

Chairman's Message

Meetings and greetings

In a moment, I'll spend some time unveiling plans for the RSPSoc Annual Lecture and *Conversazione*, and invite you warmly to Nottingham at Easter for this occasion. First, though, I draw your attention to various developments with the Society's Technical Programme.

These days, technical meetings tend to be rather fewer and further between than in the past, and not just for RSPSoc, but for many learned societies. The reasons for this are many and varied, but one probable influence is the increasing commercialisation of the university sector that has resulted in meetings becoming more expensive and meeting organisers being less inclined to spare research time. RSPSoc's approach is now to aim for fewer (than in days gone by) regular and high quality meetings, and to develop strategic collaborations with like-minded organisations to hold joint events.

Some members will no doubt welcome the return of the Evening Lecture feature of the technical programme, and it is pleasing to note the joint RSPSoc/RICS Christmas Lecture, 'Changing the Economics of Space', by Sir Martin Sweeting of Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd. Before this event, things had been rather quiet on the evening lecture front for a while, and this is perhaps partly because the regular venue at the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) has been undergoing a major refurbishment. We can now work with RICS to re-establish a series of regular, high quality, though not necessarily too frequent, evening lectures.

Immediately following the RSPSoc Council meeting in late November, we held an open meeting with representatives of the British Association of Remote Sensing Companies (BARSC) executive to discuss opportunities for collaboration. Among other things, cooperation on convening, contributing to and marketing RSPSoc and BARSC technical meetings seems to hold much potential. Plans are already underway for BARSC to deliver a keynote address at our Annual Student Meeting and a commercial applications session at our Annual Conference, and reciprocal contribution from RSPSoc to BARSC's own meeting is under discussion. Another interesting development here is an approach to RSPSoc from the organisers of the 2009 UK Space Conference to contribute to the programme. Meredith Williams, our Technical Programme Committee chairman, has moved quickly to propose joint RSPSoc/BARSC sessions, and the proposal has been well received. This conference is now a major annual event for the UK space community and RSPSoc involvement could become a regular fixture.

In future, then, the Society's Technical Programme may become rather more regular and predictable. In addition to a series of evening lectures and occasional Special Interest Group meetings, annual fixtures will include the RSPSoc Annual Conference, the RSPSoc Annual Student Meeting and the UKGeoforum Lecture, plus certain thematic meetings like the Geological Remote Sensing Group's annual meeting and possibly commercial events such as the UK Space Conference and BARSC meetings.

Finally, I can add one more event to this list: the 'RSPSoc Annual Lecture and *Conversazione*'. Again, some members will remember previous *Conversazioni* fondly and welcome their return. I probably should point out I still don't quite know what a *conversazione* is, even though I did host the Mike Barnsley Lecture and *Conversazione* last year! No matter, I'm confident everything will be alright on the night.

In 2009, I will host the Annual Lecture at the University of Nottingham on 7 April, to be given by Professor John Townshend of the University of Maryland, USA. Professor Townshend is a truly international figure in our discipline and I'm sure his address will prove both enlightening and rewarding. The *Conversazione* will follow, and we have a provisional reservation at Trent Bridge Cricket Ground's historic Long Room, though Notts Cricket Club can't confirm this until the 2009 cricket fixtures are known. (The enclosed Lecture/*Conversazione* flyer shows updated information and possible confirmation of the

venue.) I do hope we are able to show off Trent Bridge for this event; my old cricket club used to train there so I might see if I can arrange some pre-dinner exercise in the nets!

The Society's Technical Programme relies on the enthusiasm of both the organisers of meetings, whose very great efforts are appreciated enormously, and the participants, who engage in technical discussions and indulge in social proceedings. Long may this continue. My Christmas greetings to you, and at Easter I look forward to welcoming you to Nottingham for the Lecture and Conversazione, for a chat and a drink, and maybe even a bat and bowl.

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