



On Monday June 21st, 2021, members of the branch committee accompanied chairman Jim McGuirk when he made a presentation to Francis (Mac) Maccabee to commemorate his recent



Mac

retirement from the committee. At various times during 55 years of committee membership Mac served as Branch Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer and as the Loughborough Branch member on various main society committees. Happily, Mac will remain a supporter and a regular attendee at our lectures. As far and away the longest serving committee member Mac replied to the presentation with the following recollections of the Branch's history.



The Branch came into being in 1962, following the collapse of the Leicester Branch as the Power Jets facility in Whetstone ceased operations. The meeting to decide to replace it with a Loughborough Branch took place in a long, low, lecture room in the Aeronautical and Automobile Engineering Dept. at the College of Advanced Technology ("Loughborough" became a University in 1966). Representatives from the Royal Aeronautical Society's HQ, and from the dying Leicester Branch, explained the procedures involved in starting a Branch, and the decision was made to go ahead. He remembered that room well, because subsequently

he was lecturing in it when a student fell asleep in the front row ("It wasn't the room" interrupted the Chairman!).

They were dismayed to find that very little support came from East Midlands Airport, and the Branch relied very heavily on student support, including for the offices. A postgrad. was once Chairman. He remembered, that once during his own Chairmanship, a student Secretary booked a lecture on the performance of rivet arrays, which produced an audience of seven. (At that time lectures in Hamilton Place, the Society's HQ, frequently had audiences as low as eleven, though). The Branch survived, with moderate success based partly on local advertising. One of the major highlights was the hosting in the 1970s, jointly with the Derby Branch, of the Branches Conference: Derby provided the Conference visits and tours, and Loughborough the accommodation, in what was by then the University.



Student support declined, and the Branch ceased to operate in 1981, only to be revived in 1984, led by Stan Stevens as Chairman. Then the really big change in status and support came, with the use of the Society's membership database, spreading the net for membership of the Branch over a much larger area. Successive Chairmen -- Wally Bainbridge, John Ollerhead, and now, Jim McGuirk -- have led the Branch to growing success

with Colin Moss, the Secretary, a brilliant manager, and Mike Hirst, an equally brilliant reporter, writing superb summaries of the lectures.