

SAMPE UK & Ireland Student Seminar – Testimonial from a Past Winner

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Position today:

A330neo Airframe Stress Methods integrator, Airbus in the UK, Bristol, UK

SAMPE UK & Ireland Committee Member (since 2005) and Secretary Royal Aeronautical Society Bristol Branch (since 2012)

University: Imperial College London, The Composites Centre, Dept of Aeronautics

Entrant for SAMPE UK & Ireland Student Lecture Competition: Nov 2002 (one of two winners)

Entrant for SAMPE Europe Student Lecture Competition: April 2003 (second place)

Introduction:

The UK & Ireland club needs the support of younger engineers and scientists to help further the appreciation of composite materials at an early stage, so that the knowledge remains with them throughout the rest of their careers. Such knowledge of advanced materials can be invaluable in the ever changing engineering world, and may make for a good investment in their futures.

This is the reason we run the annual Student annual student lecture competition, from which two winners are selected to represent UK & Ireland in the SAMPE Europe student lecture competition. For many, this is the first time that they will have presented their research or work to a larger audience than their own university or place of work and they will experience constructively critical review of their presentation by a board of judges.

My experiences as a UK & Ireland candidate:

My own interaction with SAMPE UK & Ireland came as an entrant from Imperial College, Aeronautics Department, to the UK competition in 2002. My presentation explained the need for through-thickness reinforcement of composites, specifically Z-pinning, and the aims of my PhD research into this subject and I was subjected to a variety of questions about the work and the subject generally, by a panel of university lecturers and representatives from industry. I remember being excited to be part of the event and meeting the other students from around the country and more so when I was selected as one of the two winners to represent the UK & Ireland chapter in the European event.

The European event was itself a unique experience as SAMPE paid for my trip to Paris, France and attendance to the SAMPE Europe conference jointly held with the awe-inspiring JEC trade show (the

largest in the world for composites at the time). I met another 12 candidates from around Europe and their respective national chapters, including Israel, USA and Russia, interestingly enough. We quickly formed a good friendship as a group and this set the scene for the next 3 days at the event, whilst we took part in a further round of presentations and questions and also a poster hosting event on the conference floor, which was again, one of my first experiences of presenting to an international audience. I cherish these memories of the event and am still in touch with a few of the candidates.

My work with SAMPE UK & Ireland

On returning from the European event, I was asked to attend the following SAMPE UK & Ireland AGM that year in 2003, and met further committee members. I found that the AGM provided networking opportunities to mingle with some of the most experienced engineers and scientists in the UK and sometimes abroad (depending on attendance at UK events) and was enthused to contribute something in return for the unique opportunities offered to me during the competition. Hence I asked to be part of the organising committee and was elected to this position, with the responsibility for improving young engineer membership. This is a position I have retained with pride to this day.

It was indeed during one of the UK & Ireland AGM (around 2005) that was held at the Advanced Composites Centre of Airbus, Filton, that I met some key industrial leaders at Airbus UK who encouraged me to apply for roles. Hence through the connection of SAMPE, I obtained my first job after my PhD, as a composites stress engineer for Airbus UK, working to develop harmonised stress methods and analysis tool sets for all Airbus products.

This job was a 'dream first role' that offered the chance to apply the knowledge gained during my Masters and PhD in composites on the development of real aircraft products and also travel abroad frequently, working in multi-national project teams and even speaking more than one European language (which I had learnt since school).

Whilst my career with Airbus has lasted over 10 years and taken me abroad to Toulouse for two years and found me leading Wing static testing for the first whole airframe of the A350XWB airliner. During this time I retained my connection with SAMPE UK & Ireland and engaged Airbus graduates in experiencing their first conference attendance, by arranging trips for them to the annual UK & Ireland one day seminar at different locations around the UK and acting as a link between the UK & Ireland committee and Airbus.

Links with Other Professional Societies

Whilst SAMPE itself is not an accredited Professional Engineering Institution with the Engineering Council UK, other Societies are, and I found that it was simple and complementary to retain my UK & Ireland Committee membership whilst becoming a Full Member and Chartered Engineer with the Royal Aeronautical Society (RAeS). Indeed, today, as Secretary of the Bristol Branch of RAeS, I am enabling young engineers experience both Societies, including enabling a joint SAMPE-RAeS young persons lecture competition for 2016.

