

Foreword

Special Issue of *The Aeronautical Journal*, marking the 150th Anniversary of the Founding of the Royal Aeronautical Society

This special issue is one of a number of activities taking place this year to celebrate the founding of the Royal Aeronautical Society in 1866. The decision to form the Society was taken on 12 January 1866 at a meeting of distinguished people held in London and chaired by the Duke of Argyll. One of those present, James Glaisher, addressed the gathering and it is interesting to revisit an extract from his statement: “The first application of the balloon as a means of ascending into the upper regions of the atmosphere has been almost within the recollection of men now living but with the exception of some of the early experimenters it has scarcely occupied the attention of scientific men, nor has the subject of aeronautics been properly recognised as a distinct branch of science...”¹. The meeting resolved “that it is desirable to form a Society for the purpose of increasing by experiments our knowledge of Aeronautics and for other purposes incidental thereto and that a Society be now formed under the title of the ‘Aeronautical Society of Great Britain’ to be supported by annual subscriptions and donations.”

The first official meeting of the Society took place on 27 June 1866, and this included the first lecture to the Society. The lecture, entitled ‘Aerial locomotion and the laws by which heavy bodies impelled through air are sustained’, was given by Mr F H Wenham. While it might be thought that the Society would concentrate on balloons, kites and bird flight, it is clear from the outset that it aimed at broader issues associated with heavier-than-air flight. Following this first meeting, the Society has gone from strength to strength. Renamed the Royal Aeronautical Society in 1918, it remains today, with a membership in excess of 20,000, a leading institution in the continuing development of aeronautics.

The Aeronautical Journal was first published in January 1897 and was the brain child of the then Honorary Secretary of the Society, Captain B F S Baden-Powell, a younger brother of the founder of the Boy Scout movement. So began a journal, now in its 119th volume, which has provided a continuous record of aeronautical achievements. Although we use the term ‘aeronautics’, we recognise that these achievements relate to flight within and way beyond the boundaries of our atmosphere.

The development of aeronautics has been an unceasing story of innovation, and to illustrate this, the *Journal* has invited people who have made significant contributions to the field to contribute articles to this special issue. Authors were free to choose their topic and were given a relatively free hand. I hope readers will agree that this has produced an interesting mix of articles. Many areas will have been missed, but it was simply impractical in one issue to cover the wide range of subjects that now make up this ever-expanding field.

¹ Extract from ‘History of the Society’: <http://aerosociety.com/About-Us/history>

I would like to thank Airbus for their much-appreciated support and sponsorship of this special issue. Thanks are also due to the Publications staff at the Royal Aeronautical Society for their help in bringing this issue together. From the beginning of 2016 the *Journal* is being published and marketed by Cambridge University Press and I thank all involved for accepting the challenge of making this the first issue to be published under this new arrangement. Finally, I wish to thank all the authors for their greatly valued contributions.

For further information regarding the Royal Aeronautical Society's 150th anniversary celebrations, visit: www.aerosociety.com/150

Peter Bearman FRAeS
Editor-in-Chief