

**The Twelfth Annual General Meeting**  
**of**  
**The Helicopter Association of Great Britain**

The Twelfth Annual General Meeting of the Helicopter Association of Great Britain was held at the Royal Aeronautical Society, 4 Hamilton Place, London, W 1, on Friday, 14th June, 1957, at 5 30 p m The Chair was taken by Dr G S HISLOP, Chairman of the Executive Council

The routine business of the Meeting was conducted and the result of the ballot for election of members to the Executive Council was announced The constitution of the new Council for the year 1957/58 is as follows

B H Arkell	R Hafner
J A J Bennett	J E Harper
A E Bristow	G S Hislop
J A Cameron	A McClements
L G Frise	J W Richardson
W R Gellatly	H Roberts
M H C Gordon	J S Shapiro
D L Hollis Williams	

Various items mentioned in the Council's Report were discussed, mainly on the question of the Association's Accounts and the recruitment of new Members Various suggestions made by Members will be considered by the Council

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**The Chairman's Address**

In previous years on these occasions the Chairman has taken the opportunity to review events in the Association's affairs, and to make some comment on aspects of the helicopter field as a whole, and I would like to do so for a few minutes tonight

The Annual Report which has just been presented shows that the Association, in common with many other learned societies, relies to a great extent on the generosity of supporting firms and individuals It is not a situation which I like and we must consider whether or not an increase in subscriptions to cover the deficit would not lead to a drastic shrinkage in membership, and hence an aggravation of the financial situation This has been the subject of anxious discussion by Council and will continue to be so until the Association is less dependent on such individual generosity

Our twin mainstays are our membership and our Journal In spite of last year's hopes, the rate of increase of membership continues to be fairly small and this is probably a reflection of the slow rate of growth of the industry itself in this country, though we are making a special drive for student members and have plans for forming a West Country branch The Journal quality remains very high and is still our main shop window though the continually increasing costs are a constant source of worry We have introduced an increase in numbers issued per volume to ease production problems and at the same time to increase the potential revenue without increasing direct advertising charges

On the whole, the Association is preserving its high standards and prestige, but is gaining ground only slowly and thus, in an era of continually rising costs, is not so strong financially as I should care to see It was, however, encouraging to see that 55% of members voted at the recent ballot

Turning away from the domestic affairs, the two main events which spring to my mind are the Suez operation and the Defence White Paper. No doubt the former had a considerable effect on the latter!

To us in the helicopter field, the Suez operation saw, for the first time, the employment of helicopters by the British Armed Services on war service. We have had the benefit of a lecture by one of the principal officers commanding the helicopter units which took part and we can say that the helicopters played their immensely important part of landing Commando brigades and evacuating casualties in a highly successful fashion. I hope the lessons have sunk in and that the British industry will be asked to equip the Services with the helicopters which they need and in the quantities which are obviously necessary.

This leads me automatically to the Defence White Paper and the Service Estimates which were published shortly afterwards. There is little doubt that the White Paper is one of the most significant documents yet published as far as the aircraft industry is concerned. But I do not intend to examine it in detail for its main repercussions affect fixed wing and weapon policy, and this has been done in other places and journals. Suffice to remark that, though there is no direct reference to helicopters as such in the Paper, the rightful and appropriate role for the helicopter in defence can be recognised, *e.g.*, in references to anti-submarine defence policy. This is reflected in the Explanatory Statement on the Naval Estimates which mentions the increasing use of Whirlwind helicopters for anti-submarine work and troop carrying. Likewise, the Memorandum on the Air Estimates mentions the R A F use of the helicopter in Malaya and their plans to use more advanced twin-engined Bristol helicopters in the future. However, in the Army estimates, though reference is made to the use of helicopters (provided by the R A F and Royal Navy I would like you to note!), there is no reference to them in that part of the statement devoted to future developments. In the light of the Suez experience and the proven value to the Army of the helicopter, this omission is little short of astounding. Nor is the existence of the Joint Experimental Helicopter Unit mentioned. We can only hope that among the "military implication being carefully studied in the War Office, arising from Suez" is the place of the helicopter in future Army roles.

In the manufacturing field we can feel glad that relatively substantial orders for Westland, Bristol, and Saunders Roe helicopters have been placed, notably some Scyamoeres and Skeeters for the German Army.

Last year I mentioned that the Napier Gazelle free gas turbine was under development by Napier's. Recently, this engine powered a helicopter for the first time when an S 58 helicopter, forming a prototype of the Westland "Wessex" made a highly successful first flight. This brings to two the number of British helicopters, flying, powered by gas turbine engines, and further establishes a trend which will see increasing adherence in the years to come.

In the civil operational field much enterprise marks the activities of the flourishing charter companies which have had helicopters as far afield as the Arctic, the Antarctic, the Persian Gulf, and other areas where they are effectively demonstrating the unique abilities of the craft in a tremendous variety of applications. I wish that similar activity marked the scheduled passenger application but here I am afraid that the lack of a twin-engine transport helicopter, referred to last year, still acts as a brake on real progress. In contrast to this country, SABENA continually expands its fleet strength and routes, and is currently operating the latest American machine, the S 58. The quicker a reasonably economic twin-engine helicopter becomes available the better it will be for the development of helicopter passenger services in this country and to the Continent, a natural area if ever there was one.

This lack of civil passenger progress is reflected in the forthcoming closure of the South Bank heliport, the only one such approved site in London. It is to be hoped that active steps are being taken to replace this serious loss by another equally conveniently placed one run on a simple "on demand" basis, though official circles are extremely coy on this issue.

Finally, I should like to revert once more to a domestic topic and pay personal tribute to the wise help and guidance given by our President, Lord Brabazon, who, I am very happy to say, has accepted our invitation to continue in office for another year.