

Annual General Meeting – Wednesday 17 June 2009

Following an excellent and plentiful buffet luncheon, Southern Branch Chairman, Chris Stark, welcomed 22 members and guests to the Branch Annual General Meeting which was held at the West Sussex Highways Office, Drayton, Chichester by kind permission of West Sussex County Council.

The Institute's Vice President, Steve Spender deputising for the President, Tony Sharp, who was on vacation thanked the Branch for the opportunity of speaking to the meeting when he updated and provided data on the current state of the Institute's Membership and Finances. As ever, there were a high number of 'older' members without a balance of younger people joining. It was hoped that by making Student Membership free this would go some way to addressing the balance. Despite this, the Institute remained influential in the Highway Engineering sphere and with active Branches supported by Headquarters there was no reason why we should not go from strength in representing professional engineers. Steve informed the Branch that at the recent national AGM, it had been resolved by a majority vote to change the name to the Institute of Highway Engineers which was more representative of what we are today. More information will follow as to when the full name change will take effect but likely later in the year/new year.



Steve Spender addressing the meeting

Chris Stark opened his report by thanking the Past chairman, Alison Coffey for the work during her term of Chairmanship. He then reported on the Branch's activities over the past year highlighting the many events that had been held which had attracted a total audience of 430 delegates and guests at 10 events. He paid tribute to the Branch Committee for their continued enthusiasm in arranging these regular events for member's educational and professional development requirements. Chris also expressed the Branch's thanks to The Stilwell Partnership for their continued support of the Branch through maintenance of the Web site and preparation and distribution of the Branch Newsletter.

Due to the Treasurer's absence on leave examination of the Branch's accounts was more a joint effort than a direct report, however the upshot was that the Branch remained solvent (or was at the end of 2008). Despite taking action in the County Court, the Branch had not been able to recoup payments from a foreign organisation who attended our 2007 Seminar. A judgment was made in favour of the Branch but, whether by design or otherwise, the organisation promptly filed a notice to cease trading. Lessons to be learnt for the future?

Remaining business completed the meeting when, after taking the opportunity to have further refreshments, delegates adjourned to the nearby Tangmere Military Aviation Museum where we were welcomed by the Curator who provided a brief introductory presentation. Designed primarily for school children the presentation was still well received by the assembled company who are, probably, still children at heart. Tangmere is famed for its role during the Second World War when it was a front line fighter station during the Battle of Britain.



Though no longer an operational RAF establishment, the museum was established in 1982 and reflects its unique and fascinating history as being the home to the world speed record breaking aircraft of the High Speed Flight in the post war years. Containing many fascinating exhibits, we were able to see historic aircraft such as Neville Duke's world record breaking Hawker Hunter and equipment used by Special Operations Executive (SOE) agents who were carried into occupied France on 'black Lysander' flights from Tangmere. [Pictured left] Peter Dryburgh and Peter Etheridge reminisce with a volunteer guide who actually serviced the aircraft in the background, during his service days.

There is much to occupy both young and old at the Museum and it is well worth the visit if you were unable to attend the AGM. Further information www.tangmere-museum.org.uk