

In this issue...

Issue 4 - December 2013



Pedalling to Paris for Parkinson's



Inter-group footie fun



New intake for Autotech Academy



Steve's Alpine adventure



Sponsorship news

Igranic staff welcomed at Silsoe



It's everyone's view that Igranic's amalgamation into the facilities at Silsoe will bring benefits in terms of the group's continuing expansion, as well as opening up new opportunities for those employees wishing to progress within the company. This is seen as a chance for everyone to learn new skills and working methods, as both companies have so much to offer each other.

Those coming to Silsoe will gain from sharing the continually improving and modern facilities here at Wrest Park, while PSJ will be given more space to expand the business and improve their working environment. Other advantages for the Igranic employees include the support of the group's administrative staff and having the HR team on hand to support them whenever needed.

After the move from Luton a little over two years ago, this is another big change for the engineering staff here at Wrest Park but, far from rebuffing yet more change, most people welcome additional faces in the office.

As strange as it may seem, we were much more crowded in our previous office so moving to larger premises – coupled with the fact that the majority of our staff are continually out on site – has meant that the offices have at times felt a little empty. Hopefully, with so many more office-based staff in the building, it will become an even more vibrant and lively place to work.

As well as the advantages for individual employees, the business should benefit as the panel shop itself acts as a showroom for the group. A new Customer Centre is planned to demonstrate our products and skills, both within the engineering and manufacturing departments.

Continued on page 4



From the CEO's desk...

Along with the rest of the board and the senior management team, I'm very excited by the possibilities for closer collaboration between Igranic and Autotech now that the Igranic team is moving over to the Silsoe site. I echo Mark Sandikyan's comments that both teams have so much to gain, with Igranic being able to handle larger turnkey projects and Autotech achieving even more business diversification.

I'm also delighted by the success that the Igranic team has achieved recently, winning some prestigious orders including the Beckton and Crossness project for Thames Water. This is the first truly 'group' project,

involving both Igranic and Autotech personnel from the outset, and also having input from PSJ.

Across the group, we're continuing to experience very buoyant markets, with a great number of opportunities in all the sectors in which we are active. It's also very pleasing to see that the ATG team is continuing to grow, with an almost constant stream of new people – please take a look on the intranet to find out more about the new faces.

As another highly successful year for ATG – in which we have seen the successful completion of numerous projects – draws to a close, I would



like to thank everyone for doing a great job and wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Andy

A French adventure



At the end of August, a group of 16 cyclists, two support crew and the Autotech van set out from Northamptonshire to ride all the way to the Eiffel Tower. Among the cyclists was Bill Greenhalgh, ATG's Finance Director. This was more than simply a challenge – the event was to raise awareness of Parkinson's and to raise funds for research into this terrible disease. Bill writes...

The idea for the challenge came from my twin brother, Mike, who over the last couple of years has been adapting to a new way of life, a life with Parkinson's Disease. It is a disease affecting one person in every 500 – that's about 127,000 people in the UK. People with Parkinson's don't have enough of a chemical called dopamine because some nerve cells in their brain have died.

Without dopamine, movements become slower so it takes longer to do things. The loss of nerve cells in the brain causes symptoms to appear. There's currently no cure for Parkinson's and it's not yet known why people get the condition.

So it was at lunchtime on Friday 30 August that all the cyclists, cheered by an assembled crowd of about 100 well-wishers and followed by the Autotech van, set off for Paris. Luckily the weather was fine, as it would prove to be for the whole trip. The first night's stop was in High Wycombe, just over 85 kilometres away, and the group of very inexperienced cyclists soon settled in to cycling together and arrived in good time at the Travelodge in the centre of town. After supper at Pizza Express and a good night's sleep, we were on

our way to Croydon via Central London. Through the delights of the Chiltern Hills and then through the not-so-delightful Slough, we were soon making our way through the streets of London, with a stop in





Hyde Park for lunch. The afternoon was sightseeing on a bike – Buckingham Palace, Big Ben and Downing Street – before heading south and over the river to Croydon. It was the Travelodge again but this time Eastern cuisine and beer at Wagamama's.

Deadly Ditchling

The following morning was Sunday, but there was no lie in; we were up and pedalling before 8am, with the destination being Brighton and the South Downs in our way. This was to be the toughest day in the saddle. The biggest landmark came about 10 miles from the beach when the South Downs reared up like a great green cliff. This was the road up to Ditchling Beacon, roughly the same gradient as Mont Ventoux which is used regularly in the Tour de France, but not quite so long! All 16 cyclists completed the ascent, with relief and pride in equal measure. The reward was a stunning view down to the coast and the long descent into Brighton. The night was spent in a dodgy B&B along the coast in Newhaven, with good old English pub grub and beer to help regenerate our weary bodies.

Channel crossing

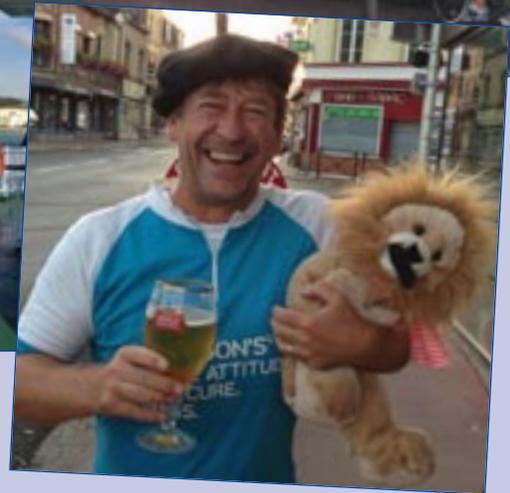
'Not your normal Monday morning' saw us loading the bikes onto the Autotech van for the ferry crossing to Dieppe. With fundraising having been increased by many generous passengers during the crossing, we arrived in Dieppe and were soon cycling along the Avenue Verte, an old railway line converted into the most perfect cycle route. A very quick afternoon pedal brought us into Forges les Eaux, a French town hotel that looked after the saddle-sore cyclists very well with plenty of wine, hearty food and very ripe cheese. The penultimate day, with over 100 kilometres to La Ferme Rose Boisemont, gave the best day's cycling with perfect rolling countryside, quiet roads and wonderful sunshine. We made excellent progress to our destination, a courtyard of farm buildings still be renovated, owned by an English lady married to a Frenchman. We were looked after very well with an



al fresco buffet and plenty of local wine. Tired cyclists went to bed early to be ready for the final leg. It was another early start and almost a sense of celebration as we set off on the last 50 kilometres that would take us to Paris and the Eiffel Tower.

Pride in Paris

We had a day of city cycling through the suburbs of Paris with a short stop in Versailles to view the Chateau and gardens. We skirted the Hippodrome de Longchamp and the site of L'Arc de Triomphe and rode on into the centre of Paris. Finally, we pedalled across the Seine and under the Eiffel Tower and our race was run. The challenge complete, we celebrated with champagne and beer. Any thought of cycling across Paris to our hotel was forgotten as we loaded the Autotech van with the bikes and found taxis to take us to Le Grand Hotel de Paris, a name that would not pass trades descriptions in the UK! And so to our final night: a celebratory meal at Terminus Nord, close to Gard du Nord, a thank you speech from Mike and lots of wine!



Over £30,000 raised

It was a great challenge, enjoyed enormously by everyone. Funds raised for Parkinson's UK are already over £30,000 with more money continuing to come in. Thank you to everyone who donated and finally thanks to Andy who allowed us to use the new Autotech van, which proved the perfect back-up vehicle.

Bill Greenhalgh

Get ready to party!



For this year's Christmas celebrations, ATG staff will be strutting their stuff on the dance floor of The Chiltern Hotel in Luton on 13 December. With a mouthwatering 3-course meal followed by mince pies and coffee, a well-stocked bar and the services of a great DJ, the event has all the elements required for a fun and memorable night.



Decisive footie win

The much anticipated football match between Autotech and the combined team of PSJ and Igranic Controls took place at Wootton Blue Cross Football Club on Friday 19th July. It was a most enjoyable evening and well supported by many employees and their families.

Autotech proved victorious on the night, although the teams were evenly matched at 1-1 for the first 25 minutes. Autotech then stepped up a gear and scored four more goals before half-time. The second half began with PSJ/Igranic pressing early to reduce the deficit but, after no early breakthrough, Autotech again took control and netted another four times to make the final score 9-1.

Thanks to those who participated and let's hope that we can make this an annual event.

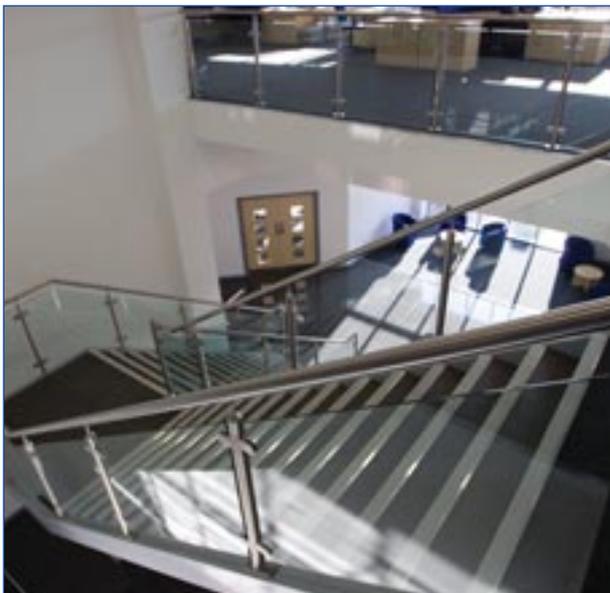
Paul Baxter

Got an idea for a social event?

If you have any ideas for an event or activity, please let your ATG Sports and Social Club committee representative know. If the idea is viable, you would receive help and support in organising it.



Continued from front page



With Igranic's diverse and loyal customer base, it is recognised that advantage can be secured when demonstrating products to new or existing customers. Visitors to either the power or controls partner could be introduced to the other side of the business. And, with our sales team actively pursuing new and more diverse customers, there can be no doubt that exciting and challenging times lie ahead of us all.

As well as all that's going on at Silsoe, much is happening at our Kings Norton office. For many years this has been the main hub for research and

development within the controls side of the business. Some time ago, we installed an ABB robot at the back of the offices for training purposes; this is now being turned into a fully functioning cell. We hope to use the cell for both training and development and, to support this, a Training Manager will join the group early in the new year. An experienced lecturer from the Bedford area who also has extensive knowledge of PLC programming, we are confident that he will be a massive asset to the whole group.

Mark Sandikyan



We were delighted to welcome 12 new apprentices into the Autotech Academy in September. We received no less than 238 initial applications – almost three times the number in 2012 – so the selection process was quite difficult. At our assessment days and follow-on interviews, the young people were really put through their paces. This resulted in offers to a dozen apprentices, all of whom accepted and they started with ATG on 23rd September. Autotech Academy's relationship with Semta

continues, in partnership with Bedford College, Bedford Training Group and Sandwell Training Association as learning partners. In recognition of the learning needs of our expanding organisation – including the rapidly growing Autotech Academy – ATG is in the process of appointing a Training Manager. We extend a warm welcome to all the new apprentices and wish them every success at ATG.

Nick Rance

Steve conquers the Alps

Steve Clossick, an Autotech Senior Control System Engineer and seasoned mountain biker, along with two other members of his club (HoTcHoP mTb), wanted to do something extra special to raise money for a fellow club member – then in treatment for Lymphoma – so in July they took on what is considered to be the ultimate mountain bike challenge.

The Haute Route (High Route) involves six days of hard cycling for the 275 km from Chamonix, at the foot of Mont Blanc, through some of the most rugged and spectacular valleys and high passes of the Alps to Zermatt and the awesome arena of the Swiss Grand Massif.

"When I studied the detail of what I had let myself in for, my stomach churned," explains Steve. "I really wasn't sure that I would be able to do it." Months of hard training plus the determination to help a close friend were thankfully sufficient to give Steve – along with his brother, Martin, and friend, Mark – the strength to see the task through.

"On at least two days we were cycling for 10 hours, rarely on designated cycle routes – more goat tracks and alpine scrambles. One morning we climbed 1,700 metres from the valley floor at Evolene to the col on the Swiss border! But despite the pain and sheer exhaustion, the scenery and the sense of achievement made it all worthwhile."



Their efforts have not gone without reward: between them they managed to raise over £1000 for the charity Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research and the intrepid trio would like to thank Autotech and everybody else who contributed.

Matt Challinor



Sponsorship

News

Cranbourne Cricket Club: a small club with big plans

The Cranbourne Cricket Club was founded in 1931 by Captain Frank T Mann who, as a leading amateur, had captained Middlesex in the County Championship and an England tour of South Africa.

Cranbourne has always welcomed club cricketers from all over the world to play on its Home Park ground in Windsor. The club has followed a policy over the years of playing friendly yet very competitive cricket. In 2011 the club's committee embarked on an ambitious plan to protect the lengthy history of Cranbourne CC by increasing its size and elevating its standing.



In 2012 it entered the Thames Valley League and, as with any new entrant, had to start at the bottom: division 9A. So impressive was the way in which Cranbourne won the division that year – winning all but one of the matches – that the league promoted the team directly up to 6A for the 2013 season.

After a tough start, Cranbourne has continued to climb the table and currently sits in second position at the halfway stage. There have been three major factors in



the success to date. The first is fantastic support from ATG, which has had faith in an enthusiastic club with clear ambition. Secondly, the club's committee has worked tirelessly to attract high-quality players from other clubs who share Cranbourne's vision for the future. Additionally, the injection of energy and management expertise from ex-division 1 player, President of Cranbourne and ATG employee, Brendon Kemp, has been critical.



Brendon is a formidable – stand next to him and you will see for yourself – bowler and batsman. Having grown up in South Africa, he is affiliated with the ECB and has achieved his Level 2 coaching badge. Based in Windsor, he and his wife, Bronwyn, are proud new parents to baby Hudson, who is being actively encouraged to follow in his father's footsteps with daily catching practice!

Matt Robinson

Cranbourne CC member



Blues lose to Pirates

For the fourth time this season, Bedford Blues were beaten by the Cornish Pirates at the Mennaye Field, with the score line being 16-13. Constant drizzle did nothing to assist either side over the 80 minutes but this was a well-fought contest between two evenly matched teams. In the end, it was a single penalty that separated the two. The match was only minutes old when the assistant referee, Dino Maddern, was forced off with an injury but once the game was underway for a second time it was a full-blooded contest right up until the last minute. It has been a competitive season for the Blues so far, losing 8 out of 10 games, mostly by the smallest of margins. Let's hope for a good turnaround in the next phase and then an upward trend. Please visit the website www.bedfordrugby.co.uk to find out about upcoming fixtures and for ticket information to get behind the team.

Matt Challinor

Autotech sponsors Solihull Moors FC



Following recent talks between Autotech and Solihull Moors FC, we are very pleased to announce a three-year sponsorship deal with the club. During the early conversations, it was apparent that we shared similar views on growth and development. The recent work being carried out by your team within the communities illustrates the vision of Solihull Moors as a future leader.

The ATG group has a similar philosophy in the workplace, as demonstrated by the introduction of a second wave of Autotech Academy apprentices, following a successful launch year. The Academy is just one example of our proactive approach to sustaining our high position as a controls systems integrator. We would like to take this opportunity to wish the club all the best for this season and look forward to exciting times ahead.

Darren Ashford

Dunstable Town

As ATG News goes to press, Dunstable Town is currently second in the The Calor League Division One Central, with 29 points – only four from the top, presently Barton Rovers. The game at Barton Rovers was postponed owing to a waterlogged pitch; this will be a crucial match for the league table.

Matt Challinor



Luton fans top the table

Thirty points accumulated to date, seven points off the leaders and placed third in the table after an 8-game unbeaten run: some might say that's not a bad start to the new Skrill Premier League season by the mighty Hatters and I would agree. With an initial lack of goals at the beginning of the season, the floodgates have well and truly opened with the last three games delivering 11 Hatters goals. Unfortunately, we have started conceding lots of goals as well due to a number of defensive howling blunders of a schoolboy nature, but we don't care because at present we are still scoring more! Let's hope we continue to score, sort out the back four and maybe we could be top of the table by Christmas. It's an interesting fact that Luton Town has the best home and away supporter following statistics for a non-league outfit; in fact, they also beat many lower-league clubs' supporter statistics as well. A recent game at Kenilworth Road was supported by 7,000 Luton home fans and only 30 away supporters...COYH!



Richard Foord

Academy race car storms to victory

Having recorded a class win and a 2nd at both Snetterton and Pembrey, I managed to open up a lead at the top class championship and was running joint leader in the overall championship. However, at Donington engine problems hampered qualifying and race 1 and the ultimate demise of the engine in race 2 resulted in a 3rd and a DNF (Did Not Finish). Luckily, there was a 7-week break before the next race, allowing an extensive engine rebuild. Going into the Silverstone races, I was sharing the class lead with my main rival and was 2nd in the overall championship. I achieved class pole position during qualifying for both races, but the start of race 1 didn't go to plan as I was punted off on the second corner and re-entered the track in last place. This caused the red mist to descend and I drove the race of my life, fighting my way back to take the class win! Race 2 was a real dogfight between me and my class rival, but this time I ended 2nd.

The penultimate double-header race weekend was at Donington. I had a great first half of the race but, after a couple of scruffy laps, my main rival passed me. In the second race, a burst water hose caused me to spin and then subsequently overheat. The saving grace was that my rival had clutch problems and nursed the car home in last place. Onto Cadwell for the final two races, with only six points separating myself and the other driver. The weather forecast was terrible, but I qualified pole in wet conditions. Race 1 was cancelled due to standing water, and race 2 – the following day – wasn't looking promising. If both were cancelled, I would win the class

and finish 2nd overall, but I really didn't want that. However, the weather brightened up and we ran the race in dry conditions. I had calculated that if I finished 3rd, I would

clinch the title, so it had to be a sensible race. After a terrible start from pole, I was in 4th place by the second corner but managed to squeeze up into 3rd by the next. By the second lap, I was up to 2nd and challenging for 1st in a tight battle. After several very close laps, 3rd place (my rival for the championship) had closed up and we were in a 3-way tussle for the front. I was mindful that I had to finish in 3rd or higher. My rival made his move when the leader made a mistake and he managed to pull ahead while I was held up by the recovering driver. With only two laps to go, I settled for 3rd spot to clinch the title by the skin of my teeth. The final race was covered on MotorsTV and can be seen at www.750mc.co.uk/webtv.htm.

The car is now sold but my new car is taking shape; it will make its debut – sporting the Autotech Academy livery – on the 750 Motor Club stand at the Autosport International Racing Car Show at the NEC from 9-12 January. Thanks to Autotech for its continuing support over such a successful season, which I'm hoping to repeat in 2014!

Austen Greenway



Spotlight on....



In this issue, we turn the spotlight on Ian Farmer, Technical Director.

What brought you into this industry?

The fact that my father worked at IBC in Luton and that I had an interest in all things technical. He was an electrician/PLC employee and was involved in the early adoption of PLCs, including the Fanuc and Modicon controllers. He thought a career in automation would be a good thing for me. He's now enjoying his retirement!

What's the most exciting thing about your job?

My company car...it goes like stink and looks great. Oh, and I also get a buzz from making things work!

Who inspired you most in your career?

John Wade from Apollo Controls, back in the early nineties. He understood that it was important to know how things should work before engineering and design took place. He briefly worked at Autotech in 1996 before he hung his boots up.

If you were an item in a warehouse, what would you be?

A decent pair of sunglasses – because I would hopefully be purchased and worn by someone sensible, who would not break or scratch me, nor wear me indoors or at night and would allow me to be in the sun at all opportunities!

If you had to do it all again, what would you do differently?

I would have got married to my beautiful wife in my thirties.

Who or what makes you laugh?

Good times and banter with friends over a few beers in a foreign place...

Do you have any hidden talents?

I can read music and play the trombone. The last time I played was about 15 years ago though. I wasn't too bad either – I played at world expos and the Albert Hall in my youth.

What's your favourite book of all time?

When I was young, 'Jonathan Livingston Seagull' by Richard Bach (recently nearly killed in a plane crash) ... it's a very short book:

<http://www.lib.ru/RBACH/seagullengl.txt>.

My favourite proper book is the Stieg Larsson Trilogy, beginning with 'The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo'.

If you won the lottery, what would you do?

Look after the family, invest in a mountain-biking resort in the Italian Alps and, with the spare change, buy a Carrera GT.



Who would be your perfect party guest?

For a dinner party, it would be Michael Palin; for a booze-up, Keith Lemon; and, for a dance-off, Darren Ashford.

What is your guilty pleasure?

Beer. It doesn't like me though.

Do you have any secret ambitions?

To become a downhill pro skier and never lose my mojo! My current achievements in this ambition are very limited – I can go fast, but I am completely out of shape.



What's your dream holiday destination?

Sailing and diving in the Maldives and Andaman Islands.

Name your three favourite movies of all time.

'Man on Fire', 'The Last Samurai' and 'Das Boot'.



What's your favourite pastime?

Downhill mountain biking. I love the adrenaline that some trails can develop and also the bike technology. Aston Hill in Wendover is the closest to me but I like the Peak District, South Wales and the Alps.