

OLD DOGS TEACH NEW TRICKS

BY NOW it's an autumn tradition in the UK. The leaves are turning, the daily commute has the added pleasure of the flu virus, and a study has warned that we face a critical shortage of engineers.

Last year the focus was on competing for the best and brightest. We had to be sure to encourage the sharpest minds to embark upon an engineering career (underground) and to educate them in the skills and training needed to enter the industry. The British Tunnelling Society led the way in proposing at WTC that the international community form young members groups, part of the purpose of which would be to encourage new engineers into the industry.

The year before, the European Union launched the 'Science – It's a girl thing' as study groups identified an alarming lack of women taking up engineering and the sciences in higher education. This was quickly slammed as offensive and banal. The efforts of the industry, however, were more dignified. Again we highlighted the work of the younger engineers in schools, and the emergence of the Women in Tunnelling group.

This year, the warning is that an ageing engineering workforce may be a threat to the ability of various sectors to meet demand. And according to industry body Engineering UK, Britain alone needs to train 87,000 engineering graduates a year until 2020 to replace those retiring.

Every problem contains within itself the seeds of its own solution, and the industry's wealth of engineering experience has certainly been put to use. In 2011/12, the UK's first MSc in Tunnelling and Underground Space was launched at the University of Warwick. From nine full time students then, to a total of 23 (including some part timers) this year, the BTS and Warwick's director of tunnelling and underground space Benoît Jones can be proud of what they have achieved.

The BTS was instrumental in setting up the course, and play a very active role in guiding it to this day, with two

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steering board meetings per year. Some 20 per cent of lectures are given by a guest, invariably a BTS member. And in addition, each module has a 'champion' who is responsible for looking into the syllabus, and keeping it relevant and of a high quality.

Due to expressed interest, and the concentration of tunnellers in London, there is even talk of evening classes being considered for future students. All this is another string to the bow, and can bring fresh blood into the industry.

There is change at T&T too. After three and half years of dedicated service, Jim Moore is leaving T&T to seek new challenges in a new industry. It was World Tunnelling that launched Jim's career in tunnelling media, but he truly came into his own as head of sales at Tunnels & Tunnelling. During his tenure, Jim oversaw a very successful period, raising the bar with some record breaking performances.

We can't thank him enough. Jim may not look back on the industry again, but his friends in the game will always remember him and look out for him. He was just that kind of guy.

Good luck from all at T&T! 

Cover

At over 120km in length, China's massive Liaoning project aims to solve Shenyang's persistent droughts



Next issue

The next issue of Tunnels and Tunnelling will publish site reports from the Warsaw Metro's second line in Poland, and large slurry works for a Gdansk road project, also in Poland. This issue will also carry the final runner-up from this year's BTS Harding Prize.

This month...

20 YEARS AGO

In excess of 85 categories of safety violations have been discovered by inspection teams from the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (CalOSHA) following a safety audit of Los Angeles Metro Rail construction projects. Fines from the violations, 33 of which were classed as serious, will total approximately USD 175,000. Underground violations included substandard electrical equipment, broken light fixtures, and evidence of smoking in areas being monitored for explosive gas. A spokesman for the Los Angeles County MTA responded that "the overall safety record is better than the national average". However, the MTA wants contractors to improve and will require them to file regular progress reports.

Tunnels and Tunnelling, October 1994, p.7

40 YEARS AGO

Ten years after the patent was taken out for the bentonite tunnelling process, the first commercial contract using this method of driving a tunnel in unstable ground has been awarded to Edmund Nuttall by the Warrington New Town Development Corporation in the UK. There has been much interest expressed in this form of tunnelling, much of it from Continental Europe. In Holland for example, the ground is so poor that there have been virtually no bored tunnels to date. At the moment, several interested parties are watching this first commercial contract with interest.

Tunnels and Tunnelling, September/October 1974, p.9