

Sampe Student and Young Researcher Travel Grant Post Conference Report

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The Sampe Student and Young Researcher Travel Grant allowed me to attend and present at the Sampe Europe Conference 2018 in Southampton. The theme of the conference was “Large Structures in Composite Engineering” and this was particularly suited to the work which I was presenting titled: “Improving the Aesthetic Quality in Composite Marine Bulkhead Joints through Applications of Design for Assembly”, which is work that I have done during my post graduate masters studies, but never had the opportunity to present.

The conference itself was very insightful with many stimulating presentations and tutorials. The first day comprised of two tutorials, the first being a tutorial on Thermoplastic Composites in Aerospace delivered by Arnt R. Offringa. This was a very informative tutorial and gave an overview of where thermoplastics stand in the aerospace industry and where lie future interests. The second part of the tutorials was a parallel session, where I observed the design and manufacture process of large composite structures delivered by Prof. John Summerscales and Dr. Richard Cullen. Completing my undergraduate studies at the University of Plymouth, I worked very closely with John and Richard, and it was a pleasure to attend one of their tutorials again after many years, as it was linked very closely to the work I was presenting.

The first day of the conference had three parallel sessions where I mainly attended the Materials and Processing session on General Processing, with occasionally dropping into the Aerospace session on thermoplastics. The second half of the day was spent on industrial visits. This in, my opinion, is one of the best aspects of conferences like this as it allows for a more interactive discussion to take place and see how businesses operate and construct products. I also attended the Sunseeker visit which took place in their production facility in Weymouth. At Weymouth, 50 and 116 foot yachts were being manufactured and seeing the size of such structures cannot help but make one think how amazing it is that it is possible that they are manufactured all out of composite.

The final day of the conference is when I presented my work within the special applications session on marine and renewables. The work focused on quality through aesthetics and the design for assembly of marine bulkhead joints, whereby a new method for creating bulkhead joints was developed, allowing it to be easier for manufacturing/assembly and more robust in maintaining tolerances. The presentation was well received by the audience with a few interesting questions that sparking a lively discussion. In addition, the chair of the session, Prof. John Summerscales, was presenting in a parallel session at the same time. To mitigate this, he has asked me to co-chair the session with him and take over after my presentation so that he would be able to deliver his. This was another remarkable experience and opportunity for me as I had never anticipated chairing a session this early in my career.

Throughout the conference, there have been numerous opportunities for networking and I have met multiple individuals from the industry and other academic institutes such as Tom Frazier from Automated Dynamics, and Terry McGrail from University of Limerick, as well as committee members from Sampe Europe and Sampe UK and Ireland chapter. This allowed me to create links that will undoubtedly assist me further along in my career. Overall, the experience of attending this conference was so positive that I have already started planning and preparing for the Sampe Europe Conference 2018 in Nantes. I would like to take the opportunity to thank once again Sampe for supporting me in attending this conference.