PAV BHOGAL:

Pav Bhogal is a 25-year-old engineer who received his Whitworth medal less than a year ago, but already, he’s thinking about the next generations.

Working in the naval ships division at BAE Systems, Bhogal helps students with difficult backgrounds or those from ethnic minorities to enter engineering. Teaming up with other organisations, including schools and universities, he’s helping them compile CVs, prepare for interviews and learn how to present themselves to potential employers.

“One of the biggest problems is the skills gap and trying to recruit and retain enough engineers,” Bhogal says. “There is a very real issue with an ageing population of engineers. In the next five to 10 years, a lot of engineers we know and love, and who do a lot of our work, will be retiring or leaving. There’s a gap between that generation and the groups coming in now. So it’s about being able to transfer and retain knowledge.”

Bhogal says he expects to see major changes in the future, including a “huge increase” of women in engineering.

Getting the Whitworth Scholarship allowed Bhogal, who works in software integration, to study smarter and buy some of the tools he needed, including a laptop. He also sees the programme as a step towards professional registration and a brilliant networking opportunity.

“It’s the support network behind it,” he says. “You get to talk to people in different locations, working in different sectors of engineering, who have probably worked abroad. It’s kind of like a mentoring network.”

Bhogal thinks that while the world has changed dramatically since Sir Joseph Whitworth was alive, many of the industry’s problems remain. He calls it “different but the same”. Software may have replaced hardware, but core issues are still being confronted and the role of engineers is still to look to the future and find solutions.

Bhogal says those considering applying for a Whitworth Scholarship should not hesitate.

“One of my philosophies is to never say no,” he explains. “If you’re given an opportunity, always go for it. Say yes as much as you can. Get involved as much as you can. It’s a great support network and it helps you develop an understanding of the industry.”