

GAS SENSORS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Gas sensing and measurement were recognised as becoming of major importance in the late 1980s and the British government, via its Department of Trade and Industry, provided finance to support the formation of a technical organisation, the Gas Analysis & Sensing Group (the GASG). This quickly garnered membership from all the industrial firms involved plus the relevant research organisations and universities. Today, the Group is entirely self-supporting and has recently enjoyed an expansion in its membership to countries as diverse as the USA, Spain, Norway and Germany.

Each year, three meetings are arranged where speakers present talks on current developments in gas sensing and the relevant instrumentation, and where researchers present their latest results. Usually, such a meeting will be hosted by a member firm that also provides a tour around its premises, but each December the Annual General Meeting is held in London, which makes it easy for overseas delegates and speakers to attend. This is where matters relating the Group's future and its finances are discussed and Committee Members are elected.

The tours of member firms have proved extremely popular (perhaps especially during a meeting held at the Scottish Courage Brewery!) and this is also true for the lunch periods themselves, which allow considerable 'networking' to take place. It is here where members can discuss joint projects, hires and so forth in a pleasant and convivial atmosphere.

Regrettably, in recent years, there has inevitably been an accent on gas sensing for security purposes and this is reflected in some of the topics presented. However, other contemporary areas have not been neglected, and the topics presented have encompassed domestic air quality, aircraft cabin air quality and jet effluents, through to industrial process control in all fields including petrochemicals. Similarly, specific sensing methods have ranged from solid-state technology through to optical approaches, including open path plume visualisation. Medical applications of gas sensing have also been highlighted and a recent colloquium was held at the ancient and prestigious St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London, where methods of on-line analysis were discussed both for diagnosis and anaesthetic control.

Each meeting is followed by the publication of a Proceedings compilation that is distributed to all members, plus three brief Newsletters which detail the current state of the Group and its activities. The Newsletter also contains a section entitled 'Company Profile' that aims to introduce either new or existing small firms to the membership, and hopefully to others by personal contact. Also published are various reports, including a review of the research being carried out in British universities and a very valuable summary of all the voluminous rules and regulations relating to gas sensing and measurement in the UK and elsewhere. These too are distributed free to the membership.

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