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Craig Johnson scoffs 9 Big Macs for BBC Children In Need



Darren Ashford gets his dancing shoes on



Nigel Rudgard

Latest results...a round-up of ATG sponsorship news



All aboard for Christmas fun in London!

ATG welcomes Nadine Dorries MP

Nadine Dorries, the MP for Mid-Bedfordshire, visited ATG in Silsoe recently to find out how an engineering SME is bucking the economic trend to experience rapid growth.

Mrs Dorries – who recently returned from filming the ITV show 'I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!' in the Australian jungle – was welcomed by Andy Robinson and staff at Wrest Park, where she enjoyed a guided tour of the facility and heard about the group's struggle to recruit skilled engineering staff.



Nadine Dorries MP is guided around ATG's manufacturing facility in Silsoe by Andy Robinson, CEO

As well as being snapped by ATG's own photographer, Mrs Dorries was being filmed by the BBC for a new feature on Britain's skills agenda. The MP was very interested in how ATG has tackled the skills gap it faces. "This firm has taken the bull by the horns to create its own apprenticeship scheme. This is the kind of proactive approach that will get Britain off its knees and we need to repeat this kind of success story," she said.



Discussing the skills shortage with Andy Currington, Proposals Manager, and Richard Foord, Sales Engineer



Mrs Dorries meets James Ellis, one of the 21 new apprentices in the Autotech Academy

The Autotech Academy took on its first 21 apprentices in October. The young people are receiving a mixture of on-the-job training and technical learning, delivered in association with Semta (the government-licensed Sector Skills Council for Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies) and Bedford Training Group Ltd, a local supplier of vocational training that specialises in engineering.

From the CEO's desk...

If a week is a long time in politics, then a year in business is one hell of a long time!

2012 has been one of the busiest years of my life, with an incredible amount of change – the acquisitions of Igranic and PSJ Fabrications along with the creation of ATG, new premises in Silsoe and Kings Norton and the launch of the Autotech Academy. Given the pace of change, it seems the right time to publish an internal newsletter to supplement our intranet and keep everyone informed of orders, organisation and strategy – as well as sharing personal stories to get to know one another better.

Our order book goes from strength to strength, with Autotech winning BAe Phase 2 at Preston and the X152 Coupe project for Jaguar;

Igranic working hard to bring some significant projects to fruition in the New Year; and PSJ producing more tanks for ATL and busy with projects for the US Air Force.

Facing an ongoing need for more staff, we've been helping to raise the profile of the skills shortage in engineering. After an invitation by Baroness Wall, I spoke at the House of Lords recently and also had a breakfast meeting with David Willets MP, Universities and Science Minister, in the Commons. I also spoke to Nadine Dorries MP about the issue when she visited us. Looking ahead, I have asked Nick Rance, our HR Development Manager, to set up an ATG Skills Council to continue this work.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your efforts this



year – I firmly believe that the dedication of our staff underpins ATG's continuing success. Enjoy a great Christmas with your families and friends and I look forward to working with you in 2013.

Andy

Craig's Big Mac challenge



Craig Johnson, a fabricator for PSJ, stepped up to the plate when challenged to eat 9 Big Macs in 30 minutes to raise money for BBC Children In Need recently.

Confident Craig was cheered on with each bite by colleagues but began to struggle with burger number 6. By Big Mac 8, he was really suffering but managed to chomp through half of number 9 before running out of time.

It was a terrific effort and raised a Mac-tastic £328 for the charity – thanks to Craig, everyone who sponsored him and to McDonald's for donating the burgers.



Apprentices update

Our 21 Autotech Academy apprentices have been with us for a couple of months now and the feedback we have been receiving has been very positive – they are bright, enthusiastic, hard working and fast learners. That's great news and reflects not only the effort put into their selection but also the welcome given to them since their arrival. I regularly see apprentices and skilled staff working busily together, with big smiles on their faces. This sense of being part of the ATG team is key to our ongoing success and we need to keep it up, whether on or off site. Well done!

Nick Rance, HR Development Manager



Dancing Darren shows he's got soul

Darren Ashford, Installation Director, has worked for Autotech for four years. When he's not looking after on-site installations, he's either spending time with his family – he has three daughters aged 21, 11 and 9 – travelling across the UK to attend scooter rallies or donning his dancing shoes. In this article, Darren shares the highs and lows of this year's Northern Soul World Dancing Championship.



Held at Blackpool Tower Ballroom with a crowd of about a thousand, the competition took place on Saturday 10 November and I was one of a hundred entrants. For those of you who aren't familiar with Northern Soul, the dancing is fast, energetic and acrobatic; it's said that it was the starting point for breakdancing. The dress code is baggy trousers, a vest top and slippery-soled shoes – plus some talcum powder to sprinkle on the floor to spin on!

The competition started with around 30 women dancing, followed by 70 men. The idea was to choose 12 from each group to dance off against each other, narrowing the field down until there was a winner. When it was my turn to impress, I threw myself into the air, twisting my body so that I dropped onto my hands, allowing me to control my fall and then flicking myself up onto my feet. I then followed this by spinning at speed and the judges handed me a necklace, meaning that I was through to the last 24 – come on!

In round 2, I dropped onto one leg in a crouched position and started to spin on the floor with one leg trailing and slowly lifted myself off the floor whilst spinning. This was an old move that not many of the younger ones had seen or tried – it can easily go wrong and you finish up flat on the floor! Once again this was enough to impress and I got the nod through to the last 12.

I then made it through the next round, so I was in the last 8 but then there was a problem. The judges had messed up and given 9 people the nod. At this point, I looked at the others and saw that they ranged in age from about 18 to 30 and – whilst I don't feel 46 – I knew that if I made the final I wouldn't have the energy to compete, so I stood down. This gave me ninth position overall, which I was very pleased with, and the event was definitely one of the best occasions of my life. You can see the final three dancers on YouTube – if I'm coaxed, I may download footage of my own efforts for SharePoint!



Sponsorship

News

Austen's racing success



ATG sponsors Austen Greenway, Senior Simulation Engineer with Autotech, in the RGB (Road Going Bike-engined) race series. After an eventful season – including a dramatic accident – Austen finished second in class. The building of a brand-new car for the 2013 season has already started and it will once again be sporting the yellow and blue livery of Autotech Academy. You can follow the action at www.austengreenway.co.uk.

Daniel defends Dunstable Town



Autotech's Daniel Mead (left)

Autotech Academy is also sponsoring Dunstable Town FC, a club that includes our very own Daniel Mead – Craft Apprentice with Autotech – as defender. The team has enjoyed a stunning start to the season,

currently topping the Spartan Premier League and unbeaten in 20 league matches – including an 11-0 victory against Holmer Green. Said Daniel, "We are in with a great chance in the FA Vase and the final is at Wembley. We're 40/1 at the bookies so it's worth a fiver!" For more information about the club, visit www.dunstabletownfc.org.uk.

Hats off to the Hatters

Another local club benefiting from ATG sponsorship is Luton Town FC, fondly known as 'the Hatters' due to the town's history of hat-making. A recent turn in form has seen the club climb upwards and the Hatters are currently sixth in the Blue Square Premier league table, only six points behind the leaders, Newport County. The club is desperate to move back into league 2 after too many years of non-league football.

Bedford Blues

PSJ Fabrications is now sponsoring Bedford Blues. Founded in 1886 after an amalgamation of Bedford Rovers and Bedford Swifts, the rugby union club has its ground at Goldington Road in the town, with a capacity of 6500 but an average gate of around 3000 on match days. Bedford Blues play in the RFU Championship, where they are currently lying in second place behind Newcastle Falcons.

**BEDFORD
BLUES**



1886

Spotlight on....



For the first of our 'Spotlight on...' interviews, we find out more about ATG's CEO, Andy Robinson.

How did you get into engineering?

From a very young age I was fascinated by how things worked. I used to spend hours reading a book called 'What makes it go?' Eventually, I started to build my own electrical circuits and develop computer programs that I sold at school – it all went from there, really, and my hobby became my job.

Who inspired you most?

Sir Clive Sinclair. He was very innovative, was prepared to take calculated risks and marketed his own kit. His products made a big impression on me whilst I was growing up – his calculator, the digital watch and the ZX81 (my first computer).

What is the most embarrassing thing that has ever happened to you?

I've never lived down a school trip to Cambridge. Whilst punting along the

river, the pole got stuck between a rock on the riverbed and a tree above me. For some reason that I've never worked out, I didn't let go of the pole and as the punt carried on I was left hanging on the pole for what seemed like ages. In the end, I had no choice but to fall into the water and swim to the bank – and that was also the end of my Sinclair digital watch!

Who or what makes you laugh?

That's easy: my 10-year-old twins reading me jokes from their silly joke books.

What is the greatest luxury in your life?

My Jaguar XK. As well as the sheer luxury, I love the build quality. Autotech installed the control systems for the Jaguar XJ and XK assembly lines, so we know a lot about the quality ethos at Jaguar. Right now, we are working on the assembly line controls for the new Baby Jag – the 'F' Type code named the X152 – which has an all-aluminium body. We are making use of innovative technologies such as robotic riveting and laser

measuring to ensure the new vehicle is best-in-class.

What is your guilty pleasure?

Chilli Sensations – I can't resist them with a nice cold beer!

What is your dream holiday destination?

Any snowy mountain – I love the complete change of environment coupled with the adrenalin buzz of skiing!

What is your favourite film of all time?

Any one of the James Bond films – you can't beat a bit of escapism!

What is your favourite pastime?

I love getting out to walk, either on my own to allow time for reflection or with the family – nothing beats walking over the fields on a chilly Sunday with the family and dog and stopping for a beer or two.

Gangnam Style on the Thames

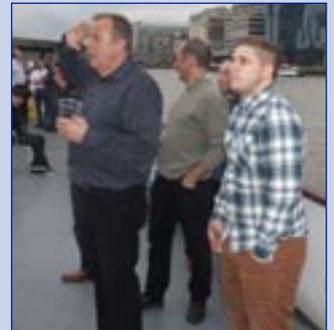
As works Christmas parties go, this was an event to remember. On Saturday 1 December, ATG staff gathered at the Millennium Tower pier in anticipation of a cruise on the Thames. Once aboard, we were welcomed with a glass of bubbly and drink tokens. As we headed up the river – taking in the sights of Shakespeare's Globe, Tate Modern, Parliament, London Eye and Battersea power station – a party atmosphere began to brew.



Food and beverage consumption was well under way, with all party-goers mingling and chatting in the cabin and on deck. It was a great opportunity to get to know other people within the organisation who you do not talk to on a daily basis.

During the cruise we were treated to the sight of young and not-so-young staff members lighting up the dance floor with extravagant moves. Balancing against the river roll and a somewhat slippery surface, some of the dancing had to be seen to be believed – the pinnacle being the co-ordinated dance-off to 'Gangnam Style'. Maybe we need to start a dance society to nurture this talent!

After the cruise, we moved into various drinking establishments before making our way home. Everyone looked to have enjoyed themselves and certainly all the feedback was very positive. Thank you all for supporting the event and we hope the headache was not too severe the next day. There are lots of interesting events in the pipeline for next year to build the success of our Christmas party.



Richard Foord