



British Section

The President's Annual Report 2013

Patrons

To 5 August 2013 Sir Alcon Copisarow
From 5 August 2013: Professor Robert Mair

Council 2013

President: David Park

Vice Presidents: Peter Varley and Peter Blair-Fish

Officers: John Beck (Honorary Secretary) Simon Greenway (Honorary Treasurer)
David Hattersley (Dining Secretary) Edmund Morgan-Warren (Membership Secretary)

Members: Grahame Barwell, Andrew McNaughton, David Shillito, Ron Walker

Past Presidents: Anthony (Bill) Bayly, Richard Groome

Dear Members and Friends

I am pleased to present my report on British Section for 2013, a year characterised by continuing strong support for the programme of lectures and other events, by opportunities taken to reinforce our links with IESF France both centrally and locally, and by the successful appointment of a new Patron, only the fourth in our existence.

Taking the last point first, Council was delighted when Professor Robert Mair accepted the invitation to succeed Sir Alcon Copisarow as Patron, and we are very appreciative of his immediate interest and early involvement in our activities, accompanied by his wife Margaret to whom we also extend a warm welcome. At the same time we renew our thanks to Sir Alcon and to Lady Diana for all they have done over such a long period to support and encourage British Section. As a mark of appreciation, Council has conferred Honorary Life membership on Sir Alcon, and we hope both he and Lady Diana will continue their long association with us.

The high levels of interest and commitment demonstrated by members, friends and partners continue to be our strength, and I am grateful to you all for the part you have played. May I also thank those who, though no longer able to join events in person by force of circumstance or geography, still keep in touch and remain a very loyal and supportive part of our community.

I shall be selective in my account of the year's events below, since detailed reports can be found in the Newsletter. But a few statistics set the scene. At three out of the five dinners numbers have exceeded 100; we sold out on available tickets for the special event day at the British Museum; we had a

“full house” for the President’s evening at the Royal Institution; and both Voyages were well supported.

The subject of my Presidential Address, Glass in Architecture, was reflected in this year’s programme where opportunities arose. In particular it led to the day in York in May where, after a morning spent in the glass conservation studio at York Minster witnessing restoration work on the Great East window, we were given a tour of the float glass production facility of Saint-Gobain, which I believe is one of the first IESF technical visits to a major French-owned operation in this country.



I shall say more about reinforcing our French links below, but suffice to say that the visit itself brought out clearly both the scale of the production process - running 24 hours a day, 365 days a year- and the importance of consistent quality and overall efficiency given the competitiveness of the market into which such glass is released - the recent news of the Pilkington (NSG) float line closure at St Helens reinforcing the point.

The March and April lectures on HS2 and Hinkley Point C were nothing if not topical. I am sure nobody could have been more relieved than Chris Bakken, returning to the podium by popular demand, when the latter project finally received a green light in October. It is clearly going to be a succession of amber lights for a while longer in the case of HS2, where Professor Andrew McNaughton delivered a comprehensive and insightful analysis. Rail featured in a very different way in October, when Professor Tony Ridley helped mark the 150th anniversary of the London Underground - his reflections on its national and global significance were both personal and finely wrought. The November lecture delivered by Andy Butler on the construction of the Leadenhall building in the City of London was a fascinating account of the extensive use of off-site prefabrication and sophisticated application of BIM to deliver an asymmetrical building with complex steel frame on a very restricted footprint.

The Pompeii and Herculaneum exhibition at the British Museum proved an excellent focus for the special event day in April. The artefacts assembled were of the highest quality and imaginatively displayed, even including a small amount of engineering content. Karen hosted the popular annual lunch for the ladies in the Museum’s Court Restaurant, while I hosted a lunch off-site for their partners.

The Royal Institution (RI) was a new venue for an IESF British Section meeting, where on the occasion of the President’s evening in June we had

free range of the basement museum prior to dinner, following a polished and informative lecture by Professor Frank James on Michael Faraday. I was particularly pleased that Sir Alcon and Lady Diana were able to join us, Sir Alcon having a long association with the RI.

The 4 day Spring Voyage to Amiens was also a new destination for British Section, and proved to hold a good deal of technical and cultural interest. Both the visit to the Ambonne Water Purification Plant, where a high standard of treatment is vital given the environmental sensitivity of the Somme valley, and that to the IDEX Environnement domestic waste recycling plant, the first in France to generate biogas, proved well worthwhile.



These visits were facilitated by the Tourist Office, who seemed delighted to have professional engineers showing interest in the city and went to great lengths to assist us, including helping ensure our expectations of French cuisine were fulfilled.

The 5 day Autumn Voyage was to Lyon, previously visited in 1997. The technical element was drawn up with the assistance of IESF Ain-Rhône colleagues, who joined us for what proved to be a fascinating day. Few will forget the morning spent in company with the President of the Catholic University of Lyon, Professor Thierry Magnin, who not only conducted us round the construction site for the new Saint-Paul campus, which will replace a former prison whilst retaining some of its more architecturally significant structures, but also spoke eloquently about the university's ethos. The visit to the stainless steel and glass clad Musée des Confluences, an example of deconstructivist architecture with consequently complex steel framing, was also special. We are very grateful to Jean-Luc Guyot and André Mordant for guiding us on the day, and also to Roland Huin for helping create the programme of visits.



In marked contrast to these modern structures, the following day we visited two historic sites with preserved silk looms still in working order - a very different type of engineering. We concluded, after some excellent meals,

that Lyon's reputation for fine cuisine was well deserved. Indeed for once it almost took the edge off appetites for Rosemary Cox's generously provided sweets, a very popular Voyage tradition!

Just as this Ain-Rhône contact helped us in 2013, the local IESF organisation in Bordeaux provided input to the 2012 Autumn Voyage, and a similar local contact is already well established for the visit to Aix-en-Provence in 2014. Further tie-ins, and possible exchange visits, are certainly options for the future. Such contacts build on the secure foundations of our established liaison with IESF Paris, carefully nurtured by our Honorary Secretary and by successive Presidents. Increasing our profile can only help win new friends and so I was delighted when an account of our Lyon trip was commissioned by IESF Ain-Rhône and put up on their website under the headline «*IESF Grande-Bretagne: What is that?*». In similar vein, John Beck and I took advantage of a day visit to Paris in June not only to meet Julien Roitman, IESF President, and other rue Lamennais colleagues (including our longstanding friend, Daniel Ameline) but also to make contact with the President-elect of ICE France, Chris Polwin, when again possibilities for increased collaboration were explored. And I was very pleased when, during the Lyon Voyage, the current ICE France President, Lucy Rew, accepted an invitation to join our group one evening for dinner.

Looking back over the year, one quickly realises how much is contributed by others. I am very grateful to my lecturers, and to those who gave votes of thanks, proposed toasts or responded on behalf of the guests on each occasion. I am also grateful to those members and friends who offered advice and assistance in other areas, including help with translation. In all cases I have sought to thank you individually and hope you will allow that the list would be too long to repeat here.

At the last count we had 155 Members and 7 Friends, indicative of the fact that steady progress is being made in recruitment of new members meeting our high standards for admission, despite the inevitable sad losses recorded in the Newsletter. I renew our welcome to all those who have joined this year.

I shall end by expressing my thanks to Council colleagues, whose efforts across 2013 it would be too easy to take for granted - John Beck and Richard Groome for their help throughout, not least their commitment of time and effort in connection with the appointment of a new Patron; Simon Greenway for his efficient oversight of the accounts; Edmund Morgan-Warren for his similarly efficient handling of membership matters; David Hattersley for his inexhaustible energy in planning and organising our venues and meals; Bill Bayly for his highly committed editorship of the Newsletter; Grahame Barwell, Andrew McNaughton, David Shillito and Ron Walker for advice and assistance on a whole raft of issues: and last but not least, my two successors, Peter Varley and Peter Blair-Fish, for practical help on the Voyages and many things besides. I would also like to thank Angela Rodgers for the administrative support she has so willingly and effectively provided

to Council over the last 10 years. We say farewell to her in this role as she hands over the reins at ICE in the New Year, extending a welcome to Greg James in her place. Additionally I am grateful to Roger Emberson for his continued work on the website.

It has been a great privilege to serve as the organisation's President over the past 12 months, ably supported throughout by Karen. Both she and I have much enjoyed our year, and wish Peter Varley and Rae every success for 2014.

David Park
President