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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 5th Edition of our newsletter and, first of all, please accept my apologies for its \*extremely\* late production again. A change of assistants, and then other priorities that got in the way, all contributed to the lateness. A further erosion of administrative support means that this could well be the last newsletter that we publish. We will have to see what support the University provides.

Firstly, a big thank you to our super-efficient, temporary assistant Helen Scott who has assembled this mammoth newsletter and thank you all for your personal contributions. It is wonderful to hear your news of growing families and new additions, but this is against the back-drop of closures of departments and even whole chemical companies in the UK. As a

result, some of you have experienced a great deal of stress and uncertainty. At the same time it is reassuring to see that you have been resourceful and that out of the ashes, new opportunities have emerged. Long may it continue.

On Page 17 Emma has written about the very sad and tragic news surrounding Kerstin's untimely death during a walking holiday on the Isle of Skye. Kerstin was in our group between 1995-1996, during which time she made lasting friendships with whoever she came across. She was a wonderful colleague who brought people together and was great fun to be with. Our deepest condolences to her husband Diarmid and their 2 children.

## CURRENT GROUP MEMBERS

### Postgraduate PhD Students:

In 2011 we welcomed Johnathan Matlock (MChem, University of York) and Phillip Unsworth (MChem, University of Oxford), both members of the 2010 Bristol Chemical Synthesis CDT cohort, Daniel Blair (MSci Chemistry, University of Bristol) and Maziar Mohiti (MSci, University of Stockholm).

In 2012 we welcomed Katie Feeney (MChem, University of Oxford), a member of the 2011 Bristol Chemical Synthesis CDT cohort, Christopher Brown (MSci, Imperial College London) and Marcin Odachowski (MSci, University of Manchester).

In 2013 we welcomed Isabel Perez-Powell (MChem, University of Bristol) and Pradip Songara (MChem, University of Reading), both members of the 2012 Bristol Chemical Synthesis CDT cohort, Christopher Sandford

(MChem, University of Oxford) and Ana Varela (MChem, Universidad de Oviedo).

In 2014 we welcomed James Smith (MSci, University of Bristol) a member of the 2013 Bristol Chemical Synthesis CDT cohort.

### Postdoctoral Research Assistants:

Muhammad Ali (Pakistan), Amadeu Bonet Laplana (Spain), Teerawut Bootwicha (Thailand), Matt Burns (UK), Stéphanie Essafi (France), Matt Hesse (UK), Josep Llaveria Cros (Spain), Momin Khan (Pakistan), Alba Millan Delgado (Spain), Adam Noble (UK), Sébastien Prévost (France), Ramesh Rasappan (India), Nina Schützenmeister (Germany), Yunus Turkmen (Turkey).

### Research Officer:

In Oct 2012 we welcomed Daniele Leonori (Italy) as the Research Officer for the Aggarwal group. He has recently secured a

lectureship at the University of Manchester, which will begin Oct 2014.

## VISITORS

We are happy to have welcomed a number of international visitors since 2011, for short-term placements:

Irantzu Couto (Spain, April-July, 2011)

Eva Torres Costa (Spain, June-Sept 2011)

Juan Moya López (Spain, June-Aug 2011)

Habib Hussain (Pakistan, Nov 2011 - March 2012)

Zulfiquar Ali (Pakistan, Nov 2011 - March 2012)

Alejandro Santana Farina (Spain, Feb-May 2012)

Lukas Pfeifer (Austria, April-Aug 2012)

Daishi Fujino (Japan, May-Aug 2012)

Jose Gonzalez Delgado (Spain, June-Aug 2012)

Giada Arena (Italy, Sept 2012 - Aug 2013)

Cinzia Citti (Italy, March 2013 - Feb 2014)

Pablo Moran Poladura (Spain, May-July 2013)

Yousuke Tani (Japan, June-Aug 2013)

Kazunori Nagao (Japan, Aug-Oct 2013)

Prof. Aiichiro Nagaki (Japan, Aug-Nov 2013)

Lennart Garve (Germany, Oct 2012 - Jan 2013)

Yuya Moriwaki (Japan, Oct-Nov 2013)

Krzysztof Borys (Poland, April-May 2014)

João Paulo da Silva Scaramal (Brazil, July 2014 - June 2015)

## RECENT LEAVERS AND THEIR CURRENT POSITIONS

**Matt Burns** (PhD, 2009-2014; Postdoc, 2014) secured a Postdoc with Prof. Tomislav Rovis, Colorado State University, US, *starts Sept 2014*.

**Chia-Chun Chen** (PhD, 2009-2013) Postdoc with Prof. Jérôme Waser, EPFL, Lausanne, Switzerland.

**Graeme Coulthard** (PhD, 2008-2012) Postdoc with Prof. Richard Taylor, University of York.

**Catherine Fletcher** (PhD, 2008-2013) Postdoc with Dr. Steve Goldup, Queen Mary University of London, after a postdoc with Prof. Anthony Barrett, Imperial College London.

**Sven Fritz** (PhD, 2009-2013) Research Chemist, Evotec, UK, after a postdoc with

Dr. Helma Wennemers, ETH, Zurich, Switzerland.

**Gayle Hallett** (PhD, 2008-2013) full-time mother, intends to secure a postdoc or job in teaching within the next year.

**Matt Hesse** (PhD, 2009-2013; Postdoc, 2014) secured a Postdoc with Prof. Sarah Reisman, CalTech, US, *starts Jan 2015*.

**Anna Hopkins (née Robinson)** (PhD, 2007-2010) Medicinal Chemist, Domainex, Cambridge.

**Johnathan Matlock** (PhD, 2011-2014) secured a Postdoc with Prof. Jonathan Clayden, University of Bristol, *starts April 2015*.

**Ben Partridge** (PhD, 2007-2011) Postdoc with Prof. Hon Wai Lam, University of Nottingham after a postdoc with Prof. John Hartwig, Berkeley, US.

**Alex Pulis** (PhD, 2008-2012; Postdoc 2012-2014) Postdoc with Prof. Doug Stephan, University of Toronto, Canada.

**Stefan Roesner** (PhD, 2010-2014) secured a Postdoc with Prof. Stephen Buchwald MIT, US, *starts Jan 2015*.

**Chandreyee Saha** (PhD, 2008-2011) Research Scientist, Chembiotek, Kolkata, India.

**Helen Scott** (PhD, 2009-2013), Executive Administrator, University of Bristol and Freelance Editor, Cactus Communications.

**Phillip Unsworth** (PhD, 2011-2014) secured a Postdoc with Prof. Cathleen Crudden, Queen's University, Canada, *starts Feb 2015*.

**Charlotte Watson** (PhD, 2010-2014) secured a Postdoc with Cancer Research, Sutton, London, *starts Oct 2014*.

**Sebastien Balieu** (Postdoc 2012-2013) Lecturer, Université de Rouen, France.

**Laetitia Chausset-Boissarie** (Postdoc, 2011-2012) Postdoc, Université Paris Descartes UMR 860.

**Jack Chen** (Postdoc, 2011-2014) Postdoc with Prof. Leonard Prins, University of Padova, Italy.

**Tim Elford** (Postdoc 2010-2012) Research Scientist, Gilead Sciences, Edmonton, Canada.

**William Erb** (Postdoc, 2010-2012) Research Associate, ENSICAen, France.

**Philipp Fackler** (Postdoc 2012-2013) Process Development, Merck, Darmstadt, Germany.

**Robin Larouche-Gauthier** (Postdoc 2009-2011) Senior Scientist, Paraza Pharma Inc., Montreal, Canada.

**Merhnoosh Ostovar** (Postdoc, 2009-2012) Research Officer for Prof. Steve Husbands, Department of Pharmacy and Pharmacology, University of Bath.

**Konstantinos Rampalakos** (Postdoc 2010-2013) Research Chemist, Eli Lilly, Surrey.

**Karen Thai** (Postdoc, 2012-2014) Scientist, Paraza Pharma Inc., Montreal, Canada.

**Yunus Turkmen** (Postdoc, 2013-2015) secured a position as Assistant Professor, Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey, *starts Feb 2015*.

**Angelica Balanta Castillo** (Postdoc, 2012-2014) intends to secure a position in industry as a research chemist.

## AWARDS

Since the last newsletter Varinder has received the following awards and special invited lectures:

- Organic Syntheses Lecturer, Chicago University, USA, August 2011
- Elected Fellow of the Royal Society, 2012
- Boehringer-Ingelheim Lecturer, Boston College, USA, June 2012

- Chemical Research Society of India Medal, 2013
- RSC Perkin Award, 2013
- Thomas Andrews' lecturer in Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland, 2014
- Swiss Chemical Society Lectureship, Switzerland, 2014
- Organic Syntheses Lecturer, MIT, USA, 2015

Members of the group continue to be very successful in both internal and external competitions and symposia:

**Graeme Coulthard** won first prize for his final year PhD talk entitled 'Towards a Concise Asymmetric Synthesis of PGF<sub>2α</sub>' in the Organic & Biological Section, School of Chemistry, May 2011.

**Gayle Hallett** was awarded the 2011 Bristol ChemLabS Postgraduate Teaching Prize, July 2011.

**Ben Partridge** was awarded a Faculty of Science postgraduate commendation for his PhD thesis entitled, 'Formation of Enantiomerically Enriched Tertiary Boronic Esters and their Application in Total Synthesis', 2011.

**Catherine Fletcher** won first prize for her poster on the 'Total Synthesis of Giganin' at Recent Advances in Synthesis and Chemical Biology, University College Dublin, Dec 2011.

**Matt Burns** won runner-up prize and **Stefan Roesner** won the 'People's Choice' award (voted for by his peers) in the Syngenta Poster competition in the Organic & Biological Section, School of Chemistry, March 2012.

**Sven Fritz** won runner-up prize for his talk entitled 'Bromoethylsulfonium Triflate: Tale of an Annulation Agent' at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Regional (South) SCI Postgraduate Symposium on Novel Organic Chemistry, University College London, April 2012.

**Catherine Fletcher** won first prize for her final year PhD talk entitled 'Application of Lithiation-Borylation Methodology in the Total Synthesis of Giganin' and **Helen Scott** won second prize for her final year PhD talk entitled 'Enantioselective Construction of Quaternary Stereocentres via the Homologation of Tertiary Boronic Esters with Allylchlorolithiums' in the Organic & Biological Section, School of Chemistry, May 2012.

**Sven Fritz** won the prize for 'Best Postgraduate Oral Presentation' at 27<sup>th</sup> Postgraduate Symposium of the RSC Heterocyclic and Synthesis Group, GSK, Stevenage, Sept 2012.

**Graeme Coulthard** was awarded a Faculty of Science postgraduate commendation for his PhD thesis entitled 'Concise, Asymmetric Synthesis of Prostaglandin PGF<sub>2α</sub> and Latanoprost', Nov 2012.

**Johnathan Matlock** won first prize in the Syngenta Poster competition in the Organic & Biological Section, School of Chemistry, April 2013.

**Sven Fritz** was awarded a Faculty of Science postgraduate commendation for his PhD thesis entitled 'New Efficient Routes to Heterocycles of Medicinal Importance', 2013.

**Dr. Amadeu Bonet** won the prize for 'Best Oral Presentation' at Euroboron 6, Poland with his talk 'Enantiospecific C-C Coupling of Secondary and Tertiary Boronic Esters', Sept 2013.

**Christopher Brown** won runner-up prize in the Syngenta Poster competition in the Organic & Biological Section, School of Chemistry, May 2014.

**Johnathan Matlock** won runner-up prize for his final year PhD talk in the Organic & Biological Section in the School of Chemistry, May 2014.

**Johnathan Matlock** won first prize for 'Best Poster Presentation, Organic & Biological Section' at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Younger Members Symposium, Royal Society of Chemistry, at the University of Birmingham, June 2014.

**James Smith** won the 'Loes Hendrickx Prize' for best PACT performance in the first 6 months of the Chemical Synthesis CDT, University of Bristol.

**Teerawut Bootwicha** was awarded the Borchers medal for his Ph.D. thesis with distinction (summa cum laude) from the RWTH-Aachen University, Aug 2014.

**Matt Hesse** was awarded a Faculty of Science postgraduate commendation for his PhD thesis entitled 'The Diastereodivergent Synthesis of Polysubstituted Alkenes through Lithiation-Borylation Methodology', Aug 2014.

## PERSONAL NEWS

**Mushtaq Ahmad** (Visiting PhD, 2008-2009) is currently working for the Pakistan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research as a Senior Scientific Officer.

At the end of September 2011 **Emma Anderson** (PhD, 1991-1994) had a son William, brother to Alice. They are now 3 and 6 years old. She has not returned to work yet, but does try to encourage the children with some kitchen science. (see photo)



Emma Anderson with her children William & Alice on Caringorm, near Aviemore

In April 2011 **Cristina Aragoncillo** (Postdoc, 2003-2005) was promoted to Associate Professor of Chemistry at Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

After completing his PhD in 2011, **Muhammad Arshad** (PhD, 2006-2011) took

up his first academic position as Assistant Professor at University of the Punjab, Lahore. In 2012 he moved to the COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Abbottabad, during which time he undertook a one year postdoctoral research placement with Dr. C. R. Hess at Durham University. His family has expanded by the addition of another baby boy, Muhammad Shahaan Arshad, born 20th February 2012.

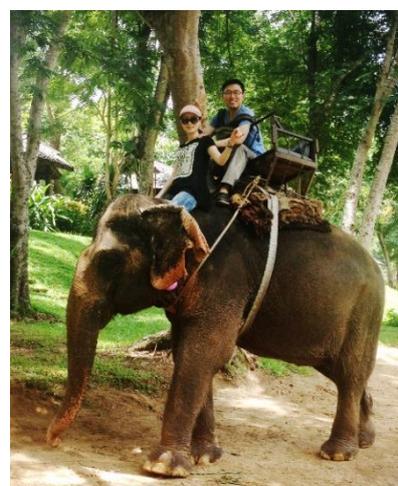


Muhammad Arshad & family

**Imhyuck Bae** (Visiting PhD, 2001-2002) has been working at Samsung Cheil Industries since 2008 as a Principal Research Engineer. He currently works in the polymer division to synthesise additives and new polymeric materials but expects that he will soon be transferred to the electronic material development division.

Imhyuck writes: Yoojin and I had a second daughter, Katherine, when we were in the USA. So now we are four: Me, Yoojin, Ashley (Yewon) 11, and Katherine (Kyuwon) 7.

**Jessie Jie Bi** (PhD, 2003-2007) still works for Midas Pharma GmbH and has been promoted to Vice-President of the Business Development & International Licensing Division, China. Jessie writes: Time flies by before you realize it has been another three years...life is as exciting and busy as before. I recently had a vacation in Thailand with my husband, Anthony (see photo). Should any Aggarwal group member come over to Shanghai in the near future, I would be more than happy to show you around – just give me a shout in advance.



Jessie Bi & Anthony whilst on holiday in Thailand

After a postdoc at ETH Zürich with Prof. Jeff Bode, **Michael Binanzer** (PhD, 2007-2010) accepted a position as Scientific Editor for Thieme Chemistry.



Amadeu Bonet & Angie Balanta on their wedding day

**Amadeu Bonet** (Postdoc, 2012-present) and **Angelica Balanta** (Postdoc, 2012-2014) got married in Reus, Spain in August 2013 (see photo). They were very happy to have other group members involved in the day: Charlotte Watson was a



Maël and Noah Conza

bridesmaid, Jack Chen was a groomsman, and Karen Thai, Giada Arena and Daniele Leonori came to Spain to share in the celebrations.

**Matteo Conza** (Postdoc, 2004-2005) is still working as a Chemistry Leader within the Janssen API small molecules development department at CILAG (a pharmaceutical company of Johnson & Johnson) in Schaffhausen, Switzerland. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 he was promoted to Senior Scientist. Since March 2011 Matteo got married to Rose and is now a proud father of twin boys, Maël and Noah.

**Mike Coogan** (Postdoc, 1997-1999) is now director of teaching at the new chemistry department in Lancaster University.



Tim Elford & family

**Tim Elford** (Postdoc, 2010-2012) writes: After relocating back to Canada in mid-2012, we have managed to settle in and become reacquainted with Canada. I am working as a process chemist at Gilead Sciences. The very first reaction I did was on a 20 g scale, which was a big change from the 50-100 mg scale that I was used to! But I have adjusted to life on the big size of chemistry and am enjoying the work. Khristi went back to work, teaching secondary math and science. Rylie has continued to grow up and is now changing from a toddler into a little boy. He is very strong willed and loves any sort of animal. We

miss being able to take him to the Bristol zoo. Then, in May 2012, we had a surprise when Finlay decided to arrive into this world three weeks early while I was away in San Francisco with work. However, he was healthy and happy and that has continued to be the case. He is a very smiley baby and absolutely loves his older brother. But that means that we have now become the typical North American family of four with a house in the suburbs and two cars in the garage (see photo). Yes, one is even an SUV! But we still miss Bristol almost daily. We loved our time there and the wonderful people, both at work and outside of it. We had planned to come back in June of 2012, but again, Finlay happened instead. So hopefully in the

next few years we can make it back to see a few of those that are still around and enjoy the lovely city that is Bristol. If you ever feel like coming to visit, just let us know. We can offer +30 °C in the summer and –30 °C with snow in the winter!

**Philipp Fackler** (Postdoc, 2012-2013) has been working with Merck KGaA in Darmstadt as a lab head in the process development department since he left Bristol.

Philipp writes: I live together with my girlfriend, Anike, in Frankfurt. We quickly moved in together on my return to Germany and have a really good time. So, no kids, no marriage :) Greetings to the group. The papers which have been published so far this year are really impressive.

**Marco Ferrara** (PhD, 1999-2002) and **Marina Porcelloni** (PhD, 1999-2002) have been living in



Marco Ferrara & family

Milan since 2010. Marco is a principal scientist for Boehringer-Ingelheim and Marina works as an R&D chemist for Menarini.

Marco writes: Our daughter Elena is now 4, she's growing as tall as me and as chatty as her mum ;- ) (see photo) Both of us still remember the years in Sheffield and Bristol as a time of both great science and also a lot of fun!

**Alejandro Fernandez Hernandez** (Postdoc, 2005-2006) is now working in Spain as an R&D project manager at Fundación Prodiotec and in general, he says that he has more projects in Spanish than in English.

**Francesco Fontana** (Postdoc, 2009-2010) is still working in Fabbrica Italiana Sintetici (Vicenza, Italy) as a Senior Scientist in the field of Process Chemistry. Additionally, he is responsible for the implementation of Lean Manufacturing Processes in the R&D department. He is convinced that the way of thinking about chemistry in the Aggarwal group has helped him a lot in solving not only lab scale, but also industrial chemistry issues. He remembers with pleasure his time in Bristol, and hopes to meet the old friends again.

**Rosalind French** (PhD, 2006-2010) has spent some time training as a patent attorney and studying IP Law, and is now working at Oxford University's technology transfer company, Isis Innovation.



Ella & Freya Fulford

**Sarah Fulford** (PhD, 2001-2005) left the EPSRC in 2010 and is now working for the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) managing their portfolio of methods and data investments. She is currently on maternity leave as her and James had their second little girl, Freya Elisabeth, in July 2013. Their first daughter, Ella Molly, was born in August 2010 and is a doting big sister with a love for drawing and all things pink! (see photo)

After her 6 month placement in the Aggarwal group in 2010

**Maddalena Gallanti** (Visiting PhD, 2010) obtained her PhD in January 2012, from the University of Milan. Shortly afterwards she moved back to Bristol where she works as a synthetic organic chemist for Abcam Biochemicals.



Aiden Hallett  
in the bath

**Gayle Hallett** (PhD, 2008-2013) and Ian welcomed the second addition to their family, Aidan Spencer, on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2013 (see photos). After graduating in July, Gayle took a year to enjoy being at home with Jessi and Aidan. She is now exploring teaching and postdoc options.



Gayle Hallett & family



Thomas & Melina

working in the Spain, but more baby boy, called Nic, are enjoying their first

**Florian Keller** working for Hoffmann Manager.

**Markus Hansch** (Postdoc, 2006-2007) has been working as a Research Scientist for BASF in Ludwigshafen since December 2009. His wife Eftichia gave birth to their son Thomas in November 2011 and daughter Melina in October 2013 (see photo). The family is living happily in Speyer on the river Rhine.



Ona Illa's son, Nic

**Ona Illa** (Postdoc, 2006-2008) is still Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, importantly Ona and David had their first on the 5th of June 2014 (see photo). They summer together in the Costa Brava.

(Postdoc, 2008-2009) is currently la Roche in Switzerland as a Plant



Robin Larouche-Gauthier with his son, Émile

**Robin Larouche-Gauthier** (Postdoc, 2009-2011) left the group in July 2011 and found a position as a med chem scientist in a small start-up company Paraza Pharma Inc. based in Montréal.

Robin writes: Back then I was employee #4. Two and a half years later we now have 40 employees and the company is doing, I believe, pretty well! I was promoted to Senior Scientist in October 2013. My partner, Lysanne, and I became parents with the birth of our son, Émile Gauthier, on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2013. He is now 13 months old and is slowly becoming a little monster! (see photo)

After being an Assistant Professor at Université Paris Descartes for 8 years, **Thomas Lecourt** (Postdoc, 2004-2005) was appointed as a Full in September 2013. He is now leading a small interested in the development of new reactions diazo compounds. Since the birth of their first son family has expended a little bit more with the and Clément (2011). All the family now lives in in Normandy.



Thomas Lecourt

Professor at INSA Rouen research group between acetals and Simon in Bristol, the arrival of Gabriel (2008) Bihorel, close to Rouen

**Adeem Mahmood** (PhD, 2006-2010) has been working as Assistant Professor of synthetic organic chemistry at COMSATS, Abbottabad, Pakistan since February, 2012. He has recently received an offer to join King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia as Assistant Professor; and he has also secured a 1 year postdoc at the University of New South Wales, Australia.



Adeem Mahmood & family

Adeem writes: During my year postdoc at Nottingham University, God has blessed us with a cute baby, Hafsa, on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2011 (see photo).

In July 2012 **Eoghan McGarrigle** (Research Officer, 2005-2009) started an independent position at University College Dublin funded by a 'Science Foundation Ireland Starting Investigator' grant. He and Anne-Louise have recently bought a home in Dublin which they are renovating.

**Hossein Mehrabi** (Visiting PhD, 2005-2006) is now an Associate Professor of Organic Chemistry at Val-e-Asr University of Rafsanjan, Iran. Hossein recalls his stay in Bristol as very enjoyable and memorable. He now has two children, his daughter Fatemeh Zahra is 6 years old and his son Adib is 10 months old (see photo).



Hossein Mehrabi with his children, Fatemeh & Adib

Since 2011, **Mariam Namutebi** (PhD, 2005-2010) has become a mother of two: her daughter, Aliyah, was born on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2011 is now 3 years old and her son, Rajab, was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2013 is now just over ten months old. She is currently based in Southampton, working for Merck Chemicals Ltd. as a Research Scientist at the Southampton Science Park.

**Alessia Nicotra** (PhD, 1999-2002) writes: Andrea, the kids and I are all fine. Andrea is still working in the position he held at the time of the last newsletter, being more and more busy. I finally managed to leave my old job, mainly because I was bored of full time research and wanted to spend more time with my family. I qualified as a secondary school chemistry teacher in 2012 and I have been teaching Chemistry in Lugano since September 2012. I couldn't imagine that I would have liked it so much, but now I am really very happy and I enjoy every single day spent with my students.



Daisuke Ohara & family

**Daisuke Ohara** (Visiting PhD, 2003) is working in the pharmaceutical chemicals division at Sumitomo Chemical and is in charge of generic API.

Daisuke writes: I sometimes attend CPhI Japan and China, and we have a booth in CPhI Europe so please come and see us when you have a chance! Chizuru, my sweet daughter, is now 3 years old; she loves Disney's 'Frozen' and sings 'Let it go' all day (see photo).

**Berit Olofsson** (Postdoc, 2003-2004) was promoted to Full Professor at Stockholm University in 2013. She now has two children: Isa born in 2010, and Ronja born in 2012 (see photo). Emmy, the family dog, got to more than 12 years old, which is unusually old for GSDs. She is missed by the whole family.

**Mehrnoosh Ostovar** (Postdoc, 2009-2012) is currently working at the department of Pharmacy and Pharmacology, University of Bath as a Postdoctoral Research Officer in Prof. Stephen Husbands' group. Her son Ryan, who is now 3 years old, has turned out to be a very active boy. From building ever



Ryan Ostovar dressed as his favourite Superhero

taller structures with his Lego to playing

computer games, he likes to challenge himself and won't stop until he gets things done his way. His favourite superhero is Spiderman (see photo) and his favourite sport is basketball.

2013 at the University of Vigo and since



Ramesh, Tamilselvi, Nithila & Kabilan



Isa & Ronja Olofsson

After her time in the Aggarwal group in the summer of 2010 **Leticia Otero De Castro** (Visiting PhD, 2010) finished her PhD in May 2013 at the University of Vigo and since September 2013 she has been working in the neuroscience section for Janssen-Toledo, Spain, on a postdoctoral fellowship.

**Ramesh Rasappan** (Postdoc, 2012-present) was excited to announce the arrival of their son, Kabilan, at the end of November 2013 (see photo). As every little one does he has brought us happiness and enjoyment along

with some trouble. All the time we just wonder how our forefathers managed dozens when we can't even manage two!



Raphael Robiette & family

**Raphael Robiette** (Postdoc, 2005-2006) and Marie are now the proud parents of Clemence who was born on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2013. Therefore, with Antoine, who turned 5 in May, they are now four at home (see photos). Raphael still enjoys doing chemistry with his little research group which now comprises of 3 PhD's, 1 postdoc, 1 technician and 1 undergrad. He has recently increased his teaching load slightly by



Clemence & Antione Robiette

taking up the physical organic chemistry course but research remains his main activity.



**Abel Ros Laó** (Postdoc, 2008-2010) is still working at the Instituto Investigaciones Químicas, Seville as a researcher. He and Inma will be parents again in October (another son is coming) and Martín is already 3 years old; he is growing so fast, it is a pity (see photo). Times for research are not so good currently in Spain, but we are trying to manage.

**Helen Scott** (PhD, 2009-2013) and David Burton got married on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2014. The reception was held in a marquee in her parent's garden, complete with a hog roast, a barn dance and some proper Bristol cider!



Helen Scott & David on their wedding day



Helen Scott on her wedding day with Aggarwal group members

They were very happy to have members of the Aggarwal group (past & present) there to celebrate with them: Cath Fletcher, Anna Hopkins, Cinzia Citti and Matt Burns (see photos).

**Knut Sommer** (Postdoc, 2004-2005) writes: I can hardly believe that ten years have elapsed since I was enjoying life in Bristol. I am still working for Bayer's plastics industry in the field of intellectual property. In April 2012, my department became part of the newly established "Bayer Intellectual Property GmbH" in Monheim am Rhein, Germany. At the end of February 2013, I passed my exams to become a European Patent Attorney. My wife Karin, our son Julian and I live in Krefeld where we recently moved into a lovely flat which I redecorated (I don't want to see any paint buckets for some time!). Little Julian celebrated his fourth birthday in March; he is a very lively child (can be *too* lively!) and enjoys playing with his friends in kindergarten. (see photo)



Julian Sommer with his furry friends: No night is spent without teddy bear Hans (top left)

**Ravi Sonawane** (Postdoc, 2008-2010) writes: After returning to India, I have been working at Syngenta in Goa as a group leader doing some crop protection research. The work is very interesting and I have been thoroughly enjoying it. Besides, Goa is a fantastic place to live (and holiday!) with its long stretches of beautiful beaches and mild climate compared to rest of India.



Ravi Sonawane & family

We do miss Bristol sometimes but I visit Syngenta's UK R&D site from time to time and it was a pleasure for me to be present for the Prostaglandin Nature paper



Ravi Sonawane & his daughter, Vibha

celebration at Varinder's house where I had an opportunity to catch up with some of the old-timers! Recently, we had the opportunity to host Varinder in Goa for a couple of days, which included a talk at our facility, I am sure Varinder enjoyed his time (and the seafood!).

On a personal front, Vaishali and I are happy parents of an almost three years (!) old daughter, Vibha (see photos). She has been growing really fast and it's unbelievable when we think that she has been in our lives for so long now. We do hope to come to Bristol some day for one of our holidays; just to walk to suspension bridge, have a stroll at harbour side and spend a lazy afternoon at Brandon Hill Park!

**Jake Stymiest** (Postdoc, 2005-2007) writes: I still reside in Rhode Island, USA (east coast) and continue to work for Purdue Pharma LLP (7 years now) and was promoted to Principal Scientist in 2013. Personally, I have recently established my permanent residence status (Green Card) so it looks as though I'll be State side for a while. Other than that, nothing much new, I am just enjoying the fruits of my labour and trying to remain busy in this ever changing chemistry job market.

**Rachel Stenson** (PhD, 1997-2000) moved back to chemistry at the end of 2012 and now looks after the technology and quality control departments at a Syngenta manufacturing site in Monthey, Switzerland. She says that it is a fabulous location in the Swiss Alps, great for both winter and summer sports.

**Alison Thompson** (PhD, 1993-1996) and David Jakeman live in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Both are full professors at Dalhousie University, living the roller-coaster ride and changing favours of research and academia. Jess Jakeman joined the clan on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012, and is doted upon by her brother James who is four years her elder (see photo). Canada's winter snow (skiing) and summer sunshine



Alison Thompson, Jess & James with a couple of seals carved from remnants of a maple tree that lost the battle in a Halifax hurricane

(swimming al fresco) is enjoyed to the full. They get back to see UK family and friends as often as possible, including a mega 31-person Sheffield 1993-1996 week-long reunion in 2012.



Yunus Turkmen

**Yunus Turkmen** (Postdoc, 2013-present) will leave the Aggarwal group to start working as an Assistant Professor in the Chemistry Department of Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey in February 2015.

**Matthew Unthank** (PhD, 2003-2007) writes: Since the last newsletter I have had a third child and finally got a girl this time round called Ella Marie Unthank, who is now 1 year old. My other kids (both boys) are now 4 and 6 years old. I have left GlaxoSmithKline and moved back to the North East, where I am from. I now work for AkzoNobel and have been molded into an organic polymer chemist. I had dinner with Varinder at last year's Bristol Synthesis Meeting and told him all about this....over a glass of wine of course...or two! I am currently Innovative Polymer Project Leader, which means I manage the long term research activities for the powder coatings division of AkzoNobel. It's pretty different to pharmaceuticals but is still concerned with organic chemistry, synthesis and catalysis. I like it!



Maxime Vitale

**Maxime Vitale** (Postdoc, 2004-2005) has been working as a CNRS Researcher at the Ecole Supérieure de Chimie de Paris since October 2008.

**Olov Wallner** (Postdoc, 2006-2007) now works as a Research Scientist in Prof. Thomas Helleday's group at Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm.

In June 2011, **Matt Webster** (PhD, 2005-2010), finished his postdoc with Prof. Fürstner at the MPI Mülheim and the US to carry out postdoctoral research Denmark at the University of Illinois.

Matt writes: This proved to be a fantastic years; I met and married my wife Amber in photo), Illinois, and was awarded a Marie Postdoctoral fellowship. This fellowship then opportunity to carry out postdoctoral Prof. Carreira at the ETH Zürich, where my currently living. We love Switzerland and are



Amber & Matt Webster on their wedding day

moved out to with Prof.

two-and-a-bit Peoria (see Curie gave me the research with wife and I are really enjoying

the hiking, the mountains and the opportunity to travel. In October we'll move back to the Illinois where I have accepted a position at AbbVie in their Med Chem division in North Chicago.

## OBITUARY

**Kerstin Weir (*née* Obiery)** (Postdoc, 1995-1996)

*by Emma Anderson*

In June 2013 we received the tragic news that Kerstin Weir had fallen over a cliff on Skye while on holiday with her husband, Diarmid.

Kerstin moved to Sheffield from Braunschweig to complete a postdoc in the Aggarwal group then returned to Germany to work for VW in the paint department. Over the next few years she would visit former colleagues back in the UK, including a trip to the wedding of Ed Hutchinson (Sheffield, Blackburn group, Jan 94 - Jun 97) where she met Diarmid, the brother of Ed's wife Anna. They married in Germany 6 years later (see photo). The option of redundancy from VW brought her the opportunity to move to Edinburgh to live with Diarmid and his 2 children. Here, she worked for a couple of small analytical companies, saw former group members Emma Anderson and Julia Adam (*née* Worrall) and set up a blog recounting her amazing cooking and baking skills.



Diarmid & Kerstin Weir on their wedding day

In her memory, some of her Sheffield colleagues raised over £500 for CRISIS, a charity for the homeless. She is greatly missed by all. RIP Kerstin, November 1964 - June 2013.

## NEWS FROM VARINDER

Varinder & family on holiday in Devon



News about Meena: We went on a family holiday to her sister's house in Spain last year, and to Devon this year. She has also taught herself how to paint semi-abstract watercolours and has been involved in two public displays of local artists' work.



Lukha (16) and Romi (14) are definitely teenagers now and things are beginning to get serious as we move into GCSE year for Lukha. By a process of elimination, he is definitely not going into the arts, but he is not sure what he wants to do yet, except earn lots of money. They still both do quite a lot of sport in and outside school and I now run the U14 football squad, with knowledge and tactics garnered from Match of the Day, so not especially useful. Romi was taller than me when

he was 13 and is still growing. Not sure where he gets it from - perhaps Meena's numerous cakes and desserts, a perk from having a stay-at-home mum!

I continue to do a bit of running and cycling although my 10K runs are definitely getting



Varinder, Jeremy Harvey & Daniele Leonori at the finish of the Great Weston Bike Ride

slower. However, I did beat Sven Fritz (PhD, 2009-2013) in 2012 with a time of 46.01 which is the main thing! I also completed the Great Weston Bike Ride with Daniele Leonori this year and last. It is quite a tough ride covering 54 miles around Bristol, including some of the hills in Cheddar and out to Burham-on-sea before finishing in Weston-super-Mare.



Martin Lowe, Varinder, Mike Shaw & Richard Franklin at UCB

In the last few years, I was really pleased to meet up with former group members at various meetings and events. On a trip to UCB in Slough I met up with Richard Franklin (PhD, 1989-1992), Martin Lowe (PhD, 2004-2007) and Mike Shaw (PhD, 2008-2011). How so many



Varinder's visit to Syngenta, Goa to see Ravi Sonawane

Aggarwal group members ended up in a single relatively small organization, I do not know. When I was in Mumbai for the CRSI National Symposium in Chemistry in February 2014, I took the opportunity to visit Ravi Sonawane (Postdoc, 2008-2010) at Syngenta in Goa where Rachel Stenson (PhD, 1997-2000) was fondly remembered by one and



Jie Bi & Varinder in Shanghai

all, including my driver. During my recent Swiss tour I met with Ingo Emme (Postdoc, 2002-2003) [Ingo missed the glorious 4:0 victory of Germany over Portugal in the world cup because he wanted to hear my talk], Matt Webster (PhD, 2005-2010), Sven Fritz (PhD, 2009-2013) and Chun Chen (PhD, 2009-2013). I also visited Shanghai in August for ISACS14, and enjoyed great hospitality and an excellent tour of the city by Jie.

I look forward to more encounters in the years to come.

## PUBLICATIONS

See the following link for our most up to date list of publications:  
[www.bris.ac.uk/chemistry/research/organic/aggarwal-group/publications/](http://www.bris.ac.uk/chemistry/research/organic/aggarwal-group/publications/)

### 14<sup>TH</sup> BRISTOL SYNTHESIS MEETING 15<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2014

This year's annual Bristol Synthesis Meeting was held in the Victoria Rooms on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> April and we were pleased to, once again, host a very impressive line-up of international, award winning speakers:

Prof. Dennis Dougherty, California Institute of Technology, USA presented 'Chemistry on the Brain: Understanding the Nicotine Receptor'

Prof. Bartosz Grzybowski, Northwestern University, USA presented 'Chematica: Planning and Optimization of Chemical Synthesis Using Chemical Networks'

Prof. Michael Krische, the University of Texas, USA presented 'Hydrogenation for C-C Bond Formation: Reinventing the Chemistry of Carbonyl Addition'

Prof. James Morken, Boston College, USA presented 'Stereoselective Organic Synthesis Enabled by Catalytic Reactions of Boron Reagents'

Nobel Laureate Prof. Ada Yonath, Weizmann Institute of Science, Israel, presented 'Ribosome: The Ultimate Synthesizer?!'

All of the speakers more than lived up to expectations with comments from the delegates claiming this year's meeting to be the best yet in terms of the science that was presented and the quality of the speakers.



Varinder with the speakers at BSM2014

Website:

[www.bris.ac.uk/chemistry/research/organic/aggarwal-group/bristolsynthesismeeting/](http://www.bris.ac.uk/chemistry/research/organic/aggarwal-group/bristolsynthesismeeting/)

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## GROUP WEBSITE



[www.bris.ac.uk/chemistry/research/organic/aggarwal-group/index.html](http://www.bris.ac.uk/chemistry/research/organic/aggarwal-group/index.html)

We always endeavor to keep the details of former group member positions up to date so please do inform me if your details on the website are incorrect or your situation changes.

## LINKEDIN

If you have not done so already, I would like to encourage you to join the 'Aggarwal Group Alumni' group on LinkedIn. It has proven to be a very convenient way of keeping in touch with former group members and I hope that future communication with the ever growing Aggarwal Group Research family will be facilitated in this way. This might be especially useful when you are looking for your next career move, if you are looking to recruit somebody, or just as another way to keep in touch.