

A Short History of the Society for Underwater Technology Group on Environmental Forces

This document gives a brief history of The Society for Underwater Technology (SUT) Group on Environmental Forces (SUTGEF) from its inception in the 1970s to the present day.

Early Days

SUTGEF grew originally out of the formal cooperation between the major North Sea oil and gas industry and the regulatory authorities during the 1970s. At that time there was a very good environment of cooperation between the two sides to achieve safe operations.

The UK Department of Energy provided documentation to operators on the construction and operation of offshore structures in the form of the 'Guidance Notes'. The DTI Offshore Structures Fluid Loading Advisory Group (OSFLAG) provided advice for incorporation into the Guidance Notes publications, often by means of major measurement and modelling investigations.

Within this framework, there were two major forums that formed the background to SUTGEF:

1. The UKOOA Structures Working Group
2. The Dept of Energy's Advisory Group on Environmental Forces (AGEF)

The former was chaired by Robin Webb of BP and John Antonakis of Shell was the founder chairman of the latter in 1982 when it emerged from OSFLAG.

Both of these groups, following on from major joint industry and government offshore environmental and structural monitoring projects, participated in the revision to the Guidance Notes in the 1980s.

With the changes in the regulatory system proposed by the UK Health & Safety Executive (HSE), the Government withdrew support for AGEF. During 1990-91 the Group committee had to decide if they had a useful function in the future. It was decided to continue as an SUT committee under the chairmanship of Bob Standing, and SUTGEF was born out of AGEF, out of OSFLAG. At the time it was felt that the Group was the only organisation in the country, or perhaps anywhere, where the specialists from the offshore industry, research laboratories and universities, and Government, could meet and discuss fluid loading problems of real concern.

SUTGEF Events

In the early years, meetings were generally held in London. There were normally four meetings a year, which were commonly attended by ten to fifteen people. The major offshore oil companies were regular attendees, together with the Department of Energy representatives, the major design contractors and researchers. After most meetings, the interested attendees would retire to a local pub to continue the detailed discussions from the day's presentations.

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The Group regularly organised SUT conferences, seminars and workshops on a range of fluid loading topics of concern to industry, as well as sessions for the bi-annual Offshore International conference. It produced papers on research recommendations to assist the offshore industry and improve safety, for publication by SUT.

The group also selected candidates for the annual SUT Oceanography Award, generally on the basis of the worthiness of an individual's contribution to the offshore industry. This was awarded only when appropriate and the function has, in recent years, moved to the main body of SUT.

Oceanography Prize Winners Nominated by SUTGEF

1986 Mike Somers
1987 Dr Joseph King
1988 Laurence Draper
1989 Dr Neil Hogben
1990 Prof Michael Longuet-Higgins
1991 Dennis Arduş
1992 M J 'Tom' Tucker
1993 David Carter
1994 Prof Klaus Hasselmann
1996 Dr George Forristall
1997 Dr John Gould and David Ellett
1998 Dr Vincent Cardone
1999 Prof J A Batties
2000 Dr David Cartwright
2001 Prof Howell Peregrine
2004 Dr Colin Grant and Christopher Shaw
2006 Dr Ralph Rayner

Recent Years at SUTGEF

In recent years the Group has changed its position as a meeting of minds between Industry, Government and Academia to become more of an academic discussion group as the regular involvement of the offshore industry has rather diminished.

As part as the Group's change of focus, it has increasingly sought to collaborate with established research project groups, a strategy which has been successful in introducing the benefits of SUT to younger undergraduates and post-graduates.

Meetings are generally been held 3 times a year with two main technical presentations on subjects ranging from modelling of smooth particle hydrodynamics to wave energy converters. A full list of presentations from 1997 to 2017 meetings of SUTGEF is available from the Group secretary as an Excel format file. In addition, annual summaries of SUTGEF activities can be found in the SUT yearbooks, available from the London office.

In addition, over the last few years, the meeting venues have alternated between London (Imperial College and City, University of London) and Oxford, bringing a

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wider academic audience, with occasional forays further afield, for example in early 2017 to Manchester.

Attendance at Group meetings has increased since the early days, to between 20 and 30, mainly due to the influx of university students, where the specialist presentations are relevant to teaching courses and post-graduate research projects. Whilst this increase is welcome, the attendance from industry and government has tended to decrease due to increasingly demanding workload and retirement of individuals.

Core membership consists of a 50:50 split between academics and industry although meetings tend to be made up mostly of members and guests from the academic side. A list of current and past members of SUTGEF, as well as meeting attendees since 1997 is held by the SUTGEF secretary.

Group Chairs

Chairmen of SUTGEF since its inception are listed below:

1982-1986	John Antonakis (AGEF)
1986-1990	Tom Tucker (AGEF)
1990-1992	Bob Standing
1992-1994	Robin Webb
1994-1996	John Chaplin
1996-1997	Chris Swan
1997-2000	John Chaplin
2000-2004	Chris Swan
2004-2013	Paul Taylor
2013-Present	Qingwei Ma

My thanks go to Robin Webb for his summary of the origin of SUTGEF, presented at the 100th meeting of the Group in 2013.

Andy Moore – Secretary
November 2017