



Noteworthy



**We're
on
our
way**

**Alumni
Association
gathers pace**

Introducing the latest issue

Contents

From the editor

WELCOME to the Spring 2003 issue of Noteworthy – and many thanks for your fantastic response to the questionnaire in the last issue.

As alumni of the University, you are part of a lifelong family – a community of common interest that spans the globe. Almost everywhere in the world you will find fellow Luton graduates, often holding important roles in industry, the media or even government.

All have benefited from their time as students at the University of Luton – and many are committed to doing what they can to help future generations enjoy the same excellent foundation. On almost every continent, funds are being raised and contributions made to help sustain the continued development of the University – and support students who might not otherwise have the opportunity to study here.

In this issue, you'll find details of our special 10th anniversary celebrations, with plans under way for a number of special events in Luton and across the world.

Our new Alumni Association will also be offering opportunities for you to reunite with old friends – there's news of the official UK launch of the Association at the House of Lords on November 7. With this copy of Noteworthy, you'll find a letter and a form inviting you to reserve a place at the launch – and to find out more about alumni events and opportunities to support the University.

Please complete the form and return it in the envelope.

Patricia Murchie, Editor



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Noteworthy is a publication for all graduates of the University of Luton. If you would like to register to receive a free copy – or notify us of a change of address – please phone or email.

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There's never been a better time to put something back into the University

Be part of our future



University of Luton
Education that works

▼LORD FAULKNER

LABOUR peer Lord Faulkner of Worcester is an experienced fundraiser and ardent supporter of the University of Luton. He has been associated with the University since 1999, when he was invited to be Guest of Honour at the University's degree ceremony. He was impressed with Luton's particular brand of Education That Works, and subsequently became a member of the University's Court, and chair of our active Fundraising Committee. He brings a wealth of experience to the fundraising role and, in his work for Luton, has made it a priority to ensure that future generations of students benefit from their time at the University in the same way as the generations before them.

TIME and again, the pages of Noteworthy reflect a real sense of the affection and pride that you, our alumni, have for your University. Wherever in the world they find themselves, and whatever they're doing now, our graduates look back on their student days as a golden time in their lives. But they want to look forward too, and there's now a real enthusiasm among alumni to be part of our future, as well as our history. "What can I do to help?" "What can I contribute?" "How can I be an ambassador for the University?" These questions are among the most frequently asked of the alumni office and we very much welcome this positive spirit among our former students. Like the alumni who asked these questions, you might want to put something back into the University and help future generations of students. In the following pages you will find plenty of examples of how you can make a real contribution. And, as we celebrate our first 10 years since achieving University status, there's never been a better time to do it. Like any healthy 10-year-old, we're growing and changing fast. Our ambitious building plans are beginning to take shape – and the investment we make now will mean better facilities for learning and living for generations of students to come. Our student numbers are also on the increase, and scholarships and other financial help contributed by our friends and alumni will help ensure that the opportunity to study at Luton is available to all talented people, whatever their nationality or social background. Above all, the University is growing in reputation, as attested by our continued

excellent performance in the annual university league tables. And, with the moral and financial support alumni can give us, we're on course to progress even further here, too. We're proud of what we've achieved, but to realise our full potential, we need the help of the whole alumni community – and that means every one of you.

LORD FAULKNER
Chair of the University
Fundraising
Group.



“

Our ambitious building plans are beginning to take shape – and the investment we make now will mean better facilities for learning and living for generations to come

”

Latest developments in and around the University

University news

▼ MINISTER'S VISIT

LUTON has become the UK's leading university for students from Bangladesh – and the country's Secretary of Education recently dropped in to find out why.

Mohammed Alam wanted to see at first hand the University's facilities and discuss possible links with education institutions in Bangladesh.

He said: "I can now see why such a large number of Bangladeshi students choose Luton – it offers a wide range of courses in 'new' subject areas that perhaps aren't available at older institutions.

"The University's proximity to London is also a benefit, as students can take advantage of the resources, culture and entertainment of the capital city without the higher living costs."

Last year, University staff made a number of high-profile visits to Bangladesh.

● The University launched a new Alumni Association for Bangladesh in January this year. See page 13 for more about our growing alumni network.

Leaping up the league tables

THE University of Luton has excelled itself in the latest university league table.

It's now officially the highest-climbing university in the country, rising by a massive 25 places in the latest *Sunday Times* University Guide to a creditable 77th.

The guide praised our investment programme – which has seen more than £60 million pumped into new facilities since 1993.

Among the areas rated as 'excellent' are subjects related to nursing, media, design, biology and psychology.

The guide also praises Luton's track record of success in graduate employment and describes

our courses as 'vocational in the extreme'.

Pro Vice Chancellor Tim Boatwain said: "We are delighted. We have argued that Luton should have been in a higher position for a number of years now and this table better reflects our true position – among the best of the new universities."

The *Sunday Times* result follows other league table successes. We were among the highest climbers in *The Times* University Guide last May, appearing in 72nd position – a rise of 21 places since 1999.

For the second year running, we were also top among all UK universities for graduate employment in the same table.

MARKING A MILESTONE

IT'S now 10 years since we achieved University status and to mark this milestone, we are planning a series of special events which will be of interest to many alumni.

● **Luton Carnival, Monday May 26.** This is one of the biggest events in the Luton calendar and this year the University will be well represented. Staff are working with our Student Union to organise a series of performances at the one-day carnival. Plans include a 3-D graphic presentation of how the new

Student Plaza could look (*see page 5*), some short films by media arts students, dancing and a selection of music.

● **Young People and Social Inclusion conference, Wednesday June 18.** The University is proud to host this major international conference, to be held at Putteridge Bury, on a subject in which Luton is renowned for its expertise. Leading professors within the Faculty of Health & Social Science will be addressing an audience of about 200.

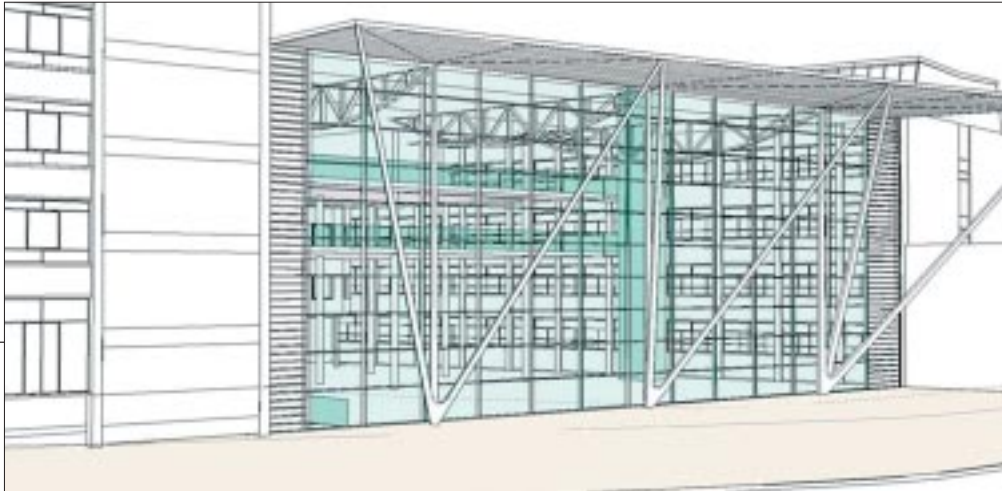
● **Symphonia Academica concert, Sunday June 29.** The University's resident orchestra will be performing at Putteridge Bury. Programme details are still under wraps.

● **Multicultural conference, Monday November 24.** This one-day business conference is to be held at Putteridge Bury.

The University is seeking funding for all these events. If you have any suggestions for sponsorship, or would like more information, please contact Patricia Murchie at patricia.murchie@luton.ac.uk.

The Putteridge Bury campus provides an ideal backdrop for open-air concerts.





◀ An artist's impression of how the new development could look.

Design revealed

THE University has revealed the chosen design for its biggest building project to date, and launched a major public appeal to help fund the development. Plans for a £6.5 million, glass-fronted extension to the Park Square building were first announced last year. Under the plan, a state-of-the-art, three-storey building inside an impressive glass atrium will form a new entrance to the main Park Square campus building, transforming the car park and providing a focal point in Luton's town centre.

The development will create a Student Plaza – a large open area on the ground floor for students, with seating and meeting places combined with small retail outlets and coffee bars. The floors above will provide new lecture rooms and other teaching accommodation.

Funding is now being sought. Some of the money could come from the Government and it is hoped that some will also be raised through sponsorship. A public appeal has already been launched by the University.

Matthew Fletcher, the University's Head of Estates, said: "This building represents our strong commitment to creating an environment dedicated to the needs of our students, in terms of learning and socialising. The glass-fronted building will provide an impressive new entrance to the University. "There are lots of great ideas being discussed as we draw up the detail – we have some way to go before the plans and funding are finalised." Work to excavate the Park Square car park is expected to start this summer.

● THERE are also plans for the University's Department of Media Arts to move from its current home in Castle Street to a state-of-the-art digital production facility at Park Square. This £2 million project will feature a broadcast television studio, three digital radio studios, a performance studio and full editing facilities. There is also an ambitious plan to launch a community radio station.

A centre of excellence

THE Government's new drive to persuade England's universities to recruit more students from deprived backgrounds has held up the University of Luton as a shining example.

We have been described in the national press as a 'centre of excellence' in broadening access to higher education.

And our student population is one of the most diverse in the country: 45 per cent are aged over 24; 30 per cent are from ethnic minority groups; 30 per cent arrive with non-traditional qualifications and our male:female ratio is 40:60.

Nearly one quarter of our students are from overseas, representing 140 countries – almost double the national average. That places us in the top 17 out

of more than 100 universities in the UK, according to Government figures.

The Government has said recently that universities should be more than just 'the birthright for the middle classes', and accessible to all social backgrounds. Patricia Murchie, Director of Development, said: "The drive to make universities more attractive and accessible to a wider number of younger people will be vital if the Government is to meet its targets on higher education expansion.

"The Government wants a 50 per cent participation rate in higher education by 2010. At the University of Luton we have established a reputation for providing people from a wide range of backgrounds with access to education that really works."

▼ FINNISH TRIP

A GROUP of six students proved to be excellent ambassadors for the University when they organised a conference for the Helsinki City Youth Department as part of a recent trip to Finland. The Youth and Community students impressed their hosts greatly with their professionalism and commitment when they organised the one-day STEP (Steps Towards the Equality of People) Conference in Helsinki. University of Luton Senior Lecturer Gill Albon, who attended the conference, said: "Their lectures were very engaging and they had designed an original simulation game which provided everyone with food for thought.

"Delegates were asking: 'How can your students be so professional?' and 'What do you do at the University of Luton? Your students are marvellous!'" The group organised the conference as part of their course, which stipulates they must undertake an 'alternative placement' – doing something that differs substantially from the rest of their work – at the start of their second year.

Other placements over the past two years have seen Luton students working with Russian immigrants, social services and young people with disabilities, as well as youth clubs and youth houses.



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◀ **Professor Angus Jenkinson is Chairman of Stepping Stones Consultancy Ltd. He has led major strategy and change assignments with blue-chip companies such as OgilvyOne, Vodafone, Olympus, IBM, Novartis and Thomson Tours Group, plus the National Trust. He is the author of two books and a former CEO/sales and marketing director of leading IT firms.**

▼ **ELIFE**

THE latest news from the University of Luton is now winging its way round the world in a new electronic format – the e-mag. Our new electronic magazine is called eLife and is aimed at leading our global student recruitment drive. eLife contains four pages of top stories which are emailed every month to potential students in the UK, our network of agents overseas and potential students overseas. The first issue, designed to be read on screen or printed on an A4 colour printer, was sent out early this year. It also benefits from links to the web and mail-back facilities. To receive a copy, please email alumni@luton.ac.uk for more information.

Marketing Centre is a UK first

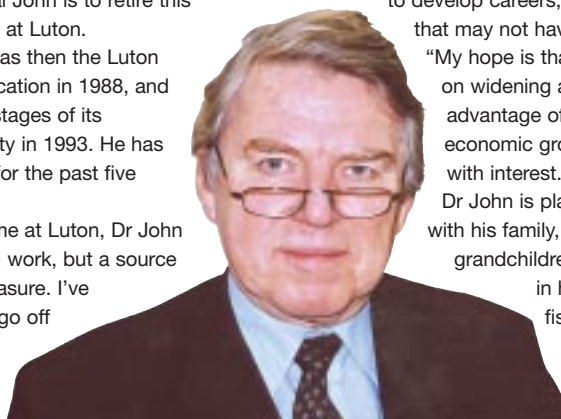
THE UK's first Centre for Integrated Marketing has been opened at the Putteridge Bury campus. Marketing directors from across the UK came to the launch of the Centre, which has been established with funding from industry. VIP guests Kevin Bishop, IBM UK Northern Europe Marketing Director, and Reimer Thedens, Chairman and CEO of OgilvyOne Worldwide, opened the Centre at a special ceremony in November. The Centre is the first of its kind in the country and has been established to research solutions to the integration issues that face the UK's 500 senior marketing directors and their agencies. Angus Jenkinson, Professor of Integrated Marketing at the Luton Business School, is leading the new Centre. "We were delighted to have two distinguished

marketing guests from the client and agency worlds opening the Centre," he said. The Professor gave the inaugural lecture to present the Centre's initial research findings on the theme of Integrated Marketing: Radical Ideas for a New Vision. "Senior marketers," he said, "recognise that integrated marketing, and therefore the Centre, go beyond the concerns of just Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). The Centre is dedicated to developing coherent vision, strategies, methods and tools to integrate Customer Relationship Management, IMC, Media Neutral Planning, Internal Marketing and more." Professor Jenkinson added: "Our research with major brands already demonstrates the significance of this challenge, as well as the key avenues that lead to a solution." **For more about the University's links with the world of business, see page 14.**

DR JOHN TO RETIRE

VICE Chancellor Dr Dai John is to retire this autumn, after 15 years at Luton. Dr John joined what was then the Luton College of Higher Education in 1988, and saw it through all the stages of its transition to a University in 1993. He has been Vice Chancellor for the past five years. Commenting on his time at Luton, Dr John said: "It has been hard work, but a source of satisfaction and pleasure. I've seen many graduates go off

to develop careers, lives and families in ways that may not have been possible before. "My hope is that the University will carry on widening access and taking advantage of Luton's resurging economic growth and I shall watch with interest." Dr John is planning to spend more time with his family, especially his grandchildren, travelling and indulging in hobbies such as fly-fishing.





◀ Greg White,
knowledge hub
Project Manager.

▼WIDENING THE NET

THE University of Luton has secured funding worth more than a quarter of a million pounds for a project to help get unemployed people back into education and looking at careers in the health service.

The £306,000 was won from Beds County Council in a bid headed by the University's Business Development Manager for Healthcare, Cathy Havill. The aim of the Business Development Directorate is to generate income to support development for the University. 'Widening the net: Learn about Health and Career Opportunities' was Cathy's first bid for European funding since she joined the directorate and she was delighted with her success.

▼INVESTMENT

THE University has been investing in its popular computer courses with major enhancements to facilities in the Department of Computing and Information Systems (CIS).

State-of-the-art new teaching labs have been created, equipped with computers, projectors and printers, and our computer networking capabilities have been significantly expanded.

Get involved with network events

THE University of Luton's knowledge hub is inviting alumni to become involved in some of its forthcoming network events. KH Project Manager Greg White said: "As the University's 'shop window' the knowledge hub hosts regular meetings to link local stakeholders of all kinds – employers, entrepreneurs and the community at large, plus development agencies, local government, business angles and the like. Most months there are a number of top-level lectures, receptions and workshops.

A packed programme this year will include:

- Free quarterly 'Luton Economic Development Events' meetings. These are aimed at regional decision-makers in government, investment/development agencies and the commercial world, plus key University clients, governors and friends. At the last meeting, held in December 2002, speakers included William Bygrave, the internationally renowned business expert, and Frederic C. Hamilton, Professor of Free Enterprise at Babson College, Massachusetts.
- 'Surviving & Thriving in a Competitive World'.

This programme of business-to-business lectures from successful local firms, innovators and entrepreneurs will cover a wide variety of themes, as diverse as the "competitiveness" umbrella itself. Events attract directors, senior managers and proprietors of small to medium-sized businesses.

- The 'Basics of Building a Business (B3)'. This series of entrepreneurship events for budding businesspeople runs throughout the academic year to form a complete mini-course. Through lectures and seminars by inspirational entrepreneurs comes understanding of the basics of entrepreneurship; how to get started and grow the business; plus mentoring opportunities, business incubation, business plan competitions and introductions to potential investors.

The knowledge hub would be pleased to hear from alumni who are interested in attending or speaking at events, in becoming a volunteer or business mentor, or providing sponsorship.

For further information contact the knowledge hub team on Freephone 0800 328 5334 or e-mail knowledge@luton.ac.uk

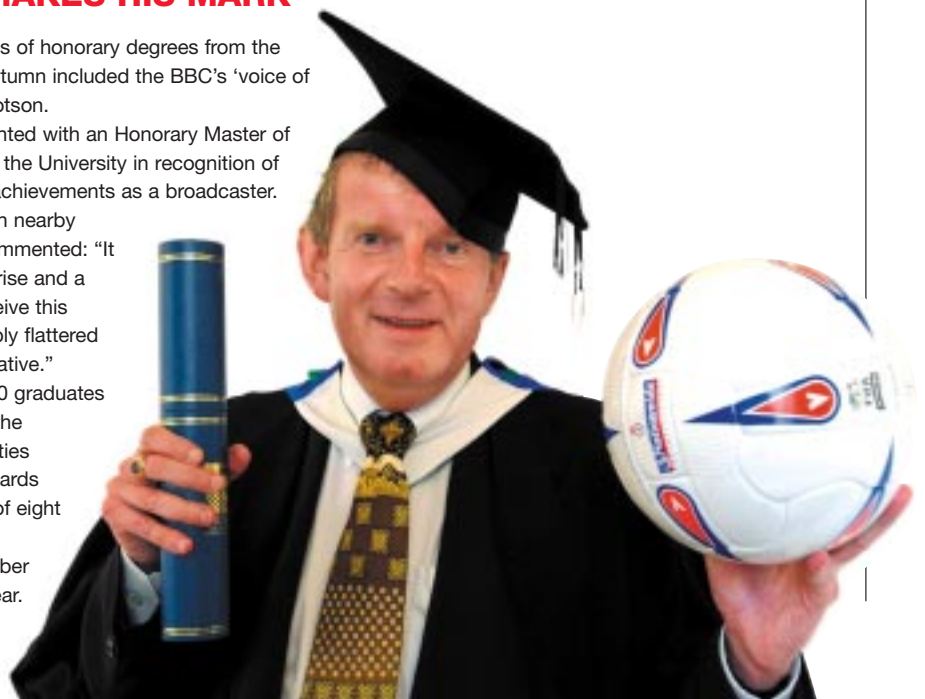
MOTTY MAKES HIS MARK

PROUD recipients of honorary degrees from the University last autumn included the BBC's 'voice of football' John Motson.

Motty was presented with an Honorary Master of Arts degree from the University in recognition of his outstanding achievements as a broadcaster.

John, who lives in nearby Hertfordshire, commented: "It was a huge surprise and a great thrill to receive this award. I am deeply flattered and very appreciative."

In all, about 1,300 graduates from all three of the University's faculties received their awards over the course of eight ceremonies held between September 10 and 13 last year.



Focus on two young Luton stars who have benefited from the generosity of local sponsors

Your money at work

How scholarship funding can change people's lives

FUNDING scholarships or sponsoring a student is a very practical way in which companies or individuals can contribute to the life of the University. Here we focus on two talented students who, with the help of locally-based companies, can look forward to a bright future. As our case studies show, the companies have reaped benefits as well as the students.



Masters student Javeed Hussain grew up in India, where he did his first degree in Business Management. He came to Luton and started studying for his MA in Human Resource Management a year ago. Last summer he won a prestigious scholarship, worth £500 a year, from locally-based brewing giant Interbrew.

The arrangement has proved a win/win for Javeed and the company. As well as providing valuable financial help, the connection has led to valuable work experience for Javeed and helped the company move forward some important projects.

Javeed said: "To an international student, a scholarship means a lot. Living away from home and covering course fees and other expenses takes a lot of money, and most people have to find some kind of work, which usually cuts into their study time.

"Interbrew's support has meant that, rather than just getting any job, I have the chance to work in a department that really helps me learn the business. I worked at the company during the summer and did two research projects for them – on attendance management and voluntary benefits."

As well as giving him challenging work to do and paying well, Interbrew also gave Javeed an excellent induction programme which, he said, really helped broaden his knowledge of UK industry.

On completing his Masters, Javeed will be working towards the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development qualification. He hopes to gain further work experience in the UK before taking his HR skills back to his home country.

Interbrew HR Manager Alex James said he very much valued the contribution of scholarship students from Luton. "The students bring a new perspective to the company. We give them real jobs to do, and the result is a finished project that we wouldn't normally have the resources to do."

In the case of Javeed, the two projects he did were of great value to the company, while at the same time considerably broadening Javeed's experience of the HR function.



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PARTNERSHIP PROVES A WINNER FOR SYDNEY AND HIS SPONSORS

ZIMBABWEAN student Sydney Lunga is currently in his second year at Luton, studying for his BA degree in Business Administration. He won a scholarship from Anachem, the specialist distributor of biochemical products and, like Javeed, has found the financial help has made all the difference to him. "The help I receive from the company takes the pressure off me to look for work during term time," he said. Sydney said he was pleased and surprised to win the scholarship from Anachem. "It was quite competitive and lots of people were on the shortlist. When I heard I'd got it, I was very pleased." In addition to the annual lump sum of £500, which, Sydney says, helps greatly towards tuition fees and other expenses, the company has given Sydney temporary work in its accounts department, mainly covering holiday periods. "I'm looking to go into accounting when I finish my degree, and this has been very valuable experience for my career," he said.

Anachem's HR manager Wendy Rust said the scholarship arrangement is of great benefit to companies as well as students. "Sydney is the third student we have sponsored, and the original reason we got involved was to raise the company's profile within the business community in Luton. Funding scholarships is a very tangible way of doing that. "The company looks specifically for students whose courses are relevant to what we do here, and, as well as providing funding, we can offer them access to our resources and work experience. "We also benefit, because as well as helping to raise our profile, the arrangement gives us access to a pool of young, talented people working in areas relevant to us. Sydney is an excellent example – a self-starter who can come in and just get on with things." ● For as little as £5 per month you can contribute to the University's scholarship programme through our new Annual Fund for Scholarships. See pages 10–11 for further details.

▼ SCHOLARSHIPS

OTHER local companies offering scholarships include:

A to B Removals
AstraZeneca
Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service
EDS
Meriden Animal Health
Reliance Security Systems Ltd
Rotary Club of Luton
Scheidegger MIS Ltd
SKF (UK) Ltd
Welcome Break
Whitbread

Helping you contribute to the success of your University

How to give



There are many ways in which alumni can contribute to the future success of the University – helping others to enjoy the benefit of our unique brand of higher education. You don't need to be a millionaire to make a difference. Our guide to donating outlines the various routes to giving – just choose the one that's right for you.

FUND A SCHOLARSHIP

ANYONE can set up a scholarship – whether you're a company, a group of people or a private individual. And if you'd like to make a contribution but can't afford to fund a whole scholarship, we'll make sure even the smallest donation is put to good work helping fund a student's education.

Education is more important than ever before and represents one of the best possible investments in a person's future. But good investments do not come cheap – it costs approximately £15,000 to fund a student through a three-year degree course at the University of Luton.

If you have benefited from higher education, or if your company benefits from employing graduates, a scholarship is a perfect way for you to help someone else to enjoy the excellent start that studying at Luton can offer.

In many countries education isn't taken for granted, and a scholarship can offer real opportunity to a gifted young person

who might otherwise be deprived of the chance of attending university.

In some cases alumni groups have agreed to provide scholarships, interviewing and selecting students from their countries and raising the funding needed to pay for their education.

There are many examples of companies funding scholarships – often prompted by management who are University of Luton alumni and whose education has helped them on the path to a successful career. Companies can work with the University to choose their own candidate for a scholarship. As well as reaping the reward of seeing a young person flourish in higher education, they often benefit from having an enthusiastic part-time worker during the holidays – and an excellent candidate for recruitment once studies are complete.

One of the main benefits of this type of arrangement is that the donors can have a lot of say in how the money is spent. If they'd like to fund a scholarship for a particular area of study or for a student from a particular country, ethnic group or social background, they can specify this.

To find out more about how you can invest in a young person's future through a scholarship, contact alumni@luton.ac.uk.



SPONSOR OUR BUILDING PROGRAMMES OR EQUIPMENT

IN our first 10 years, the University of Luton has invested more than £60 million in new buildings and facilities.

And our plans for the future are equally ambitious. We are about to embark on a £6.5 million project to create a new Student Plaza and teaching areas – with a variety of other investment schemes on the drawing board. See page 5 for the latest news of our new building programmes.

In the demanding world of higher education, staying ahead means constantly improving – and that involves a continuous supply of funding over and above what we can raise in fees and Government support.

Our alumni community can play an important role in helping the University to continue to offer an excellent start to future generations of young people.

The University of Luton is proud to have provided a springboard for many thousands of graduates during our first decade. In the pages at the back of this issue of Noteworthy you can read about the progress of some of our alumni.

We're also proud that many of those who have passed through our doors feel part of a lifelong community and have chosen to use their own success to help others – by investing in the University.

Patricia Murchie, Director of Development, explained:

“Every contribution, whether it be £50 or £50,000, is put to work to improve the University through equipment or new facilities.

“The world is changing fast and it is imperative that we keep ahead to offer the very best opportunities to our students.

“We can do that only with help from our alumni and I am delighted that so many have chosen to put something back into the University so that others can enjoy the same good start.”



HOW CAN I CONTRIBUTE?

HOWEVER large or small, all donations to the University of Luton are extremely welcome.

You can contribute in the following ways:

• Contribute towards our scholarship fund

The University has set up a permanent annual fund to provide scholarships for Luton students. Individuals as well as companies are being invited to give whatever they can to the fund – you could be involved for as little as £5 a month.

For larger contributions, in excess of £500 per annum, scholarships may be named after the donor or company and may be awarded in a specific subject.

• Contribute towards our major development fund

If you would like to make a donation towards our major development projects – the Student Plaza or Media Arts, for example – please contact alumni@luton.ac.uk for details.

• Simply make a donation

If you would like to make a one-off donation to the University or a student prize/scholarship, you can find a form on our website at www.luton.ac.uk/alumni. And don't forget, if you are a UK taxpayer, your contribution can also qualify under the Gift Aid scheme.



University of Luton
Education that works

How the University is strengthening its links with alumni

Alumni Association



Survey report

WHERE are you now? Last summer, Noteworthy conducted an extensive survey of its readers, to find out more about our alumni community, their opinions and concerns. It revealed an active and committed readership, who look back with affection to their University days – in short, a great foundation on which to build a flourishing alumni association. More than 700 of you took the time to fill in the survey and, of the completed questionnaires we received, about 130 were from 2002 graduates, while the rest came from our alumni of previous years. Most respondents described themselves as British, but in all, 26 different nationalities were represented. Sixty per cent of respondents are single, while 25 per cent are married, and an additional 2.2 per cent live with a partner – of the rest, most did not disclose their marital status. Of all married respondents, around 18 per cent told us their partner had also been to Luton. The vast majority of respondents are in full-time work, with 88 per cent describing themselves as in employment, while 29 per cent are self-employed. Of graduates under 30 who revealed their salary range, most were earning less than £20k, with

substantial numbers in the £20-30k range, and a few with significantly more.

The survey revealed enthusiasm among alumni for an active association: 262 said they would be interested in attending a reunion, while 108 were keen for the association to provide help with careers and networking. Many of you were keen to meet other Luton alumni in similar fields of work, to exchange ideas and give mutual support. "I'd like to make contact with people in similar professional situations to mine," said one. "What can you offer in terms of careers networking?" asked another, while one respondent looking for a job change suggested the University's valuable careers service could be extended to help alumni further their careers after graduation.

"A website for graduates, similar to Friends Reunited, would be good," said one respondent, and the suggestion was echoed by several others. Comments also revealed a keenness to set up local alumni communities – particularly among graduates from overseas – to get together for reunions, and to hear news of old friends. One enterprising suggestion was for a fundraising reunion – perhaps a May Ball – with the proceeds going to help students with financial problems.



Day to remember:
The survey told us about your present circumstances, as well as your memories of life at the University.

Events around the world

IN this, our 10th anniversary year, the University is strengthening its links with alumni as never before. New local alumni communities have already been established in Malaysia, Thailand, Brunei and Bangladesh, with many alumni taking the opportunity to catch up with old friends at launch events, and a great deal of enthusiasm for further gatherings. Bangladesh is one of the University's biggest recruitment markets, and business entrepreneurs and key figures in government

ministries were among the alumni who gathered at the Dhaka Sheraton Hotel for the launch of the University of Luton's Alumni Association for Bangladesh on January 24. Also included were current students who are doing research for their theses in their home country, as well as new students about to join the University. Cyprus is home to one of our largest alumni communities and on May 10, the University will be hosting a special alumni event at the Hilton Park Hotel, Nicosia.

Two further key associations will have their official launch in November. A special association is due to be launched for China, a key recruitment area for Luton. Finally, the UK association holds its first official event on November 7 at London's House of Lords. For further information about all our forthcoming events, see www.luton.ac.uk/alumni or contact Patricia Murchie on patricia.murchie@luton.ac.uk.

Could you be an ambassador?

COULD you be an ambassador for the University? Many graduates have asked us how they can help contribute to our future, and one way is by promoting Luton to other prospective students. Media figures such as poet John Hegley and broadcaster Toby Friedner are well known ambassadors for the University. But you don't have to be a famous name to make a difference. Diana Galpin is taking a Business Studies degree at Luton, and is currently on work placement in our External Affairs office. She has been speaking to groups of pupils in local schools about her own experiences.

"I love being at University, and I love the course, so I find it easy to talk about," said Diana.

She has now visited a number of local schools to pass on this enthusiasm to others – both to encourage them to apply for University, and to get them to consider Luton.

For most of the young people she talks to, applying to university is not an automatic choice, she says.

At their age, she was the same. "I'm the first person from my family to go to university, and initially I wasn't that keen on the idea. But some people from the University gave a talk at my school, and I then visited to get a flavour of what it was like – that clinched it for me."

Diana says the talk and questions generally takes about an hour. As well as speaking generally about

University life, she explains the mechanics of applying. She also talks about her personal experiences – the accommodation, making friends, organising her own work and, above all, how much she's enjoying her time at Luton.

Could you help promote the University to prospective students at a school near you? For further information, contact Marketing Manager Lal Joshi on lalit.joshi@luton.ac.uk.

► **Experience: Diana Galpin loves the chance to talk about her course.**



▼ REUNION TIME

CALLING all graduates of the year 2000: on June 21 2003 Luton alumni Philippa Worley and Alison Fakes are organising a special reunion for our class of the millennium, to be held at the University. Please note that places for this event are strictly limited, and tickets will not be available on the night. For more information, please email Alison and Philippa at lutongraduates2000@yahoo.co.uk.

The University of Luton is helping companies to achieve their goals

Business connections

Major boost for firm's image

STEVENAGE software company Cadcorp is a specialist in geographic information systems, producing and selling software around the world. A medium-sized business with about 40 employees, Cadcorp is among the UK's top 100 fastest-growing high-tech companies, with offices in the UK, USA and Australia, and an expanding client base across Europe.

However, Alan Plumley, Cadcorp's Sales and Business Manager for Europe, felt the company's progress on the Continent was being hampered by a limited understanding of European languages and culture. He decided to embark on a Languages for e-Business (LeB) programme at the University of Luton.

Business meetings in Spain were frequently conducted in English, but Alan's Spanish counterparts would turn to each other to discuss particular aspects in their own language. He said: "It's at times like this that you really need to understand what they are saying or at least part of what they are saying."

Although most of his clients speak some English, since joining the LeB programme Alan has found that speaking in their own tongue is a real asset. Cadcorp had its first taste of this when the company commissioned a Tailored Marketing Report through Trade Partners UK with the help of the British Embassy in Madrid.

The Embassy helped identify a number of potential business partners in Spain and the company decided to hold a seminar in Madrid.

The response was phenomenal. Alan said: "We've just received our first two orders from Spain and for us it's fantastic. Although the company in Barcelona is pretty good at English, we do communicate quite a lot in Spanish now that I am learning.

"This has definitely given Cadcorp's image a boost, in that our Spanish colleagues feel that we care about them. Our efforts have really been appreciated. The last e-mail I received from this particular company said: 'I received the shipment. . . . Thank you very much. I think this is the start of a great friendship'."

▼ Alan Plumley: The University's e-Business programme has helped boost his company's image abroad.



► **Sohail Khan: a great example of a new generation of business entrepreneurs from the University.**



Since the seminar in Madrid, Alan has made further business trips to Spain and is delighted to have signed up more companies: two in Madrid, one in Barcelona, and another good prospect in Santander. Because Cadcorp's business operation in Spain now looks so positive, the company has decided to translate its software into Spanish, which will also benefit another business partner in Mexico, where customers include the Mexican Police and Mexican national oil company Pemex.

Alan said: "Things are looking good and Spain is now my most enjoyable territory. We are planning a presentation to about 80 people from a large company in Madrid, and we are also meeting shortly with a potential partner from Seville."

Alan is enthusiastic about his new-found skills and is looking forward to the possibility of studying other languages. Cadcorp plans to expand in France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, so it looks as if its Spanish model of success could soon be mirrored across Europe.

▼ MOT SERVICE

A UNIVERSITY of Luton professor is offering an MoT service for local businesses to help them be more competitive. Professor Colin Coulson-Thomas (pictured), from the University's Centre for Competitiveness, gives clients a choice of four MoT reviews. These cover the main priorities of winning major bids, developing strategic customers, winning new business and creating and exploiting know-how. The quality assessments aim to give businesses the knowledge that can bring power and wealth. Professor Coulson-Thomas recently joined an international line-up of speakers – world experts on quality, high-profile business people and industry leaders – to

address 700 delegates at the World Quality Congress, Q2002. His speech, 'Quality in the Knowledge Society', addressed the key theme of the congress: how quality practices can improve profitability for industry. For more information visit www.K-frame.com.



University of Luton
Education that works

Take advantage of the experts

LUTON Alumni Sohail Khan and Conrad Wilson are great examples of a new generation of successful business entrepreneurs to emerge from the University. Both studied for MScs in Marketing Management at Luton and now preside over a flourishing computer software training company.

Sohail originally set up mail order company Affordable Computer Training from his bedroom, selling CD-ROM training courses with help from a Prince's Youth Trust business grant.

He moved to the University's Innovation Centre, was joined by Conrad and the company went online. affordabletraining.co.uk was redesigned and registered as a limited company selling its computer software training solutions on the internet. Now in its third year, the company has experienced exceptional growth by moving into the international market through its websites. Major clients include Zurich, PriceWaterhouseCoopers and Bristol Myers Squibb.

Conrad said: "The University really helped – by subsidised hire of offices for start-up businesses and helping to find grants."

And he advised other would-be entrepreneurs:

"Speak to the University's business experts – they have strong links with people who can help, and make it easier to open doors.

"The main ingredients for success are that you have to know what you want to sell and you have to have a passion for it."

Martha Pennington, Powdrill Professor of English Language Acquisition, talks about her work

Your money at work: 2

Martha makes her mark on the community

ALMOST everyone has fond memories of their time at Luton, and what better way to maintain a connection with the University than by contributing to its future? The Powdrill Professorship was created in 1996 through charitable donations by long-standing friends of the University. It is a prime example of the way funding from individuals can make a real difference – both enhancing our academic reputation and contributing to the success of Luton students and the wider community.

The University is proud to be able to boast Professor



► **The Powdrill Chair benefits the community by working with local schools where English is not the first language of a high proportion of its pupils.**



Martha Pennington as our Powdrill Professor of English Language Acquisition.

As a leading authority in her field, Martha enhances the reputation of the University as a centre of excellence for language learning. Last year, she was awarded a £50,000 National Teaching Fellowship award in recognition of her excellent teaching. The money is being used to fund a new University research project.

Martha writes and lectures extensively (see www.luton.ac.uk/powdrill) but, just as importantly, she is there for Luton's students, giving help and encouragement to those who need to improve their academic English, whatever their subject of study. Students who have recently benefited from her help include graduates studying for higher degrees in such diverse fields as sociology, tourism and film studies. Martha's influence also goes well beyond the academic community. She is very much involved in the educational life of Luton at school level. Martha commented: "Throughout my career I have

promoted cross-fertilisation between the University and the community, and among the various levels of education, from university doctoral level all the way down to the infant school.

"Universities should be places where ideas are born that spread out into the community and trickle down through the education system. It is also important for universities to remain in touch with the world beyond, to be alive to the needs and innovations that start in the community at large and in lower levels of education and percolate up to the university sector."

Martha's post as Powdrill Professor enables her to benefit the lives of many people. To find out more about how you could help future students, or to send a contribution to the University, see pages 10–11.

▼ POWDRILL FUNDING

AS well as sponsoring Martha's work, the Powdrill funding has established a prestigious Language Research Centre for the University. The Centre, located in the Research Directorate in The Spires Research and Innovation Centre, carries out research activities, publishes research reports by academic staff and postgraduate students, and hosts an invitational speaker programme. Recent visiting speakers have included renowned linguist Professor David Crystal, who spoke on Internet Linguistics. For more information about the LRC, please contact alumni@luton.ac.uk.

▼ MARTHA'S AWARD

PROFESSOR Martha Pennington was last year named as one of 20 recipients of a UK National Teaching Fellowship. The fellowship recognises achievement in university teaching and learning by an award of £50,000 for a specific research project to be carried out by the recipient. Martha's project is for a Thesis and Dissertation (TAD) Website for postgraduate (Master's and Doctoral level) students and their supervisors. The research is a further development of Martha's long-standing interest in computer-assisted learning and the teaching of writing.

IMPROVING SUTAPA'S STYLE

SUTAPA Haldar is just one example of the many students who have benefited from Martha's expertise. She is from India and is studying for her PhD in Applied Social Studies. Sutapa speaks English at home and is also fluent in Bengali and Hindi. Though she was used to holding conversations in several languages, she felt her academic writing style could be improved.

She asked for help and Martha spent time with her, going through her papers sentence by sentence, and suggesting improvements to their structure and clarity.

After just a few sessions, Sutapa says she felt much better equipped to edit her own work. "The sessions were extremely helpful," she said.

"They gave me another perspective on my own work and made me want to learn more about academic writing style."

Martha also frequently acts as a consultant for schools in Luton, giving help to those involved in the teaching of English as an additional or second

“
The sessions were extremely helpful. They gave me another perspective
”

Sutapa Haldar

language at a local level. There are more than 60 different language groups in and around Luton, so, for many of the children in local schools, English is not the main language spoken at home.

One project brought together a group of teachers who were

researching ways of improving the education of children in their schools who did not speak English as a first language. As part of the project, Martha went into local schools and observed lessons, giving extensive feedback and practical support. One of the teachers involved in the project, Sandie Sargent, who is also one of Martha's PhD students at the University, commented: "The whole group was impressed with Martha for her openness, support and willingness to be available."

Spotlight on the success of University of Luton graduates

Where are they now?



2002

George Ogembo
 MBA, Construction Management. Teacher, Lealands High School, Luton
 George came from Kenya as a mature student, having worked in the building industry and as a qualified teacher in his home country. He chose Luton to study because of its good academic programme combined with reasonable fees, and enjoyed the excellent support he received from the University's international office when he first arrived in the UK. George is now teaching Technology to children aged 11–18 years at a Luton school, a job he finds very rewarding. "I really enjoyed my time studying at the University, and made some good friends there," he said.



I really enjoyed my time studying at the University, and made some good friends there



George Ogembo
 MBA Construction Management

**Kirsty Moore: BA (Hons) Health Science and Health Studies (1997).
 Project Manager, eResearchTechnology**

KIRSTY works for a clinical research organisation which specialises in the heart-monitoring of patients taking part in clinical trials. It's a small, but vital part of the research into new drugs. When a pharmaceutical company develops a new product, whether it is designed for use against HIV, Alzheimer's or any other medical condition, one of the key things it needs to find out is whether it is likely to have an adverse effect on patients' hearts. The company employs a research specialist like eResearchTechnology to ensure that all patients have their hearts safely and accurately monitored, either by ECG or another type of device, and that any potential risks to the heart are spotted as soon as possible. As well as ensuring that all monitoring equipment is working properly and reports are received accurately,

the company is involved in training health professionals in the use of monitoring equipment. As a project manager, Kirsty is responsible for all these areas and finds the job very rewarding. "Developing drugs is a slow process," she said. "It can take 10 years for a product to get to market. But there's still a real sense that we're making a positive difference to people's lives." Because clinical trials take place all over Europe, Kirsty's job takes her to meetings in many parts of the Continent. In the past year, she's visited Switzerland, Sweden, Athens and Spain.

**Claudine Raymond: BA (Hons) Media Performance (1998).
 Floor Manager, Bid-Up TV**

BID-UP TV is a specialist live auction and shopping channel available via Sky Digital and the internet. When Claudine is on duty as floor manager, her key task is to ensure that all the products up for sale on the channel are there when they're needed and looking their best, as well as overseeing all the normal aspects of floor management in a TV studio, such as health and safety. What Claudine most enjoys about her role is being part of a highly-skilled team. She told Noteworthy: "You have to be a special kind of person to spend 10 minutes selling a pen!" Like most TV jobs, it's intensive work involving long hours, but also very rewarding, especially when the team's output gets a good response from the shopping public. And people now make a surprising number of purchases from their TVs, said Claudine. Even on Christmas Day, they were still buying. The role Claudine now has is a complete contrast to her previous job in TV – as a runner on Gloria Honeyford's chat show. Her next job could be different again. Wherever her TV career takes her, though, she feels the Media Performance course at Luton has given her a really good grounding. "It was an excellent course, and I wouldn't have got into television without it," she said.



“

The Media and English courses give you a really good grounding for working in media jobs – I got a lot out of it

”

Ben Myers
Literary Studies in English



2001

Matthew Winslow
BA (Hons) Geography
Matthew now works as a planning officer for Basildon District Council.

Rebecca Tucker
BSc (Hons) Mapping Science
Rebecca works within the Civil Service as a mapping and charting officer.

Julia Austin
BA (Hons) Professional Practice Midwifery
Julia is based at Milton Keynes General Hospital where she is a practice development midwife.

2000

Colin Gyapong
BSc (Hons) Information Systems Development
Colin now works in the telecoms industry, working as an operation centre representative for Telewest Broadband.

Ben Myers: BA (Hons): Literary Studies in English (1997) Freelance music journalist and author

BEN started freelancing for Melody Maker when he was still at Luton and now writes for music titles including Kerrang!, Bizarre and Careless Talk Costs Lives. He's been at home with Ozzy Osbourne, drunk absinthe with Marilyn Manson – he's even interviewed the Spice Girls. A collection of Ben's interviews – American Heretics: Rebel Voices in Music (Codex) appeared last year.

So when he's not writing, going to gigs, jetting back and forth across the Atlantic and hanging out with the stars, he'd be forgiven for being asleep. Somehow, though, he's also managed to find time to write his first novel, due to be published this summer by Wrecking Ball Press, but with a working title that's a little too naughty for Noteworthy. Ben says he

always knew he wanted to write, and studying English at Luton helped him hone his writing skills. He did a Journalism module as part of his course, and one assignment was to pitch an idea to a magazine to try to get a commission. Though nobody's attempt saw the light of day that time round, the exercise gave Ben the confidence to start making contacts on the music magazines, which led to the Melody Maker opportunity.

On his time at Luton, Ben says the most important thing was that the University was willing to give people a chance.

“The Media and English courses give you a really good grounding for working in media jobs – I got a lot out of it and made a lot of friends.”

Simon Hall: BA (Hons) Product Design (2001). Product designer with President Office Furniture

SIMON is enjoying the challenge of designing the kind of furniture needed in today's ever-changing high-tech offices. “It's quite scary to see all these things you've designed in use, but it's also very satisfying,” he said. “New technologies mean designs only have a lifecycle of about five years, after which you need to think about revamping them. People are

moving to flat-screen monitors and there aren't so many cables and wires to be accommodated, so you can have narrower desks.

“A lot of my work is about trying to guess what will happen in the future and trying to get ahead of the game. At the moment, we are looking at designing a cordless office.”

Joanna Burnett: BA (Hons) Media Performance (1997). Actress

JOANNA did a two-year postgraduate course at drama school after leaving Luton and then began a varied career which includes everything from open-air Shakespeare to TV advertising. She'll also be appearing on our TV screens later this year in an episode of *The Bill*, playing 'a teenager with attitude who gets punched'.

In fact, playing youthful roles seems to be a bit of a speciality for Joanna. A year ago, she took her first lead role in a new play based on *The Book of the Banshee*, by Anne Fine, in which she portrayed a 13-year-old girl. However, Joanna's greatest fear is becoming typecast. "I want to do as wide a variety of roles as possible," she said. "If you get settled into a TV soap or something too early in your career, it can really limit your options, so I'm getting as much experience as I can."

"In different plays, I've played Jewish, French and Asian people; I've done children's theatre, even some martial arts."

Then there was the TV ad for BT Cellnet, a brief appearance which, she said, goes a long way towards paying for her 'resting' periods.

Joanna was part of the original Media Performance class at Luton and still keeps in touch with the friends she made there. "I really enjoyed my time there, and though there wasn't much acting within the course, it made me sure of what I wanted to do."



“

The company is constantly adapting to change ... there's always new ideas and new ways of working

”

Alison Batley
BA (Hons) Media Studies

Alison Batley: BA (Hons) Media Studies (1994). Internal Communications and PR Executive, McDonald's

ALISON has had a varied career so far, working at a holiday camp, as a photographer at Madame Tussauds, and in a customer services role for Harrods. She then went travelling, started temping on her return, and so came to the communications department at McDonald's. She works with the rest of the team to produce communications for all the company's UK employees, including a printed magazine and an online publication aimed at managers. Communication is central to the success of McDonald's, says Alison. "Our people are the ambassadors of the brand," she said. "So keeping

staff informed and making them feel part of a bigger team is really important."

She also handles some of the external public relations for the company, including requests from the media for quotes and pictures.

The best thing about the job, says Alison, is that there are new challenges every day. "The company is constantly adapting to change in the High Street – there's always new ideas and new ways of working. We have to keep moving with the times and communicate what's going on to our staff and customers."



University of Luton
Education that works

Matt Hallard: BA (Hons) Media Performance (1997). Production manager, P&O Cruises

IT'S a life on the ocean wave for Matt (*below, centre*), whose job is to oversee the technical aspects of the entertainment on cruise ships. The role is much the same as it would be at a theatre on land, but when you're all at sea, you have to rely on the equipment and skills you have. Lighting is Matt's speciality, and he's worked with big-name entertainers such as Danny La Rue and Des O'Connor. His first post was with Saga – now he's with P&O, working for a younger, more demanding audience. The trips he's made have taken him all round the world and though he's not seen

“
What could be better than working tax-free, having your accommodation and laundry taken care of?
”

Matt Hallard
BA (Hons) Media Performance

as much of the shore as he would like, he's got a flavour of lots of different places he'd like to return to. "Working on a cruise ship is not a lifetime career," said Matt. "But it's brilliant fun for a while. "What could be better than working tax-free, having your accommodation, laundry and catering taken care of day after day, staying overnight in places you'd never go on holiday, and visiting duty-free havens scattered all over the globe?" Matt's best moments include sailing into Sydney Harbour at sunrise, climbing the Great Wall of China, riding an elephant and swimming with dolphins. On the down side, he says, you work, eat, sleep and socialise with the same people day after day. Storms with 90mph winds and 30-metre swells do happen, and, being out of contact from friends and family back home for weeks at a time is commonplace. Matt would love to hear from old university friends – contact him via matt-lite@mail.com.

Natalie Perkins

BA (Hons) Psychology
Natalie is working in a private hospital in Bromley as a healthcare assistant.

Mark Valderey

BA (Hons) Sports and Fitness Studies
Mark lives in Swindon, and is working as an associate manager for Gap.

Seema Sahnan

BA (Hons) Public Policy and Management
Seema is working as a fraud elimination officer for an insurance company.

1999

Donna Tamblin (née Price)

LLB, Law
Donna is married to fellow Lutonian Robert Tamblin. She works for a London law firm as a paralegal and lives in Gillingham, Kent.

Paul Woloszyn

BA (Hons) Modern English Studies
Paul is working as a freelance journalist for BBC Digital Text.

1998

Kate Davis (née Davies)

BA (Hons) Modern English Studies
Married to Paul and living and working in Maidstone, Kent, as a service adviser for the AA.

Julia Hutton

BA (Hons) Media Production
Julia works as a freelance sports journalist and is also press officer for the Rugby Football Union.

Robert Elder

BA (Hons) Politics
Robert is a journalist for the Larne Times.



“

For me, Luton always remains quite special. I really enjoyed studying there and made a lot of good friends

”

Kieran McGeary

HND, Business and Finance (Communications and Media)

**1997****Paul McAleese**

BA (Hons) Contemporary British and European History
Paul did a PGCE in Manchester after graduating from Luton. He now teaches in Warrington as head of history and head of year 11.

Marit Rullestad

BA (Hons) Travel and Tourism

Marit lives and works in Oslo as a booking consultant in the hotel industry. She would like a reunion as, living in Norway, she does not often have the chance to see friends from University.

Darren Bloom

BA (Hons) Media Production
Darren is now working in complementary medicine as a yoga teacher and masseur. Darren says he enjoys Noteworthy and would like to go to a reunion.

Richard Skuse

BA (Hons) Sport and Fitness Studies

Richard works in the leisure industry as duty manager at Clacton leisure centre, Essex.

1996**Gary Charles**

BA (Hons) Travel and Tourism

Gary works as a benefits officer for Bradford Council.

1995**Natasha Broomfield-Reid**

BA (Hons) Community Management and HND

Public Administration
Natasha works in the voluntary sector as an area manager for Victim Support in Birmingham.

Rachel Buckby (née Bridges)

BSc (Hons) Physical Geography with Geology
Rachel works as a contracts officer for Transco and lives at Stoney Stanton, Leicestershire.

Kieran McGeary: HND, Business and Finance (Communications and Media) (1992). Chief Executive, Beat 102–103, Republic of Ireland

KIERAN has just embarked on a new venture, presiding over the launch of Ireland's first regional radio station, Beat 102–103. Previously Managing Director of Wolverhampton station The Wolf, he is looking forward to the challenge of starting a new station from scratch.

Kieran always knew he wanted to get into radio – at 15, he worked part-time at his local station in Ireland. At Luton, much of his course work was relevant to a radio career, particularly to the management side. He followed this up with a postgraduate course in broadcast journalism at Falmouth, Cornwall, after which he went to work for BBC local radio.

Then, after a spell doing news bulletins for Classic FM and Talk Radio, Kieran began the path into radio management, with a post as Head of News, then Programme Director at Radio Mercury in Crawley, and the move to MD at The Wolf in 1999. Beat 102–103 has a launch date this July and Kieran will be relocating to Waterford, near where he grew up. “It's been a personal goal of mine to launch a radio station,” he said. “And it's a much more open market in Ireland, so there are more opportunities to start something from scratch.”

Semeli Koukliati: BA (Hons) Modern English Studies (2001). Teacher of English in Thessaloniki, Greece

AFTER leaving Luton, Semeli went on to do a Master's degree in European Politics, Business and Law at the University of Surrey. She is now aiming for a career in the Diplomatic Service, and meanwhile is enjoying the challenge of teaching primary-age children in her home country.

Suzanne Whittaker: BA (Hons) Interior Design (2000). Designer, Scurr & Partners Ltd

SUZANNE has worked on a variety of different design projects since joining architecture and design company Scurr. At the moment she's part of a team designing old people's homes; before that she was working on the interiors of branches of Pizza Hut. Naturally, part of the challenge of her role is working to strict guidelines from the client, though some do give more creative freedom than others. Her own

Kieran has fond memories of his time at University. “For me, Luton always remains quite special. It was the first place I lived in the UK, and it was quite a home from home, as there were lots of other Irish students. I really enjoyed studying there and made a lot of good friends.”

Kieran also met his wife Georgina (née Kelland) at Luton – she was doing the same course there. They married in 1995 and now have two children, Clodagh (4½) and Callum (1).

Kieran says he can't imagine working in any other job. “The best thing about working in radio is that I'm getting paid to do what I like best – if I didn't work full time in this industry I would do it as a hobby.”

Luton was Semeli's first experience of the UK, and she enjoyed it immensely. “There were many people from Greece, so I didn't miss the Greek way of life at all,” she said. Semeli likes to revisit the University as often as she can and is still in touch with many of the friends she made there.

design taste is for contemporary interiors, especially Italian.

Ultimately, she'd like to run her own design team and take responsibility for complete projects. Suzanne has two sons, George (12) and Harry (10). She looks back with fondness on her time at the University and particularly appreciates the freedom it gave her to experiment with interior design.

Mark Denton: BA (Hons) Business Administration (1994). Round the world yacht race skipper and business consultant

“When I was just going nowhere, Luton put me back on my feet and made me feel I could control my own destiny,” says Mark Denton, a round-the-world yacht race skipper.

The former business administration student first learnt to sail on lakes at Northampton and then went on to turn his hobby into a career.

He admits sailing as a sport became “a bit of an obsession”, that led him over four years to arrive at the door of The Challenge Business, the company that runs the BT Global Challenge.

He was then picked to prove himself against 186 other candidates, in a tough selection process that lasted two months.

“To become a professional skipper on this race not only requires vast sailing experience, but management and leadership experience too. That was where my degree from Luton and my subsequent commercial experience became invaluable,” said Mark.

Eventually, Mark was one of 12 to be picked to command of a crew of 17 amateur sailors in the BT Global Challenge 2001.

The yacht race is said to be the ‘world’s toughest’ due to the fact that it sails the wrong way around the world – against the winds and currents, and against the spin of the earth.

“There were plenty of moments when I really felt up against it and out on a limb – when we met Hurricane Michael near Boston for example – but when it’s that bad, you’re too busy keeping the thing together to worry about it!” he said.

“I had gone to university at 21 after running my own business for a couple of years – I was undecided about going to Luton until the day before I was due to start, but then I thought ‘what have I got to lose?’ – Thank God I did – it really gave me the focus and direction I needed.

“With sailing you have to be hugely focused and driven. It is a fascinating sport but totally all-consuming. You have to live it and breathe it 24 hours a day when you’re out there. You have to be dedicated.”

There was a three-year build up to the 10-month race that included compulsory training, fitness and all the necessary logistics, as well as plenty of corporate



days where the teams would look after their sponsors by giving them a trip on the yachts.

However, Mark only knew who his team were going to be just nine months before the start, and in that time only had the opportunity to train further with them for three to four weeks.

“But there was an incredible will to learn fast and bond quickly within the team. We knew our lives and reputations counted on it!”

After leaving its host port, Southampton, the race stops at various places round the world – Boston, Buenos Aires, Wellington, Sydney, Cape Town and La Rochelle, France – before coming back to the UK shores again.

“We were going one way round the world while lone yachtswoman Ellen MacArthur in the ‘Vendee Globe’ was going the other. We crossed between Cape Horn and New Zealand, only a few miles apart.”

BP Explorer, Mark’s team, finally achieved third position back into Southampton after a non-stop battle for points in each leg of the race. “It was always our mission to get on the podium and we finally did it.”

Now, in between sailing commitments, Mark uses his University and business background coupled with his yacht racing experience to teach teambuilding and people management for companies who are striving to achieve and maintain outstanding performance.

“The parallels between running a team in sport and business are many, and I definitely learnt a lot about what intrinsically motivates people.

“I work a lot with energy company BP, which sponsored our yacht, but I’ve also lectured to many other clients including Guinness, Nationwide, Nuffield Hospitals and Bang and Olufsen, to name a few.” But the sea still draws Mark. His next challenge is the Volvo Ocean Race in 2005 – a tough event for professionals, higher stakes and a lot more competitive. Just how Mark likes it!

Norma Keery

BA (Hons) Psychology
Norma is a family support worker with children’s charity Barnardo’s

1994

Mannon Trappe (née Hughes)

BA (Hons) Community Management.
Mannon is living in Blaenau Ffestiniog, and working as a social worker.

David Dutton

BA (Hons) Accountancy
David is now financial controller for Amcor, Bristol.

Victor Castillo-Estevez

BA (Hons) Business Administration
Victor now lives in Gran Canaria where he is manager of his family’s business. He’d be keen to stay in touch with former students.

Noteworthy

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