

BDS conference in Warwick, September 2008

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The 15th biennial conference of the British Dam Society (BDS) took place at the University of Warwick between 10 and 13 September 2008. In keeping with recent tradition the proceedings were officially opened by the associate dean of the university, Dr Tony Price, who welcomed us all to the campus and wished us a successful conference. In his opening address he emphasised the importance of dams and reservoirs to modern society and with the ageing stock of reservoirs in the UK he recognised the important work that is needed to maintain their safety. This theme was of course reflected in the title of the conference, ‘Ensuring reservoir safety into the future’.

The first day of the conference was devoted to presentations and discussion which covered a wide variety of topics. The first session considered the current status of UK reservoir safety management, but also covered proposals for changes to be made to UK reservoir legislation particularly in the light of the Pitt review into the 2007 floods. Other topics presented included the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) research programme, post-incident reporting and the safety of small reservoirs that are not currently covered by the Act. Further sessions followed on specific technical subjects, including internal erosion, dam break analysis, risk assessment, and design, analysis and monitoring. There was a range of subjects and case histories within each session that illustrated the varied work that is ongoing, all of which is aimed at increasing

the understanding and knowledge of our reservoirs, so as to ensure their safety for years to come.

Prior to the reservoir visits to Rutland Water and Carsington, which are reported separately, there was a further technical session that focussed on the 2007 storms and how they impacted on reservoir safety. Within that session there were several papers that considered the Ulley reservoir incident and described how the emergency services and reservoir engineering community had responded to the situation, and in so doing had ensured that a serious incident had not become a catastrophic dam failure. The final technical session took place on the Saturday morning and covered various reservoir construction works that have been carried out as part of remedial works, refurbishment and discontinuance. Once again there was a range of interesting, high quality presentations that described such things as spillway reconstructions, valve refurbishment, dam anchoring works to increase stability, the latest developments in geomembrane technology and the installation of high capacity siphons for emergency drawdown purposes. A feature of all of the technical sessions was the time management that was exercised by the session chairmen. This meant that the programme ran smoothly to schedule, and ensured that there was sufficient time for discussion that proved to be lively and informative with many of the delegates raising interesting and challenging questions.

The conference dinner was a great success and provided all delegates with the opportunity for further networking and discussion in a friendly and convivial atmosphere with good food and good wine in abundance. The

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Fig. 1. Delegates in the exhibitors' area



Fig. 2. Rapt attention

dinner was attended by the ICE President, David Orr, who also serves as the chair of the reservoirs committee, and in reference to the Ulley incident he paid tribute to the contribution that is made by the reservoir engineers of today. The guest speaker was Bill Ginn, who is an undertaker (of the funereal, rather than the reservoir, kind) as well as being an accomplished after dinner speaker. He gave a funny and informative speech that highlighted the more amusing side of death. The highlight of the conference was of course the Geoffrey Binnie lecture which preceded the dinner and which was given this year by Bill Carlyle. Full details of the lecture are also presented in *Dams and Reservoirs*; suffice to say

that it was a truly excellent and enjoyable lecture that described the numerous projects and technical challenges with which Bill has been involved during a long and illustrious career in dam engineering.¹

In closing the conference, Jonathan Hinks thanked the University of Warwick for being our hosts and for providing the excellent food, accommodation and conference facilities. He also paid special thanks to Neil Williams and his organising committee who had done such good work to make the conference a success, and this is a sentiment with which all delegates will fully agree.

REFERENCES

1. CARLYLE W. J. The Binnie heritage in dam engineering. *Dams and Reservoirs*, 2008, 18, No. 3, 121–134.