



TOULOUSE BRANCH

Honorary Secretary's Annual Report to the 2003 AGM

Introduction

In writing this report I find myself in a very different position from Bob Lange, my predecessor in this role. This time last year, Bob was penning his final Honorary Secretary's annual report and reflecting upon his achievements during the previous three years. Hindsight is a wonderful thing from which Bob was able to benefit: this is my first report and I am faced with the rather different task of gazing into my crystal ball and trying to predict what the future might hold!

This first year as Honorary Secretary has been full of learning opportunities; although I had had experience on many other RAeS committees before coming to Toulouse I had never held such a high-profile position as Honorary Secretary. I therefore apologise if there has been any sensation of a lack of understanding on my part of my role and responsibilities, or any feeling that things have not been running as smoothly as before. Indeed, at this point I feel it is appropriate to highlight why you might have noticed this change, in thanking Bob Lange for his extremely efficient input as Honorary Secretary in the previous 3 years. Bob continues to serve on Branch and main Society Boards and committees and I have lost count of the number of times he has provided me with priceless advice on shortcuts through RAeS and Airbus bureaucracy!

I therefore have a challenge to rise to and I hope I will manage it: I am lucky to be surrounded by a willing and capable committee, led by a very experienced Chairman in Hugh Dibley, who, despite the seemingly reducing number of available hours in the day, maintain this branch in its current healthy state. May I publicly thank them for their contributions over the last 12 months.

The Branch would almost certainly not survive if it were not for the valued contribution of many external organisations who have helped out in many ways this year. In particular and on behalf of the Branch, I would like to thank the following:

- Airbus, for the continued use of the Symposium Room and the provision of delicious cakes, coffee and orange juice that have calmed the nerves of many a speaker (and your Honorary Secretary) throughout the year. In addition all of this year's committee meetings have been held in rooms provided by Airbus.
- BAE SYSTEMS Regional Aircraft SA for covering postage costs and providing raffle prizes for the annual dinner.
- EURESAS and its Director Paul Clark (who also delivered a lecture to the branch this year) for hosting events.
- Rolls Royce for continuing sponsorship of the Mini-lecture competition, including beautiful trophies fashioned from fan blades, as well as for providing raffle prizes for the dinner.
- SBAC Toulouse for raffle prizes for annual dinner.

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- flyBE for raffle prizes for annual dinner.

In addition I would like to thank the employers of all our speakers for releasing them for the time necessary to come and share their expertise with the members of the Branch.

Lecture programme and Branch Activities

This year's programme was fixed late in the day, partially because of the change of committee leadership. As a result, some of the lectures were changed at relatively late notice, although this was also necessary on one occasion due to illness. An additional, initially unscheduled lecture was organised in April. The final programme was:

- 10th September 2002 - Challenges for a New Breed of Engineer, Nicolas Roy, Intespace
- 15th October 2002 - The Elastic Aircraft, Paul Clark, Cranfield University (held at EURESAS)
- 12th November 2002 - Aerodynamics in Racing Car Design, Hugh Dibley, Chairman RAeS Toulouse Branch
- 10th December 2002 - Developing the A380 Cockpit, Peter Chandler, Airbus
- 21st January 2003 – Rolls Royce Mini-lecture competition and Trent 900: The Low Risk Route to High Technology, Gordon McKechnie, Rolls Royce
- 18th February 2003 - 11th Gordon Corps Lecture: Campaigning Against Accidents, Padhraic Kelleher, CAA
- 18th March 2003 - Supporting the Airbus Fleet, Pierre Steffen, Airbus
- 15th April 2003 - Hatfield Manpowered Aircraft, Frank Ogilvie, Airbus
- 13th May 2003 - Breitling Orbiter 3, Brian Smith, Mission Controller
- 10th June 2003 - AGM and History of UK Space Industry, Tom Keates, Vice Chairman RAeS Space Group
- 20th June 2003 - Annual Dinner. Speaker: Les Brodie, British Airways Concorde Captain (held at Chateau de Larroque)

Despite the difficulties mentioned, this still represents a total of 11 lectures, the content of which was extremely varied and represents good value for Branch members. Comments from those attending lectures were almost entirely favourable. The temptation of relying on Airbus speakers, who are somewhat easier to obtain, is still visible, but no more than in previous years.

An attendance book was instigated this year, which helps our Membership Secretaries keep tabs on any changes of membership details, as well as allowing us to target those who default on Branch or Society membership fees and consistently attend our lectures. Whilst casual visitors are very much welcome, we have to bear in mind that an organised programme of lectures is a benefit provided to those who contribute to the financial health of the Branch. The book shows that the average attendance for this year was approximately 30, with a peak of 60 for Paul Clark's lecture at EURESAS. Dinners, ably organised by Hugh Dibley, continued to be held after all of the lectures at the Grand Noble, including a party of 28 on one occasion (number swelled by a visiting delegation of members of the Indian airworthiness authorities).

The Branch hosted visitors from both the Cyprus and New Zealand branches this year and we will be welcoming the President of the Society to the Annual Dinner. This event will return to the Chateau de Larroque this year following unfavourable feedback from some Branch members regarding last year's venue. In addition, the Branch was represented (by Hugh Dibley) at the Branches Forum at Hamilton Place and the Branches Conference at Cosford.

The advertising of lectures has improved thanks to some efficient e-mail communication to the Branch membership by Peter Reddel. The use of attachments (such as posters or voting forms) has caused some difficulty to some members of the Branch, but we intend to continue to use this method as technological advances are quickly resolving the issue. Posters have been produced on some occasions - thanks to Dominique Schmidt for these - but as Bob Lange noted last year, there is no official mechanism for getting them displayed at Airbus (and indeed the world at large!). As a result, only the goodwill of committee members is available to get the posters on show, and so their impact is not as great as desired.

There were no joint lectures this year, although Hugh Dibley is working closely with the AAAF regarding one of our lectures in next year's season, as well as a conference hosted by Thales that is in gestation for early 2004.

Mini-lecture competition

Under the leadership of Steve Dillingham, it was decided to revitalise the Mini-lecture competition this year by running a preliminary event in each of the aerospace engineering schools in Toulouse, followed by a run-off to coincide with the Rolls Royce lecture in January. Steve and I decided to visit each of the schools and to make a presentation to the students, highlighting the benefits of participation, but to our dismay, only ENSICA replied to our invitation. The presentation was duly made to ENSICA students but, we acknowledge, at the wrong moment in the academic year. This meant that, despite some Herculean efforts from Steve with our contacts at ENAC and SUPAERO, we had to rely on the results of an internal competition at ENSICA to provide us with the sole candidate at the Rolls Royce lecture.

The candidate in question was Loic Le Gall, who won a trophy from Rolls Royce for his presentation on Space Charge in Materials, as well as a cash prize donated by the Branch and free student membership of the RAeS donated by the Society. All those present at the presentation will, I'm sure, agree with me when I say that irrespective of his being the sole candidate, Loic's presentation was easily equal to the high standard of presentations made at previous competitions.

Steve and I recognise that this situation is far from desirable and with the benefit of our experience have already started the preparations for next year's event. Rolls Royce have generously agreed to continue their sponsorship arrangement but we are already facing difficulties even getting the engineering schools to answer the telephone, let alone organise any candidates!

Membership numbers

Following difficulties in keeping tabs on Friends of the Branch in previous years, a more direct approach to dealing with consistent defaulters was adopted this year. This involved the instigation of a system highly similar to that used by the main Society, of a series of warning letters with appropriate deadlines for payment. Friends of the Branch are removed from the distribution lists of Branch activities if payment is not received on time. This policy has resulted in the loss of approximately 20 Friends of the Branch this year. This may seem a lot, but bearing in mind that these Friends had not paid up for one or more years, they were starting to become a drain on the Branch's (limited) finances. In addition, the main Society is getting more efficient at sending us regular updates of main Society members resident in Toulouse (and indeed France as a whole) which means that we can more effectively target the core of the Branch's supporters.

The number of Branch members approaching us for assistance in main Society membership applications and upgrades remains stable, with a number of candidates supported by the Branch achieving Member and Fellow status this year.

For the record, the official membership numbers at the end of this season are as follows:

Main Society members (branch)	68	(99/00 - 63, 00/01 - 60, 01/02 - 71)
Main Society members (France)	95	(99/00 - 80, 00/01 - 91, 01/02 - 83)
Friends of the Branch	85	(99/00 - 50, 00/01 - 32, 01/02 - 100)
TOTAL	248	(99/00 - 193, 00/01 - 183, 01/02 - 254)

Committee membership

During the year, the committee included 15 members.

Due to work commitments, Simon Smith had to relinquish his role as treasurer part way through his term of office when he returned to the UK. His short tenure of the post was nonetheless much appreciated. Peter Reddel has been holding the fort since and is a candidate for election to the post.

At the end of each full year of service, committee members are asked to indicate their willingness to continue on the committee. This measure is in place to recognise the changing workloads of committee members, as well as giving potential new candidates the chance to join the committee. This year, Philip Lawrence and Yves Rengade will not be continuing in their functions and we thank them for their valuable contributions. Yves is currently quite poorly and we send him our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

In addition, one of the pillars of the Toulouse Branch has decided it is time to hang up his RaeS boots. After many years of loyal service and strong involvement in the branch, Bill Ford is retiring (again!) from the SBAC. We thank Bill for his invaluable contribution and hope that we will continue to see him at lectures, as well as being able to call upon him for advice.

All other Branch officers and committee members are willing to continue in their roles, although after reaching the end of her first term of office as Membership Secretary, Paula Watson is standing for re-election in accordance with the Branch rules.

With the departure of Bill Ford, Yves Rengade, Simon Smith and Philip Lawrence, the committee is perhaps too heavily manned by Airbus employees, and is also reducing in size. Please take a moment to consider if you could spare some time to help support the Branch by joining the committee, particularly if you are not directly related to Airbus: the time involved is relatively small and your input would be highly valued.

The future

I see next year as one of consolidation of the Branch: the new committee with its changes in Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer will have the opportunity to benefit from its first year of experience, whilst at the same time trying to stretch its wings. There are a number of key issues to tackle and I hope to stand here this time next year with positive news on all of them:

- increased communication with the membership;

- putting in place of new benefits to members, including a branch website and on-line access to recordings of previous speakers (trialled at Pierre Steffen's lecture this season);
- successful establishment of a revised Mini-lecture competition.

In addition we must remember that (depending on which side of the Channel or the Atlantic you stand!) the 2003-2004 season is a celebration of the first century of powered flight. We will keep you informed of the many special events being organised by the RAeS to mark this historic occasion.

The 2003-2004 lecture programme is still being finalised and will be distributed during the summer holidays, but the following dates can already go in your diaries; all are Tuesdays (except the Annual Dinner) and the lecture start time will remain 18h00. Venues to be advised!

September 23rd, October 21st, November 18th, December 16th, January 20th 2004 (Mini-lecture competition final), February 17th (Gordon Corps lecture), March 23rd, April 20th, May 18th, June 15th (to include AGM) and June 25th (Annual Dinner)

Jim Fawcett
Honorary Secretary
Toulouse Branch, Royal Aeronautical Society

Toulouse, 10th June 2003