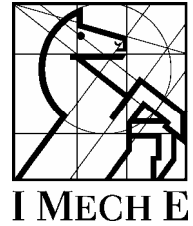


Benelux Branch Newsletter



August 2006

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Forthcoming Benelux Branch Events

Date	Event	Location
1 st Wednesday of each Month	Beer & Banter Evening	Brussels
Sunday 3 rd September 2006	Visit to Industrial Heartland of Southern Luxembourg	Luxembourg

Your Benelux Branch event co-ordinators are:

Netherlands: Position vacant!

Belgium: Steve Price, Tel: +32 2772 1603, Fax: +32 2779 8217, E-mail: steven.price@pccl.be

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From your Branch Chairman

As I received the Chairman's baton your committee was almost literally 'all at sea' as discussed in Andy's AGM report. Following discussions with members, I can't help feeling that this is a fairly widely held view of the Institution at large. Communications from Headquarters address issues which don't seem to concern those of us working in a part of the world where Engineers are respected and valued. Distinctions and divisions between engineers here are more related to the number of years university study you completed (and therefore whether you are more practically or theoretically inclined) than to whether you are happier with things which move, stand still, smell or fizz (I think that covers the four largest UK institutions!). A significant proportion of our branch membership, whichever their initial discipline, have since moved into management positions, and now run engineering businesses or departments, employing engineers from across the spectrum. What relevance to us the debate on Bangladeshi subscription levels? In a fragmented market with institutions competing for membership amongst one another, mergers are inevitable and essential if members' subscriptions are to fund real benefits of membership and not to prop up multiple anachronistic Headquarters structures and their divisions and groups.

It is hardly surprising that active membership amongst those registered in the Benelux area is limited to a few. Branches of other UK Institutions report the same 'bath tub curve' of member's participation levels: fairly active on graduation and until achieving chartered status, then almost inactive throughout the working life ('I've got a family, and a job which causes me to travel a lot, how do I find time for the IMechE? And whenever anything does look interesting, I'm travelling!') Activity then increases as retirement approaches.

So the themes for the next couple of years will be to deliver more benefits of membership more efficiently and with a wider appeal. In discussion with other committee members we have agreed we can provide more choice of activity without asking individual members to put in any additional effort.

We can make better use of the web-site to disseminate information from HQ for those who do want to stay informed. We could also provide a facility for those interested to make their opinions heard, such that I can represent them at the various Council and International Affairs Committees it is my lot to attend. (If I get no other views, you can guess from my opening paragraph the position I am personally inclined to take).

We can make better use of the activities of other Engineering and related Institutions to widen the number of events of interest to our members. Partnership and collaboration at local branch level has been more active in the past than today, and re-establishing good reciprocal links is something I will personally pursue. The results should be seen in an increased number of activities listed on our web-site schedule.

And finally, although the two 'big' events reported elsewhere in this newsletter were great, and well-supported (made more likely by their family-friendly nature). These do take quite a lot of organisational effort researching, coordinating guest speakers and participants. Contrast these with the low-effort, high frequency, high involvement Beer & Banter evenings we've been having in Brussels for the last couple of years, where member's needs to meet with and network with other expat engineers, discuss integration into local life and working culture, and even occasionally put one member with a need in touch with another who can supply. It sounds almost like the remit for the original 'Club' on which the Institution was founded.

Finally, and borrowing from the informal nature of the B&B, have any of you thought that what

you do for a living might also be of interest to other members? Perhaps you could stay late for an evening after work and to show a small handful of IMechE colleagues around as visitors to your company. I know of one ex-committee member who has a laboratory full of fascinating injection-moulding and testing equipment, which although just routine to him would make for a fascinating short presentation to others. (And if followed by a drink at a local hostelry, the evening is sure to be a winner!). So, the challenge now is for those of you able to organise it, to let us on the committee know you work in an interesting field which other members might appreciate seeing and hearing about from you, maximum numbers you could accommodate, and for us to publish a date for a mid-week 'workplace walkabout'. The first round afterwards will be on the longest serving committee member present.

Looking forward to hearing that this first address has stirred a few of you into action, and I hope to see, in addition to the stalwarts and regulars of recent years, a few more of you becoming active with the branch during the next couple of years.

Have a good summer.

Steve

Benelux Branch AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Benelux Branch was held on Saturday 1st April in Rotterdam. Sixteen Corporate members of the branch took part in the AGM. Thanks were expressed to Kyle Henderson for what is thought to be the first Branch AGM held on a boat.

Two members of the committee have either left or will be shortly leaving due to work assignments; Kyle Henderson is continuing his education in Singapore and Paul Revell is moving to a new position outside the Netherlands. The committee passed a vote of thanks to them both. Of note is Paul's contribution as editor of the Branch newsletter. Paul managed this in spite of his frequent trips to far flung parts of the world. Our best wishes to them both and we look forward to seeing them back in the Benelux.

A report was given on the progress of the merger talks with the Institution of Civil Engineers.

Malcolm Henderson, Branch Treasurer gave a report on the accounts of the Branch, which continue to be in excellent order. The auditors recommended that the accounts be accepted. For the next year, K.Elvery and A.Webster agreed to be the auditors with R.Vigar as reserve. The committee expressed their thanks to the treasurer and the auditors.

One of the key activities of the AGM is the election of the committee and the committee for 2006/7 was elected as follows, Steve Price (Chairman), Theo Speaight, (Immediate Past Chairman), Andy Webb (Honorary Secretary), Malcolm Henderson (Treasurer), John Thompson (Branch Membership), Alan Hankinson (Branch Webmaster), Colin Anderson (Newsletter), Rod Vigar, Ian Hind and Gareth Pemberton.

Thanks were expressed to Theo Speaight, who stepped down as Chairman after two years.

A.W.

Details of Forthcoming Events:

Beer & Banter Evenings

The Belgium Beer and Banter social / networking evening is planned to continue through 2006/7. The event takes place on the first Wednesday of each month at the **Taverne Mannekin Pis** in Brussels starting at **19:00**. For further details see the Branch website or contact Steven Price steven.price@pccl.be.

Luxembourg's Industrial Heritage

Spend a day touring the industrial heartland of Southern Luxembourg. The day will include:

- A ride on the steam train in Petange.

- Lunch in a local restaurant.
- A guided tour of the mining museum in Rumelange, starting at the engine-house on the surface and including a trip into the mine.

The event is open to IMechE and ICE members, friends and family. A detailed itinerary of the day's activities and information on how to sign up will follow in the coming weeks.

Date: **Sunday 3rd September 2006**

Time: **TBA**

Location: **Southern Luxembourg**

Delta Works Visit – Sunday 11 June 2006

Following April's AGM/Boat Tour of Rotterdam Port, this was the second of a (hopefully) regular series of events for the members of the IMechE in the Benelux area, but also open to our fellow engineering organisations in the region.

A very respectable turn out of 19 members, friends and family made their way to Neeltje Jans in Zeeland province in the South West of the Netherlands on a perfect, balmy Dutch summer day. Our purpose was a trip to the fascinating 'Delta Works' Centre – the colossal series of sea defences, built to protect large tracts of the Dutch landscape from the North Sea and disasters such as the great flood of 1953.

Our special guide, Ir. Tom Verhoeff, who was actually a Lead Engineer on one of the key aspects of the Delta Works Project, was able to give us an insightful and engaging commentary on the inside exhibition at the Centre and also while taking us right into and through one of the immense Storm Surge barriers themselves. As well as Tom's input, the Centre laid on a private screening of a film of the construction of the Delta works and a boat trip around the Neeltje Jans estuary and nature reserve.

After this full and informative day, there was just enough time for those with the energy to enjoy the other attractions, such as the hurricane simulator, whale exhibit and feeding time for the seals!



The next event in the pipeline is a late summer/early autumn trip to the Dutch 'Open Air Museum' in Arnhem, so please keep watching this space.

K.H.

Formula Student

July 5th-8th saw Bruntingthorpe proving track hold the 2006 Formula Student Competition. This international competition is held once a year, for the world's top university students to design, build and race a formula style racing car.



The event, run by the IMechE, promotes careers and excellence in engineering, by challenging university students to design, build, develop, market and compete as a team with a small single seater racing car. The competition is split into dynamic and static events ranging from handling tests, endurance tests to presentations and cost analysis.

This year Gareth Pemberton, Air Products' employee and IMechE Benelux committee

member was chosen to become part of the design judging team. "This competition is a great way to promote engineering as it really tests the students' theoretical skills, practical knowledge, and their ability to work as a team. To design, build and test a racing car in one year with little previous experience is a fantastic achievement, let alone to produce some of the cars we see with carbon fibre wheels, titanium uprights and Bluetooth technology. The overall standard is incredibly high and demonstrates a bright future for engineering."

While ostensibly about the design and production of a single-seater racing car, Formula Student is actually more about building future engineering talent, not just in design and manufacture, but in many of the management, marketing and people skills so vital in the modern world, across all sectors of employment.

Top honours out of the 65 competing cars went to Toronto University. Graz University of Technology came a close second with Oxford Brookes in third and the best UK team.

To learn more about the event please visit the [formula student website](#)

G.P.

Benelux Branch Membership Facts

Membership Numbers:

Belgium	66	Women	14	CEng	185
Luxembourg	19	Men	279	Other	108
Netherlands	208				
Total	293				

Age Profile:

Age 18 – 29	51
30 – 39	68
40 – 49	87
50 - 65	60
65 and over	20

Responsibility Levels:

Engineer	79	General Manager	70
Chief Engineer	35	Head of Dept.	12
Chief Exec / MD	8	Researcher	6
Lecturer	1		

What do they do?

72 members work in the Dutch petroleum industry (56 for Shell), about 20 in the Belgian and Luxembourg motor industries (eg Toyota, Delphi and Goodyear) and the rest are spread over a range of other industries.

J.T.