

The PITA Conference of 2008: A retrospective

by Graham Toft

The PITA Conference took on a slightly different format this year. The idea was to make it appealing to the maximum number of individuals in the papermaking community, an approach that seems to have worked for the considerable showing of mill and supplier attendees.

The Conference took place at Robinson College, Cambridge, the newest Cambridge

college and a popular venue with PITA members. The programme was divided into five sessions over two days and was ably chaired by Tim Klemz of Compact Engineering, whose finesse as a wordsmith and all round entertaining 'good egg', provided cohesion and structure to the proceedings.

David Moss of Kadant opened the Conference with a concise précis of his company's approach to energy saving initiatives. There then followed several presentations on *Environment and Raw Material*, the theme of the first session.

Viridor, who have one of the largest recycling facilities in Kent, presented a paper; and the Cambridgeshire Local Authority explained their progressive approach to waste management in the household sector.

An absorbing presentation was given by Kim Thomson of TVD (UK) and Peter Christmas of Salvtech. This was entitled 'Innovative Drying and Disposal of Recycling Waste Sludges', and it incorporated a discussion on the available techniques available for the disposal of the various waste streams from modern de-inking plants.

To round off the session, Ian Fairbairn of SLR Consultancy presented a paper on the implications of the Water Framework Directive for the UK paper industry. Barry Read, the Session Chairman, ensured that the questions flowed freely after the sessions and judging by the number of these, the session was of great interest to the audience.

Possibly the highlight in terms of audience interest was the presentation of the forthcoming newsprint machine installation at Kings Lynn, by Papierfabrik Palm. Three of Palm's senior managers attended the Conference, which was really appreciated, especially since they had to be at the ground breaking ceremony the day after.

The presentation itself discussed Palm's reasons for deciding to site the mill in the UK



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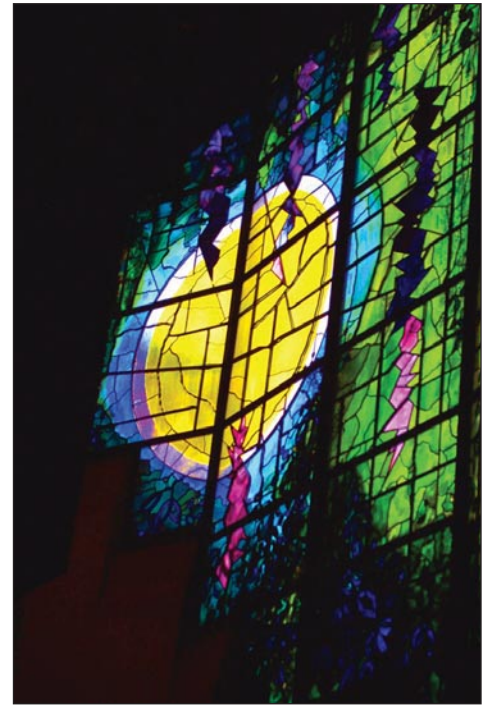
in terms of the current market and gave a broad outline of the project steps to date and a projection to the 2009 startup.

Focus on papermaking

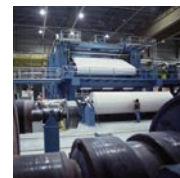
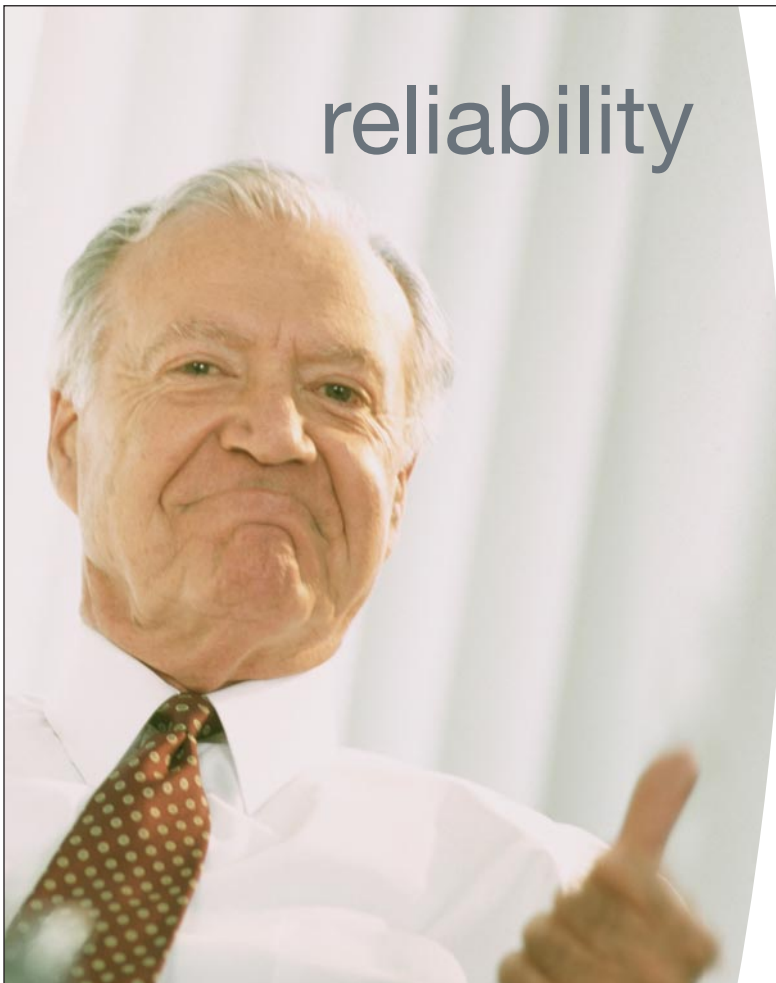
The afternoon session focussed on papermaking and following an excellent review by Tim Klemz of the latest offerings from Compact on pocket ventilation systems, the emphasis moved to process control.

Examples of automatic process control techniques were given by Paul Austin of Perceptive Engineering, including a state-of-the-art control system for the deinking plant and the energy generation system at Aylesford Newsprint. These have given significant and cost-effective advantages to Aylesford and coupled with a short payback time demonstrate what can be achieved when technology is coupled with this kind of modelling expertise and control techniques.

Sandwiched between these two presentations, was Robin Brooks of Curvaceous Software. He presented a novel approach to visualisation of process data, based on geometric techniques. Again, if the level of interest can be judged by the number of questions and what we know about the subsequent follow up, the thirst for this type of presentation is significant.



The Chapel at Robinson College is the largest in Cambridge. It has two stained glass windows by John Piper and it houses a world renowned Frobenius organ, a David Rubio harpsichord and a Steinway Piano.



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Indeed, PITA have assessed the desire to learn more about this area as such a priority, that a 2 day seminar is being organised. It will take place in September and will be devoted to simulation, modelling measurement and APC.

Session 2 also contained a stimulating paper on an alternative to the size press. The speaker, Peter Leonhardt of Cargill, presented the results of two recent full scale trials on European paper machines, where high levels of a newly developed wet-end starch were used to eliminate the size press application.

In the midst of these papers, Ross MacHattie of Honeywell, presented a thoughtful and well-considered summary of energy saving techniques which can arise as a result of measuring equipment. This new approach includes measuring paper properties along the entire paper machine and using that information to provide co-ordinated control of paper quality properties. In addition, the potential of using embedded water removal sensors to provide energy reductions was demonstrated.

One of the briefs for the Conference was to incorporate elements which would be of interest to tissue producers. A presentation from Metso Millwide, which took as its subject the growing problem of wet strength broke handling, was included to deliver this objective.

The following morning was allocated to Sessions 3 and 4, which focused on *Fibres and Finishing* respectively. The theme of energy reduction figured heavily in the Session 3 which featured two papers, one on enzymatic techniques, given by Phil Hoekstra of Buckman and the other on the optimisation of TMP refining, given by Puya Afshar of Manchester University. Again, this was of great relevance to producers of tissue.

In Session 4, three suppliers presented briefings on their technologies and services for the Finishing department. Metso began by presenting their approach to winding/slitting management and Peter Nadin, the Session

Chairman, followed with a description the equipment and services provided by Rolpex. David Pepper of Phoenix Ironworks, rounded off the session with a paper which was themed around the care and maintenance of rolls.

New departures

Session 5 contained several departures from the traditional PITA format. Under the direction of the Session Chairman, Mark Caldwell, who is Head of Technology at SCA, a very interesting selection of papers emerged, interspersed with Product Showcases. This gave several suppliers the opportunity to introduce any aspect of their company they wished.

Nigel Jopson began the session, by presenting a paper by Pira International, which contemplated the paper industry of the future, by extrapolating the likely development of disruptive technologies, such as gasification, biorefining and tree cloning. Margaret Marley, editor of Paper Technology, followed Nigel's presentation with a brilliant summary of trends in paper and tissue making, highlighting and analysing the effects of economical and geographical influences. This was followed by 3 papers which broadly speaking had regulations and directives as a common theme.

Mark Thompson (Consultant) began this session by giving a personal and highly effective account of the practicalities of implementing the CDM regulations. Derek Coulson of Laidler Associates followed this with an interpretation of CE marking and the New Machinery Directive, a well-received presentation.

The final paper of the Conference was given over to the Corporate Manslaughter legislation, which is of course, a very topical theme. The presenter was Nicola Coote of PHSC and she displayed her considerable knowledge and expertise in this area and gave some useful ideas to the assembly.

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