

# **Norwich Engineering Society**

## **President's Report 2008/2009**

It gives me great pleasure to present you with this year's President's Report. I have very much enjoyed my Presidential Year. Seen from my perspective, the year has been very successful.

I hope you agree with me that our 2008-2009 lecture programme has been broad ranging, informative and, with one notable exception, very enjoyable. A highlight, as far as I was concerned, was the recent talk by Dr Lucy Collinson who gave an extremely clear and well thought out presentation pitched at just the right level; an exemplar of how it should be done. Members will be delighted to hear that we raised just over £230 towards Cancer Research UK at the collection after Dr Collinson's talk. Clearly this programme can't have happened spontaneously; it is all down to our programme organisers. I would therefore like to thank, on your behalf, Dick Abbott, our Vice President, and his team for all the hard work they put in arranging this splendid set of talks. I can assure you that the programme for next year is also well advanced with confirmed talks already on the stocks on such topics as 'wings and how they really provide lift', 'civil engineering aspects of dam building', 'Nanotechnology and pharmacy'; and 'Aspects of car design' by Lotus cars.

As you are well aware this is our first year here at the Holiday Inn. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking the Holiday Inn team for all the help and assistance they have given us in setting up our talk venues for. Overall I think the transition from Pinebanks has proved somewhat easier than I thought it would be. For this we must thank Dick Abbott, assisted chiefly by Chris Hoskins and Mike Vincent, for all the work that they put in. At this juncture I would also like to thank Nigel Ratcliff and Keith Webster for setting up and maintaining the audio-visual aspects of our meetings.

As many of you are aware we also had an excellent Summer Visits programme that was well organised initially by Mike Vincent but later assisted by Ray Allen and Ray Hannent who now constitute our visits team. I am sure you would like to join with me in thanking them for all their efforts in getting this programme together. Some very notable visits were the trips to the Mini plant at Cowley and the Sizewell B power station training centre. You will be glad to hear that an exciting programme has already been assembled for this coming summer e.g. Marshall of Cambridge and Cooper Roller Bearings. More trips are in the planning negotiation stages e.g. Little Snoring airfield and Commander Wallis' engineering base at Reymeston Hall to see his work on autogyros and, if the weather is kind, to see them in action. I will not say any more because it will steal Mike Vincent's report later in the agenda.

We always welcome suggestions for topics and/or speakers and/or potential visit venues. If you have any ideas please contact any council member and talk your ideas through with them.

As I reported at the last meeting, the NES is one of the main sponsors of the Rotary Challenge Tournament for Schools. 2009 was again a successful event with three NES members being on the judging panel, Bernard Ambrose (chief judge), Chris Hoskins and me. There were 21 teams from 8 schools. The really good thing about this year's results was that the winners were from a range of schools not just Norwich School and Langley. This can only be good for the tournament! Let us only hope that many of the participants become members in the future!

In terms of the detailed running of the society it is clear that in many areas the team approach that we have been trying to adopt to spread the load on Council Members has proved very successful. I have already mentioned the Lectures team and the Summer Visits Team. Another area where we have had success is in the secretarial administration of the NES; handbooks were prepared in time as were all the necessary papers for the running of the Council Meetings. Here I would very much like to thank Mike Vincent for all his efforts. In order to take a more team like approach to administration you will be glad to hear that for the coming 2009-2010 season Chris Hoskins has agreed to join Mike in looking after secretarial matters. At this juncture I would also like to thank Dick Abbott for booking Council Meeting venues and taking notes at all the meetings he could attend. On the few occasions he couldn't make it, Chris Hoskins took on the role of note taker; very many thanks to him for this. On a personal note I would like to thank Ray Hannent for chairing meetings when I was absent on the far side of the world.

As Ray Hannent indicated in his President's report last year, Council set up the ad hoc post of Membership Secretary to ease the burden on the Treasurer. This post has been successfully carried through by Nigel Ratcliff; indeed most of you paid your subscriptions through him this year. The experiment has been so successful that the main driving force for the amended constitution that is coming up later in the agenda is formalising this post; many thanks to Nigel for carrying through this task with his normal enthusiasm.

I have mentioned easing the burden on the Treasurer earlier. This became very important this year because the present incumbent, Stuart Snelling, found himself under significantly increased pressure in his workplace; so much so that he found it impossible to attend some meetings and arrived late at many of the others. Understandably, NES business became very much the poor relation in Stuart's list of priorities. As a consequence he has been unable to prepare a set of accounts that can be submitted to our account examiners for which he has tendered his apologies. As I reported at our last lecture meeting the pressure on Stuart is likely to continue for the foreseeable future and at the last Council Meeting he tendered his resignation, as your Treasurer. At this juncture I would like to reiterate what I said at the last lecture meeting, the NES owes Stuart an immense debt of gratitude for all that he has done for the society.

Several days after resigning as Treasurer, Stuart also resigned as Publicity Officer and Webmaster. This leaves the NES with a bit of a problem because our web-site is hosted, at the moment, in Stuart's own personal web-space on his ISP's servers; for all sorts of reasons this is not good for him or the NES. The Council has set up a small working

party (Steve Searle, Nigel Ratcliff, Stuart Snelling and myself) to investigate the way forward in terms of migrating our site to a new host and setting up the necessary tools so that a team of people can update the site rather than relying totally on Stuart's very valuable free time. This will necessitate spending a little money but hopefully if we can persuade as many of you as possible to use the web as our first line source of information; hopefully we can then save on phone and mail charges by only sending letters when we really need to.

I hope I have covered all the bases that a President should. I apologise if I have missed anything out but I think I have already gone on far too long. This leaves me with the very pleasant task of thanking you for your company and wishing you well for the upcoming year and, of course, wishing the new President, whoever that might be, all the best for the future.

**Thank you!**

**Richard Aldridge**  
**President 2008-2009**