



# apex

Alumni Magazine

Issue 18

Autumn 2006

  
ASTON  
UNIVERSITY

IN THE HEART OF  
BIRMINGHAM

## A PLUMB JOB

Moving into a new career

## ALL CHANGE AT BIRMINGHAM NEW STREET

An insight into the redevelopment plans  
for Birmingham New Street Station

# you must remember this...



Send in your photos and share your memories of your time at Aston.

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### Meet the team...



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### apexplus

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

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 Office. 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 pdf format, but please contact us if you experience any difficulties accessing the publication.

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# ONE OF THE BEST IN THE COUNTRY

Aston's success in the national league tables is continuing as the University has recently been named as one of the best in the country in *The Times* newspaper's annual Good University Guide. Aston is ranked 13th out of 109 higher education institutions in the Guide, coming ahead of the likes of Nottingham, York and Manchester.

The 2007 league table ranks universities by measuring nine aspects of their activity, including student satisfaction, the quality of the institution's research, its entry standards, student-staff ratio, library/computing spend, facilities spend, the percentage of students achieving a first or upper second class degree, graduate prospects and the number of students who complete their courses.

Professor Graham Hooley, Pro-Vice Chancellor at Aston said: "This outstanding result for Aston bolsters our already strong position as one of the UK's leading universities. Our graduate employment record is excellent and our research and teaching quality is also rated very highly which ensures we can provide a top quality learning experience for our students. We are very proud of this latest recognition."

## Statistician enjoys THE HIGH LIFE with roof-top tour

**Aston Business School statistician Jeremy Dawson has been making headlines up and down the country with his unusual fund-raising idea. As one third of The Extreme Cellists, he took time out over the summer to raise more than £4,000 with a whirlwind tour of cathedral roofs.**

Jeremy formed the trio in 2003 with friends James Rees and Clare Wallace in response to a documentary about the 'sport' of Extreme Ironing. "Why did we do this? Well, there are two main reasons. Firstly, because we're mad, and we like a challenge! But secondly, and more importantly, because we want to raise money for two very worthwhile charities," explained Jeremy, a research fellow with the School's Work and Organisational Psychology Group.

“By visiting every cathedral in England in just 12 days we also raised the profile of ASPIRE and Shelter and entertained a few members of the public along the way.”

The charity Shelter helps provide practical support and advice for the homeless while ASPIRE works with people with spinal cord injury to provide rehabilitation and independence.

Kicking off in Truro, the tour covered 2,400 miles and a lot of stone steps. Members of the public were invited to listen to the performances, which lasted around 10-15 minutes. Not content with breaking new ground in musicianship, Jeremy also became the Business School's first official blogger keeping everyone up to date with his online tour diary. For more information on The Extreme Cellists and a chance to catch their next tour visit [www.extreme-cello.com](http://www.extreme-cello.com)



### Aston's architecture

Aston University has been given national recognition in one of the leading guides to architecture. Details of the Main Building, the Library and Lakeside Residences are included in *Pevsner's Architectural Guide to Birmingham* by Andy Foster (Yale University Press 2005). There is a brief history of the University as well as references to the architects involved in the design of our buildings. For further information about the guide visit [www.yalebooks.co.uk](http://www.yalebooks.co.uk)

## Aston's new Vice Chancellor announced

**The University is pleased to announce the appointment of Professor Julia King CBE, FREng as its next Vice Chancellor in succession to Professor Michael Wright FREng. She will take up her appointment in December 2006.**



Professor King was educated at New Hall, Cambridge where she gained a first class BA Honours Degree in Natural Sciences (Metallurgy) in 1975 followed by a PhD (in the field of fatigue and fracture) in 1979. She then held academic posts at the University of Nottingham and at Cambridge University before moving to Rolls-Royce Plc in 1994 to take up the post of Head of Materials at the Rolls-Royce Aerospace Group. She was Director of Advanced Engineering, Rolls-Royce Industrial Power Group from 1997-1998, Managing Director of Rolls-Royce Fan Systems from 1998-2000 and then Director of Engineering and Technology Marine from 2000-2002. She moved from Rolls-Royce in 2002 to become Chief Executive of the Institute of Physics. Since 2004, Professor King has been Principal of the Faculty of Engineering at Imperial College London.

Professor King has been recognised for her work by many awards and honours during her career, including the Fellowship of the Royal Academy of Engineering in 1997 and the CBE in 1999 for services to Materials Engineering. She has published more than 160 papers on fatigue and fracture in structural materials, materials issues in aero-engines and advances in marine propulsion technology.

Geoffrey John, Aston University's Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Search Committee for the Vice Chancellor said:

“We are delighted to have been able to appoint Professor Julia King as Aston's next Vice Chancellor. She has an outstanding record of academic and industrial achievement which is in line with Aston's focus on subjects of professional and vocational relevance.”

Commenting on her appointment, Professor King said: "Aston has been very successful in recent years and I am looking forward immensely to working with all its staff and students to take the University through the next phase of its development."

### profile on...



CHRIS LANGLEY

**Chris Langley has been linked, in one way or another, with Aston University for the past 13 years. He first came to Aston in 1993 as an undergraduate pharmacy student and upon graduation in 1996 undertook a year's pre-registration training at St Peter's Hospital in Chertsey. Once qualified, he returned to the Pharmacy Department at Aston to undertake PhD research with the Medicinal Chemistry Research Group.**

Chris submitted his thesis in 2000 and then moved over to the Pharmacy Practice Group, initially as a Research Fellow and then a year later as a Lecturer in Pharmacy Practice, where he has been ever since. During this time, his research has resulted in a number of published research papers and reports and he has given over 45 research presentations at conferences all over the world, including Estonia, Malta and New Orleans. Currently, he is also involved in the supervision of a PhD student who is also a fellow Aston pharmacy graduate.

Chris' teaching surrounds the legal and practice aspects of the pharmacy degree and he has completed the University's Postgraduate Professional Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. Other work has resulted in the recent publication of a student textbook supporting extemporaneous dispensing, which he wrote with three colleagues from the Pharmacy Department at Aston.

A few years ago, Chris also undertook the role of the University Senior Residence Tutor, living on the University campus and overseeing the welfare and discipline of over 2,000 resident students. During this time, Chris met Kath Moffitt (1998 BSc French) a fellow Aston graduate who was visiting friends at Aston while living and working in France. Chris and Kath married in May 2005 in the Lake District and now live in north Birmingham.

Away from Aston, Chris' interests include walking and cycling and he has recently taken up badminton.

# ASTON HONOURS

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

## JOAN ARMATRADING



Joan Armatrading has been an outstanding singer/songwriter for 33 years. Effortlessly eclectic, her music ranges from soul to sophisticated pop – an apt mix for a performer born on the island of St Kitts in the West Indies and brought up here in Birmingham.

By the early 1970s Joan had moved to London and released her debut *Whatever's For Us*. The career that followed has seen the birth of classics – *Love and Affection*, *Down to Zero*, *Drop the Pilot* and *Me, Myself, I*.

Joan has been a long time supporter and performer for the Prince's Trust and played for Nelson Mandela on his 70th birthday and wrote a tribute song entitled *The Messenger* backed by The Kingdom Choir.

She was nominated Best Female Vocalist twice for the Brit Awards and twice for the American Grammy Award. She received the Ivor Novello Award for Outstanding Contemporary Song Collection in 1996 and has numerous platinum, gold and silver albums. Joan released a CD of *Lullabies With A Difference* in December 1998 for a children's cerebral palsy charity called PACES.

Joan was nominated as one of the 100 most influential

women in rock in the VH1 poll at the end of 1999 and received a platinum CD for her participation with other artists in the Lou Reed song *Perfect Day* by the BBC for sales of over one million.

Joan received her BA(Hons) Open University degree in 2001 and in 2005 was elected President of Women of the Year in the United Kingdom for a term of five years.

## ELSPETH INSCH

Elspeth Inch has a BSc in Geography from Birkbeck College, London University and an MPhil from Edinburgh University. She has been Headmistress of King Edward VI Handsworth School since 1989 having been Deputy Head in Sleaford and previously a geography teacher in Leicester and Nottingham.

From 1970-1979 she worked as a consultant geomorphologist for a sand and gravel company.

In 1980 Elspeth was awarded a Fellowship from the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust to lead an expedition to Iceland and in 1998 an OBE for Services to Education.

In 2002 she was one of the first people in the country to be awarded Chartered Geographer (CGeog) status. Elspeth has been a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society since 1979 and is currently Vice-President of the Society and Chairman of its Education Committee. She is a trustee of the Grantham Yorke trust and the Frederick Soddy Trust. Elspeth is currently a member of the Council of Aston University.

## JOHN EDWARDS



John Edwards joined Advantage West Midlands as Director of Regeneration in August 1999. He was appointed Chief Executive of Advantage West Midlands in November 2000.

He is a Quantity Surveyor and has held senior appointments in land and property development and business support. John has extensive experience in urban and rural economic regeneration and, prior to joining Advantage West Midlands, he was Director of Operations and Chief Executive at the Rural Development Commission.

John plays a key role in leading the West Midlands in improving its economic prosperity. He is closely involved in the management and delivery of European funding as Vice-Chair of the Programme Monitoring Committee responsible for over £800m of EU expenditure in the region.

He led the executive team that devised and delivered the strategy of the MG Rover Task Force in 2005 and is a member of the Midlands Automotive Partnership which develops strategies to ensure a competitive automotive sector in the region.

As a member of the Regional Skills Partnership, he is ensuring that the region is addressing the needs to upskill the workforce.

John also has a very strong personal and professional commitment to ensuring ever stronger links between West Midlands universities, research bodies and businesses. He sits on the West Midlands Innovation and Technology Council focusing on joint initiatives by universities and businesses in areas such as energy, advanced materials and automotive.

John is also a member of the Council of Aston University and a Governor of Staffordshire University.

## KAREN ARMSTRONG

Karen Armstrong spent seven years as a Roman Catholic nun in the 1960s.

She studied English Literature at the University of Oxford, earning the degrees of BA and MLitt. Since then she has taught modern literature at the University of London and headed the English department in a girls' public school.

In 1982 she became a full time writer and broadcaster. Her television work includes *The First Christian*, a six-part documentary series on St Paul which she wrote and presented and two interview series entitled *Varieties of Religious Experience* and *Tongues of Fire*.

She now regularly appears on radio and television to comment on religious affairs in England and the United States.

Karen is a frequent contributor to conferences, panels, newspapers, periodicals and is a regular columnist for the *Guardian* newspaper.

For ten years she taught part-time at the Leo Baeck College for the study of Judaism and the Training of Rabbis and Teachers.

Since September 11th, however, she has become chiefly known for her work on Islam and Fundamentalism. She has addressed members of the United States Congress on three occasions, as well as the State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Council for Foreign Relations.

She has participated in the World Economic Forum in New York and Davos and was recently appointed by the Secretary General to the United Nations initiative 'The Alliance of Civilizations' with a mandate to give practical guidelines to member states to prevent the build-up of tension and hatred.

Karen has published numerous books including international bestseller *A History of God*. Her books have been translated into forty languages. In March 2006 she published *The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions* which immediately became a bestseller in the United States.

## CHRIS TARRANT



Chris Tarrant is one of the UK's most popular television presenters and broadcasters.

He was born in Reading in October 1946 and was educated at King's School in Worcester and the University of Birmingham, where he graduated with a BA(Hons) in English.

He became a familiar face for many people in Birmingham when he joined Associated Television (ATV) in 1972 as a writer/presenter on the daily news programme *ATV Today*.

Two years later he became a front man on the popular Saturday morning children's TV programme *Tiswas*. The show's blend of anarchy, custard pies

and slapstick humour created by Chris and fellow presenters Sally James and Lenny Henry made it a winner and it ran until 1982.

Chris is probably best known today in his role as host of the hugely popular gameshow *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* which started in 1997. His show *Tarrant on TV* is now in its fifteenth year.

Chris's Capital Radio breakfast show, which ran for 17 years, was also a huge success and won the Sony Radio Academy Breakfast Show Gold in 1995. In 2004, Chris was awarded the OBE for his services to broadcasting and charity. He is an ambassador for the homeless charity, Centrepoin, as well as patron of the Headway Thames Valley and Phoenix Centre for children with special needs and of Milly's Fund, set up in memory of Milly Dowler.

## PROFESSOR LISA LIYUE'E

Professor Li came to England in 1988 and took her Master's degree in Applied Linguistics at Reading University before studying for her PhD in Discourse Analysis at Aston University.

After returning to China in 1993, she gained rapid promotion and moved from Shanxi Agricultural University to a Chair at Shanxi University and, in recognition of her international experience and very remarkable administrative ability, became the University's Vice-President in 1998, having already successfully served as Deputy Dean of Languages.

She became Director of the Foreign Affairs Office of Shanxi Province, has a very demanding international travel agenda and is the effective Province Ambassador.

Professor Li has helped to facilitate the Partnership Agreement that the School of Languages & Social Sciences now has with Shanxi University, enabling up to 20 young students annually to come to Aston for a year of study in the School.

## JOSIE LAWRENCE

Josie Lawrence, acclaimed actress of stage and screen, was born in Old Hill in the West Midlands in 1959 and

studied Theatre at Dartington College of Arts, receiving a BA(Hons) degree in 1981. In 1996, her College awarded her an honorary degree of Doctor of Arts.

Josie has numerous theatre credits including Moll Flanders in *Moll Flanders*, Eliza Doolittle in *Pygmalion*, Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* and Gabby in *Picasso's Women*. For the Royal Shakespeare Company, Josie performed the role of Kate in the *Taming of the Shrew* (Dame Peggy Ashcroft award for Best Actress), Dunyasha in *The Cherry Orchard* and Helen of Troy in *Faust*.

In 2001 Josie played Anna in *The King and I* at the London Palladium and enjoyed a highly successful nine-month run. Josie was in the all-female production of *Much Ado About Nothing* at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre playing the lead male Benedick!

In 2005 she played Mrs Overall's evil daughter in *Acorn Antiques* in the West End. Amongst many TV roles, Josie has starred in *The Green Man* with Albert Finney, Norbert Smith with Harry Enfield, *Swalk & Lunch In The Park* with Paul Merton, *Fat Friends*, three series of the award winning *Outside Edge* and her own series, *Josie*.

Josie is perhaps best known for her skill at comedy improvisation and appeared in seven episodes of the BAFTA award winning *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* She has also been a member of the Comedy Store Players for the last nineteen years.

Films include *Enchanted April* with Joan Plowright and the *Sineater* with Rhys Iffans. Josie also writes, directs and works on many radio productions.

In 2003 Josie spent eight months walking across China, Cuba, Peru and Tanzania for Breakthrough Breast Cancer and helped to raise over £550,000.

In 2005 she climbed Mount Kilimanjaro for Sunfield – a school for children with learning difficulties – of which she is patron.

In 2006 she will be appearing in *Miss Marple* and an episode of *The Last Detective*. In April Josie started work on a new series, *Easy Peasy*, playing the wife of Peter Davidson.

## GED FISHER



Ged Fisher is a Chartered Member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He is a graduate of the London School of Economics and has attended a Senior Management Programme at the Sloan School MIT, Boston, USA.

After working in the electricity and brewing industries, he spent the last 25 years of his employment with Severn Trent Plc where he became head of the personnel function in 1980 and retired as Group Personnel Director in 1999.

Ged was a member of the CBI National Education and Training Committee, Chairman of the Board for Education and Training in the Water Industry and a non-executive member of Water Training International. He was also a member of the 'New Deal' Task Force for Birmingham. Before privatisation of the water industry he was a member of its national negotiating bodies.

He is currently a member of employment tribunals and the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal. He is also a member of the Central Arbitration Committee and the Regulatory Decisions Committee of the Financial Services Authority. He sits as a Chairman/Member of the Disciplinary Panel for the Institute of Legal Executives and is a Member of the Disciplinary Panel of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy.

He is also a member of the Disciplinary Committee of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. Ged joined the Council of Aston University in November 1999 and has been Chairman of the Personnel and Employment Committee since then. He is also Chairman of the University's ICT Committee and was appointed Vice Chairman of the Council in February 2004.

# ALUMNI DISCOUNT



## On-campus benefits

**CONFERENCE FACILITIES:** Aston Business School Conference Centre is offering alumni 10% off conferences booked\* with them or at Lakeside Conference Centre. They are also offering a discount on accommodation. The following rates are for bed and breakfast and are inclusive of VAT:

Classic Room	£60.00
Standard Room	£85.00
Standard Double	£100.00
Superior Room	£91.00
Superior Double	£106.00

To take advantage of the above offers, please call Aston Business School Conference Centre on +44 (0)121 204 3011 and quote 'Aston Alumni Offer'. Should you wish to see more details about their conference facilities, please visit [www.abs.aston.ac.uk/newweb/ConferenceAston/mdc/default.asp](http://www.abs.aston.ac.uk/newweb/ConferenceAston/mdc/default.asp)

\*Must be booked for 30+ delegates



**LIBRARY:** As an Aston graduate you are able to register to use the University Library for just £24.50 a year. This entitles you to borrow one medium loan item and five long loan items subject to the Library's normal loan rules. Access to Aston's web catalogue is available. Printed material can be used in the Library and use of the Library's photocopy services subject to the usual rules of copyright. To join the Library as an external borrower, send an email to [library@aston.ac.uk](mailto:library@aston.ac.uk) and you will be sent an application form in the post. Alternatively contact the Alumni Relations Office for an application form.

**SPORTS FACILITIES:** All Aston graduates can now use the sports facilities at Aston. Once you have joined and become a member you can take advantage of vast reductions on many activities such as swimming, aerobics and badminton. With membership costing £35.00 for Aston alumni, there's nothing to stop you leading a healthier lifestyle! To join, contact the Woodcock Sports Centre on +44 (0)121 204 4623 or email [sportsenquiries@aston.ac.uk](mailto:sportsenquiries@aston.ac.uk) for an information pack.

## Off-campus benefits

cottages4you

**COTTAGES4YOU** are offering a 10% discount on your next cottage holiday. Cottages4you offer a range of over 15,000 holiday properties across the UK, France, Ireland, Spain, Portugal and Italy. To search online, check availability and book, visit [www.cottages-4-you.co.uk/aston](http://www.cottages-4-you.co.uk/aston) or call the holiday helpline on 0870 192 1751. To receive your 10% discount simply quote code 'AST10' when booking.



**BEST WESTERN** are offering up to 20% discount for Aston alumni at all their hotels – over 300 in the UK and 4,000 worldwide. To book, simply call central reservations on 08457 73 73 73 and quote the Connect Business Plus Number 01357700.

Cancellations must be made prior to 4pm on the expected date of arrival in order to avoid a charge.

**JURYS INN, BIRMINGHAM** is located on Broad Street at the heart of Birmingham City Centre. It is currently offering Aston alumni a discounted rate of £68.00 for a single occupancy room with breakfast included. The offer is available Friday through to Sunday, subject to availability. To book, please call 0121 606 9000 and quote 'Aston alumni'.



**BUPA** are offering Aston alumni 10% off BupaCare. To take advantage of this offer or to find out more, please call 0121 695 5490 and quote 4970/11788 or email Sandra Johnston at [johnstns@bupa.com](mailto:johnstns@bupa.com)

**PERKZ** is an online employee discount scheme featuring offers from leading high street retailers and online specialists. Perkz was developed by two Aston Graduates David Tedford (1989 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies) and Paul Ireland (1989 BSc Computing). To register for Perkz you will need a company code. To get this code, email [aston@perkz.com](mailto:aston@perkz.com) with your name whilst at Aston, the dates you attended Aston and the course you were on. Once this information is verified you will be sent a code. Then, go to [www.perkz.com](http://www.perkz.com) and click on the link that says 'If you are a first time user click here'. Follow the instructions to complete the registration process and you can then log in to take advantage of all the great offers that Perkz has available.



**JPA RECRUITMENT:** A partnership has been agreed with recruitment specialists, The JPA Group, to offer alumni the opportunity to register with one of the leading niche market recruitment specialists. Visit [www.j-p-a.co.uk/](http://www.j-p-a.co.uk/) for more information.

All offers are subject to terms and conditions. The University provides no guarantees or warranties in relation to the quality or suitability of any services offered by third parties, nor in relation to the accuracy or reliability of advertisements placed by them and accepts no responsibility or liability whatsoever in relation to such services.

# STAY CLOSE & go far WITH Graduate Advantage



A common perception, often reinforced by the media, is that the graduate labour market ceases to exist 'beyond' the M25. However, an Aston University based project, Graduate Advantage, is here to challenge that!

Recent research conducted by credit card firm Capital One reports that two out of five graduates surveyed are specifically looking for opportunities in regions outside the Southeast, and although the blue-chip based London companies and high salaries can sound very attractive, the high cost of living may prove an increasing deterrent. It's time for both employers and graduates to think more broadly about graduate opportunities.

According to Department of Trade and Industry figures, over 99 per cent of businesses in the UK are SMEs\*. SMEs offer challenging graduate opportunities with an ability to provide a breadth and depth of experience. Furthermore, graduates can inject the skills and enthusiasm SMEs require to expand and access new markets.

Graduate Advantage is a West Midlands initiative based within Aston University and supported by ten further local universities and colleges. The project aims to retain graduate skills in the region and to provide local SMEs with access to high level skills. They do this via the following four key initiatives:

### GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMME (GET)

The GET Programme provides support in order to help companies make a successful new appointment and develop their new graduate into a valuable member of the team. The GET programme offers three main services:

- free online advertising and recruitment administration;
- individual training plan for the graduate;
- subsidised training courses (available for SMEs).

“The project is designed very specifically for graduate positions in the West Midlands. I was asked to fill in an appropriate, challenging and relevant profile which brought out information about my skills, interests and qualifications.”

James Merrix (2006 BSc Computer Science) on the Graduate Employment & Training Programme with Warwickshire based company aXcessTen.

### STUDENT PLACEMENT PROGRAMME (SPP)

SPP activity provides undergraduates with the opportunity to undertake paid project based work experience within companies across the West Midlands. Placements run in the summer vacation, plus a part-time scheme operates throughout the autumn and spring terms.

Bob Peapell supervised Naila Akhtar, an Aston undergraduate who undertook an IT placement with Birmingham based project Contact The Knowledge Exchange.

“Naila's placement has been a success on two counts. Firstly, the work she has undertaken has been invaluable in advancing the development of our website and the management of information in the team. Naila has fitted in seamlessly – it seems like she has been here forever!”

### GRADSKILLS

GradSkills is a highly interactive, two-day transferable skills course which offers graduates a unique opportunity to boost their employability. The course runs at Aston University, three times a year.

“The course has made me more focused on what I want to do and how it can be achieved.” Peter Roberts, Aston graduate.

### MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Our free one day Management and Leadership course is aimed at very recent managers and also those aspiring to move into their first management position, within companies across the West Midlands. Our first course will take place at Aston Science Park this autumn with further courses being rolled out across the region.

So, spread the word! If you are a new graduate wanting to stay in the West Midlands, or a local employer seeking to expand and develop your company's skill base, Graduate Advantage can provide a range of free services to you.

For more information on any of Graduate Advantage's services, contact Aston alumna Etta Parkes (2003 BSc Management and Psychology) on +44 (0)121 204 4763 or email [e.l.parkes@graduateadvantage.co.uk](mailto:e.l.parkes@graduateadvantage.co.uk)



\*SME (small and medium sized enterprise) – employs 250 or fewer employees with an annual turnover below a specified amount.

# JPA recruitment

I'm Anthony Tuite (2004 BSc Public Policy and Management and Business Administration). You may remember me – I was elected as the Aston Students' Guild President for the 2004-2005 academic year.

I'd like to think that I took the most I possibly could from my Aston experience and that culminated with me finding a job at long last! I say 'finding a job', it was actually down to a company called JPA Recruitment. They took me on as a key graduate candidate and it was this organisation that put me forward for an opportunity with Computer Futures Solutions (Birmingham office).

CFS is the founding company of the STHREE Group (a FTSE 250 organisation) and the market leader in IT recruitment. Additionally they have recently come 13th in the *Sunday Times* 100 Best Places to Work, are Investors In People and are always on the lookout for talented graduates.

I can honestly say I would not have gone into recruitment as a career had it not been for the guys at JPA. I didn't even know recruitment was an established industry and a very dynamic and lucrative one at that!

Based on JPA's careful character analysis of me through our conversations, they were able to expertly direct me to an industry and a company that now suits me very well.

If you are currently looking for work why not see what the guys at JPA can do for you. Without a doubt, they have opportunities that you won't even know about yet. Good luck with the job hunting!



**JPA is one of the leading niche market graduate recruitment specialists placing inexperienced candidates as well as those with up to five years experience into sales, recruitment, business & finance, Engineering & IT, Design & Multi-Media and Graduate Recruitment Programmes.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE: [J-P-A.CO.UK](http://J-P-A.CO.UK)

## A RACE ACROSS

# THE ATLANTIC



### CROSSING THE POND

'Crossing the pond' took on a whole new meaning for George Simpson (2001 BEng Communications Engineering and 2005 PhD Optical Fibre Sensors)

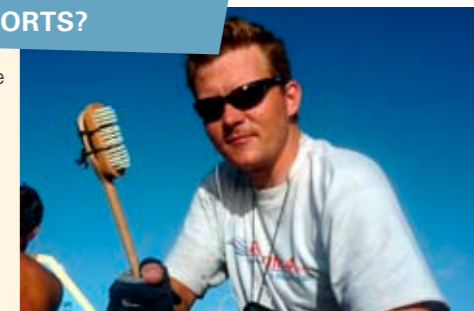
when he rose to the challenge of rowing across the Atlantic Ocean in aid of the Anthony Nolan Trust. The Woodvale-Events Atlantic Rowing Race 2006 hit the headlines this year, in part due to the first celebrity entry, but the message that didn't get in the press was that they came in behind George and his crew who raised around £10k for their charity! Apex recreates some of the race here, but the full story can be found at [www.Atlantic4.co.uk](http://www.Atlantic4.co.uk)



### HOME COMFORTS?

"Pretty thin on the ground really! A bucket, no more than two feet away from the other three guys. It still makes me shudder now."

Despite trying to sell Kylie to a passing yacht three weeks into the voyage, the team rowed on battling against the worst weather on record for December and January. The mid-Atlantic was hit by three low pressure systems, two tropical revolving storms and a hurricane. Nineteen boats capsized and six were lost, fortunately all survived.



### VISITORS WELCOME

With a 360° horizon of thousands of miles of water, it was easy to see visitors arriving. "Pilot whales were frequent visitors because they're naturally curious, as are huge families of wild dolphins. The interesting distinction in the deep ocean is that they watch you. Oil tankers are the things to look out for, they can be over 100,000 tonnes and the smaller vessel has to give way."



### WHY OH WHY?

"It's a cliché, but if you have to ask 'why?' you'll never understand the answer," explained George. "Challenges like this one grip some and terrify others. I'm both, curiously enough. Speaking retrospectively, I like the self confidence that goes with knowing what you're capable of."



### THE ATLANTIC4

The race started from La Gomera as tropical storm Delta hit the Canary Islands. For the next 49 days home was a 24ft fibre glass rowing boat – officially named Atlantic4, but affectionately known as 'Kylie' to the boys. Because the boat had space for only two people to sleep at once, they rowed opposite shifts of one hour on/one hour off for the entire crossing. George comments: "People usually ask if it was hard to cope with so much exercise and so little sleep. I'd like to say it wasn't. In fairness though, the effort and sleep deprivation is only half the story. Isolation is a killer and cabin fever could easily have become a problem; it's a psychological battle first and foremost."



### FINISHING POST

11pm on 19 January 2006, David, Neil, Glynn, George and Kylie arrived at Antigua in second place, a few hours in front of the celebrity entry of Cracknel and Fogul. "Finishing was excellent, as you'd expect after so long at sea. I don't remember all that much really, conditions were hard in the last few miles. It was quite a difficult technical approach in the dark without an engine. It was fantastic to spend time in Antigua and see the other competitors finish, we made good friends with them all over the last three years. It's all about the people for me."



**George and the crew rowed for Anthony Nolan Trust, a charity founded in 1974 as the first register of volunteers willing to donate bone marrow in circumstances when a match cannot be found in a patient's family. For full details of the charity, or to register as a volunteer, please visit [www.anthonynolan.com](http://www.anthonynolan.com)**

George now works as a laser scientist for BAE Systems in Bristol and can be contacted on [George@Atlantic4.co.uk](mailto:George@Atlantic4.co.uk)

# a<sup>plumb</sup> job



Probably many of us, disgruntled at some point with our career, have thought about the possibility of starting our own business. When faced with an opportunity, how many of us are brave enough to accept such a challenge? Reacting to recent publicity about a shortage of plumbers in the UK, Janet Rivers (1977 BSc Maths and Architectural Studies) launched her own domestic plumbing business *Girls on Tap, Ladies who Plumb*, in 2005. We met up with her to find out more about the challenges of running her own business and just whether or not plumbing is as lucrative a career as we have all been led to believe.

Janet worked for Barclays Bank as an Implementation Manager in charge of IT projects earning £40K a year when she decided to retrain as a plumber. She explains: "I found my job satisfying but I wanted to work for myself. I planned to become a freelance IT Consultant until I realised that IT projects are subject to budget cuts in difficult times, so I thought about doing something practical that could ride the ups and downs of the economy. I decided to become a plumber having noticed all the publicity surrounding a national shortage. I figured that a blocked toilet or a nasty leak will need fixing regardless of the state of the economy."

Janet took voluntary redundancy from Barclays in 2003 and joined an NVQ Level 2 plumbing course in Oxford, which was held one day a week for two years. With plumbing considered by some to be one of the last male bastions, was Janet not deterred slightly upon realising that there were to be only two other women on the course to 13 men? "No, not at all. In fact the men were all very supportive. If they ever saw me struggling with something they would frequently show me a better technique. To be honest, the male to female ratio I experienced on the course was similar to that of my degree at Aston, so I really wasn't overly concerned by it. The only real difficulty I experienced during the course was getting the relevant work experience. In my view, when doing a course like plumbing, it's vital that you are also working in the industry. I don't know if it was my age, my sex, or if it was just because many smaller businesses don't need extra staff, but it seemed to be one "no" after another. That was the only time I got despondent and wondered if it was really meant to be. I did eventually get work experience –

just like buses I received offers from three different businesses all at the same time. After that, things started to look up."

Janet's business, *Girls on Tap*, was established in 2005 and was given the strapline *Ladies who Plumb* to prevent it from being confused with an escort agency! Janet deals only in domestic plumbing, serving parts of Surrey and Berkshire, and has plans to franchise the name in the hope that more women will enter plumbing in the future. This is something actively promoted by the Institute of Plumbing and Heating Engineering (IPHE) through their Women in Plumbing Group (WPG), which offers support both to women already in the industry and to those considering it as a career. Every year the WPG hold an annual conference where women (and men) in the profession can meet and discuss issues relevant to their work. Janet attends every year and aims to become more involved once her business is fully established.

One thing we were particularly interested to find out was how the general public have reacted to Janet's new career.

Does she think people are becoming more used to females entering previously male dominated professions, in this case, plumbing? "Obviously if people call my business they know they are going to get a woman, so I only really notice a reaction when I park my van somewhere. I've been accosted in car parks on several occasions by people who are interested in using me, so obviously people aren't put off by the idea. I hate to admit though that I was rather offhand to one man who was asking me so many questions that I thought he was a market researcher – in fact he turned out to be a really good customer! Overall, I think people are generally pleased to see women entering the profession and in some circumstances would be keener to hire a female plumber than a male one." Janet goes on to explain that most of her clients are older ladies who seem to prefer to deal with another woman. A lot are also older gentlemen, one of whom presented her with a lunch of home-baked bread, cheese and pickles when the job she was doing for him went on for longer than expected.

One question that couldn't go without asking is if there have been any really horrible jobs she's had to deal with. "Mercifully I haven't yet had to sort out a blocked toilet. One of my most memorable jobs so far has been when I had to take a sink out of a work surface to get the tap out because it was so badly rusted in place. Before I had decided to do that, I had spent several hours lying on my back in the dark cupboard under the sink with my arms in the air trying to saw that tap off – it wasn't pleasant! I never know what situation I am going to face, but so far I have managed to rise to every challenge and I always keep a pair of long, heavy duty rubber gloves to hand for the day when I will eventually have to unblock someone's toilet!"

Talking to Janet it's obvious to see that she is truly passionate about her work and holds no regrets about her change in career. "I love my job and I love meeting all my clients. It's just so rewarding to know that I am earning my living by providing such a clearly needed service. I now have a very flexible way of working and am looking forward to helping my fiancé,

Tony Goodhead (1981 BSc Civil Engineering) to tackle the mucky pipes on his beautiful old wooded boat which he hires out for corporate entertainment events, [www.heritageboatcharters.co.uk](http://www.heritageboatcharters.co.uk). We didn't meet at University but were introduced a few years ago by a mutual friend, Martyn Wheatley (1982 BSc Mechanical Engineering)."

Finally, does plumbing earn people the huge salaries we are all told about? "No. It's a myth that plumbers earn huge salaries. To do so you have to do emergency work charging high rates and working long, unsociable hours. I don't earn as much money as I did, but in time I will – and I really enjoy my new career."

# ASTON AND BIFFA TACKLE CHANGING LANDFILL MIX



**Aston University's Bio-Energy Research Group (BERG) and Biffa, one of the UK's 'big six' waste companies, have teamed up to find new ways to recover energy from a changing mix of domestic, commercial and industrial landfill waste.**

The Government's pledge to cut the amount of biodegradable waste going to landfill by 50 per cent from 1995 levels by 2013 means that UK landfill operators face a very different pile of rubbish than in the past.

Biffa operates over 30 landfill sites across the UK including Poplars, Waresley and Wilnecote in the West Midlands. Most of these sites recover landfill gas – mainly methane – to power reciprocating engines

that generate electricity which feeds into the national grid. But, as more biodegradable waste is diverted away from rubbish dumps, the amount of landfill gases they produce declines, making the process less efficient.

Landfills will, however, remain a key part of Britain's waste management strategy for years to come. Converting the remaining fraction of organic waste into energy onsite is

challenging but essential if the Government is going to meet its target to recover 67 per cent of Britain's waste by 2015.

An innovative conversion method called fast pyrolysis could provide the answer. BERG and Biffa have been selected to research the technology's potential under a Co-operative Award in Science and Engineering (CASE) by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council. Using its fast pyrolysis rigs, BERG will investigate converting the organic fraction of various waste streams into a gaseous or liquid fuel to power the existing engines.

"Fast pyrolysis is a technology with promise. It offers an innovative way to recover energy

from waste and reduce our dependence on fossil fuels," said Stamatios Dacey, the BERG PhD student, who was awarded the CASE studentship.

Fast pyrolysis heats up biomass to very high temperatures for only a few seconds in the absence of oxygen to convert it into a gas or liquid fuel. The technology can also separate valuable metals and other products, which can then be re-used in building and construction materials. BERG will characterise different waste streams, test them in its pyrolysis reactors and evaluate their potential to be used on landfill sites.



## a reputation for excellence

The internationally acclaimed Aston Studies, a programme of research launched in the 1960s and still lauded in the 21st century, provides Aston Business School with a unique bequest.

**L**ooking back at 40 years of excellence, Professor Michael West, Head of Research at Aston Business School, said the legacy left by the Aston Studies cannot fail to inspire today's generation of researchers. The significant impact of the weight of material produced by those early teams remains and Aston Business School continues to assign research the highest priority in planning and resource allocation.

"Diversity is one of our hallmarks," said Professor West. "As well as a diverse student population, 36% of our staff group is not from this country, so the University as a whole and the Business School in particular reflects the diverse nature of Birmingham. Our research looks at a variety of issues, such as how we can maximise the benefits of diversity within a team or an organisation. We have shown that teams and organisations with a diverse make-up are often more efficient and the services and goods they produce are of a higher quality."

Current research projects enjoying a similar worldwide reputation to the Aston Studies

include a look at the way leaders play a crucial role in the cross-border transfer of knowledge and how they can be helped to best manage this. This GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organisational Effectiveness) Programme is a worldwide organisation of some 170 scholars from 60 nations who investigate the cross-cultural forces relevant to effective leadership and organisational practices. Around 17,300 middle managers from 950 organisations in 61 countries participated in the first two phases of the GLOBE Programme.

The Business School is also currently leading the way in research into health provision in the UK. The research carried out by Aston staff shows how the UK can manage health service organisations to improve staff morale, patient care and even reduce patient mortality as well as demonstrating how to cut errors in hospitals and reduce medicine waste in the community. Government policy measures in the health service have been informed by the findings of the NHS National Staff Survey – this is produced annually by the school up to 2010 and is

supported by an Advice Centre available to all NHS staff.

The quality of all the research conducted in the Business School is reinforced by the fact that the Business School has received QAA teaching ratings of 24/24 in the most recent assessment exercise. Assessors' reports specifically and consistently cite the research-led culture of the School and the international standing of its research as key distinguishing features. For more information on research degrees at Aston Business School go to [www.abs.aston.ac.uk/newweb/programmes/RDP/](http://www.abs.aston.ac.uk/newweb/programmes/RDP/) and for an overview of all research activity, visit [www.abs.aston.ac.uk/newweb/research/](http://www.abs.aston.ac.uk/newweb/research/)

### KEY ABS RESEARCH THEMES:

- performance measurement and management – people, organisations, markets and economies;
- diversity, knowledge and innovation;
- leadership, ethics and governance;
- strategy, partnerships and organisation.

## ASTON QUALIFICATION IN GLOBAL TOP THREE

A qualification from Aston Business School is one of the first in the world to be recognised by a new quality award. The Aston DBA (Doctor of Business Administration) has been accredited by the Association of MBAs.

Designed to appeal to 'high flying' directors and senior managers who already hold an MBA, the DBA is a professional doctorate where students undertake an independent research project into a real business and management issue. ABS was recognised alongside programmes from Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Kingston Business School in Surrey.

'Triple crown' ABS is already ranked amongst the top 0.4% of business schools worldwide. In June, the School was again awarded EQUIS accreditation by the European Foundation for Management Development. ABS is also recognised by The Association of MBAs – the MBA programme is already accredited – and the American Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, AACSB.

Professor John Saunders, Head of ABS, said:

“Accreditation is core to our determination to be a leading international business school; we want to excel in all we do and this pushes us to keep on learning.”

# A LECTURE... BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT!

A series of exciting new teaching initiatives in the School of Life & Health Sciences could change the way that Aston students learn. Psychology lecturers Pete Reddy and Carl Senior, together with technician Jon Wood, have developed the Virtual Pedagogy Initiative, a five-strand teaching project with enormous long-term potential not only for the School but for the whole University.

The team has taken existing technology and software and put them together in new ways and on a different scale than before to create a series of new learning methods for undergraduates. It is already attracting attention, not least because of the way it could accelerate the process of change in terms of the way students learn.

Mention the phrase ‘podcasting’ and you know you’re talking about something that is both at the forefront of broadcasting and highly fashionable. The Psychology team will start podcasting to new students from the start of the new term. They will record practicals and lectures and turn the results into a quality audio stream that students can stream onto an i-pod or watch online. Students can subscribe to the podcast service and get automatic updates. Podcasts will also be used in the weekly Psychology newsletter making it more like a radio show and, as such, a more effective and dynamic way to learn.

The second strand of the initiative is ‘vodcasting’ (video on demand). The beauty of vodcasts is that they can capture both the lecture and the audience participation. Students can keep these films and they will be a permanent record of what they have learnt.

“Our desire to push a flexible distance learning infrastructure for our students and also to create a sense of community between the staff and the students underpins the entire virtual pedagogy initiative.”

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The third strand of the initiative has captured the attention of the national press. This is the use of ‘Mini-pods’ (high-quality, short video files that the Psychology team will push out to individual student mobile phones using MMS or Bluetooth technology). These ‘Mini-pods’ will provide students with a 30 second snapshot of the most salient points of a lecture, which they can then refer to at a later date.

The fourth strand is the ‘campus cam’ which will enable events at one part of the campus to be broadcast to another location. The final strand of the initiative is the Virtual Lecture, which will run on the Internet on the Aston website and all students can become involved in these lectures.

Carl Senior says: “Our desire to push a flexible distance learning infrastructure for our students and also to create a sense of community between the staff and the students underpins the entire virtual pedagogy initiative. Everything we do is taking formal lectures out of the classroom and into the hands of our students, giving them more responsibility and perhaps most importantly flexibility in their studies.”

Jon Wood added: “We are proactively reaching out to provide students with what they need. What is also important is that we are offering them a quality product. As they use and learn about these new technologies, they will be well versed in them before they leave Aston, giving them an additional set of valuable skills to take into employment.”



## TODAY'S YOUTH TOMORROW'S SPORTS STARS?

As if the World Cup wasn't enough of a sporting event for this summer, Aston invited 60 enthusiastic year eight pupils from six schools across Birmingham and Solihull to a special day devoted to sport and languages, which received support from some of the Midlands top football clubs.

With sport at the forefront of many people's minds – the

World Cup dominated much of June and July – Aston took the opportunity to show pupils how speaking an additional language could take them a step closer to achieving their dream career in the world of sport.

The students experienced a taster lesson in Mandarin, in honour of the next Olympic Games to be held in Beijing, and also discussed the

range of job opportunities in sport that are open to those who are multi-lingual.

Lorna McClelland, who is the Welfare and Liaison Officer at Aston Villa Football Club, attended the event to talk to the students about how speaking several languages has helped her work closely with the players and their families.

“I speak French, German and Spanish,” she explained. “The world of sport is huge and international so speaking another language is a bit like having a unique passport to that world. I think that a day highlighting the connection between sport and languages is a great idea as people don't often connect the two. Having a second language can be valuable in so many professions and the World Cup is a great opportunity to promote this.”

Languages for Life Officer and organiser of the event at Aston, Annie Bannerman, said: “We were really pleased to help spread the message that languages are really useful in sport. Not only are they useful for professional sports players, such as athletes, but also to the hundreds of people who help make an event like the World Cup a success.”

The event was also supported by Walsall Football Club Chief Executive, Roy Whalley, who said: “Over the years, Walsall Football Club has welcomed players and staff from all over the world and we can see the benefit of Aston University organising an event devoted to sport and languages. I am sure the pupils had a fantastic day and learnt a lot about job opportunities within sport.”

## Can almonds help your heart?

Next time you tuck into a packet of almonds you may be helping your heart. Researchers in the School of Life & Health Sciences led by Professor Helen Griffiths have been awarded funding by the Food Standards Agency to investigate whether eating a daily almond snack for two months can reduce the risk of developing cardiovascular disease.

Diseases like cardiovascular disease are known to arise over several decades and improvement in the diet of young people, particularly of men (who are more likely to have a heart attack before the age of 50 than women), is a simple but effective way of safeguarding future vascular health.

Almonds are one of the richest natural sources of ‘tocopherols’ and the Aston group believes that, as well as having an antioxidant function, tocopherols can reduce the activity of cells involved in blood vessel function. The group's initial results have shown that eating a daily almond snack improved blood vessel function, reduced blood pressure and even reduced body weight in some people who took part in the study.



## New postgraduate course announced

The School of Languages & Social Sciences has developed a series of new MA programmes to complement the existing and highly successful MA in Translation in a European Context, MA in TESOL Studies and MA in Contemporary German. Contemporary Modern Language Studies for Teachers will be offered in French, German and French and German. There is also a suite of MAs in Applied Linguistics and an MA in European Union (EU) and International Relations. Through this programme graduates will gain a knowledge and understanding of the EU's role as an actor on the international stage. The exercise of political and economic power

in a globalised world will be explored and there is a strong policy focus.

The MA in Applied Linguistics will provide graduates with a grounding in key linguistic concepts and models and enable them to apply these concepts in the analysis of a range of naturally occurring spoken and written data.

The suite of MAs in Contemporary Modern Language Studies for Teachers have been created because many foreign language teachers feel that they acquire considerable experience in classroom practice but that they struggle to maintain their fluency in the foreign language. Moreover, their busy schedule may leave them unable to

keep up to date with both new approaches to language teaching and the politics, culture and economics of the countries where the foreign language is spoken.

Dr Christina Schaeffner, Director of Postgraduate Programmes/Director of Translation Studies in the School explained: “These new programmes, run jointly by our French, German and English departments, meet the precise needs of teachers in that they give experienced practitioners the opportunity to refresh their language competence and bring themselves up to date with events in the German or French speaking world. They can also explore developments in the theory and practice of language teaching.”

## TOP OF THE CLASS: LEARNING FOR LIFE THROUGH INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

Interdisciplinary study is becoming increasingly popular with new entrants and the achievements of our graduates highlight just why! More than 200 students graduated from combined honours this year and more than 300 new students will be enrolled for this academic year. The employment rate for combined honours has increased to 80 per cent.

**There are many advantages to studying a combined honours degree. Students who study two subjects tend to gain multiple skills which is very beneficial when they are looking for employment. It appears that some employers favour those who have studied a combined honours degree over single honours graduates. Aston students often opt for studying a familiar subject alongside a new one.**

Latest annual statistics show the employability rate for Business Administration has been excellent – 87 per cent of students went into employment or further study. Our graduates now work for top businesses such as HSBC, KPMG as well as many others. Similarly high rates for Computer Science have been reported – 95 per cent of all graduates went into employment with companies such as IBM and Barclays or on to further study.

Gary Preece (2005 BSc Computer Science and Business Administration) explained: "I chose a combined honours degree as it gave me the flexibility to study two subjects I was interested in. I had not decided on a firm career path before studying at Aston and the combined honours programme allowed me to keep my options open." Since completing his degree, Gary has chosen to stay on at Aston for postgraduate study.

He has recently completed an MSc in Operational Research and Management Studies and he is just about to start a PhD in Management. When he completes his research, he hopes to work around the world as a Management Consultant before embarking on a career in academia.

Combined honours subjects allow students to have a strong vocational focus, putting into practice what they have learnt. An example of this is the Business Game where students are required to work in teams to run a company. The Business Game uses computer simulation to track how decisions affect the business and student teams are compared with others in the University who are taking part. As well as being an excellent way to acquire new skills such as teamwork, presentation and other 'soft skills' that gives them an edge on their career, students also find the module great fun.

The employability rates for Sociology and Psychology have also increased with 90 per cent of graduates entering employment or further study. Graduates work for top companies such as Deloitte, NatWest, Microsoft and Vodafone amongst others.

Robert Snelson (2004 BSc Psychology and Sociology) feels that choosing a combined honours course allowed him to carry on studying two subjects

he loved at degree level. According to Robert one of the best things about combined honours at Aston is the 50/50 split between Psychology and Sociology: "I think combined honours students are better prepared for a hectic work life than other students, as you have to very quickly learn to manage your time and projects effectively – a skill I need in my employment as a teacher of Sociology and Psychology," said Robert.

In many universities this balanced syllabus is not on offer. Since Robert started, however, some major/minor combinations have become available within combined honours, although most students still opt for the 50/50 split. "In my experience," he continued, "employers like combined honours graduates as it shows a degree of all-round knowledge."

Dr Roy Smith, Director of Combined Honours, says: "We are always striving to enhance the employability of our graduates. Contact with alumni is vital for this and we appreciate any feedback from our graduates about how their degrees have helped their career development."

“  
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**Sophie Stevens (2006 BSc Applied and Human Biology) has recently returned from the USA where she gave a presentation at Disney World on research she carried out during her placement year at Twycross Zoo. The project was in the field of reptile environment and enrichment, which is a relatively new field of research and looks at how the living conditions for reptiles in captivity can be improved so that they can be as happy in their enclosures as possible.**

Sophie wanted to create an environment for the Bearded Dragons at Twycross that would make them stop exhibiting the stereotypical behaviour associated with animals in captivity. This would help them to express the normal behaviour that they would display in the wild. Sophie redesigned their enclosure (totally changing the original exhibit) to create a naturalistic environment. She changed the lighting, added rocks and wood, altered the temperature and supplied the optimum amount of water.

Sophie noticed a conference advertised in *Zoo News* asking for papers to be sent for the RATE (Reptile and Amphibian Training and Enrichment) conference, which was to be held at Animal Kingdom in Orlando, USA. She sent an abstract from her work and was astounded when she received a reply asking her to give a presentation at the conference.

It is a real honour for an undergraduate studying for their first degree to be invited

to present a paper at an international conference and it shows the value that taking a placement year adds to the student experience. Twycross Zoo and Aston University co-funded the trip. Sophie says: "I feel extremely privileged to have been given the opportunity to present my paper at the RATE conference. Without the help of Twycross Zoo and Aston in allowing me to carry out my research during my placement year and providing funding this would not have been possible."

Sophie's project has had such an impact that she has been asked to return to Twycross Zoo to give another presentation about her work and plans are in hand to publish some of her work in a special reptile enrichment book. Sophie admits she's not sure yet what she'd like to specialise in, so whether it's making reptiles happy or home improvements for other animals, the Alumni Relations Office wishes Sophie many further successes in her future career.

## Spaghetti service nets charity money



**Aston's answer to Jamie Oliver, David Koulakis (aka 'Spag Bol Dave', 2006 BSc Accounting for Management) cooked up a storm on campus during his final year with his highly original way of raising money for Cancer Research UK.**

He has almost reached his target of raising £2,000 for charity since he first shared his culinary skills in September 2005 by establishing a home cooking pasta service. The popularity of his spaghetti bolognese empire resulted in him making the dish for up to 30 students a week, with all proceeds going to Cancer Research UK.

The fun and quirky service (together with a little help from his friends) established 'Spag Bol Dave' as a popular choice for many students around the campus fancying a takeaway or their own visiting chef. Dave also captured the media's attention appearing in numerous articles and broadcasts from BBC Midlands Today to The Evening Standard (London).

The success of his home cooking service was certainly not the only money making venture of 'Spag Bol Dave's'. He also recently took part in the London Marathon, completing it in four hours and 53 minutes.

Cancer Research UK is a charity very close to Dave's heart. After the diagnosis of his father's cancer, Dave felt the need to do his bit to help others: "Looking back on the whole experience – training, cooking and the Marathon – I can proudly say I accomplished what I set out to at the start of the year and that was to achieve something out of the ordinary. The kindness and support people on campus gave to me through the 'Spag Bol Dave' scheme really kept me focused and motivated and got me through the 26.2 miles of the marathon."

If you would like to donate to 'Spag Bol Dave's' quest to raise money for Cancer Research UK, visit [www.justgiving.com/spagboldave](http://www.justgiving.com/spagboldave)

# New minibus arrives on campus thanks to alumni generosity

Gifts come in many shapes and sizes and one that arrived on the campus recently was a minibus for the Students' Guild – a donation from Aston alumni through the 2005 telefundraising campaigns organised through the Office of Advancement. Within minutes it was placed into service ferrying students to Tamworth for their ski and snowboard lessons. Needless to say, the Guild and the students are delighted.

Gill Clark, Guild Student Development Co-ordinator, said: "The Guild is delighted to have a brand new 17-seat minibus courtesy of Aston alumni.

"It joined the 'fleet' recently and looks very impressive with its new livery. We now have three minibuses of varying ages and

conditions. Sports clubs and societies depend heavily on these minibuses for travelling to matches, going on trips and excursions or taking members to courses and conferences. In fact, they would struggle to function without them.

"The minibuses are vital for the Guild as a whole. They are even used for picking up new international students at the start of the academic year. Having a new bus means that more students can participate in student activities and the Guild saves money because we don't have to hire so many. Good news all round! We are all extremely grateful for this very generous donation. It will be put to good use!"

“ The minibuses are vital for the Guild as a whole. They are even used for picking up new international students at the start of the academic year. ”

For the students involved in last year's calling campaigns the purchase of the minibus was great news. These students – from across the four Schools, both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, and who reflect Aston's diverse

cultural nature – were ecstatic with their success. As student caller, Rafi Mendelsohn, said: "Calling for Aston University was really rewarding. Not only did I get to do something I enjoyed, but it was for such a great cause too."



## STATE-OF-THE-ART PRESENTATION SUITE PLANNED FOR THE GUILD

Responding to urgent student demands about the need for presentation and study areas within the University, the Aston Students' Guild, along with the Office of Advancement, is working to redevelop the second floor of the Guild building.

According to Nathan Shane, Vice-President Finance and Advancement: "The project is still at an early stage. An area will be emptied and all electrical and wireless points installed as part of a larger project. The AV equipment and furnishings will be added at a later stage when funding has been received through the Office of Advancement. The presentation suite will be free to use by all students of the University to help improve key skills which are required by employers. The cost of the AV equipment and furnishings is £30,000. We are hoping that alumni will respond to this project in the same generous way that they helped to fund the minibus, which arrived on campus earlier this year."

The Aston Students' Guild presentation suite is one of several projects being undertaken by the Office of Advancement's autumn student phone campaign. Other projects include student bursaries and placement grants, e-workstations located in convenient locations in the University providing 24-hour computer access for students and grants for research students to allow them to attend essential academic workshops outside the University.

### INNOVATIVE BLOG HELPS ALUMNI CONNECT WITH STUDENT CALLERS

The spring telemarketing campaign saw the launch of a blog, or online diary. The first of its kind in the UK, the blog contained details of the progress of the four week campaign, plus photos of the callers themselves, which were posted on a daily basis. To view the spring blog, log onto [www.teamadvancement.blogspot.com](http://www.teamadvancement.blogspot.com)

The autumn campaign's blog – 21 October to 19 November – can be found at [www.give2aston.blogspot.com](http://www.give2aston.blogspot.com)



## ALL CHANGE AT NEW STREET STATION

**Martin Chambers (1981 BSc Building Economics and Measurement) could be forgiven for wondering what he has done to deserve his latest challenge, the redevelopment of Birmingham New Street Station. But, in reality it's a challenge that he appears to be relishing!**

Many of you may well recall that Martin was the leader of the team responsible for the successful delivery of Birmingham's £114m Millennium Point, a nearby neighbour of the University. Since Millennium Point opened, Martin has not exactly been idle. As well as remaining a member of the Board at Millennium Point, he notably played the lead role for Bovis Lend Lease in securing Project SLAM, the MoD's £1Bn UK wide accommodation modernisation.

Now his attentions have turned to New Street Station. The Station has a long history but has been neglected for too long. As Martin puts it: "Since leaving Aston in 1981, New Street

Station is, in my opinion, the one thing in Birmingham that hasn't changed for the better. I don't want graduates in twenty years to be saying the same thing."

A station on the New Street site was first opened in 1854. This was followed by a major expansion in 1885, with the current station being opened in 1967. It was designed to cope with just 640 train movements a day, but today it handles 1,350 trains – by comparison Heathrow airport currently handles just 1,300 flights! The fact that New Street has been able to cope with such a phenomenal growth in volume is nothing short of a miracle. The time has now come to make the station 'fit for purpose' in the 21st century.

Martin is leading a team that will oversee the creation of a fourth generation New Street Station, known as the 'Gateway' project. Investment on the station site, including the construction of two of the highest towers ever to grace the city skyline, will total more than £500m. Most

importantly, 'Gateway' will provide for an increase in the 'on station' passenger handling capacity of more than 150 per cent on top of today's numbers, improving the lives of passengers. It will include a stunning atrium, bringing natural daylight flooding down on to the main concourse, and even the platforms, for the first time in over 50 years. As Martin explains, the project is not limited to physical construction works, it will see the creation of three new concourses operating as 'airport style' departure lounges so that passengers can remain at concourse level until their train is ready for boarding.

Following some 18 months of train movement and timetable planning, construction of the first phase will begin in 2008. A new station concourse will be built 'offline' whilst the current station continues to operate normally. At twice the size of the current concourse area, delivering phase one by March 2011 with minimal disruption to

the ongoing railway and The Pallasades Shopping Centre, will be no easy feat! As Martin explains, phase two, scheduled for development between March 2011 and June 2013 will be more challenging still! "We will deliver concourse and operations areas that are again more than double the size of those currently on the station."

Martin seems unfazed by the size of the task ahead. Indeed, as a result of his involvement with New Street Station, Martin has moved to position 76 in the top Power100, as recently listed in Midlands Business Insider magazine. As if the challenge of rebuilding New Street isn't enough, in June 2007 Martin will also be installed as the President of the Chartered Institute of Building. It sounds like Birmingham and Aston University have a great ambassador in Martin. We wish him all the best for what looks like a very exciting few years and look forward to further updates in due course.

“ I first saw New Street in 1972 on my arrival to Aston. It's both comforting and disconcerting that nothing much has changed in the past 34 years! ”

Keith Austin (1976 BSc Civil Engineering)

“ My initial impression of the station still holds today. It has to be the most depressing and unlovable of any major city station – not a place to linger! ”

Adrian Clarkson (1972 BSc Pharmacy)

# where are they now?

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 the spring edition, contact us at the usual address with your news – and, go on, send a photograph!

## 1960s

### THOMAS WHISTON 1966 BSc Applied Chemistry

"I obtained my degree in 1966 when Aston got its charter, but studied at the College of Technology on Suffolk Street. I left in the early 1960s and undertook a few more postgraduate degrees at several universities in physical chemistry, ergonomics, cybernetics and cognitive psychology. This led to my undertaking numerous academic, governmental and international agency reviews of higher education policy, national science policy issues, innovation and forecasting studies, global environmental studies for such bodies as NESCO, IIEP, OECD, NRC, NSF, ICSU and most of the UK Research Council bodies, the work being summarised in more than 150 books, journal articles, governmental studies and research reports. I have been a Lecturer in Psychology at Manchester University; Senior Research Fellow at

SPRU Sussex University for 25 years and, for nearly a decade Professor of Environmental Regulation and Director of the Global Environmental Postgraduate Programme at Roskilde University, Denmark. Quite a bit of industrial and other research was also undertaken in several national research labs. I have lectured and researched on all five continents over the past forty years which has taken me to more than 40 countries. At one stage I was fortunate to be asked to write a national blueprint for a new system of higher education and research policy for South Africa following the fall of apartheid. I am presently Emeritus Professor and Adjunct Professor at Roskilde University and Honorary Professor at Sussex University and an Active Member of the Club of Rome. After all those years and all that travel my heart is still in Brum where my family have lived for the past two hundred years."

### KOLLENGODE NARAYANAN 1967 BSc Chemical Engineering

"My last job was as Vice-President ITC (Agribusiness), Calcutta. I am currently a Consultant for Numico International, Holland and Roche Diagnostics, India. I live in Bangalore."

## Did you graduate in the 60s?

**We'd love to find out  
what you're up to!**

**Email:**  
alumniinfo@aston.ac.uk

**or write to:**  
Alumni Relations Office  
Aston University  
Aston Triangle  
Birmingham  
B4 7ET

**Deadline:**  
February 2007

## 1970s

### MIKE GRIFFIN 1970 BSc Behavioural Science

"I misbehaved with Margaret Wadeson (1970 BSc Behavioural Science) until we married in 1987. My career has spanned a range of HR and manufacturing roles in Bowater, Glaxo, Dairy Crest and the NHS. Currently I am HR Director for Kings College Hospital, London. We live in High Wycombe where Margaret teaches psychology and sociology in a local secondary school. We have three sons, the last of whom is just embarking on his A-Levels. We're mad about the theatre and music. We would be delighted to hear from former chums, nay comrades (this was the pre-modernist era of Biggles and Trotsky)." Contact the Alumni Relations Office for Mike and Margaret's details.

### PETER SEXTON 1974 PhD Metallurgy

"After graduating I returned to the USA with an English girlfriend from Four Oaks, Anne Wilson, and an Aston PhD! We married in 1975. Since our family has travelled extensively, Anne and I chose Bhutan as a location to celebrate our 30th wedding anniversary. We were struck by the people, culture, history and scenery. Currently I am the Business Development Manager at Technic Inc. We produce and market a full range of precious metal powders which are used in a wide variety of electronics applications including plasma displays, photovoltaic (solar) cells, ceramic capacitors, etc. I travel extensively to Asia and Europe on business. Anne and I live in Cohasset, Massachusetts, half a mile from the Atlantic Ocean and 18 miles from Boston. We both enjoy skiing, mountaineering, and the cultural activities of Boston. I also sail, though Anne has yet to show much enthusiasm for this! We have a 29 year old daughter, Alissa, who is resident in Manhattan and will

be married next July. Anne and I have both been volunteering for the NGO, Habitat for Humanity International, leading volunteer groups to South Africa, Botswana, Chile, Paraguay and Bolivia to build housing for the disadvantaged. I have been able to keep in contact with many from my course, including Joe Littleton, Bob Phillips, Henryk Pisarski, Prof Terry Barnby."

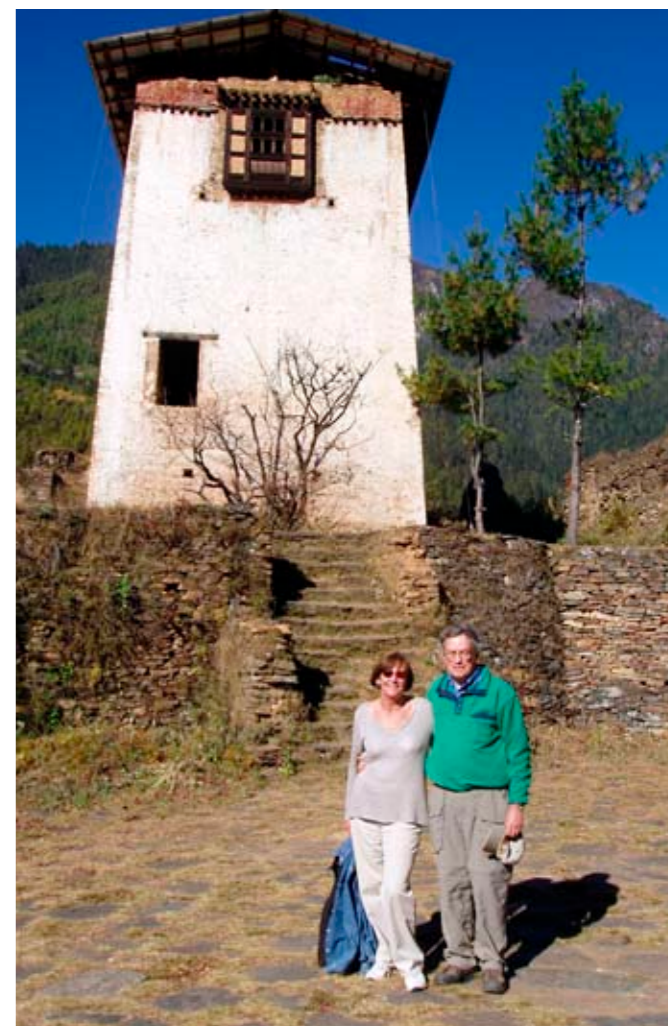
## Did you graduate in the 70s?

**We'd love to find out  
what you're up to!**

**Email:**  
alumniinfo@aston.ac.uk

**or write to:**  
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February 2007



### BOB DUNNING 1976 BSc Production Engineering

"For the last twenty years or so I have worked in the aerospace industry. In the early '90s I was managing director of a sizeable company that many may know, TI Accles and Pollock in Oldbury. During this time I did a great amount of travelling to the US, the Middle and Far East, selling the company's products. Since graduating I have worked in Birmingham, Leeds, London, Cheltenham and France. For the last five years I have been MD of a company based in Derbyshire and am travelling much less now, thankfully! The company was recently sold by the French owners to a UK-based company. I will miss the trips to France and my French boss. I now live in North Warwickshire. My daughter, from another existence, is 21 and starts her final year at Birmingham University doing a Sociology degree. Only one more year of payments – yes! I still foolishly support Walsall Football Club through good, bad and worse times. I also still have a love of music that was developed at Aston, namely 'Yes' (even been to the US to see them), 'Kinks', blues and jazz. I also still have a love of good quality beer, as you can tell from my picture! I also have a passion for walking, the only exercise I have now. In October I am starting to study again but will not say what or where. At Aston I was Chairman of the Production Engineering Society. Most of the events seemed to involve beer and women – nothing educational at all! At the time it was fun, but I have to say I now look back and cringe a little! Can you guess where I am walking?"



# 1980s



**YAOHUA ZHU**  
**1983 PhD Metallurgy and Materials Engineering and 2006 DSc Engineering and Applied Science**

Yaohua has worked as a Senior Research Fellow at Hong Kong Polytechnic University since 1998. He was recently awarded the degree of Doctor of Science (DSc) from Aston in March 2006 after the Senate of the University assessed his selected 69 published academic journal articles (where Dr Zhu appeared mostly as the first author). The DSc is a higher doctorate and one of the highest academic recognitions any researcher of science can obtain. It carries great prestige and acknowledges the holder's achievements through distinguished, substantial and original contributions to the advancement of science. Dr Zhu graduated from the North-East University of China in 1965. He is considered an authority in his subject because of his painstaking research on microstructure, phase transformation and processing in materials science.

Did you graduate in the 80s?

We'd love to find out what you're up to!

Email: [alumniinfo@aston.ac.uk](mailto:alumniinfo@aston.ac.uk)

or write to:  
 Alumni Relations Office  
 Aston University  
 Aston Triangle  
 Birmingham  
 B4 7ET



**JAMES DAVIE**  
**1984 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies**

"After graduating, I went on to qualify as a Chartered Accountant. My career progressed into training and recruitment and I worked for over two years in the Middle East. Returning to the UK in 1995, I focused my career on recruitment and since 2001 have worked for Lord Search & Selection recruiting executives and senior management across a range of disciplines and industry sectors. Based in the West Midlands, I work on a national and international basis, with a significant amount of work in Hong Kong and China. I am married with two daughters aged eleven and seven. I continue to follow Leeds United (despite their fall from grace!) and my other passion is a 1989 TVR, which makes a noise that always brings a smile to my face! I would love to hear from anyone who is considering a career move or who needs to recruit someone!"

## 1990s

**KEVIN CHADWICK**  
**1993 BSc International Business and German**

Kevin joined the CIE (Centre for International Economics) in Canberra, Australia as an economist in 2005. Prior to this, he successfully established and managed his own online translation business. Kevin has worked in the Lao PDR with the Swedish International

Development Agency (SIDA) and in Pakistan with the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Before this, Kevin was Lecturer for Business English at the Otto-Friedrich Universität, Bamberg, Germany. Kevin has also completed a postgraduate Diploma in Applied Economics and, more recently, a Master's in International and Development Economics. He says he'd be happy to share a beer with anyone passing through from the 'old country'.



**KATIE LOMAS**  
**1997 BSc Applied and Human Biology**

"After spending several years working in retail and recruitment I decided to have a complete change of direction. Last year I started a two-year training course to become a Probation Officer. I am studying for a BA in Community Justice alongside an NVQ in Community Justice linked to work-based learning and it keeps me very busy! I will qualify in October 2007 and then the fun begins! On a personal note I now live in Leeds (having bought a house last year) with my cat and housemate."

**SARAH GILES**  
**1998 BSc French and German**

"After graduating I worked in the field of European politics and funding, both in the UK and in Brussels. In 2003, however, I had a bit of a career change – I am soon to be ordained into the Church of England. I am now working in the centre of Telford – and still get to use my languages in the field of ecumenism. I wonder what the next ten years will bring...!"



**PIERS McLEISH, MIKE AUDIS, ROB PARKINSON, KET CHAUHAN AND CHRIS BAYNE**

**BSc 1993 Computer Science** founded Armstrong Consultants Ltd in 1993. Specialists in the development, supply and implementation of a comprehensive range of integrated service, finance and CRM solutions, Armstrong Consultants are now UK leaders in their sector. The business started in a spare room at Chris' parents' house in Harpenden, but has since grown to six directors, employing over 60 employees in two UK offices, with a turnover of £6m last year. In 2003,

ACL identified the need to open a northern office. This is situated in Runcorn and managed by yet another Aston graduate, Piers McLeish (2003 BSc International Business and French). Despite the growth, the directors still consider themselves 'hands on' and are very much a part of the day-to-day running of the company. Their philosophy is to 'work hard, play hard' and have won numerous industry awards in recent years.

# 2000s



**Claire Barker (née Taylor)**  
**2001 BSc Maths and Business Administration**

"On graduating from Aston I returned to Deloitte, my placement year employer, to complete my training contract and I qualified as a Chartered Accountant in July 2003. On 6 September 2003

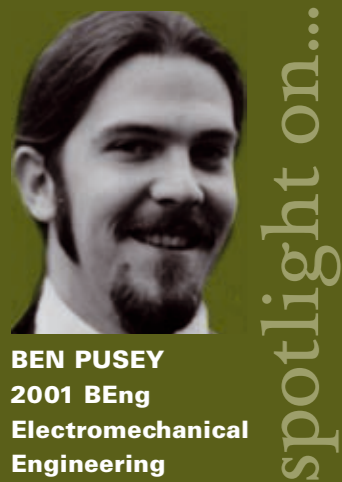
I married Craig Barker (2000 BSc Computer Science). In May 2005 I qualified as a Chartered Tax Adviser and am now practising as a corporate tax manager for Deloitte in Birmingham. Craig set up his own IT contracting company in June 2005, which is doing really well, and we are now both enjoying spending time with our son Samuel who was born on 25 January 2006.



**Jerry Talandis Jr.**  
**2006 MSc Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)**

"My MSc dissertation involved creating a website that archived messages sent to our program's email discussion list. My aim was to provide

access to our community's discourse history and enable past, present, and future participants to benefit from the accumulated insights and wisdom. After a period of rest and rejuvenation, I hope to continue this project at the PhD level at Aston, where I will investigate how this resource can grow into a more interactive, self-sustaining enterprise, one that takes advantage of capabilities provided by emerging 'web 2.0' technologies."



**BEN PUSEY**  
2001 BEng  
Electromechanical  
Engineering



**KATE SEAGROTT**  
2002 BEng Chemical  
Engineering

spotlight on...

Both briefly worked in engineering before becoming self-employed; Ben as a plumber and Kate as a clothes designer. Kate's clothing company, Kate's Clothing, quickly expanded and Ben has now given up his job to work with her full-time on the business. The company is based in Birmingham and employs two Aston students part-time. Both former RockSoc committee members, Kate and Ben design specifically for the goth and alternative clothing market. Their designs can be viewed at [www.katesclothing.com](http://www.katesclothing.com)

#### **ALASTAIR TOYNTON (aka ALLY)** 2003 BSc Translation Studies with French and German

"I was taken ill at the end of my year abroad and had to go through my final year whilst on dialysis, which meant four thirty-minute sessions every day in my room. I finally received a kidney transplant in December 2005 after a couple of serious scares and recently completed my first week of work since University as a barman at the World Rowing Championships in Eton for a corporate events company. I found I had enough strength and energy to complete nine days in a row – a major step in my long road to recovery. I now have a job working at the Hinds Head Hotel Bar and Restaurant in Bray, which is owned by Heston Blumenthal and is next to his The Fat Duck Restaurant."

## want to be in Apex?

If you would like to be featured in  
**'Where are they now?'**

in the spring edition of Apex, please send some  
information about yourself either by email to:

[alumniinfo@aston.ac.uk](mailto:alumniinfo@aston.ac.uk)

or by letter addressed to:

**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 is February 2007.)

## Did you graduate in the 2000s?

We'd love to find out  
what you're up to!

Email:  
[alumniinfo@aston.ac.uk](mailto:alumniinfo@aston.ac.uk)

or write to:  
Alumni Relations Office  
Aston University  
Aston Triangle  
Birmingham  
B4 7ET

Deadline:  
February 2007



#### **REBECCA WORLEDGE** 2005 MSc Information Technology

"I spent my final term at Aston studying as an exchange student at the University of Oulu in the north of Finland. I chose to study in Finland because I reasoned that I would never ever go there otherwise, which is a shame because it is a wonderful country – the people are warm, the scenery is fantastic, and there is a thriving IT industry. I liked it here, so I stayed on and got a job working for a company called Mentor Graphics. Mentor aren't a household name but are pretty big in the embedded software business. We write simulation software up in Oulu, which is interesting work – it is desktop software, but I have learned a huge amount about the actual hardware and software of embedded devices. Being an expatriate and living outside of the UK is a lot of fun. My Finnish has improved a lot, although I find myself forgetting common English phrases or (worse) using Finnish instead. No, elämä on! People from Aston are welcome to email me, my address is [becca@loralora.co.uk](mailto:becca@loralora.co.uk)



#### **PETE MATTHEWS** 2006 BSc Business Administration and Computer Science

"Since completing my degree (which was spread over an amazing seven years and two different Schools) life has been both hectic and fantastic. After working over the summer in the Alumni Relations Office, I went to Italy for nearly two weeks with 5,500 European Scouts at a big tri-annual camp in Florence. Here I helped as part of the international service team with people from Ireland, Finland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, etc. Coming back from a fantastic trip like that is always a bit of a comedown, especially when you realise you have to get a job! Reluctantly I signed on and a week later was off again on another Scout trip, this time to North Devon to run activities for my local Explorer Scouts from Sutton Coldfield. On my return I found that I was invited to a host of interviews and was even being head hunted (degree obviously doing its job there then!) After a few phone calls I was offered a job over the phone without even meeting anyone. This was turning out to be an excellent summer! I'll miss not returning to Aston this October, but I do appreciate that Aston has given me the skills, ability and confidence to get out there and live life. I'd like to say hi to everyone I knew at Aston and wish you all the best of futures!"

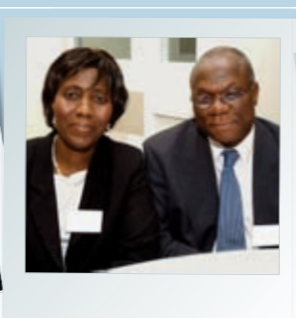
# re:UNION

One of the highlights of the alumni year is the AGM of Convocation – a weekend of activities, talks, food and fine company. This year we welcomed almost 200 people back to campus for a varied programme which proved to be a lot of fun.

There was also the chance to hear directly from the Vice Chancellor, Professor Mike Wright, about Aston's vision and forward strategy, meet some of our current students to get an idea of life on campus today and visit the newly-furnished Psychology labs. For those of you who weren't able to join us – and for those of you who did! – here's a reminder of the event.



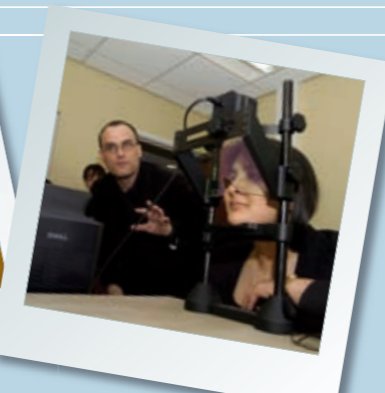
Morning coffee set us  
off on the right foot!



A relaxed lunch for all.



Visit to the newly-furnished Psychology labs: experiments  
into the effect of driver behaviour and hazard perception and  
eye trackers and their role in consumer psychology.



A chance to get back into  
the Guild – the social heart of  
Aston. We had a glimpse of  
student life today whilst we  
grabbed partners and clicked  
our heels with the moves  
of the Salsa Dance Group.

## COMPETITION

### BUDDING ARTISTS

Following the success  
of last year's Aston  
Graduates' Association Art  
Competition we will again  
be calling for entries from  
alumni, students and staff.  
Look out for details on  
how to enter your  
two-dimensional print,  
photographs, textiles,  
paintings, drawings, etc.

Chancellor, Sir Michael  
Bett, hosted the Annual  
General Meeting  
of Convocation and  
the AGA Prizes for  
contribution to the social  
life of the University  
were presented.



## Diary date

Next year's AGM will be on 17 March and the full programme  
will be sent out to alumni in early January. Please visit  
[www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/update.jsp](http://www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/update.jsp) and update your contact  
details so that you don't miss out on the information!

## Stand for the Standing Committee of Convocation

If you like the idea of being  
involved more closely with  
Aston and want to join  
others who care about the  
welfare of the University,  
its students and graduates,  
then consider a nomination  
for election to the Standing  
Committee of Convocation.

The Standing Committee  
is the official University  
Committee that represents  
the views of Aston's alumni.  
Members are kept up to date  
with current decisions on  
Aston's strategic direction  
and issues that directly  
affect alumni are debated  
and discussed. Members  
regularly receive reports  
from the Guild, reports from  
Aston Graduates' Association  
and reports from both  
academic Schools and support  
service departments around  
campus. The Committee  
meets six times a year in  
the early evening. Members  
of University Council also  
sit on Standing Committee  
and feed comments back  
into the decision-making  
hub of the University.

You will find nomination forms  
for the Standing Committee  
in with the information about  
the AGM – so keep an eye  
on the letterbox in early  
January. In the meantime,  
if you want to know any  
more about the important  
work of this Committee,  
contact Sarah Pymm on  
[s.e.pymm@aston.ac.uk](mailto:s.e.pymm@aston.ac.uk)

# re:UNIONS

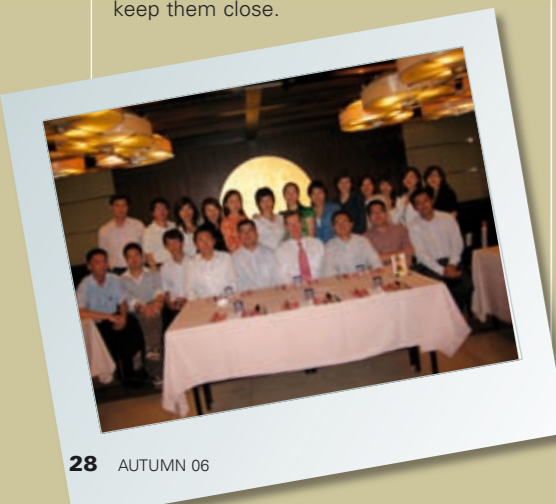


## Tokyo reunion

The Aston MSc in TESOL distance learning participants in Japan gathered in Tokyo in June for a two-day workshop held by Nur Hooton from the School of Languages & Social Sciences. The attendance of graduates from the same course was welcomed by all. One participant commented: "The workshop provided a sense of connection and excitement regarding (my) future studies." Another said: "It was great to meet tutor and participants, new and old." The workshop proved to be a social event as well as a medium for sharing ideas and experiences. You can visit [www.aston.ac.uk/lss/academicgroups/english/](http://www.aston.ac.uk/lss/academicgroups/english/) for information on TESOL and related English programmes offered by the School of Languages & Social Sciences.

## Shanghai reunion

On 14 September, 23 Aston alumni met in Shanghai to hear developments of Aston University. Alumni commented how much they appreciated the effort Aston was making to bring them together and keep them close.



## Fondue Memories Reunion

On 22 July over 300 graduates from the years 2001-2005 returned to Aston for the annual Fondue Memories Reunion at the Students' Guild. A good night was enjoyed by all, but not by the Alumni Relations Office – we're still on the hunt for the person who sneakily ate Caroline's chocolate bar on the reception desk!



## Shining a light in Beijing

Dr Matthew Hall and Professor David Bennett of Aston Business School's Operations and Information Management Group met the Aston Beijing Alumni (ABA) earlier this year when they visited China. From time to time, our alumni in Beijing gather together for dinners and seminars and ABA President Peter Thong (1970 BSc Production Engineering) has created a banner to serve as a backdrop for guest speakers and alumni. Many scholars claim that The Ming Dynasty period (1368-1644) was the height of China's sophistication and supremacy. This was when the Great Wall was built and the blue and white Ming china was invented. ABA's banner has the picture of the Great Wall in Beijing with the blue and white colour of the Ming porcelains. The Great Wall depicts the passage between Birmingham and Beijing. "Naturally Aston's logo is right on top, shining like a sun over Aston University and its alumni," explained Peter who went on to elaborate a moral through a story.

In a little village in the outskirts of Beijing, there lived an old, blind man named Lau Fu. Each night after dinner, Lau Fu meandered



along the dark narrow lanes with his walking stick and a torch. He believed that a walk after dinner is good for health. Neighbours took his age-old habit of walking with a torch for granted. But one evening Lau Fu met a visitor from England, Professor Cat, who was in the village to study Chinese culture. On realising that Lau Fu was blind, he asked: "Why do you carry a torch when you cannot see?" Lau Fu replied: "Ah, you know that there is a reason behind every action. I am no doubt blind and cannot see, but I carry the torch so that others can see me in the darkness." The moral of Peter's story: "Aston is the torch of our fine education. We keep our torch aflame so that others can see the light."

## 1980s Pharmacy Reunion

On the weekend of 13 May a group of 1980s Pharmacy graduates held a reunion in Birmingham. Alison Tennant (1987 BSc Pharmacy) told the Alumni Relations Office all about it:

"A small core party unofficially kicked off the reunion in a pub on the Saturday, watching football, but they must be maturing since they made it back to the hotel to change before the evening meal! The meal was held at La Tasca where some very helpful staff kept the table continually supplied with sangria, beers and food. There was a spread of representation from the early 1980s to the more youthful end but the banter was as loud and non-stop as you would expect from a group of Aston graduates – including the spouses who have learnt to talk aspirin and paracetamol with the best of us. In order to prove our stamina was as good as in the 80s, and because we were nowhere near finished talking, we adjourned to the Tap and Spile on the canal side to continue lubrication of our throats.

Those who remembered Birmingham City Centre in the 1980s were extremely pleased to discover that we could remain here until 4am and therefore proceeded to take full advantage. As you can imagine a somewhat subdued group met up the following morning before heading off separate ways but firm promises have been made to repeat the experience."

## Fancy going 'up the pub'?

Want to meet up with old classmates but are put off by the formality of an organised reunion? Then why not attend one of our pub reunions – our new, more relaxed approach to reunions. We are hosting two such events both in London (Pitcher and Piano, Trafalgar Square) and Birmingham (All Bar One, Brindley Place) on the 5 and 13 December respectively. So, if you are living or working in either the West Midlands or the Southeast, why not come along for a pre-Christmas drink and meet with fellow alumni and members of the Alumni Relations team. Free to attend, there's absolutely no commitment on your part. We'll be there from 5.00pm onwards and we hope you will be too! For more information, email [c.l.broome@aston.ac.uk](mailto:c.l.broome@aston.ac.uk)

## Need our help with an event?

If you're confused about how the Alumni Relations Office could help you to organise an event, then you'll be pleased to know we've made it a little bit clearer by adding a page to our website about our reunion services at [www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/reunions/help.jsp](http://www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/reunions/help.jsp) In short, our Silver Service offers you as little or as much help as you would like with your event, such as helping you to find 'lost friends', sending out mailings, publicising the event and offering venue and accommodation suggestions etc. Our Gold Service, on the other hand, means we will organise the entire event for you as part of the Alumni Relations event programme, providing you give us at least six months notice and that we believe the event has a good chance of success. For more information, please visit our website or email [c.l.broome@aston.ac.uk](mailto:c.l.broome@aston.ac.uk)

## calendar '06-'07

Forthcoming reunions and events for 2006-2007

### 29 NOVEMBER: MBA EVENT

Honorary graduate, Sir Peter Rigby, returns to Aston to give a lecture entitled Entrepreneurialism in a high tech industry... how to survive. Email Stephanie Meek for details on [s.d.meek@aston.ac.uk](mailto:s.d.meek@aston.ac.uk)

### 5 DECEMBER: LONDON PUB REUNION

All graduates living or working in the Southeast are invited to join members of the Alumni Relations Office for a pre-Christmas drink at the Pitcher and Piano, Trafalgar Square from 5.00pm onwards. Email Caroline on [c.l.broome@aston.ac.uk](mailto:c.l.broome@aston.ac.uk) for more details.

### 13 DECEMBER: BIRMINGHAM PUB REUNION

All graduates living or working in the West Midlands are invited to join members of the Alumni Relations Office for a pre-Christmas drink in All Bar One from 5.00pm onwards. Email Caroline on [c.l.broome@aston.ac.uk](mailto:c.l.broome@aston.ac.uk) for more details.

### 17 MARCH: AGM OF CONVOCATION

All alumni of the University are invited back to Aston for this annual event. Information will be mailed out in the New Year along with details on how to enter the AGA art competition.

### JUNE (DATE TBC): WEST MIDLANDS EVENT

Aston Business School MSc Alumni event.

### 28 JULY: FONDUE MEMORIES

Graduates from 2003-2006 are invited back to this yearly event at the Students' Guild.

### JULY (DATE TBC): LONDON EVENT

Please contact the Alumni Relations Office for details about any of these events. Call 0121 204 4543 or email [alumniinfo@aston.ac.uk](mailto:alumniinfo@aston.ac.uk). Details are also available at [www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/reunions/events.jsp](http://www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/reunions/events.jsp)

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# News from Aston Graduates' Association

Jenny Martin updates readers on the recent activities of AGA

## Graduates go organic



On a very cold day in April AGA members visited Ryton Organic Gardens near Coventry to learn about recent advances in organic gardening. We gathered in the coffee bar for hot soup to fortify us for the excursion even though it was late spring. Ryton boasts over 20 examples of small gardens each using recycling ideas in a different way. Of particular interest were the composting ideas, the use of recycled rubber, paper, wood and rubble in the production of garden furniture, paving and building materials. Gardens specifically designed to cater for children, the disabled, the visually impaired and the elderly provided interesting ideas for each of us to try at home. After the tour of the gardens members had an excellent organic lunch in the restaurant and completed the visit by buying supplies of organic vegetables, bread and fruit in the shop. Some members also purchased seeds of rare plant varieties from the seed library and we await details of their success.

## JOINT MEETING WITH BIRMINGHAM GUILD OF GRADUATES

On Friday 9th June AGA members joined Birmingham Guild of Graduates at Birmingham University for the annual meeting. Frank Pearce gave a talk entitled 'Under the Red Eagle', in which he told of his experiences in the RAF as a pilot with the air force in Italy. The meeting was followed by a buffet super and members were able to renew old friendships and catch up on the gossip. We look forward to hosting this event in 2007.

## Pétanque

On a very pleasant warm evening in July, AGA members set out for the annual competition against the Hints village team. This match has become a traditional end of year event and AGA members are always pleased to win and collect the prize of the box of doughnuts, which we generously share with the home side. This year, however, something went amiss and, whilst AGA members were not concentrating properly, the Hints village team comprehensively won the match. As Gerald Blackburn, the organiser of the Hints village team is moving from Hints this autumn, it was only justice that their team should win. However, we have been invited to compete again next year and we are hopeful that a more effective AGA team can be gathered together. Your committee feels that new signings are needed and your events organiser has offered to stand down from the team as she scored no points. Our thanks go again to the Hints village team and catering staff, who make this event into such a fun evening each year. (We will be back!)

## VISIT TO THE BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

We opened our new season of events with a Saturday morning visit to the BMAG. The Art Gallery has a very fine collection of Pre-Raphaelite paintings by William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and Rosetti amongst others. Our guide was able to highlight the major innovations of this genre by reference to paintings in the collection. Hopefully this visit has whet the appetite of members and they will return to the BMAG to see more of the world famous masterpieces held by the gallery on our doorstep.

## Dates for your diary

### 19 October Visit to Brandon Marsh Nature Reserve

This is one of the Midlands' most important wetland nature reserves and our guide will help show how the area, which was originally a centre for mining and quarrying, has now been converted into a home for an extensive variety of marsh, reed-bed, grassland and woodland habitats.

### 9 December Christmas Dinner at the Banqueting Suite in the Council House

### March 2007 Art Exhibition

After last year's very successful art exhibition, AGA members will again have the opportunity to enter this competition. Three prizes will be awarded by a panel of judges. Time to get out the paint box that you had for a retirement or Christmas present and see what you can do.



Ady Yong Art Competition Winner 2006

Aston Graduates' Association committee meet at Aston about eight times a year. If you would like to help in any way at all please contact the chairman via the Alumni Relations Office at Aston. The treasurer in particular is looking for help.

# intouch

## 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!

### WILLIAM ANGUS

(1973 BSc Systems Analysis)

### FUAAD BURAS

(1992 MSc Software Engineering and Applications)

### JOHN AJONGWEN-NUMFOR

(1989 PhD Chemical Engineering)

### CAMERON HAY

(1973 BSc Systems Analysis)

### RICHARD NUTT

(1997 MEng Chemical Engineering)

### DAVID BETTISON

(1974 BSc Electrical Engineering)

## 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...

### ELNUR ABUSABAH

(1983 PhD Chemical Engineering)

### PAUL ADAMSON

(1989 BEng Civil Engineering)

### JOHN BARKER

(1993 PhD Pharmacy)

### WENDY BROOME

(1989 MBA)

### STUART CAVILL

(1985 BSc Chemical Engineering)

### ANDREW CHAPMAN

(1990 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)

### CHRISTOPHER CHURCHILL

(1980 BSc Production Technology and Management)

### SUKHAMOY DAS

(1976 PhD Electrical and Electronic Engineering)

### ALEXANDRA DAVIES

(née Merrick, 1998 BSc Pharmacy)

### BRUCE DEBENHAM

(1990 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)

### LISA DORN

(1987 BSc Human Psychology)

### MARY DORNHORST

(1979 MSc Applied Psychology)

### PAUL ELWORTHY

(1991 MSc Information Technology)

### ANDREW GALE

(1984 BSc Geological Sciences)

### ELISABETH GOULD

(1981 BSc Biology Man and Environment)

### IAN GOULDING

(1978 BSc Environmental Health and 1983 PhD IHD)

### STEPHANIE GOVEIA

(1985 BSc Business Administration and French)

### JUSTIN GRIFFITHS

(1988 BEng Chemical Process Engineering)

### DEBORAH GRIMMETT

(1985 BSc Pharmacy)

### GYLLIAN GRINDEY

(1982 MSc Environmental Planning and Design)

### PETER HALE

(1980 BSc Mechanical Engineering)

### CATHERINE HAMMOND

(1991 MBA)

### REBECCA HINDLEY

(1983 BSc Behavioural Science)

### EDWIN HOLMES

(2002 MSc Financial Management and Control)

### RICHARD HOOTON

(1984 MSc Occupational Health and Safety)

### VICTORIA INGE

(1989 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)

### NICOLA JEFFERIES

(1995 MSc Personnel Management and Business Administration)

### CATHERINE JOHNSON

(1981 BSc Mathematics)

### MUSTAFA JORNAZ

(1984 BSc Production Technology and Management and 1991 PhD Production Engineering)

### MUHSIN JWEEG

(1983 PhD Mechanical Engineering)

### GEORGE KALOUTAS

(1980 MSc Process Analysis and Development)

### MOSTAFA KAMEL

(1982 PhD Management)

### CATHERINE KIMBERLEY

(1982 BSc Business Administration and French)

### ANDREW KYRIACOU

(1982 MSc Process Analysis and Development)

### PETER LAWRENCE

(1979 BSc Civil Engineering)

### RACHEL LAWRENSON

(1991 BSc Ophthalmic Optics)

### SIMON LE MAISTRE

(1993 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)

### WENG LEE

(1986 BEng Electrical and Electronic Engineering)

### YVONNE LENAGAN

(1995 BSc Pharmacy)

### PAK LEUNG

(1979 BEng Electrical and Electronic Engineering)

### PETER MIDDLETON

(1981 BSc Transport and Business Administration)

### JITENDRAKUMAR MISTRY

(1987 BSc Maths and Computer Science)

### SIEW NG

(1979 MBA)

### KARINE N'GOALA

(1996 PhD Chemical Engineering)

### HAZEL NIXON

(1994 BSc Psychology and Business Administration)

### PAUL NUNNERY

(1991 MSc Information Technology)

### WILLIAM OCONNELL

(1983 BSc Safety and Health)

### WYNFORD OLDBURY

(1979 BSc Civil Engineering)

### SENG ONG

(1982 MSc Mechanical Engineering Design)

### HULYA OZTEL

(1995 MSc Management)

### KALA PARMAR

(1992 BSc Biology and Psychology)

### NICOLA PRIDHAM

(née Denness, 1983 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)

### NOSHEEN QURESHI

(2003 MPharm Pharmacy)

### PAL RAAN

(1978 BEng Electrical and Electronic Engineering)

### SHEILA RABY

(1978 BSc French and German)

### KIMBERLEY READ

(1992 BSc Ophthalmic Optics)

### TERESA REILLY

(1991 MSc Teaching English)

### DAVID ROSE

(1979 MBA)

### PETER SANDERS

(1982 MSc Computer Science Applications)

### SIMON SLOAN

(1987 BEng Electromechanical Engineering)

### CLARE SMETHURST

(1993 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)

### ANDREW STOKES

(1979 PhD Electrical and Electronic Engineering)

### ROSALIND STRANGE

(1988 BSc Applied Chemistry)

### WING TING

(1979 BSc Mechanical Engineering)

### THOMAS TSE

(1989 BSc Pharmacy)

### PETER TURNBULL

(1979 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)

### ANDREW TURNER

(1985 BSc Chemical Engineering)

### LISA TWEEDIE

(1991 BSc Human Psychology)

### KAREN UNGER

(1990 BSc Human Psychology)

### ENEAS VALDIVIESO

CEDENO (1982 PhD Chemistry)

### BRIAN VINCENT

(1979 BSc Business Administration and French)

### SUSAN WALDEN

(1980 BSc Behavioural Science)

### CATHERINE WALMSLEY

(1993 BSc French)

### HOWARD WIDDICOMBE

(1972 BSc Behavioural Science)

### XIANSHENG XING

(1992 MPhil Chemical Engineering)

### MARTIN YEATES

(1978 BSc Metals and Materials Technology)

### LAURENCE YOUNG

(1983 BSc Behavioural Science)

### LUTHER ZOGANG

(1983 MSc Teaching English for Specific Purposes)

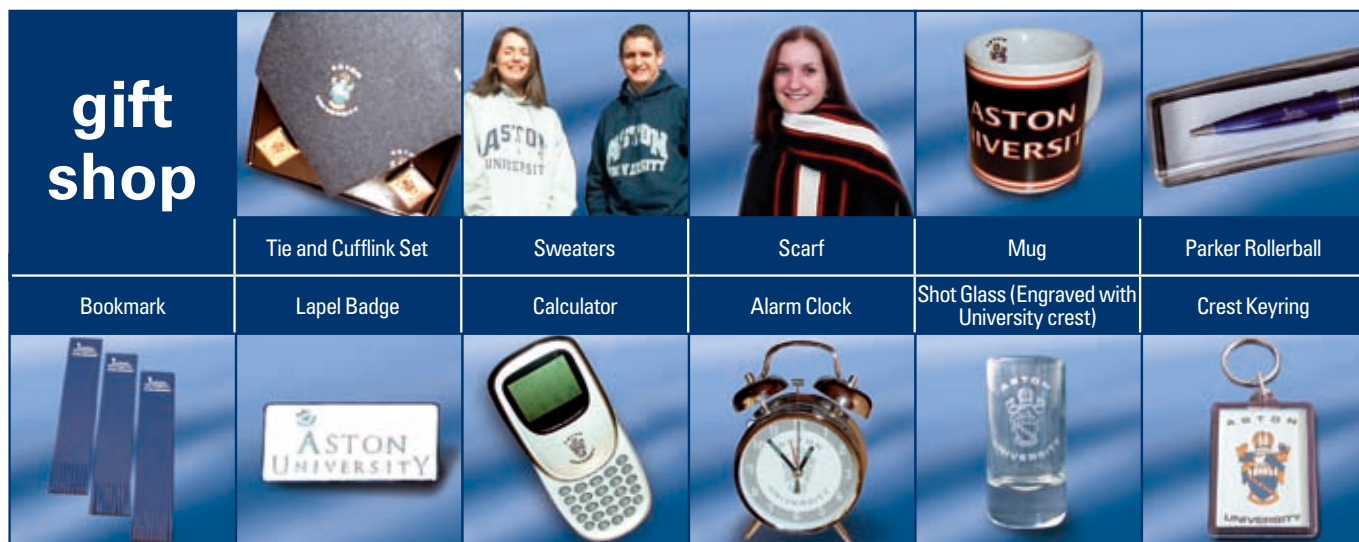
### DONNA ZURKOWSKI

(1981 BSc Managerial and Administrative Studies)

## Looking for somebody from Aston?

If they aren't listed on our email directory on the website [www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/contactsdb](http://www.aston.ac.uk/alumni/contactsdb) 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 enquirers and all mail is treated in the strictest of confidence.



**TO ORDER YOUR ASTON UNIVERSITY GIFTS, PLEASE COMPLETE THE ORDER FORM AND RETURN IT TO:**

Alumni Relations Office, Aston University, Aston Triangle, Birmingham, B4 7ET, UK. All prices include postage and packaging.

	Item Description	Price	Quantity	Total
1	Tie and Cufflink Set	£15.00		
2	Pink Sweater S M L XL	£25.00		
	Grey Sweater S M L XL	£25.00		
	Light Blue Sweater S M L XL	£25.00		
	Navy Sweater S M L XL	£25.00		
3	Scarf	£20.00		
4	Mug	£4.00		
5	Rollerball	£6.00		

	Item Description	Price	Quantity	Total
6	Bookmark	£2.00		
7	Lapel Badge	£1.00		
8	Calendar Calculator	£11.00		
9	Alarm Clock	£13.00		
10	Shot Glass	£4.00		
11	Crest Keyring	£2.00		
<b>Total</b>				

**Payment can be made by credit card or cheque made payable to Aston University, in sterling and drawn on a bank in the UK.**

All orders must be accompanied by full payment. Refunds will only be given if the goods are faulty. Please allow 28 days from receipt of order.

Dr ☐ Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Miss ☐ Ms ☐ Name:

Address:

Postcode:  Country:

Tel:  Email:

Tick as appropriate: ☐ I enclose a cheque in pounds sterling drawn on a bank in the UK for £

I wish to pay by ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ Switch/Maestro ☐ Access ☐ Delta ☐ Solo

Please charge to my account:

Card number

Name on card

Security no.

Expiry date  Issue number

Cardholder's signature

Delivery details  
(if different)

Name:  Address:

Postcode:  Country: