

The IET In France - A Short History

By Morgan Bonici

Introduction

The IET France Local Network today is among the oldest IET Local Networks outside of the UK and is likely the oldest in continental Europe. It comprises of 270 members locally and boasts a committee of 10 active volunteers and strong links to local chapters of sister organisations including the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) France. We currently work to represent our local members and to provide interesting visits to points of technological or engineering interest throughout France as well as to provide online talks and webinars.

The network has seen its ups and downs over the years, the history of which I have collated therein with the help of IET archives, staff, past and present volunteers and good old-fashioned googling.



When did the France Local Network begin?

The IET France Local Network has rather deep roots. As anyone who has been involved in an association in France can tell you, if you are not registered on the 'Association loi de 1901' registry, then you are not an association. Thus it could be argued that the IET France Local Network officially came into existence on the 24th October 1994 when it was registered with the French authorities marking 2024 as our 30th anniversary.

That being said...

The IET France Network officially began as the IEE French Centre on the 16th November 1988 with its first meeting at the Société des Ingénieurs et Scientifiques de France (ISF) in Paris. It was opened by IEE Deputy President Dr D.A. Jones and the inaugural France centre chair Mr Peter Mortlock. The IEE French Centre at the time boasted 200 members centred on Paris, Geneva and the Cote d'Azur and hit the ground running with initial events including seminars on Satellite communications, a talk on the upcoming channel tunnel and the 24th May 1989 Faraday lecture all held at the ISF.



Dr D. A. Jones Deputy
President of the IEE and Mr
Peter Mortlock the IEE France
Centre inaugural Chair

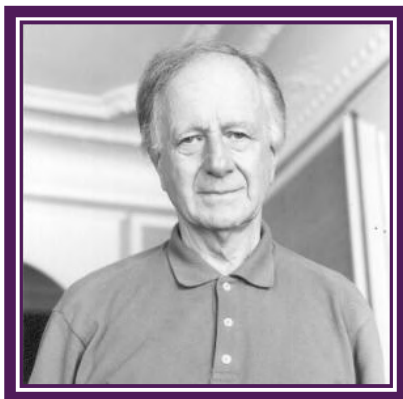
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IEE Appointed Representatives 1887 - 1939, 1946 - 1988													

IEE France Representatives - 1887 to 1988

The IEE did however have prior representation in France with appointed Honorary Secretaries for members in France from 1887 to 1939.

A little known event called World War II caused a hiatus in the IEE presence in France but this was reinstated through the appointment of Overseas Member of the IEE Council for France in 1946. The first post-war IEE France representative was Mr Pierre M J Ailleret in which capacity he acted after being active throughout the 1930s and then from the 1946 to 1967.

He was one of the four founding directors of Électricité de France (EDF) in 1946 and is considered one of the founding fathers of the French Nuclear Energy programme. He went on to become the Directeur Général Adjoint of EDF from 1958 to 1967 and created the EDF Wind Power Division. He won the 1963 Faraday Medal.



He was followed in the role in 1967 by Mr. Roger André Tellier from the Conseil International des Grands Réseaux Électriques (CIGRE), Deputy head of Engineering at EDF and eventual chair of the Centre International de Recherche sur l'Environnement et le Développement (CIRED) until his retirement in 1988.

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IEE French Center 1988 - 2009													

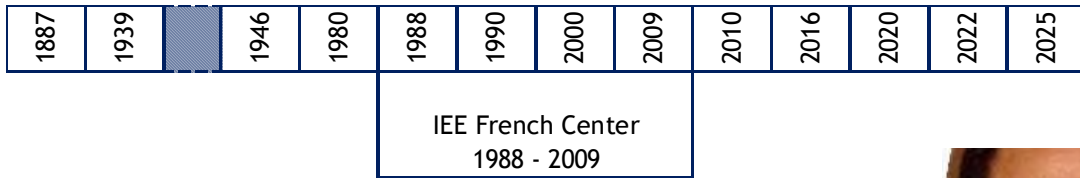
The French Centre of the IEE- 1988 - 2009

While IEE members in France benefitted from the presence of the IEE France Representative, that role largely involved reporting to the IEE on the situation in France and few activities were organised until, with membership in France rising to over 200, the ‘Gang of Four’ namely Peter Mortlock, Kevin Galligan, Chris Barratt and Mike Wrigley got together and proposed an initiative to the IEE council to create a France Center who would organise meetings, reunions and discussions for the wider membership in France.

This was notably the first such ‘center’ or ‘network’ in Europe and set the stage for other networks in the region to be created.



From IEE News #7 - 1989-May-12



The following was kindly provided by Mr Mike Wrigley, Founding member and former Chair

The French Centre of the Institution of Electrical Engineers was formally opened on November 16 1988. Glasses were raised in a toast throughout the country from Montmartre to Montpellier. The fact that those glasses contained Beaujolais Nouveau would have been a sheer coincidence.



Prior to this launch, the IEE had "Representatives" in European territories whose remit seems to have been to organise an annual dinner. In practice not too annual.

To launch the IEE French Centre, a meeting was organised by HQ on January 20 1988 at the Lady Hamilton where a petition to the IEE Council was drawn up. Yours truly already had a decade of IEE experience including chairing the IEE Graduates and Students in Manchester so was recruited to the "Gang of Four" (with Kevin Galligan, Peter Mortlock and Chris Barratt) to carry the project forward.

The Gang of Four met in each other's houses to put together some sort of programme, more often than not in a pub, so that Members could meet other Members something that came top in the Members' wish list from the inaugural meeting. When our request to create a local centre was granted, a budget came with it so that, when we held a meeting in, for example, a hotel, we could pay for the room and provide refreshments following standard practice of IEE Centres in UK. Building on UK practice, these meetings were documented with formal minutes communicated to HQ (but I can't remember if this was on paper or by fax).

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IEE French Center 1988 - 2009													



But our knowledge of French law was to be proven inadequate. To be above-board, we needed a legal foundation, an “Association 1901”. Already the authorities in Université Pierre et Marie Curie were telling us that we “didn’t really exist” and, when we wanted to hold a meeting in Texas Instruments, the Security Manager demanded a copy of our “Statutes” as a condition of using their meeting room.

We needed “Statutes”. What would they look like? Well, the IEE had a Royal Charter. That must be useful! So, I got a legal translation and sent it to the Préfecture de Police. A lady phoned me to say that this document had little in common with what they usually see but I replied that I was very sorry that it really wasn’t possible to change what George V had written. She accepted this point of view and we became legal on October 24, 1994 with an announcement in the Journal Officiel on November 16, 1994.

As part of the legalisation process, we needed an address. The SEE (Société de l’Electricité, de l’Electronique et des Technologies de l’Information et de la Communication) very kindly accepted to host us on March 20, 1992.

Over this period of time, following the UK’s accession to the European Union many British Engineers were moving to the Continent in general and to France in particular, and the IEE in continental Europe flourished. Local IEE Centres were set up in Benelux, Germany, Spain and Switzerland based on the “French model” (but with real statutes).

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IEE French Center 1988 - 2009													

Whereas the French activities were essentially based in Paris, German geography, with large cities spread across the country, favoured weekend meetings which became a family affair. A joint Germany – France meeting in Strasbourg was very successful needing an entire hotel.

Observation of the membership database led us to conclude that we needed to do something about the huge numbers of Associate Members compared with Corporate Members. A programme was launched to encourage upgrades and help with aspects such as recognition of qualifications and job titles in a French context.

Another observation of the membership statistics led to the creation of a Côte d’Azur group who held several meetings in the area although “job mobility” seemed to be higher than in the Capital and continuity became a problem.



For a few years, a screening of the Faraday Lecture attracted good audiences. With the advent of the WWW, there was no longer any need for a physical meeting to enjoy these presentations.

Another very successful presentation in Paris was held on the Channel Tunnel. The room was not big enough and chairs had to be brought from

From IEE News #98 - 1995-Jan-05

neighbouring rooms and installed around the doors in a fashion which would not have pleased any fire brigade.

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IEE French Center 1988 - 2009													

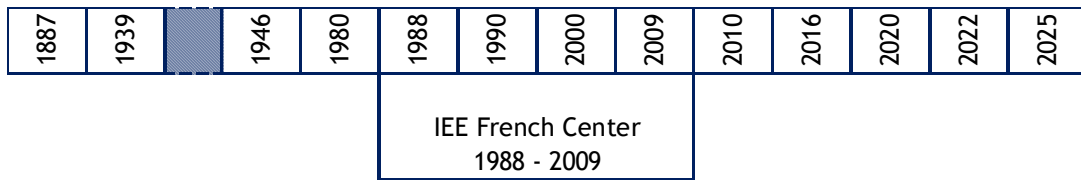
The Institution of Civil Engineers followed in the IEE's footsteps and created their own Association 1901. Very quickly, both of us recognised the benefits of holding joint meetings.

Given the "mass migration" to the Continent of UK engineers (and many others) in the 90s, many asked for information and assistance from Savoy Place. These requests increased in number and got passed to the IEE French Centre. To respond to the volume, Damian Campbell and Patrick Noble produced the IEE Guide to Living in France which could be distributed by headquarters. Those were the days before Internet. Perhaps the most frequent question was "Do I need to speak French as an electrician in France?"

One particular highlight of our activities was the holding of the IET Christmas lecture on January 25th 1995 in the Cité des Sciences. Collaboration with the British Council and the Education Ministry, helped to fill the amphitheatre morning and afternoon with secondary school pupils for whom the presentation in English was a big bonus. Huge quantities of IEE literature were distributed to participants and to other schools who were unlucky in getting places.

The IEE / IET has held stands in careers' fairs in English speaking schools with great success. Whereas, in the UK one often needs to explain what an engineer does, on the continent the kids know already and want to know how to qualify.

As an indicator of local activity, one can note that in 1994, no fewer than seven meetings were held. A respectable frequency.



The IEE France Centre was very active throughout the nineties and saw the format created here replicated over other upcoming European IEE centres as well as our sister Institutions including the Institute of Civil Engineers (ICE) and Institute of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) with which we quickly developed a working relationship allowing for joint events and resources. One such visit organised by the IEE France Centre was the June 1998 weekend visit to the CERN Delphi Detector station, Geneva and Nyon with tied in presentations on switchgears and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) which involved members from France and Switzerland as well as guests from IMechE.

The 2000s saw the IEE France Network continue to grow with an active core in the Paris Ile-de-France region. A notable IEE led event was the 2007 visit to the Airbus site in Toulouse which also included tie in visits in the region such as to Carcassonne. The ICE France group however took the effective lead in event organisation under their chairs Mr Christian Grandjean and Mr William Powles organising events in the period including the 2006 Rhin-Rhône Ligne a Grande Vitesse (LGV) construction site of the new high speed rail in Franche Comte, the 2007 visit to the ITER construction site and Provence region.

Testament to the growth during the period, In 2005 the IEE France Centre could boast 442 members including 41 young professionals and had strong links with the SEE, IMechE, ICE as well as the regional group of Engineers South-West France (ESWF).

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IEE French Center 1988 - 2009													



IEE French Center Members at the
Airbus site in Toulouse - 2007

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							IET French Network 2009 - 2022					

The IET French Network - 2009 - 2016



The IET was formed of the merger of the Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE) and the Institute of Incorporated Engineers (IIE) in March 2006. The IEE French Centre was thus rebranded as the IET French Network effective 19th February 2009.

The French Center had been reporting within the IEE to the EuroExec committee which covered the wider European Economic Community. This changed with the Introduction of the regional Communities Committee (CCs) in 2012 with the France Local Network coming under the CC-EMEA covering Europe, Middle-East and Africa.

There had been a spike in members immediately following the merger of the IEE and IIE in 2006 totalling 737 members including 275 IIE members however membership figures were down to 479 members the majority of which being Chartered MIETs of 35-45 years old as of early 2009.

The IET French Network continued into the early 2010s much as it had before with events being organised by the network such as the Garabit Viaduc visit in Cantal in 2010 and a 2015 visit to St Nazaire which included the French Navy shipyard, Airbus factory and the Guérande salt pans. The IET Technical Networks were also active in France with the Control and Automation Network holding a lecture from Dr Nick Reed on the Psychology of Autonomous Vehicules in Paris in November 2013 and the Aerospace Technical Network hosting a technical symposium in Toulouse on the Single European Sky ATM Research (SESAR) in October 2014.

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							IET French Network 2009 - 2022					

Our sister organisations, in particular the ICE were very active organising visits including visits to ITER in 2012 and 2019 in addition to other civil engineering sites such as the Bacalan Bastide lifting bridge in Bordeaux in 2012, the LGV high speed rail construction site in Poitiers in 2014.

The IMechE also hosted a lecture on the Eurotunnel presented by Prof Yves Machefert-Tassin whose titles included Honorary Director of Engineering & Research with Schneider Group, France Rail Expert and Technical Adviser for the Eurotunnel Honorary Professor of Rail Traction at the Ecole Spéciale des Travaux Publics in Paris.



ICE/IET Visit to ITER 2012



ICE/IET Visit to LGV 2014

The IET, ICE and IMechE France associations also took it in turn to organise and host an annual dinner in Paris throughout this period. There were also many regular networking events held at the notorious unofficial home of IET and other France networks, the Highlander Pub as well as Carr's bar in Paris.

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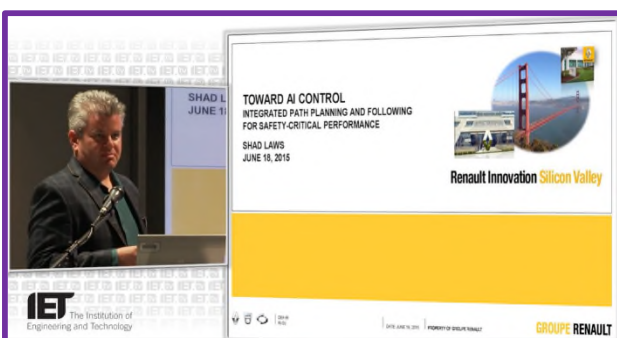
The 18th June 2015 saw a major series of presentations organised by the IET French Network and the Control and Automation TPN in Paris with presentations on a variety of topics. These were notably captured by IET.TV.



- Mobile Laser Scanning for 3D Road Scene Reconstruction from Prof François Goulette from MINES



- Autonomous Vehicle control from Mr Michel Dhôme from CNRS



- Guidance and Control for autonomous vehicles from Mr Shad Laws from Renault.



- Multi-robots control for mobile robot formation - Control of a fleet of off-road vehicles from Mr Roland Lenain from IRSTA.

- Interviews with Serge Lambermont from Delphi and Axel Fuchs from Quanergy Systems.

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Our current and future network chairs Phil Dunbar and Robert McCann were also interviewed by IET.tv as part of the control and automation event.



An Interview with Phil Dunbar,
Chairman, IET French Network



An Interview with Robert McCann,
IET French Network

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Brexit and Covid-19 - 2016-2022

2016 brought the Brexit referendum which led to the formal withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union in January 2020. The IET French Network put together a guide and list of documents for our members with the help of the local British Communities Committee and the British Embassy. This guide put together guidance on things such as banking, healthcare and residency to help our members navigate the post-Brexit environment.

Brexit resulted in a marked drop in the relevancy of British Engineering Institutions in Europe. The majority of our membership were not locally grown coming instead from outside of France. Broadly speaking, engineers in Europe do not require Chartership as they are considered 'qualified' upon completion of their studies. This means there is little draw for local students to join unless they have an eye on a future career outside of France and local engineers do not see a draw to our engineering institutes joining instead the French equivalents such as the Société de l'Électricité, de l'Électronique et des technologies de l'information et de la communication (SEE).



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Despite the challenges, the network did not simply roll over. Timothy Lorkin, a British lecturer at the École Nationale Supérieure d'Arts et Métiers (ENSAM) helped set up On-Campus groups at the Chalons-en-Champagne and Paris-Sud sites in 2017 and 2018.

Efforts were concentrated on bi-lingual engineering students and those also studying English and engagement was driven through encouraging them to participate in the Present Around The World (PATW) challenges as a way to boost their language and presentation skills as well as taking part and assisting in First LEGO League challenges.



PATW presentations following the 2018 LEGO Challenge at the Maison des Arts et Metiers in Paris

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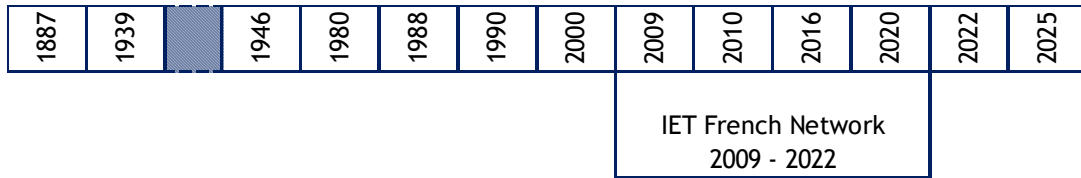
2020 brought with it a further shock in the form of Covid-19 and resulting lockdowns. This forced a halt to in-person physical events and pushed our activities online.

All IET networks struggled with being forced online. It is harder for members to network during a virtual meeting than in person and necessitate each network to pivot to delivering talks and seminars over Zoom or Teams.

OECD AI Principles & Ethics 'Virtual' conference
 Bringing French Students, Institute members, AI Policy makers & Industry together
 12/11/20 - 14h00-19h00 via Zoom

- Introduction - OECD** Andy Wyckoff (Director, OECD STI Department)
- Sponsoring organisations** IET, IEEE & EIRMA* (UK & US Engineering Institutes)
- Intro to Ethics** Jonna Bryson (Hertie School of Governance, Berlin)
- State of the art today** Alistair Nolan (OECD)
- IPROVA** Julian Nolan - CEO, AI in the Development process
 "Data driven non-linear thinking to create the next generation of game changing products and services"
- MangoGem** Ben Rodriguez - CTO, "Survival of the Agile: how AI-powered planning optimization makes industry more efficient and fit to adapt faster to disruption." AI in the Production process
- 2 case studies to be presented / discussed** in terms of AI Principles & Ethics, in breakout groups
 - CS - 1 (RTE - France)** Antoine Marot - Lead AI Scientist Alistair
 - CS - 2 (Lan Research)** Anj van Berckel "Empowering Smart Grids with AI in the 21st Century" Kurtze
 - CS - 2 (Lan Research)** Anj van Berckel "AI in industry - Conditions for a successful digital revolution" Kurtze
- Parallel sessions** (OECD time managers)
- Students from each sub group to present discussion summary to whole group
- Wrap-up Pt Bryson.
- Thanks to OECD

The Network had some success in holding online events including the November 2020 joint IET-IEEE-EIRMA OECD virtual conference on AI Principles and Ethics however few other events were held over the period. The end of the lockdowns brought some reprieve however by then, engagement had already taken a significant hit.



The strain as they say was beginning to show...

Demographically, the network was ‘aging’ with an increasing proportion of retired members and fewer Young Professional and Mid-Career Engineers. The 479 members of majority 35-45 years olds of 2009 had become just over 300 members with a median age of 59 by 2022. A third of these being retired.


The Network had long been garnering a certain reputation for being largely Paris-centric with few opportunities for networking and involvement outside of the capital region leading to some disengagement from members based in the provinces.

As of 2018, GDPR data privacy regulation made it that the local network could no longer hold a database of members and their contact details locally. While the membership at large could still be contacted through email blasts from the IET HQ and the Adestra system, it still contributed to further disconnect for members outside the Paris region.

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Amid this period of poor communication and falling engagement. Timothy Lorkin the outgoing chair of the France Local Network was thanked for his contributions but was asked to step down to help make way for a renewal of the network.

The Extraordinary Annual General Meeting on the 13th Dec 2022 saw Morgan Bonici elected as Chairman. Recently moved to France he was recommended by IET governance based on his experience within the IET Singapore Network. He was also appointed onto the IET Communities Committee EMEA to help ensure good communication.



13th December 2022 - 19:30 - 21:00

FREE ENTRY

**IET France Local Network
Extraordinary Annual General Meeting 2022**

With keynote speech from Sir Julian Young KBE CB FREng CEng FIET

Venue
Royal British Legion Paris Branch
28 Rue des Acacias, 75017 Paris,
France (Metro CDG Etoile - Exit 5)

We are pleased to invite you to join us for a hybrid EAGM which will be held on the 13th December 2022 at the Royal British Legion in Paris and overzoom.

We have the pleasure to announce that the past President of the IET Sir Julian Young will be providing the keynote speech on the topic of 'Maintaining a Just Culture' which will delve into mistakes made by engineers in their work and the behavioural aspects of the work and line managers response to the errors.

Issues faced during the AGM earlier this year require us to repeat the AGM to meet the legal statutory requirements however we trust that you will benefit from our keynote speech and the updated agenda which will include voting in a new committee and discussions about the future direction of the network.

Kindly register and join us in person at the Royal British Legion Paris Branch or online through the Teams link to below.
We look forward to seeing you there.

Contact
France@ietvolunteer.org

Book your place at
<https://focalevents.theiet.org/cb15cd>

theiet.org/communities
#ForThoseWhoDoMore

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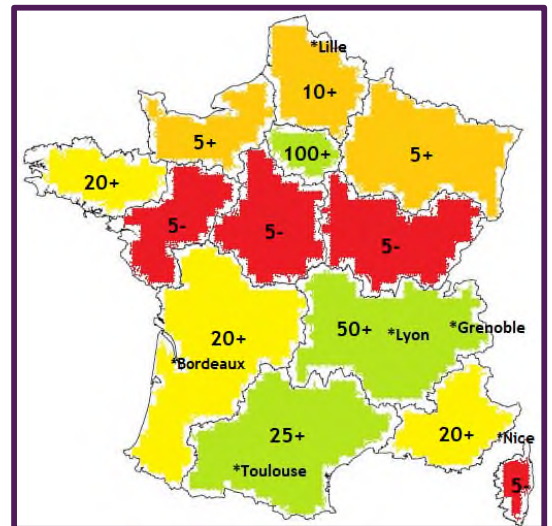
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											IET France Local Network Today	

The IET France Local Network Today



A period of rebuilding ensued. This included a review of our membership numbers and of our demographics with a view on how best to position the network to support the local membership. The statutes were updated and the registered name of the Network became the IET France Local Network.

It was found that the bulk of our members was in the Paris Ile-de-France area with smaller concentrations around regional centres such as Lyon, Grenoble, Toulouse, Lille, Bordeaux and Nice. The geographical distance between members at large, including the committee kept most activities online even after Covid-19 restrictions faded. An initiative at the time to re-organise the Network with a North and South France Sub-division did not bear fruit.



Regional spread of IET France Network members

The networks presence on social media was improved with the creation of Facebook and LinkedIn pages as well as regular updating of the IET EngX site with our activities allowing easier access to our members. The improvement of relations between the network and IET governance has also made a big difference with the reputation of the France LN being restored.

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												IET France Local Network Today	

The main activities in 2022 and 2023 were organised by the ICE including the visit to the Tunnel Euralpin Lyon Turin (TELT) construction site at St Jean de Maurienne on the 28th August 2022 hosted by Lucy Rew and a visit to the CERN Science Gateway site and the Compact Muon Solenoid (CMS) collider within the Large Hadron Collider tunnel on the 10th March 2023. We also assisted in spreading the word on their online events and networking sessions in Paris.

ICE/IET visit to
TELT 2022



ICE/IET visit to
CERN 2023

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2024 saw the re-emergence of the IET France Local Network as an active network with the organisation of a visit to the ITER construction site and to the Observatoire de Haute Provence (OHP) on the 27th-28th May 2024 as well as a couple of online webinars. These activities besides putting the network back on the metaphorical map also resulted in new volunteers expressing an interest to join the local network committee.



IET/ICE visit to ITER 2024



IET/ICE visit to OHP 2024

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We have interest from several students studying engineer at the Institut Universitaire de Technology (IUT) Lyon 1 to join the IET and are working to incorporate them as a sub-committee to the France Local Network.



Masaf
MALAYSIAN STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION IN
FRANCE

This came about after discussions with Malaysian engineering students on JPA placements in France through events organised

by the MALYON Franco-Malaysian Association of Lyon and we are working to expand our offerings to students outside of the Lyon area. They are represented locally by the Malaysian Student Organisation in France (MASAF) but there is room for us as an engineering specific organisation to provide support.

The key benefits for joining will include helping them link up with their home countries IET Local Networks in order for these students to have a ready-made professional network when they return from their studies as well as supporting them in achieving EngTech professional registration status during their studies.

This will be open to all students local and international with the support of the France local network and the IET Young Professionals Committee.

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2025 and Beyond

The IET France Local Network on the eve of 2025 has a lot going for it. Although it is facing similar macro challenges as other networks in Europe, it is facing them with committed volunteers, fruitful links and co-operations with sister institutions and a renewed sense of purpose.

Our membership stands at a historic low of 270 members however the actions taken so far have improved engagement with local members and brings an exciting opportunity to develop student members. The plan in the coming years is to build on these strengths through:

- Hosting one flagship physical event a year.
- Supporting the student members with local visits.
- Producing a steady flow of technical talks and presentations.
- Maintain relations and collaborations with our sister institutions.

The IET has had a presence in France from the very beginnings of the IEE itself and a volunteer network in place for 30 or 36 years depending on ones pedantry. Its story has seen successes and challenges and will no doubt go on having many more of both as long as its members and volunteers continue writing its future chapters.

The IET France Local Network Committee 2024



Morgan Bonici IEng MIET – Chair
Project Manager at Edmund Optics
IET volunteer since 2014



Stuart Burton IEng MIET – Honorary Secretary
International Product Marketing, Orange SA
IET volunteer since 2019



Colin Childes MIET – Honorary Treasurer
Freelance Cyber Security Expert
IET volunteer since 2022



Phil Dunbar – Committee Member
Retired Telecommunications Validation Manager
IET volunteer since 1999



Ian Gillis CEng MIET – Committee Member
Retired Radar Systems Engineer
IET volunteer since 2006



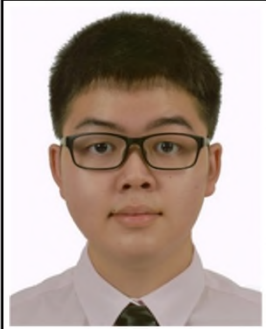
Franck Margrave – Committee Member
Engineer and Academic - semi-retired
IET volunteer since 19XX!



Paul Poncelet – Committee Member
Retired Telecommunications and Computer Engineer
IET volunteer since 1994



Richard Bodin CEng MIET – Appointed Member
Consultant
IET volunteer since 2024

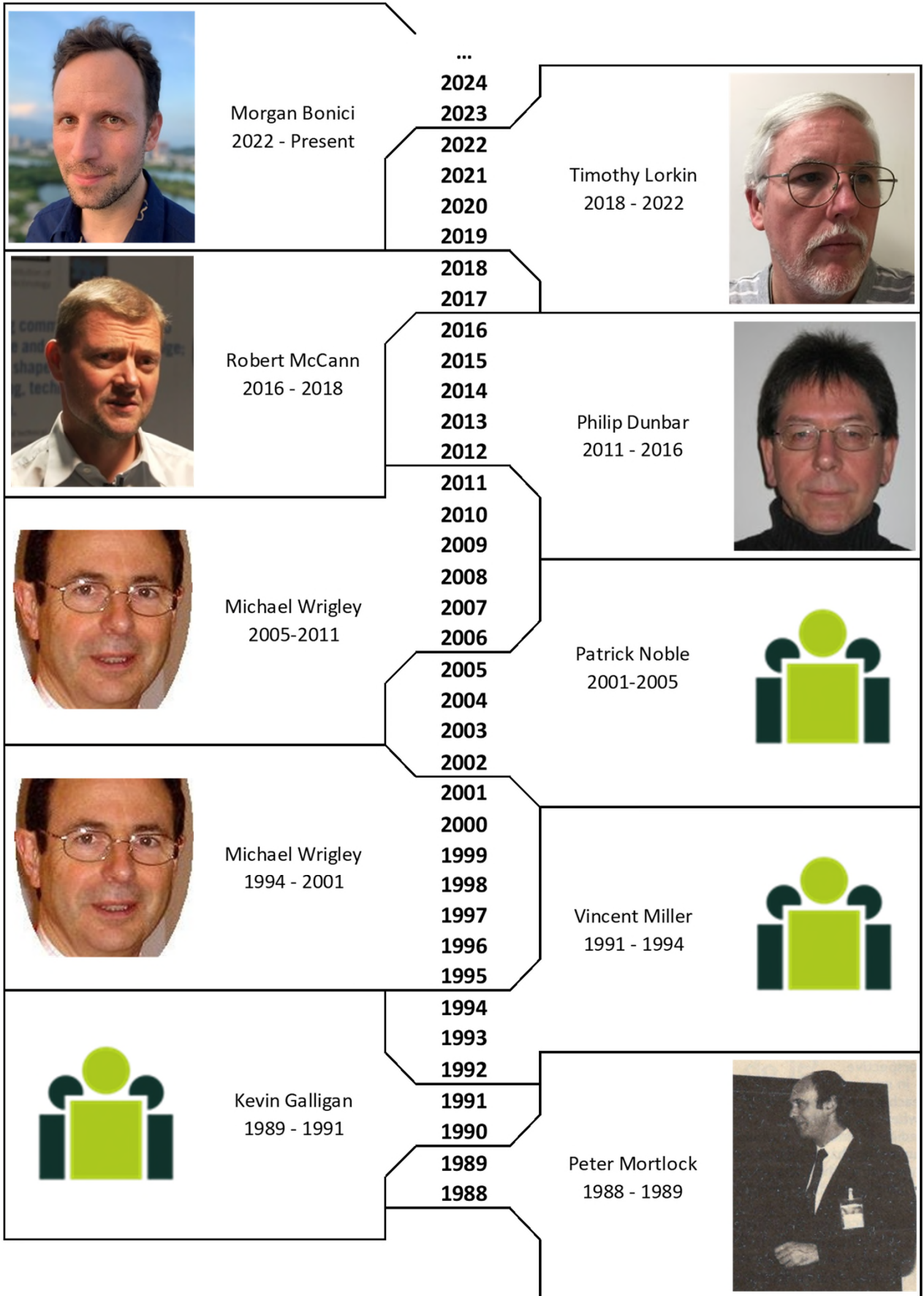


Sophie Cavé-Lopez – Appointed Member
Student at the Open University
IET volunteer since 2024



Clement Lau – Appointed Member
Student at IUT Lyon 1
IET volunteer since 2024

Chairs of the IET France Local Network





Phil Dunbar
Chairman, French Network, IET



On behalf of the IET France Local Network, I would like to thank all past, present and future members and volunteers for their contributions.

Special thanks to Anne Locker from IET Archives, Michael Wrigley, Ian Gillis, Phil Dunbar, Andrea Lund and all who have screened through this document during its drafting for their help in putting this together.

Morgan Bonici



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