the Massey Ferguson Head Office in Toronto, Canada. During this time I had increasing responsibilities as the company went through a major restructuring and

in 1990 I started my own business as a turnaround consultant. One of my projects was to help revive a failing Institute of Corporate Directors, which I did, and in 2003 the Institute completed the introduction of a Directors' Education Programme, which has been highly successful. By this time I had moved on and am now President and CEO of the Hamilton Port Authority, at the west end of Lake Ontario, the largest Canadian port in the Great Lakes. This is an exciting time to be in the marine industry, as global trade has expanded so fast and roads and rail have become so congested."



Christine Allsopp

Christine Allsopp

(née Goddard, 1968 BSc Chemistry)

replaced the Venerable Michael Chapman in January 2005 as the new Archdeacon of Northampton. An Archdeacon is one of the senior clergy in a Church of England Diocese, assisting the Bishop in the pastoral care of clergy and assisting parishes with the legal and practical matters they face. Archdeacon Allsopp is a former research chemist and a technical editor who was ordained deacon in the Church of England in 1989. One of the first women in the country to be ordained priest in 1994, she was Team Vicar in Bracknell, Berkshire, before moving in 1998 to be Team Rector of the Bourne Valley and Rural Dean of Alderbury, near Salisbury, Wiltshire. She was made a Canon and Prebendary of Salisbury Cathedral in 2002. Christine is married to fellow Aston graduate, **Dennis Allsopp** (1968 BSc Biological Sciences and 1973 PhD Biology) who works as a Consultant Chartered Biologist. They have three grown-up children.

Brian Malcom Ross

(1968 BSc Electrical Engineering)

has now retired from the European Commission where most recently he worked on two European Directives (European Legislation) for noise reduction. Previously he had worked on IT within NATO in Holland and with Marconi on defence systems in Surrey, Munich and Kent. He is still at home on the continent with the bits of language he has acquired in more than 25 years abroad.

1970s

Simon Clarke

(1979 BSc Metals and Materials Technology)

"After leaving Aston I continued working for Wellworthy in their Metallurgical Research and Development Laboratory at Lymington, Hampshire. In 1986 I gave up working to travel for two years by push-bike. This journey took me across Europe, Asia, Australia, New Zealand and South America, where I was bitten by a dog and had to come back to the UK for rabies treatment (just in case!). Once back in the UK I joined Sandberg where I took over the running of the Metallurgy Department. Here I got involved in a number of very varied materials investigations, including some notable historic structures such as Eros and the Forth Rail Bridge, as well as some more modern structures such as Sizewell Nuclear Power Station. As a result of these detailed investigations I have since developed my skills as an Expert Witness and get involved in both civil and criminal litigations. These range from failures of major structures, such as cranes or bridges, through to fatal accidents involving high tech equipment such as racing cars and aeroplanes, as well as criminal investigations involving counterfeit coins and knives from murder investigations. In my spare time I enjoy travelling and catching up on visiting the places I missed due to the dog bite!"

Tony Goodhead

(1979 BSc Civil Engineering)

"After graduating I joined Sir Robert McAlpine & Sons to work in their design department leading multidisciplinary teams on major industrial projects, culminating with the Nissan Car Plant in Sunderland. In 1988 I joined a Japanese contractor in London where I worked until April 2004 when they withdrew to



Simon Clarke

the Far East and China markets. Having very sadly lost my wife to cancer in 2001, I decided to make a lifestyle change. I am now the owner of Heritage Boat Charters Ltd. which has an immaculately restored 1929 classic wooden motor cruiser that operates on the River Thames between central London and Oxford. She can comfortably accommodate 12 guests for buffet style breakfast, lunch or supper or luxuriously seat eight guests for fine dining in the spacious saloon. Wired for IT presentations via a 19" TV/monitor, she is also ideal for board meetings or brain-storming away from the office without interruptions. During the winter months and part-time during the summer, I also carry out Quality Assurance Auditing work. Please visit www.heritageboatcharters.com for more information, or contact the Alumni Relations Office for my details."



Tony (looking out of the wheelhouse) on his cruiser, St Joan.

1980s



Robert Goode

Robert Goode

(1980 BSc Physics)

"I had a fantastic time in the late 1970s reading Physics. After graduation the lure of teaching proved irresistible and I spent the next 24 years in a variety of schools in the West Midlands passing on my passion for the

subject. I still teach but I have the added bonus of teaching would be teachers the craft of the classroom. I married Anne in 1981 having shared our undergraduate years together. We have two children, David (18) and Miriam (12). I enjoy photography but my great passion has always been sailing and I spend far too much time around boats or on the water."

Michael Ferguson

(1982 Electrical and Electronic Engineering)

continued working for Philips in Cambridge until 1987, initially as a Test Equipment Designer and subsequently as their Production Manager. Finding the management of people increasingly rewarding, Mike left Philips to take a Masters in Management Psychology, thereafter setting up his own consultancy whilst also maintaining a senior academic post at Ashcroft International Business School. He currently leads a busy training and development partnership, specialising in corporate client-based projects to deliver heightened leadership and management performance around the world. "I guess I am best described as 'an engineer-turned-psychologist' – and there aren't many of us about!" He is married with two children and currently self-building a large house near his office base in Essex.



Michael Ferguson

Richard Wood

(1987 BSc Applied and Human Biology)

"My first job was at North Manchester General Hospital as a Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer. In what has turned out to be a varied career, I then trained at Keele University to teach science at secondary school level, before teaching for a short period in a secondary school in Huddersfield. I also tried my hand as an Assistant Marketing Manager for a company that services petrol stations. I eventually found my niche in the academic world of English Literature, gaining a first class degree in English Studies at Sheffield Hallam University and embarking on a postgraduate career in Renaissance Literature. My most recent project is an edited edition of a little known Caroline play: <http://www.shu.ac.uk/schools/cs/teaching/lh/renplays.htm> I live in my home town of Barnsley where I enjoy playing cricket, watching football, cycling, walking and enjoying the vibrant art, theatre and music scenes of South Yorkshire."

1990s



Baby Kai with Vanessa and James

James Robertson

(1991 BSc Transport Management)

became a proud father on 8 September last year when his wife, Vanessa, gave birth to their first baby boy called Kai. On top of all of the excitement surrounding Kai's arrival, their marketing consultancy, Arkwright Consulting, continues to go from strength to strength and James recently made it through to the finals of the Annual Business Link Awards in the category of Outstanding Marketer of the Year.



Vassoulla Vassou (right) with Caroline Cleland, ICEfloe Chairperson, and Colin Clinton (1980 BSc Civil Engineering) ICE President.

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Vassoulla Vassou

(2003 PhD Civil Engineering)

"I am currently working as a Senior Engineer within the Highways Asset Management Group of the Transport Solutions Division of Atkins Consultants Ltd., Birmingham. Responsibilities include the development of asset management technology for highway structures and identification of rehabilitation options and maintenance strategies for deteriorating concrete structures. Other duties include preparing decision-making models for junction improvement schemes; designing web-based engineering tools and providing technical input on the whole-life costing for highway structures. In 2000, the Institute of Civil Engineers (ICE) established the ICEfloe Committee ('floe' standing for fair, level, open, equal). In January 2004 I became an active member of the Committee and my special areas of interest are female engineers' issues and how engineering is perceived in schools. I contribute to the Atkins Schools Liaison Initiative which entails the initiation and development of links with secondary schools aiming to raise the profile of civil engineering to younger generations through a variety of events. During the free time that I do get I enjoy sports – especially swimming and football – and I like spending time with my extended family who visit me from Cyprus twice a year."



Peter Richardson

Peter Richardson

(1994 MBA)

"Since completing my MBA at Aston, which I finished whilst working for Colgate-Palmolive, I have spent the last eight years working for Dyson Ltd, famous for their vacuum cleaners 'that don't lose suction'. The MBA helped me to better understand and participate in general management issues whether they be commercially biased, or more operational in nature. This has helped me progress through my business career to my current role of Chief Operating Officer. Although completing the MBA programme was hard work (I will always remember the six days a week, 6.00am start study discipline I had to get used to, as I was a distant learning student). It's an experience that helps you to understand what makes business work. As in most things though, common sense and a sense of perspective is the best qualification you can use."

Colin Barker

(1992 BSc Transport Management)

moved to Auckland, New Zealand in 1994, after taking a year out to travel. Five years ago Colin relocated across the Tasman with his current employer, CSR (a building materials manufacturer and sugar company) and is based in Sydney, Australia where he works as Systems Analyst.

Kerrie Gutteridge

(née Bassil, 1999 BSc Psychology and Management)

"I married **Andrew Gutteridge** on 5 June 2004 in Studham. We met back in 1996 when we were both Aston Aunties. Andrew was studying Chemical Engineering but he left in the second year having decided Chemical Engineering wasn't for him. Our ushers were **Paul Bradshaw** (1999 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies) **Justin Mayhew** (1999 BEng Civil Engineering) and **Nick Drew** (1999 BEng Mechanical Engineering). Other Aston friends who attended were **Siobhan Wylie** (1999 BSc European Studies and French) and **Anna Burder** (1999 International Business and French). The day was wonderful and Nick, who used to play in the Max Rebo band at Aston, ensured the partying carried on late into the night by providing the evening entertainment with his band, The Collective. We now live in Walton-on-Thames and I work as a UK Marketing Officer for Kingston University and Andy is Senior Broadcast Engineer at the Express Shopping Channel."

**SPOTLIGHT ON...****Gary Wood**

(2000 PhD Psychology)

"Amongst my news I am currently appearing as a Psychologist/Life Coach on the new series of *Trisha* on Channel 5 as part of her 'Campaign for Change' team. I was in the very first episode which aired on the 24 January 2005, and two more since. I've been booked for future episodes as a regular contributor. I'm also a regular on Richard Bacon's *Late Show* on Radio Five Live and on BBC Radio WM's *The Late Show* with Tony Wadsworth and Julie Mayer – they have dubbed me their 'tamed psychologist' apparently due to my down-to-earth, no-nonsense approach. I've also appeared on *Big Brother's Little Brother* and *Money Spinners*, and *Woman's Hour* on Radio Four. I'm a regular on an advice panel feature for *Eve* magazine and am also on the advisory panel for Anne Diamond's advice column in the *Daily Mail*. I routinely offer psychological insight and expert analysis for television, radio and press news stories and features. My book, *Sex, Lies and Stereotypes: Challenging Views of Women, Men and Relationships* was published on 1 March. The book has been featured on the Trisha Goddard's Show website as a competition. The significance of *Sex, Lies & Stereotypes* as far as Aston is concerned is that a large portion of the material is from my PhD. I am currently Programme Co-ordinator for Psychological Studies at The Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University of Birmingham. I've been in demand recently both publicising my book and talking about the film, *Kinsey*, which is about the life and work of sex researcher, Alfred Kinsey."



From left to right: Justin, Nick, Anna, Andrew, Kerrie, Siobhan, Hermione (Nick's girlfriend) and Paul Bradshaw



Stella and Albert on their wedding day

2000s

Stella Mui

(2000 BSc Applied Chemistry)

"I met **Albert Tsang** (2000 BEng Chemical Engineering) during my time at Aston and on 28 February we were married in Birmingham. The wedding was a lovely day and we only invited close family and friends so that everyone felt welcome and had a superb time. We are still living and working in Birmingham. Albert is working as a Process Engineer for Precision Micro and I am now working for HSBC Bank PLC. We are looking forward to starting a family soon."

Amy Clubbe

(2000 BSc International Business and French)

"I've recently returned to the UK after 2 years working as an English instructor out in Japan. I'm still really close to my Aston friends and a few even came out to Tokyo where I introduced them to karaoke Japanese style! The whole experience was amazing and to top it off, I travelled home by Trans Siberian Express across China, Siberia, Russia and Scandinavia. I am now living with my boyfriend of five years who I met at Aston!"

Maxine Davies

(2001 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)

"After graduating I spent seven months in Australia. On returning to the UK I decided to study law, passing my Graduate Diploma in Law and the LPC. I am now working as a Paralegal for fbc Solicitors in Wolverhampton and will be starting my Training Contract in September 2005 to qualify as a solicitor in two years time."



SPOTLIGHT ON...

Thomas Robert Hasson

(2004 BSc Accounting for Management)

"I now work at Wesleyan Assurance, Birmingham, as a Trainee Management Accountant. I did my placement year here in 2003 and am currently taking further professional accountancy qualifications. I'm a season ticket holder at Aston Villa for my sins and my main ambition this year is to have more time to play golf."

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 (250-300 dpi). We are waiting to hear from you – don't be afraid! (Deadline for receipt of information August 2005.)



Forthcoming Reunions

2 July 2005: Class of 1995 and 2000 reunion

If you graduated in 1995 or 2000 then return to Aston to celebrate your 10 and 5 year anniversaries! Enjoy a delicious three-course meal in the Lakeside Conference Centre before moving on to the Students' Guild where you can dance the night away or chat to old friends. Tickets are priced at £30 per person for the dinner; £34 per person for the dinner and entrance to the Guild; and £7 per person for entry only to the Guild. Limited accommodation is also available on campus priced at £30 per person. Visit www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/reunions/index.jsp for more information or call Caroline on 0121 204 4543.

9 July 2005: Fondue Memories Reunion

Calling all 2001-2004 graduates! Return to Aston for the Fondue Memories Reunion at the Guild. Tickets are priced at £5.00 per person. Limited accommodation is available on campus priced at £30.00 per person. Visit www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/reunions/index.jsp for more information or call Caroline on 0121 204 4543.

15/16 July 2005: Energy Technology Reunion

1980 Energy Technology graduates are organising a 25th anniversary reunion in Birmingham on the 15/16 July. The event will consist of a tour around the campus on the Friday; an opportunity to visit old haunts around the city and Handsworth Wood; a chance for a bit of sightseeing and shopping; and a celebratory meal at the Copthorne Hotel on Saturday evening. If you are interested in attending this event or would like more information, please contact Ben Ford at ben@ford76.freereserve.co.uk

28 August 2005: Biological Sciences Reunion

Jayne McBride (née Clissold, 1978 BSc Biological Sciences) is organising a reunion on 28 August this year for all 1978 Biological Sciences graduates. Jayne has made contact with most of the people from her course, but do you know the whereabouts of Lynn Smith or Stephen James? If you do, please email Jayne at jayne.mcbride@btinternet.com. Jayne is also happy to be contacted at this email address if you would like further information about the event.

Neville Leath

(1980 BSc Building Economics and Measurement) is looking to arrange a 25 year anniversary reunion for all 1980s Building and Building Economics and Measurement graduates. He has already heard from a number of people, but if you are interested in the reunion please contact Neville at nev@dwrcconstruction.co.uk

Reunion Research

In October last year, the Alumni Relations Office undertook some market research into reunions to find out a little bit more about what you might (and might not) like from your reunion programme. Over 6,000 of you were emailed a link to an online questionnaire, to which we had 687 responses – thank you to all those who took part. Questions ranged from simply asking if alumni would be interested in returning to Aston for a reunion, to more complex multiple choice questions where alumni were asked to rate a variety of events in terms of how appealing they were.

The results have since been analysed and are far too numerous to list here, but here are just a few of them to look at:

- 67% of you are keen to return to Aston for a reunion.
- The most popular 'type' of event was an informal gathering, taking 30% of the vote. Only 7% of you would like to return to a themed dinner and dance
- 53% of you want to return for a reunion with your School/Department, with only 14% of you wanting to return to a reunion with friends from sports clubs or societies.
- 67% of you want your reunion to be back on campus.
- 69% of you want a reunion to be held on a Saturday.
- 70% of you would like to leave it between 1-10 years before returning for a reunion, as opposed to 5% of you wanting to return 15-20 years after graduation.
- The most likely thing to put you off attending a reunion is because 'you don't have a strong connection to your classmates' – 40% of people chose this as the reason they wouldn't want to attend a reunion.

The results from the research will prove invaluable in helping us to plan future

events. Please don't forget that we are also here to help if you are interested in organising an event outside of our publicised programme. Please contact Caroline at c.l.hidson@aston.ac.uk for further information or help.

Call for email addresses!

One of the most interesting responses to come back from the reunion research was that 84% of you would prefer to be contacted by email with details of a reunion. If you want to make sure that you are notified by email about events in the future, please send us your email address to: alumniinfo@aston.ac.uk

News from AGA

From Jenny Martin

Fencing

AGA members have enjoyed another full and varied programme of social events during the last six months. However, I have to admit, not all AGA meetings go as planned. When AGA member John Hutton agreed to give a talk about the history and development of fencing from an ancient art to a modern sport I doubt he realised that the gremlins were preparing to strike.

Innocently, the talk was scheduled to be given in the Woodcock Street Sports Centre to enable members to revisit this listed building. On the Friday evening in October, having overcome gridlock on the local roads and motorway closures, John arrived to give his presentation. The Aston students, in the adjacent room exercised enthusiastically to music, but John persevered and gave a most interesting talk. We were shown a wide range of fencing equipment to illustrate changes in the sport over time and young fencers were on hand to demonstrate its use. Unfortunately, as we were to be shown modern developments in electronic scoring, the power supply to the Sports Hall failed. Not one to give in easily, John and the demonstrators continued with the fencers shouting when they were struck, in order to record their score. Coffee and biscuits also had to be abandoned due to the loss of the electrics.

It was at this meeting that we made a donation to Brian Porter towards the student hardship fund. Nothing ever seems to go right when you have visitors does it? Our heartfelt thanks go to John Hutton and his team for their valiant efforts to overcome the gremlins and make our evening such an enjoyable one.

Gourmet dinner

AGA members and friends returned to the College of Food in February for a gourmet dinner, served by the students. This is always a popular event and provided a pleasant evening to dispel the winter blues.



Festive visit

Aston Hall proved to be a magical venue when members visited in December. The Hall was lit for Christmas by hundreds of candles giving visitors a feel for how life must have been in about 1630 when the Hall was built.

While waiting for the tour of the Hall to begin we were entertained by music of the period, jugglers, sword fighting displays and enactments from the English Civil War Society. Much restoration work has been carried out at the Hall recently. Displays relating to James Watt Junior, the damage done during the civil war and the first glimpse of the Long Gallery lit by candles provided highlights. After the tour we enjoyed a pig roast, doughnuts and a visit to the craft fair. A most enjoyable festive visit.

Down memory lane

The publicity department at Aston have made strenuous efforts to collect a wide range of archival material over the last few years to help preserve and record the changes and developments on site. Much of this is in the form of unidentified photographs, many showing celebrations, building projects and visits by important personages from the Suffolk Street Technical College days to the present time. In November, AGA members and friends were invited to put names to faces and places at our Nostalgia Evening and where possible to record their thoughts associated with the photos. The University kindly provided a buffet supper to encourage us to reminisce. It was a most enjoyable evening and hopefully a profitable one.

Dates for your diary

May: Visit to a sheep farm at Burcot run by Mrs Emberton, a member of AGA, to see her flock of Jacobs Sheep and hear about the Jacobs Sheep Society.

June 17: Joint meeting with Birmingham Guild of Graduates in the Warwick Room, 6th floor Main Building. Sally Hoban from the Public Relations Department at Aston will talk about Antiques at Aston. Buffet Supper will follow.

October: Visit to the Pen Museum in the Jewellery Quarter.

See www.astongraduates.com for forthcoming events as they are confirmed.

If you have suggestions for talks or visits that you think AGA members would enjoy please contact Jenny Martin, 40 St Annes Grove, Knowle, B93 9JB. Membership of AGA costs £5 per year and many events are free or subsidised.

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...

Temilade Abimbola
(2003 PhD Management)

Elizabeth Allen
(1981 BSc Environmental Health)

Mark Ashley
(1994 Teaching English for a Specific Purpose)

Janet Atkinson
(1989 BSc Ophthalmic Optics)

Kate Beddard
(2004 BSc Psychology and Business Administration)

Robin Bevan
(1979 BSc Building)

Jonathan Biggs
(2003 PhD Pharmacy)

Andrew Birks
(1989 BEng Electrical and Electronic Engineering)

Subhadra Bose
(1984 MBA)

Ben Bowley
(2001 BSc Computer Science)

Michael Braniff
(1973 BSc Chemical Engineering)

Andrew Burke
(2001 BSc Marketing)

Andrew Charwood
(2001 BSc Public Policy and Business Administration)

Brian Coates
(1979 BSc Business and Computer Science)

Janet Cooper
(1980 BSc Business Administration and German)

Mark Darton
(2000 MBA)

Sanjay Devjani
(2003 BSc Optometry)

Michael Diss
(1981 BSc Mathematics)

Clive Dyche
(1974 BSc Mechanical Engineering)

Peter Elliston
(2001 BSc Marketing)

Scott Fitzgibbon
(2003 BSc Marketing)

Sarah Fletcher
(née Hall, 1974 BSc Physics and Chemistry)

Alistair Gardiner
(1976 BSc Ophthalmic Optics)

Alison Gillatt
(1985 BSc Mathematics)

David Harrison
(1994 BSc Business and Ergonomics)

Paul Haslewood
(1995 BEng Electromechanical Engineering)

Deborah Hawkes
(1994 BSc Human Psychology)

Elizabeth Holloman
(1994 BSc Applied and Human Biology)

Rosemary Hotten
(née Harper, 1979 BSc Biology of Man and His Environment)

Peter Hussey
(1982 BSc Production Technology and Management)

Fatima Jamal
(1982 BSc Pharmacy)

Sarah Johnson
(1999 BSc Social Studies and Business)

Beryl Jones
(1982 MSc Public Sector Management)

Mark Jones
(2001 BSc Human Psychology)

Lesley Kelly
(1980 BSc Chemistry and Physics)

Philippa Knight
(1982 BSc Business and German)

Robert Knox
(1992 MSc Teaching English for Specific Purposes)

Jernail Singh Lakha
(1981 BSc Metallurgy)

Martin Lawrence
(1995 BEng Chemical Engineering)

Francis Lennon
(1984 BSc Business and Ergonomics)

Christopher Livesey
(1982 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)

Melissa Logan
(1998 BSc International Business and French)

Qiao Lu
(2004 BSc International Business and Economics)

Anas Mahdi
(2004 BSc Computer Science and Business Administration)

Laurence Maisonneuve
(1992 MSc Telecommunications Technology)

Adele Mallinson
(1980 BSc French and Russian)

Keith Marnoch
(2001 BSc German)

Richard May
(1977 BSc Biological Sciences)

Alan McDonald
(1980 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)

Vivien Meadows
(1991 MSc Public Sector Management)

Robert Merrett
(1984 MSc Occupational Health and Safety)

Federico Milani
(2000 PhD Computer Science)

Samina Mirza
(1996 BSc Computer Science)

David Moore
(1976 PhD Chemical Engineering)

Richard Newman
(1991 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)

Bobbie-Anne Obrey
(2002 BSc Accounting for Management)

Ian Parker
(1981 BSc Geological Sciences)

Allan Partington
(1981 MSc Construction Management and Economics)

Mahendra Patel
(1978 BEng Electrical and Electronic Engineering)

David Porter
(1976 BSc Electrical Engineering)

Mark Purslove
(2001 BSc Applied and Human Biology)

Rita Raichoor
(1978 BSc Ophthalmic Optics)

Eileen Robinson
(1977 BSc Biological Sciences)

Charanjeet Saini
(2002 MPharm Pharmacy)

Katherine Sains
(1995 BSc Pharmacy)

Harpreet Sanghera
(1999 PhD Electrical and Electronic Engineering)

Maria Sanjaume
(1997 MSc Teaching English)

Anna Sefton Turner
(1977 BSc French and German)

David Shaw
(1982 BSc Environmental Planning and Design)

David Singleton
(1977 MBA)

Christopher Smith
(1987 PhD Production Engineering)

Anthony Stock
(1976 MSc Process Analysis and Development)

Makinder Suri
(1981 Pharmacy)

Barbara Szpytma
(1990 BSc International Business and French)

Sally Taboubi
(2000 MSc Teaching English)

Tristan Tapper
(2000 PhD Chemistry)

Andrew Taylor
(1998 BEng Electrical and Electronic Engineering)

Diane Telford
(1999 MBA)

Andrew Thewles
(1977 BSc Biological Sciences)

Kirsty Thomas
(1990 BSc Business Administration and French)

Sian Trotman
(2001 BSc Accounting for Management)

Andrew Truscott
(1987 BSc Maths and Computer Science)

Nikolaos Tsavdaroglou
(2003 MSc Marketing Management)

Maurice Valarino
(1983 MSc Occupational Health and Safety)

Geeta Varma
(1997 BSc Optometry)

Vasos Vasiliou
(1983 MSc Production Technology and Management)

Sally Venner
(1999 BSc French)

Brent Walker
(2001 MBA)

Andrew Walsh
(1999 PhD Pharmacy)

Nicholas Watkins
(1995 MSc Telecommunications Technology)

Paul Way
(1983 BSc Geological Sciences)

Adam Weafer
(2002 BSc Psychology and Business Administration)

Anna Werrin
(1983 BSc Politics and Sociology)

Louise Wiggan
(1993 BSc Pharmacy)

Mark Wiggins
(1988 BSc Computer Science)

Ann Williams
(1983 BSc Behavioural Science)

Don Williams
(2004 BSc Optometry)

Isabel Williams
(1985 BSc Pharmacy)

Karen Willis
(1998 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)

Vincent Wilson
(1983 PhD Pharmacy)

Sophie Wilson
(1997 BSc Social Studies and Business)

Anna Wiseman
(1992 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)

Tak Wong
(1983 PhD Production Engineering)

Anthony Woodhouse
(1983 MSc Electrical and Electronic Engineering)

David Yates
(1999 PhD Biological Sciences)

Graham Young
(1983 BSc Civil Engineering)

Bo Zhang
(2004 MPhil Pharmacy)

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? If so, let us know!

Gabrielle Clark (1995 BSc French and Psychology)

Malcolm Forbes (1967 BSc Production Engineering)

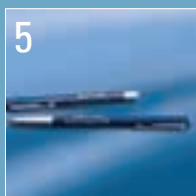
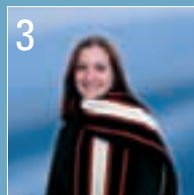
Ali Golshan-Tafti (1978 BSc Production Engineering)

Steve Moss (1974 BSc Electrical Engineering)

Vivienne Muller (1985 BSc French and German)

John Parkin (1990 MBA)

Are you looking for somebody from Aston? If they aren't listed on our e-mail directory on the website www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/directory 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.



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