Oscar Faber by John Faber (his Son), Quiller Press, 1989
OSCAR FABER

There are few more significant gaps in the literature on our great engineers than the complete lack of biographical material on that dominant figure who bestrode the structural scene in the early part of this century – Oscar Faber. This is the more surprising in that, unlike his well-known predecessors such as Brunel and McAdam, his name is perpetuated via the large and successful firm which he founded.

Perhaps in common with other towering personalities, some years have to pass after his death for the true perspective to be reached – and this is certainly true when the biographer is his son.

John Faber, himself an engineer and a close confidant of his father during the final stages of his long and eminent career, knew his father’s work at first hand. Though at the height of his powers Oscar was beset by the usual problems which spring from launching and sustaining a successful practice, the early days, taken from research and personal interviews, show all the drama and zest of an untrammelled intellect bursting upon new worlds of opportunity. Together the two strands form an enthralling and far-from-sycophantic narrative.

The Bank of England, Lord’s Cricket Ground, Royal Horticultural Hall, large Grain Complexes at the principle UK shipping ports, the Mulberry Harbours for the D-Day landings, the rebuilding of the House of Commons after the war – not to mention other great projects and a host of fine buildings about the world. … It would be tedious and unnecessary to lengthen the list, for Oscar Faber’s claims to fame lead back to his remarkable initiatives in the field of reinforced concrete, work on air-conditioning and his leadership as President of the Institution of Structural Engineers just as strongly as they led forward, with his colleagues Kell, Vaughan and others, to the foundation and development of his broadly based practice Oscar Faber & Partners.
Harald Faber (1856-1944), Oscar Faber's father, when Danish Agricultural Commissioner in London.
Oscar Faber (1886-1956) at the time he was President of the Institution of Structural Engineers.
Joan Faber (1881-1967), Oscar Faber's wife, in the Hayes Court heyday of the 1930s.
Copper piping for panel-heating, ready for concreting to form the Soane domes at the Bank of England (1934-1942).

The generating station in the basement of The Bank of England - the waste products being conserved for heating within the building.
The Structural's Annual Ball 1960. Far side, left to right, Mrs. Lane, Monty, Mrs. Kell, Clover, Mrs. Vaughan, Kell, Mrs. Glover. Next side, left to right, the Author, Miss Montgomery-Smith, F. S. Lane (accountant), new Sir Peter Lane, Mrs. Faber, Vaughan.

Oscar Faber & Partners head offices, Marlborough House, St. Albans, 1974.
OSCAR FABER
President 1944-45
OSCAR FABER
PRESIDENT 1944

The new President of the Institution of Heating and Ventilating Engineers, Mr. Oscar Faber, was born 1886, in London, and was educated at St. Dunstan’s College, Catford, and City and Guilds (Engineering) College, South Kensington (Cloth-workers Scholar) 1903-1906, obtaining the A.C.G.I., first in Electrical Engineering and subsequently in Civil and Mechanical Engineering. He took the B.Sc., Engineering, London University and subsequently the D.Sc., by thesis on Research. He became assistant civil engineer to A.P.C.M. and worked on jetties, wharfs, and Civil Engineering Works, chiefly of timber and reinforced concrete. Later he became assistant engineer to Indented Bar Engineering Co. and was responsible for designs of many important R.C. structures. When chief engineer with Trollope & Co. Ltd, he was responsible for design of engineering work in many large London buildings, such as Hong Kong Bank, Chartered Bank of India, London House, etc. During the last War he did important research work and production for the Admiralty for which he was awarded O.B.E.

He set up in private practice as consulting engineer about 1920, became consulting engineer for New Bank of England, including structure, heating and air-conditioning plant, electrical system, and all engineering services (1925-1942). He acted in similar capacity in regard to many buildings in London and abroad, such as Lloyds Bank, Glyn Mills Bank, Martin's Bank, Barclay's Bank, India House, S. Africa House, Church House, Royal Empire Society, Earls Court Exhibition, including all heating, air conditioning, electrical work, and all services. He designed many flour mills, silos, etc. and was consulting engineer for many large buildings in Shanghai and Hong Kong, Nairobi, Cape Town, Pretoria.

He is a Past-President, Institution of Structural Engineers and author and joint author of many technical papers and books on reinforced concrete, constructional steel, heating and air conditioning, foundations, etc. The Hon. D.C.L. of Durham University was awarded him in recognition of work in underpinning Durham Castle, under conditions of considerable risk and difficulties. He was elected a Member of Institution of Heating and Ventilating Engineers in 1933, and Vice-President in 1939.
Past Presidents of the Institution have the satisfaction of having their names incised permanently on a board in the Institution headquarters. One IHVE Past President, however, has obtained for himself a more public memorial. J R Kell, IHVE President in 1952, Gold Medallist in 1948 and co-author of *Heating and air-conditioning of buildings*—better known as Faber & Kell—is also Chief Warden of St Albans Abbey. And in that role he has joined the Right Revd Robert Runcie (until recently Bishop of St Albans) and the Very Revd Peter Moore, Dean of St Albans, on the roof of the Abbey Church at St Albans among the gargoyles and busts, carved in stone.

*John Robert Kell, Partner in Oscar Faber
President IHVE 1952*
JOHN ROBERT KELL

PRESIDENT, 1952–53.

Mr. John Robert Kell was born in Hertfordshire in 1902; his parents came from Co. Durham, his father being a builder and contractor. He was educated at St. Albans School, and entered the engineering industry as an apprentice in 1921; he was later engaged in the heating and ventilating contracting business of the late Mr. F. Broadhurst Craig.

In 1926 he joined the office of Dr. Oscar Faber, Consulting Engineer, President of the Institution 1944–45, and in 1948 became a Partner in the firm of Oscar Faber & Partners. Among the numerous projects both at home and abroad for which he has been responsible for the design of mechanical and electrical services may be mentioned the Bank of England and the House of Commons rebuilding. Mr. Kell joined the Institution as Associate Member in 1928 and became full Member in 1935; and was elected to Council in 1944. He served on the Examinations Board for a number of years, and amongst other committee work he has been Chairman of the Guide Committee since 1948. He has represented the Institution on the M.O.W. Codes of Practice Committee, on the District Heating Working Group, and is at present a member of the joint committee on Basic Design Temperatures under the ægis of the I.E.R., being Chairman of the working panel.

Mr. Kell is well known as joint author with Dr. Faber of Heating and Air Conditioning of Buildings. He has read several papers to the Institution, both at headquarters and to the branches; also he has read papers to the R.I.B.A. and other bodies, and has contributed articles to the technical press in this country and abroad.

He is a Member of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, a Member of the Institute of Fuel, and a Member of the American Society of Heating and Ventilating Engineers.
PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Noblesse Oblige

PETER L. MARTIN, PRESIDENT 1971/72

Peter Martin was born in Leicester, educated at Wyggeston School, Kibworth Beauchamp School and Leicester Technical College.

He entered the industry in 1934 as an indentured apprenticeship to Young Anson and Young Ltd to which company he returned after war service in the engineering branch of the Royal Air Force from 1940 to 1946. He commenced his studies in 1946 by attending the intensive course operated at Borough Polytechnic, London.

In 1947 he joined the practice of the late Dr Oscar Faber as an assistant to J R Kell, was made an Associate of Oscar Faber and Partners in 1955 and taken into partnership in 1961.

He was elected as an Associate Member of the Institution in 1957, transferred to Member (now Fellow) in 1952, and has served on the Council since 1957.

From the outset he became active in committee work of the Institution, in particular the Guide Committee where the fluid flow data became his special interest. He was awarded the Institution’s Silver Medal for his paper on the new HHVE Pipe Staging Data for Water Flow in 1958. He gained the bronze Medal of the Institution in 1966 as a joint author of the paper ‘Building Services for Swimming Pools’. In 1966 he was elected Chairman of the Guide Committee and took upon himself the enormous task of the revision of the Guide to SI units, at the same time splitting the Guide into three volumes.

Additional to his work for the Institution, he served as Chairman of the Heating and Ventilating Research Association in 1967/68 and is at present Chairman of the Department of the Environment (C.A.C.C.E.) Sub-Committee for Application of Computers to Services Engineering. He is a member of the Building and Systems Committees of the Association of Consulting Engineers and is a City Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Plumbers, having recently been elected to the Court thereof. He has a continuing interest in the educational needs of industry, particularly at Technician level, and is a Governor of the Hertfordshire College of Building.

In the course of his business he has travelled extensively, particularly in the Middle East and West Indies. He claims as his hobby ‘avoiding gardening’ but from the Institution’s point of view it would seem that the Guide must have been his all-consuming hobby over many years, coupled with his collaboration in the preparation of the forthcoming SI Edition of that other bible of the industry, Faber and Kell.

The title which I have chosen for this address is one which is open to interpretation in a number of ways; standard works of reference offer a wide choice. I use it in the general sense where it reflects the interplay which exists between privilege and responsibility; that possession of the former entails acceptance of the latter and that proper responsibility should in due time earn privilege. In his Presidential Address to the Institution of Structural Engineers last October, Dr. O. A. Kerensky spoke movingly of the ethics of the individual engineer: I propose to dwell upon the ethos of an engineering body as demonstrated by its history.

Membership

The first Constitution of this Institution, drafted in 1898, stated that the sole object was ‘to promote the intellectual welfare of members, to read, consider and discuss papers or problems on Heating, Ventilation, or other kindred subjects and to take measures to extend, develop or safeguard the interests of these trades’. It will be noted that this aim was both narrowly sectarian and introspective and it is to the credit of our founder members that these limitations were soon recognised. In 1902 therefore the Constitution was revised and the first of three objects was stated as being the promotion of the science and practice... to give an impulse likely to be useful... to the community at large.

The tradition of service by this Institution—to its members, to allied professions, to the building industry and to the environment—may therefore be said to have been in existence for nearly seventy years. Moreover, as the years have passed, the breadth of specialisation has been changed, often in retrospect, through the Articles of 1926 to those of the present day, and now embraces virtually all aspects of man-made engineering for the built environment.

Aims and objects

At 31st December, 1970, as may have been noted from the Annual Report adopted earlier this evening, the total membership of this Institution numbered 5442. Of this total some 440 are resident
Peter Martin, Partner in Oscar Faber
President CIBSE 1971
Peter Martin being presented with a leather bound copy of the IHVE Guide by President E G Brooks in recognition of his work as Chairman of the Guide Committee
Alec Moir
Alec Moir is chairman of Oscar Faber plc, and director of Oscar Faber Consulting Engineers Limited, Oscar Faber Scotland Limited and Oscar Faber (USA) Inc. He joined the company in 1967.

He studied in London, attending Borough and Regent Street Polytechnics and the National College, and went on to do an indentured apprenticeship with G N Haden & Sons Limited.

As project engineer for Thomas Anderson & Partners, Alec worked in Malaysia in the 1960s.

He is former chairman of the Qualifications Board and then the Education, Training and Examinations Committee (1). He is currently vice-chairman of the CIBSE Accreditation Panel. He has represented the CIBSE on the CIC Education and Training Committee, and sits on the Herts Centre Building Services Liaison Panel.

Alec Moir