

Produced by and for people with autism-spectrum conditions

united Asperger

Edition **53** January 2008





Asperger United is a newsletter run by and for people with autism-spectrum conditions. The newsletter aims to put people with the condition in touch with each other and to share information so that they can lead more independent lives.

Please note that *AU* receives over 200 letters each quarter so it is not possible to respond to every one, nor for every contribution to be printed.

Asperger United is free. We ask for a contribution of £6 per year from overseas readers and £10 from professionals and institutions to cover postage costs. Please make cheques payable to the NAS.

Editor John Joyce

Additional support The National Autistic Society's Publications Department

Please send all correspondence and subscription requests to:

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c/o The National Autistic Society
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Tel: 020 7903 3595
Fax: 020 7833 9666
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Subscribing to *Asperger United*
Tel: 020 7903 3595
Fax: 020 7833 9666
Email: asp.utd@nas.org.uk

All we need is your name and address and we will add you to the mailing list — free of charge.

Thank you to George Cox who kindly produced the illustration included here and on page 6, and to Graeme Lawson for producing the *AU* logo.

Please note that the views expressed in Asperger United are not necessarily those of the editor, the National Autistic Society or those involved in the publication of the newsletter.

Contributions for the next issue should reach us by
27 February '08

Asperger United was founded in 1993 by Pamela Yates and Patricia Howlin, in association with the Maudsley Hospital, and Mark Bebbington and Judy Lynch of The National Autistic Society.

This was in response to a recognised dearth of services for people with Asperger syndrome and the potential for self help and networking as a means of support for this group.

The provisions for editor's and sub-editor's post was to develop a publication that was truly the voice of the people it was aimed at. This post also provided the possibility of work experience and responsibility and has benefited those who have held the position. These are Richard Exley, David Wright, Martin Coppola, Ian Reynolds and the current editor, John Joyce.

Pamela Yates provided support and advice to the editors until the publication was handed over to the National Autistic Society in 2000.

The name *Asperger United* was chosen by the group of original readers as the most 'appropriate name' for the publication. This was suggested by Anna Cohen.



Dear Readers,

Hope all is well and everybody has had the best of Christmases.

I enjoyed a trip to Scandinavia which involved a lot of rescheduling of my travel. I started from London on 24 August and returned home on 4 September, travelling first to London, then to Oslo, with stops at Hamburg, Copenhagen and Gothenburg. I came back via Malmo, Copenhagen and Cologne. I did not have time to see the sights at Cologne, Hamburg or Gothenburg because of timetable problems.

The European Autism Congress was well-

attended and, as usual, discussed new ideas — I made a number of new acquaintances, and I hope to receive some views from conference presenters.

I visited Rosenberg Palace, a former Danish royal residence, taking photos in the gardens. I may post them on the internet when the computer is back in service.

Thank you for your usual high quality presentations, and I wish you all a prosperous New Year,

your editor,

John Joyce

If sufficient material is sent in, the theme for April will be **mental health**. Other themes coming soon will be **relationships** (including romance, family, friends) and **music** (listening and performing). Writing on any subject is still welcome, remember! (Cover art is also welcome.)

the work edition

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Anarchy, nihilism and chaos

by Bruce

Dear *Asperger United*,

From Bruce — alienated anarchist. I'm as alienated as "the man in the moon" — probably an eccentric.

I don't expect you to agree or publish this in *Asperger United* but it says a lot how I feel.

It's the egocentric, selfish bit I am interested in, as I feel as socially alienated as the man in the moon. I've tried occult, lunatic fringe politics, nothing works...

Now I am a man, I'm Alchemy-Punk, *Dr Who* Freak.

I can't work due to being egocentric — I've got a thing about being like Patrick Troughton's *Dr Who*. Most people have alien collective belief systems and values. Having said that (and you may tell other Aspergers) I discovered I can relate to this society by science — especially chemistry, but not by work or religion.

I may be learning disabled and a total social failure exam-wise, but I found:

1) I'm deeper than Joe Average, not thick.

2) Omega-3 cod-liver-oil pills also stimulate my thinking.

I can't make relationships with girls, I am tortured emotionally:

1) I feel I can't compete with other guys as I can't work, look ugly like President Nixon, and totally lack emotional feelings — a bit like Norman Bates in *Psycho* crossed with Mr Spock from *Star Trek*.

2) I've got this thing about dominant women, bigger/taller than me. (It's very much a disadvantage to me, being an anarchist in a police station with a police woman). It seems to me most women want the guy to lead and I hate that, as I've got zero self-confidence socially.

3) I like going to the boxing club, as the women are a bit more "punchy" and sometimes spar with me which I love: I like Amazon women — tougher and faster than me, most natural thing in the world.

I just wish I could break out of being a prisoner to solitary egocentricity though . . . I am so lonely and unhappy.

A friend told me if all Asperger people wanted to be *Dr-Who-like* Scientists, I would be ok (but they don't). To get them to do art collectively would be an achievement.

I just feel most people work to live and we give them something to live for: musicians, artists, writers, clowns, etc. Rather than being social outcasts and social lepers all the time; I'd be so much happier.

I've had so much "shit" from society and life that I'll always be anarchist, even though, in practice, this leads to further isolation and social alienation, especially from an Asperger point of view.

Anarchism for me is not for bringing down the government, but to be an individualist, live life your own way.

Could I be bold: I hate working class life, like Count Dracula hates mirrors and crosses. I'm even blacker than the anarchists (they

value work while they oppose so much else). “The Workers” say they have to keep us, but they are such control freaks, double-standard hypocrites. The average man finds individuality in having a job (and family) — that’s fine, but I can’t live like that: I need my own world. Social misery demands total mean regime.

The one thing I know is: society is always negative. I have found some deep inner peace in realising that most people are lucky if they find any joy in life at all, never mind mad-scientist success, seventeenth-century doctor, alchemist or stardom.

I encourage other Aspergers to do the same, push forward: it might be painful and emotional torture, but I found deep comfort in asking what makes a real doctor?

1) Some prat out of university in a status job (I wouldn’t mind being a university prat, ha, ha) or

2) A magician with a passion for science?

If you want to win on a horserace you bet “both ways” and that’s a fact. The choices we’ve got in society as Asperger’s people are:

1) Working-class warehouse labourers and building-site labourers — always getting bullied.

2) Lower-paid office clerks (if we are lucky) with work-bigoted double-standard hypocrites who send their kids to university to do superior work as lawyers and chemists.

3) The mental health system, which compromises or changes us for the common social good and uses our emotional insecurities as signs of mental illness (no knowledge of Asperger’s).

I want to be like Dr Who, a scientist. It’s even a need with me, not just a job. I hope

you are able to understand this, it’s all based on individualist versus group psychology, which I did with my psychologist.

Two “goofy” women where I worked 25-30 years ago were forever “grassing” on me — I was sacked in a blaze of glory — stayed on the dole and DLA ever since!

I just feel so “angry” society has denied me so much the last twenty years and always been so bloody negative!

Please don’t take offence, it’s how I feel inside myself with everybody. Yeah, I know being Dr Who and being an anarchist is a contradiction, but I’ve got a lot of them. Anyway, Dr Who was an anarchist to the daleks, wasn’t he?

Layabout

by **Alain**

I sleep all night I sleep all day
I sleep my whole damn life away.

I go to the pub and write sometimes
Composing simple foolish rhymes

I have no use except being useless
Finding work is dull and fruitless

What is the point of drugs or drink,
They inhibit the ability to think,

To think of other things to do
Than sit around all day and stew.



Response to Becky's letter in edition 52

I was shocked and horrified to read Becky's account of being told that she cannot expect to become "any kind of writer" because of her AS.

If **Enid Blyton** had been told this, there would have been no Famous Five, Secret Seven, Noddy or any of the hundreds of books she write to delight children whilst neglecting her own as a result of her AS single-mindedness.

If **Charles Lutwidge Dodgson** had been told this, there would have been no Alice in Wonderland — and therefore no Mad Hatter's tea party, no *Walrus and the Carpenter* and no Queen of Hearts to cry "off with their heads" as she played croquet with flamingos: for Dodgson was better known as **Lewis Carroll**.

If **Roald Dahl** had been told this, we would not have had the tales (or movies) of *the BFG*, *Matilda*, *the Witches*, *James and the Giant Peach*, amongst many others, that for many children are their gateway into the exciting world of literature.

If **JM Barrie** had been told this, we would not have had the story of the boy who never grew up — seen today as an autobiographical description of someone with AS, whose emotional development always remains that of a child — and Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital would not have benefited from the royalties from *Peter Pan*.

If **Patricia Highsmith** had been told that she couldn't write, no doubt she'd have added the person telling her that to her definite dislikes (television and four-course meals) rather than definite likes (fountain pens and the absence of noise).

If **Eric Blair** had been told when he was growing up that he could never write, we would not have had the chilling foresight of *1984* or *Animal Farm* — for Blair is better known as **George Orwell**.

If **Gary Numan** had been told he couldn't write lyrics, his Robots would have had no friends, electric or otherwise; and his Cars would have been driverless.

If **Björk** had been told this, she wouldn't have released her first album at 11 and become an international superstar.

If **Wendy Lawson** and **Donna Williams** had been told that they couldn't write . . . heck, they'd have gone ahead and done it anyway!

My advice to you, Becky, is to disregard the negative numpties who doubtless are jealous of what they see as lacking in themselves — and rather listen to your Aspie cousins who are some of the greatest writers and lyricists of all time.

Good luck!

Neil

I am 50 this year and I have had a very lonely life and I only have teddy bears for friends.

I would like to know if anyone else has suffered the same fate. Rejection has resulted in a strong hatred of humans. I would like to know why some people with Asperger's have relationships or friends and if I am the only one left out.

David

On the following pages are a large number of pen-pal adverts — if people feel there is too much space being taken up by the ads, please let me know and a limit to the number of words allowed per advert can be introduced. Ed.



How to reply to Pen Pals

- Please remember to let us know the name and number of the person whom your letter is for. (All pen pals are numbered.)
- To contact a pen pal, please send your letter to *Asperger United*, c/o The National Autistic Society, 393 City Road, London EC1V 1NG.
- We will pass your letter on to the person you wish to contact. However, we cannot guarantee the person will reply as that is entirely their decision.
- Please note that all pen-pal letters sent via *Asperger United* are opened before being passed on.
- Those under the age of sixteen must have parental permission before placing a pen pal advertisement in *Asperger United*.
- If you prefer, you could try the NAS pen-pal website, which is at www.assists.org.uk/penpal.html

****Important notice — please read****

Asperger United is happy to publish pen-pal advertisements but we must stress that we are not a pen-pal or introduction organisation. We do not match people up and we cannot monitor letters (other than the first letter, that is sent via us) so please be cautious when releasing personal details in your letters. The National Autistic Society / *Asperger United* cannot intervene or be held responsible for any ensuing correspondence between letter-writers.

Pen pal number 13

Hello, my name is Aaron and I am 17. I live in North Manchester and my hobbies include playing football, tennis, and especially cricket. I also like to surf the Internet and play computer games. My favourite type of music is classical.

I am currently doing my A-levels. The subjects I have chosen are mathematics, English literature, ICT and geography.

At the moment I am looking for a Saturday job and I have recently been interviewed for a Saturday library assistant post.

I would be happy to hear from anyone around my age, male or female, regardless of their interests.

Pen pal number 14

My name is Matthew and I am 23 years old.

My interests are: the rock band Status Quo, shopping in JJB Sports, and my job at Cash Generator, where I work every Thursday afternoon. My duties include: polishing scratched computer games, tidying up the warehouse and doing the banking. I also like watching Blackburn Rovers play now and again.

I would like a pen pal who fancies a general chit-chat.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Pen pal number 15

Hello, my name is Josh. I am 31 years of age. I have Asperger syndrome. I am seeking pen pals aged from 25 to 60.

My hobbies are: model railways and steam railways; gardening, particularly houseplants; computers; music. I play keyboard, guitar and sing. I am interested in fish-keeping and clocks — mainly antique clocks.

I am studying for an ichthyology diploma and doing courses in gardening and an Open University degree for BSc (Hons) in psychology.

I live in a care home for people with AS and would like to get to know of others with similar interests.

Does anyone have interests in psychology, music and computers? I would love to talk, as I am fairly alone and isolated and want to talk to more like-minded people.

Thank you, I look forward to receiving any replies.

Pen pal number 16

Hello, I'm Richard; I'm 25 years old. My hobbies are: mobile phones, new kettles. I like museums, reading. It comforts me that there are people out there like me.

I also like travelling to Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, and enjoying the different way of life.

I get nervous of people and things confuse me. When I was told I had Asperger's I was pleased that I was not the only one that felt like me, feeling no one understands you, getting confused a lot and feeling like an outsider.

Pen pal number 17

Hello, my name is Evan, I am 12 years old and live in Dundee, Scotland.

I was told I had AS when I was 7. I had three cats but one died; I also have a tortoise and tropical fish. I love all animals and dinosaurs; I even like the Loch Ness Monster and abominable snow man, yetis, Bigfoot and aliens because I think they may exist.

I like surfing on the net and playing my X-Box. I am obsessed with dairy-milk chocolate bars. I would like to be a filmmaker when I grow up or an inventor or a zoo-keeper.

I would like any children or teenagers to write to me (8-16), boys or girls.

Pen pal number 18

Hi, my name is Dan. I am 16 years old, come from Newcastle, love football and love computer games. I also listen to music a lot. I try to socialise but usually sound like an alien to other people (metaphorically speaking, of course). I'm hoping that writing to other people with AS will help me understand my problems more and, in the mean time, gain a few friends. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Pen pal number 19

Hi, I'm Emily. I'm 23 and have fairly mild Asperger's. I'm very interested in environmental issues and also growing food on my allotment. I also work part-time in a library. I'd really like to hear from other Aspies who share my interests.

I look forward to receiving any replies.

Thanks.

A spillspilling wording of glory intriguing

Book review of
A baffling unoriginal looking with a voice to prove positive

by Charlie Keeble

Grosvenor House Publishing, £6.99 (online price)

ISBN: 1 905529 80 5

review by **the Goth**

The author of this book writes in a distinctive style which I'm drawn to compare with James Joyce's saladic use of words in the famously difficult read, *Ulysses*, a book which I have greatly enjoyed. Both books share a love of language for the sound of language, without regard to the formal rules of language. But whereas *Ulysses* is wilfully obscure, this book contains a beautiful self-consistency. It is not a book to tackle for an easy read but it is a rewarding read if you come to understand why the author has chosen to write the book in the way he has written it.

The protagonist has a dystopian vision of Britain and he takes his politics from the *Daily Mail* and *the News of the World*. The writing has glorious sentences such as: "an expensive thing that Scott was compulsive not to purchase because of his preserved warmth in his bank account", said in reference to buying a laptop. All the characters speak from the protagonist's voice and the development of the story is very much governed by his own point of view, his wish-fulfilment. At one point he has a Hollywood-style fist fight with a female lawyer, the consequences of which arc surreally through the rest of the book. However, this doesn't detract from the underlying message.

A baffling unoriginal looking delves deeply into autistic thinking and the joy of language. You can't understand *Ulysses* if you take it a page at a time and try to understand what the author meant by what he wrote; what you have to do is read a long passage, let the words flow over you, and the sense of what he is getting at comes through despite the abuse of vocabulary and grammar which Joyce has become famous for. Because it refuses to let you think about what you are reading, this is an emotionally powerful way of communicating.

Keeble has none of the arch artiness of Joyce, and this is a good thing, but it is still a difficult book. It is a book that you have to be prepared to read, and from which you may get a great deal. It is not a light read, but it is only 118 pages, unlike *Ulysses*, which is over a thousand. Both writers have a good ear for language and the key to enjoying the language is simply to read, not to puzzle over a sentence that you don't quite understand, but just to keep reading, maybe even out loud, because then the richness of the prose becomes apparent and the overall meaning of the writing comes through. I thoroughly recommend it to anyone who enjoys individual expression more than rules.

Both books can be ordered on line or from any good bookshop.

Are autistic people better off self-employed?

by Charlie Keeble

A baffling unoriginal looking with a voice to prove positive was self-published by Grosvenor House Publishing. I paid the £795 fee to get 2,000 copies printed on demand. I invested my own talents and distributed books to local bookshops and got my face in the local newspaper. Then a few weeks later I received a touching letter from a woman who wrote to tell me that my novel had changed her ways of thinking about society.

That will be an impressive add to my CV, but while I was writing and working through the publishing process I was still on the dole without a nine-to-five job. I had been searching for years for full-time employment, but I could not attract interests from a publisher. Then I heard about self-publishing from an author called GP Taylor, who had self-published the bestselling novel,

Shadowmancer; he had such success I decided to self-publish. GP Taylor now runs a self-publishing company and thanks to his business I've proved my sufficientness as an author. So why wasn't I more eligible to employers?

I decided to investigate why most of the autistic people were not in work. I went around my local town centre and found that most of the managers had no hesitancy in employing disabled people. I then wrote to employers under two separate identities. One of me with my autism, and the other my leading character, Scott Hardy, without the autism. The results: no reply to either! I'd rather be self-employed. You will require confidence and self-discipline. I would suggest attending a confidence-building class. That way you could shape yourself up for taking control of your own career prospects.

Pen pal number 20

Hi! My name is Harry, I have Asperger's syndrome and I am 10 years old. I am seeking a pen pal aged 3-12. I like TV, rock music, computers and other stuff like that.

These are reasons why I'm down mostly:
1. Neither my brother nor my parents have Asperger's syndrome, so they're hard to speak to sometimes; 2. I have three cats and two dogs, but they never speak, of course; 3. My befriender only comes once per fortnight; 4. My birthday is on December the 18th, so close to Christmas.

My friends are: 1. My school-friends, especially Ben; 2. Toby from next door; 3. My favourite cousins, especially Micheal. Not many friends, though.

I still feed my pets, but cannot say "You're welcome" or hear a "Thanks".

Pen pal number 21

Hi, I'm Joanna, age 24. I live in South Manchester and was diagnosed with Asperger's at age 11—I would like to meet people to be friends because I don't have any.

My hobbies are: cars, reading, history, science, shopping, toy collecting, pets, DVDs, new *Dr Who*, seeing new places, coffee shops, meals out.

I write motoring books and will be published one day because my hero, James May, is helping me.

I don't judge people because I've been judged all my life; I just want a life-long friend, as I'm missing out and want to be happy. I also support Manchester City and Portsmouth. I love to watch *Top Gear* and docu-dramas, history and science programmes. I also enjoy *the Bill*.

That time will end

by **Ruth**

When we leave the Garden,
Weeds will tangle with Shrubs.
Branches will stretch across pathways.
The window of the hut will cover with dust
From the nearby building site.
Our sculptures will begin to dislodge
And there will be no one to put them right
And our people, who have met and collected at this spot
For coming on to seven years,
Will be disbanded.

We will go our separate ways.
Alex, who is the true artist
Amongst us, will sit in a
Chair or throw furniture to the walls of his
Care-home where the
Pattern remains the same.
Kayahan who comes to the
Kids Club won't jump
On the trampoline and
Gaze into the fire anymore.

We won't create our own marks,
Simply by walking and stopping
Where we choose:

Placing food for birds,
Getting compost from the cafe next door
Making Tea, washing dishes,
Cracking nuts, catching the sun
Or getting rained on.

We will have no responsibility towards
This place and it will no longer
Hold us.

There will be no "us".
That time will end.

Memory Gardens

Legard Road, Arsenal, London N5

Memory Gardens is a self-help
autistic and dyslexic arts project
based in a garden which has been
developed by members out of
neglected land.

We have continuously held a duty
of care towards this stretch of land
situated at the side of NCH head
office since 2000.

NCH have recently asked for the
land back and we have been given
notice to leave by 30 September.

Garden sculpture club

Outdoor living

A club in a garden for local people
and autistic people for making
sculptures, painting and gardening

WHEN: Every Tuesday 10.30-12.30

WHERE: Memory Gardens, Legard
Road, Arsenal, London N5.

COST: £3, Concessions £2

Contact Ruth: **020 8806 1129**

yellruthtoday@yahoo.co.uk

Courses run throughout the summer.

Dear Ed.

I've had a superb summer and am really glad that the Scout Association has finally changed its policy towards people with Asperger's syndrome.

Two years ago I found out that when the scouts state that they are open to all regardless of disability that this didn't include Asperger's or autism. I applied to do a trainee camp for the World Jamboree called Eurojam. In the past I'd had an argument with one person in scouting after being told that, due to my Asperger's, I couldn't be a scout leader, and also a joke that they'd made at my final camp with that group, well they said it was a joke but instead of saying sorry, the main leader blamed it on me for not understanding jokes (and she works in a school looking after children with ASDs). At the time of Eurojam I was being made redundant and was given a choice, either opt for early redundancy and loose £2,000 redundancy or stay on and not be able to take holidays. I opted for the early redundancy due to Eurojam.

Two weeks later I got a letter from my county commissioner (CC) stating that due to my AS and the argument I'd had that it would be very embarrassing for the Scout Association to allow me to go to Eurojam in case I mentioned anything to the media that would be present. I couldn't believe it, after me giving up my job so that I could do this. In addition to this I couldn't understand what he meant by this letter as I'd been the webmaster, and still am, for our district. Surely, if I wanted to damage to the image of scouting, altering the website would have been far simpler than trying to get media attention at Eurojam — getting the letter published would have been even worse. He warned me that if I mentioned this to anyone then I would not be able to take part in the World Jamboree. After this I talked to my boss: she did find me a new job in the warehouse, which ensured my contract carried on and that I received

redundancy at the end of it, not quite as much but at least it was some. The problem with the new job was that due to the shifts I was unable to continue helping with the scouts, but then I thought: after their attitude, why should I bother? I didn't even bother to contact them to tell them, I just turned up when I had the shift off. I know this was a bit of a nasty attitude to take. I also know the district commissioner (DC) knew about what had happened, as he apologised to me and explained that it was nothing to do with him. However, when I got the refund from the Scout Association I was even more annoyed to find out that it had been a decision between the CC and the DC: I really hate people who lie just to make themselves look better. I still can't trust anything that the DC says and really hate it when he asks me how I'm doing. I've not let on to him that I know he lied to cover his own back but I would appreciate it if he told me he lied to save himself, instead of acting like I was born yesterday.

Anyway, this year I finally got to do the World Scout Jamboree. Before I went on it, though, I had to be humiliated by the CC one more time: he said to me, "Now, Darren, by me signing this form it means that you will behave and not say anything about what happened." When he said this I just said yes, but I felt really intimidated. Two years ago I didn't know the CC properly, but thought I was getting to know him quite well and sorting out all the problems I'd had, until this. That made me decide that the World Jamboree is going to be the last time I do anything for this district. Two years ago I'd made the decision to no longer support them on any of their camps.

The Jamboree was a good event except for the job I got; I'd put down all my skills, such as working with disabled children with Sense, HND in Software Engineering, member of BCS, knowledge of French, Welsh and British Sign Language — with all this experience I thought I might be working somewhere with

the participants, but instead they give me a job miles away from anything, in the staff canteen serving meals to people. I have never worked in any type of restaurant before, I had no hygiene certificates and the training we received was just: we will be serving food to 8,000 members of staff; ok, that's all the training you need. I guess I got stuck so far away from everything because of what happened at Eurojam. The other thing with being in the restaurant was that we were serving meals at night whilst most of the adult staff were forming friendships in the bar (the bar opened 19:00 to 22:30 and we worked 15:00 to 23:00) and we were always on different rotas to each other so we never really got to form many friendships. I was looking forward to making friends on the camp. The worst thing was half way through the camp I found out that at the beginning there had been a way to change jobs if you believed they'd made a mistake but no-one told us this. The final insult was that I'd stated on my form that I'm vegetarian (so the last thing I wanted was to serve up dead animal).

The worst thing I've found, though, with the county commissioner is that after what happened over Eurojam he has since been overly nice to me, inviting me to all sorts of events, and offering me lifts there in his car. I'm not too sure which way to take this, whether he's being overly nice after what happened with Eurojam and hoping I don't say anything, or sucking up to me (I hate that), or whether he's just a nice person. I'm thinking and hoping that it's just he's a nice person and I didn't really know him well enough before Eurojam. One thing I thought which was kind of nice was that it was my birthday on the camp and he bought me a birthday card with a cat playing with wool on it, and on the back of the card it said it was taken from the picture "Sorry", whether this was deliberate or accidental I'll probably never know but it's nice to think that it was deliberate, even though the school I went to did exactly the same thing.

I find it quite funny that my school did exactly the same thing to me as the Scout Association have. I'd booked to go with the school to Disneyland Paris when it first opened; I was one of the first people to pay for it. However, the school changed the date due to not many people wanting to go. When they changed the date there was a large influx of people wanting to go, and they told me that due to my ADHD (I was misdiagnosed with ADHD, and later re-diagnosed with Asperger's) it would be very dangerous for them to take me to France as they might lose me (yeah: I'm in a foreign country, I barely speak the language, I'm really going to wander off on my own!). This happened with many other trips that the school organised too, until they organised a trip to Granada as our class was competing on *Hunt the pie*, a children's quiz which had about one run before being axed as it was rubbish. After going there the teachers all apologised for stopping me from going on so many trips as they said I was the best behaved pupil there and that had they only known this earlier I might have not missed out on so many school trips. There was one advantage for me, though, missing out on the trips: this was that I have nocturnal enuresis so it did save me much embarrassment and getting picked on as none of my friends at school knew about this.

By the way I've left the details out above about which area of scouts I belong to, to keep them anonymous as even though they really upset me I don't think it's fair to go publishing their names.

Anyway I'd better end this letter here, I think I might have gone on a bit too much (one of my friends is always telling me off about that!). I presume you'll edit this letter quite a bit to publish it.

Yours faithfully

Darren

How to find work that works for people with Asperger syndrome

by Gail Hawkins

Jessica Kingsley Publishers £14.95

ISBN 978 1 84310 151 2

Asperger syndrome employment workbook

by Roger N Meyer

Jessica Kingsley Publishers £16.95

ISBN 978 1 85302 796 3

review by **Neil**

These are two excellent books that really do provide concrete help for people with AS wanting to get — and keep — a job. Roger Meyer has AS whilst Gail Hawkins runs the first agency in North America to specialise in obtaining work for people with AS, so their perspectives are very different whilst maintaining a common goal.

At some 300 pages each, these books are not light reading, but are packed with helpful tips and exercises that help the reader consider all of their options, highlight potential pitfalls and address the very important issue of whether or not one should disclose that one has AS (both Roger and Gail strongly advise early disclosure and emphasising the strengths that are a feature of AS).

Both books emphasise the importance of recognising our strengths as well as our weaknesses: all too often, people with AS are inclined to undersell themselves as a consequence of the poor self-esteem most of us have. We tend to overlook all of our strengths — for example, in hard work, perfectionism, organisation and timekeeping — because they are simply a part of us; yet these are skills that employers are desperately seeking.

The type of job sought, and the environment that one works in, is also addressed. Whilst we might see ourselves as journalists off to dig up the latest scoop, for example, this is a job that not only requires excellent interpersonal and communications skills but also a first-class ability to read body language, which, of course, is one of the greatest deficits in AS. Add to that the sensory nightmare of having to work in a noisy open-plan environment, and it can be quickly seen that the career in journalism may not be such a good idea after all.

People with AS can be found in every business sector, from the chairman of Microsoft to the postman who sorts and delivers in all weathers with absolute accuracy and no hint of “Spanish practices”. We are particularly well represented in academia and in the sciences, engineering, technology, IT and transport sectors. We are also particularly suited to starting our own businesses, as long as we bring in others to cover our weaknesses.

There is, in short, no reason why anyone with AS who wants to work cannot — with help — find a role that suits him or her perfectly: and these books will go a long way towards helping achieve those goals!

Gig review of *the Editors*

by Joe

I am a huge fan of music, especially live. My music taste is very eclectic, from Frank Sinatra to Emo bands like *30 Seconds to Mars* and *My Chemical Romance*. Seeing a band live is my favourite pastime. They have achieved huge fame with the singles off their first album — including *Munich*, and their latest single, the first off their new album, *Smokers outside the hospital doors*. They are *the Editors*, they formed in 2004, and they are touring again!

On the 2nd of October, 2007, my father and my brother and I headed to Portsmouth. I'd never been to Portsmouth Guildhall before, so I was a little anxious about seeing a new venue. There were ticket takers inside, the lobby was packed but they still kept it cool, and if you got a ticket for the upstairs circle, that was where you were sitting, no buying one and then sneaking downstairs.

The bar was full of people, and I was still unsure of where the actual hall was, no one really wanted to go in yet, but I was desperate just to see the stage. My dad had always ranted and raved about if you bought a standing ticket you could sit down. I had no idea what he meant by that, it was all so confusing, but as we finally entered, I noticed that at the back there were seats! This is a nice feature, though I didn't want to sit down.

The support band were called the *Kiss Away Trail*. I'd heard of them though I wasn't too keen on them at all. They seemed to play for quite a while, and like many bands I have seen, they had three electric guitars, a bass and drums, which was unusual.

After about half an hour, my anticipation grew bigger. I didn't know what to expect, then all of a sudden, like at all gigs, the lights went out, and they came on stage, with a keyboard noise in the background. I knew which song it was and I wanted the song to

start. Someone in the venue hit the lights; the music started; the cover of their second album was the backdrop — a gasometer.

They started with their latest single, *An end has a start*, which has made the top 30, and I love it. After that they did a track off their second, *Bones*. I really like that song — to be honest I like all their songs.

Once they finished that song, the lead singer said "Good evening, Norwich". I think he might have been confused; he made a rude remark for a laugh and then they did my personal favourite, *Bullets*. I think he was influenced by Ian Curtis and Joy Division, who are more dark and unfunny; their music is the same but a bit more lively.

Their performance blew me away! Tom Smith said their next single was going to be a song called the *Racing rats* which I enjoyed. I love buying new albums before they release too many singles because it means you can play a guessing game of what they will release next, but in this case I was wrong!

After being on stage about 45 minutes, they went off, and then did an encore. In the encore they did *Smokers outside the hospital doors* as their second encore song, and finished with a well known album track off the first album call *Fingers in the factory*.

All in all, this was by far one of the greatest gigs I've been to out of the dozens I have been to in the past year (including Muse and the Police). It was a true spectacle, I loved it. I think this gig will be talked about for a while. They really are an awesome band, and I hope you can get into them.

Thank you very much to the Aspie Funksters for bringing up this music idea. On the scale of one to ten, I'd give this gig a nine.

Finding Asperger Syndrome in the family

by Clare Lawrence

Emerald Publishing, £8.99

ISBN: 1 84716 008 5

review by **Mark**

Very impressed I am, as it has answers to questions most often raised, like for instance:

Why bump into people?
Why not sleeping at night?
How to deal with obsessions.

The author, Clare, has a son with AS, so her book is from “experience” making this book even more interesting.

Free bridge classes!

Adult man with Asperger syndrome who plays bridge is looking for a bridge coach and any other adults — men or women of any age! — who are keen to learn bridge. Courses to be held in the St John’s Wood or Willesden areas.

Classes on Saturday and/or Sunday afternoons. You are welcome for a trial class. Free tea and coffee and biscuits provided!

If you are interested please contact *Asperger United*

New Welfare Rights Service

The National Autistic Society has recently launched a Welfare Rights Service to assist with queries regarding social security benefits. A dedicated Welfare Rights Adviser (WRA) will now respond specifically to these enquiries from both members of the public and professionals to assist them with benefit matters. This includes advice on potential benefit entitlement, help in completing claim forms and the procedure for reviewing and appealing decisions. All benefits are covered including Disability Living Allowance, Income Support, Incapacity Benefit, Tax Credits and Housing and Council Tax benefit.

The service operates a telephone and email service. To contact by telephone please call

the Autism Helpline on **0845 070 4004**. A helpline adviser will take some basic details of the enquiry and then arrange a telephone appointment at a later date with the WRA. The WRA will then call back with further advice and support and provide more information by letter or email if requested. An email enquiry system is also in operation and benefit queries can be emailed directly to the address below. A reply should be provided within seven days. In addition, existing benefit information on the NAS website will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

Jonathan, Welfare Rights Adviser
NAS Autism Helpline: **0845 070 4004**
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