

## **History of the Gas Analysis and Sensing Group (GASG)**

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The GASG is an organisation dedicated to all the scientific and technical aspects of gas sensors and their associated instruments and is a private limited company supported entirely by membership subscription. It was inaugurated in the year 1993, when the government's Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) assisted in the formation of several 'Interest Groups' through its Advanced Sensor Technology Transfer Programme (ASTTP) scheme. One of these, the GASG, subsequently convened its inaugural meeting in December of that year, wherein Mark Churchyard of the DTI and Dr. Peter McGeehin of the United Kingdom Sensors Group (UKSG) gave talks about the ASTTP programme and the UKSG respectively. These were followed by a lively discussion, and a Committee was duly elected, including Ms. Jo Bazeley for the ASTTP and Peter McGeehin representing the UKSG. Joe Watson of Swansea University was elected Chairman of the Group along with more Committee members including Jonathan Gilby of City Technology, Russell Pride of British Gas (now retired) and Peter McGeehin of Capteur Sensors (now of Compton Consultants), all of whom attended the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Colloquium at the Institute of Materials in London (see picture).



**Celebrating the 20th anniversary of the GASG at the Institute of Materials, London. Left to right: Jonathan Gilby, Joe Watson, Russell Pride and Peter McGeehin.**

The financial contribution of the ASTTP was issued in three annual tranches, £6940, £4993 and £4044, after which the GASG became self-supporting via annual membership fees of £200 for Industrial Members, £100 for Academic and Consultant Members, and £600 for Corporate Members. The registration fees for each of the three annual colloquia were set at £30 (plus £5.25 VAT) for each member, who could bring a guest at the same rate; though Corporate Members and up to five guests were admitted free. Each of these Colloquia was followed by a printed 'Proceedings' and three Newsletters per year were also published. Both are now distributed entirely electronically.

The GASG accounts were initially administered with the help of the Swansea University Finance Department, but the Group is now entirely independent and is based at the Source Testing Association in Hitchin, Herts. The annual subscriptions are currently £250 for Industrial Members and £125 for Academic and Consulting Members. Corporate Members pay £500 per annum and may send two delegates to each of the three annual colloquia

free of charge. Colloquium registration fees for other grades are now £75 for each delegate inclusive of lunches. (Non-members of the GASG may attend at a fee of £150). The membership includes almost all the UK gas sensor and instrument manufacturers, the university research groups and most relevant public and private laboratories.

The GASG colloquia coverage is very wide-ranging, and has varied from 'Industrial Site Monitoring' through 'Health and Safety' and 'The Air We Breathe' to 'Gas Sensors in Medicine'. The meetings themselves have been located at a series of industrial firms, universities, research establishments and even St. Bartholomew's Hospital. The December Colloquium always takes place in London, which allows members easy access by rail in a period of often inclement weather, and incorporates the Annual General Meeting as required by the Constitution. For the other two annual colloquia, the Committee locates hosts who can often provide tours of their premises, which take place during an extended lunch period. These have proved extremely popular, perhaps especially at a meeting held at the Scottish Courage Brewery in Reading, where samples of the product were kindly provided! This is also true for the lunch periods themselves, which allow considerable 'networking' to take place. Generally, the host institution provides a high-ranking member of the relevant organisation to welcome the GASG delegates, followed by an in-house technical paper, after which four or five speakers located by the Committee give presentations relevant to the themed subject matter. In several past meetings, it has been possible to field speakers from France, Germany, Norway and the USA in addition to British presenters. Each meeting is publicised on the Group's web site [www.gasg.org.uk](http://www.gasg.org.uk), as is the GASG itself.

The GASG co-operates with other organisations including the Sensors in Water Interest Group (SWIG), which is the other surviving Group from ASTTP days and with which the GASG has cordial relations. Colloquia have been held jointly with this Group, and also with the Institute of Physics, the Royal Society of Chemistry and the National Physical Laboratory.

The Constitution of the GASG does not provide for, nor specifically aid, start-up firms in the area of gas sensing and instrumentation, but many firms have been formed by members and most have prospered. The GASG Newsletter frequently contains a section entitled 'Company Profile' which aims to introduce both new and existing firms to the membership, and hopefully to others by personal contact. Of particular note is Alphasense Ltd., which was formed in 1997 to manufacture gas sensors beginning with electrochemical oxygen sensors and has since become a major force in the field of solid-state gas detector manufacture. Many other well-known organisations have become Members at various levels, and examples include City Technology, Crowcon Detection Instruments, Kane International, EI Electronics in Irish Republic and Edinburgh Instruments in Scotland, along with all the leading universities active in the field.

It has also been found possible to fund the compilation of several publications by Robert Bogue & Associates including "Gas Sensor Research in British Universities", which was issued free to members and assisted them in locating sources of expertise. Furthermore, research and development in the areas of gas sensing and instrumentation is actively encouraged by the provision of travel grants to students wishing to present their work at relevant conferences both in the UK and abroad. Recipients are required to give a synopsis of their work at the GASG Colloquium following the attended conference.

The GASG is active in all these areas and new members are welcomed at any of the three membership levels, which are designed to accommodate everyone from students and established researchers to company CEOs. Membership applications from organizations and individuals in overseas countries are particularly encouraged.