

A Short History of AFLS — in 4 pages and 4 Appendices

If the formal history of AFLS began just over 15 years ago, at the meeting held at Birkbeck College on the first day of Spring 1981, its origins go back a little further, to a conference on post-a-level teaching of French organised at the University of Sussex in the autumn of 1979.¹ On that occasion, it was decided that the concerns of those present should continue to be addressed at future meetings. The first of these was held in Reading just before Christmas 1980. Perhaps it was the cold which spurred the six intrepid participants into action, deciding that a new association should be founded, which would cater for the interests of those working in the areas of language teaching and research. There was some discussion whether this should cover all languages taught in HE in the UK or only French; in the event the latter, perhaps less adventurous, option was chosen.

The meeting on 21 March 1981 elected a steering group to get the association going, and this group became AFLS's first committee: Carol Sanders as President, Tom Hodge Secretary, Bob French Treasurer, Gertrud Aub-Buscher Membership Secretary, and Joan Butterworth, Alan Hersh and Madeleine Renouard as ordinary members. (For subsequent officers, see Appendix 1) Madeleine Renouard took on the task of launching a *Newsletter*, and N°0 came out in June of that year, adorned with the hexagonal AFLS logo designed by a student and destined to carry the message to the far corners of the earth on letterheads, books, journals and t-shirts. The inaugural meeting was organised by Tom Hodge at Bristol Polytechnic on 10 October 1981 and a constitution was adopted; its aim was stated to be

to encourage and promote both theoretical research and pedagogical application in the field of French language teaching in Higher Education.

The Association grew rapidly: by the time *Newsletter* N°3 appeared in the autumn of 1982, it listed over 160 individual and institutional members, mainly in the UK, but also in the rest of Europe, Sudan and New Zealand. The Society for French Studies asked AFLS to organise a section on language at its 1982 annual conference in Hull, and the French Embassy recognised the Association by agreeing to give it a subvention, which has supported

¹ See C. Sanders (ed.) *Beyond A-level in the Teaching of French* London: CILT, 1979

many of its activities over the years. The first large conference at Lancaster, on the Media and the Teaching of French, was so successful that it was decided to make it an annual event (see Appendix 2) Regional groups also began to meet, the most active being in the North West and Northern Ireland.

These regional meetings became the prototype of the association's workshops and seminars. These have covered a very wide variety of areas (see Appendix 3) and are reported to be the envy of other associations. Much of their success in recent years is attributable to the workshop co-ordinators, Penny Sewell and Annie Rouxville, but they have also given many individual members a chance to become involved in organising AFLS activities.

The *Newsletter* has appeared three times a year from the beginning, different members of the committee taking on the task of editing it until Geoff Hare took over. If its look was rather less than professional in those early days, the speed with which articles and news appeared was much admired; under its new and more permanent editor it had a welcome face-lift. For many members it was their main lifeline to the Association, with its news, practical hints, reports on teaching materials and book reviews, as well as more substantial articles. The latter began to be refereed in 1995, and the publication changed its name to *Cahiers* to mark its new status (without losing any of its friendliness in the process).

Although the first AFLS book came out in 1983 (see Appendix 4), the *Newsletter* continued to be the Association's only regular publication for the first ten years. However, in 1986 the committee began to look at ways of ensuring that the aims and activities of AFLS had a wider impact. A publications sub-committee was set up, negotiations with cilt brought to an end the problems of marketing AFLS books by making AFLS the first partner in a cilt « Associated Publications » scheme, and by 1988 it was agreed that AFLS should sponsor a journal in which high-level research in French linguistics, both pure and applied, should be published, even if this meant raising the membership fee from £5 to £20. A contract was signed with Cambridge University Press in the autumn of 1989, and the first number of the *Journal of French Language Studies* appeared in March

1991. It has quickly become respected in its field, and is currently read (or at least bought) in 30 countries.

The trickle of AFLS books became a steady stream a little later, thanks to the work of the Projects and Publications Committee set up in 1990 under the chairmanship of Jim Coleman. Since 1992, at least one title has appeared every year, mainly in the areas of language teaching and learning (see Appendix 4). Less formal publications have also been sponsored by the ppc, notably the series of grammar brochures and *Vidéogrammaire*, produced in the wake of the workshop on the teaching of grammar held in 1991.

The encouragement of r&d has been on the agenda from the beginning — there was a research sub-committee of the very first executive and a bourse to help with travel for materials development was instituted in 1981 — but more active steps were taken from 1986 onward, with the re-activation of a research committee, chaired by Roger Hawkins, and the regular publication in the *Newsletter* of his research register of members. New initiatives have been taken in the 90s — rae oblige — in the form of a research committee Mk3, a series of research workshops (see Appendix 3), the setting up of the French Lexis group, and, perhaps most importantly, the creation of bourses to support postgraduate work in French language and allow young researchers to attend AFLS conferences.

We hope that such schemes will ensure that the next generation will keep AFLS alive and develop it further. This short report has not mentioned many persons: all that AFLS stands for is the result of the efforts of so many that their names could fill several pages. *Que cela continue.*

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Appendix 1 : AFLS Officers

	President	Secretary	Treasurer	Membership Secretary
1981-84	C Sanders	T Hodge R Towell	R French	G Aub-Buscher
1984-86	R French	R Towell	R Crawshaw	G Hare
1986-87	G Aub-Buscher	R Towell	R Crawshaw	G Hare M Stewart

1987-89	G Aub-Buscher	R Towell	R Crawshaw	M Stewart EM Aldridge
1989-91	R Towell	R Hawkins	R Crawshaw G Parker	EM Aldridge
1991-93	R Towell	R Hawkins	G Parker	EM Aldridge
1993-95	C Sanders	P Sewell	G Parker	EM Aldridge
1995-	C Sanders	P Sewell	G Parker	MM Gervais-le Garff

Newsletter/Cahiers Editors:

1981-86:	<i>Newsletter</i> started by Madeleine Renouard; given its format by Gertrud Aub-Buscher; one or more numbers edited by each of the following: Eve- Marie Aldridge, Dennis Ager, Gertrud Aub-Buscher, Joan Butterworth, Robert Crawshaw, Bob French, Tom Hodge, Madeleine Renouard, Carol Sanders, Marie-Paule Woodley
1986-88	Geoff Hare
1988-90	Phil Brew
1990-93	Gerry McIntyre
1993-94	Stephen Noreiko
1995-	<i>Newsletter</i> reborn as <i>Cahiers</i> , also edited by Stephen Noreiko

Appendix 2: Conferences

1982	Lancaster	The Media and the Teaching of French
1983	Aston	<i>Les médias</i> ; Post-o-level language courses.
1984	Nottingham	La Francophonie (joint meeting with ASMCF)
1985	Oxford	French Phonetics and Phonology
1986	Roehampton	The Advanced Language Learner (joint meeting with the Scottish Universities French Language Research Association)
	Newcastle	<i>Quel français enseigner?</i>
1987	Sheffield	Syntax and Discourse: theory and applications
1988	St Andrews	Assessment; launch of <i>En fin de compte</i> (joint meeting with SUFLRA)
1989	Portsmouth	<i>Les mots</i> : lexical studies and vocabulary acquisition
1990	Liverpool	How to Do Things with Pragmatics: principles and applications in the teaching of French
1991	Edinburgh	Understanding & Encouraging Adult Second Language Acquisition
1992	York	Phonetics and Phonology: teaching and researching the spoken language
1993	Aix-en-Provence	<i>Le français, langue étrangère</i>
1994	Southampton	Second Language Acquisition: theory and practice
1995	Paris	<i>Le français aujourd'hui et demain</i>
1996	QM&W Glasgow	Postgraduate conference (1-day) <i>Les linguistiques et les pratiques: échanges et synthèses</i> (joint meeting with SAFLA)

Appendix 3: Workshops

This is not a complete list. In particular, it does not include the regional meetings held during the early years of the Association.

1983	Birkbeck	Language A-levels
	Essex	Contemporary French Linguistics
	Surrey	Grammar and Language Teaching
1984	Westfield	<i>Littérature et classe de langue</i>
1986	Oxford	<i>L'écriture à l'heure de l'informatique, ou la 3e galaxie</i>
1987	Salford	<i>La BD</i>
	Oxford	Producing teaching materials based on Satellite TV
1988	Birkbeck	AS-levels
1989	Salford	<i>Variation et structure: le français dans sa diversité géographique et sociale</i> (research seminar)
	York	<i>Le séjour en France</i>
	Stafford	Teaching with <i>Lyon à la une</i>

	Surrey	The teaching of language and area studies (for new staff)
1990	Gregynog	Role-play in language learning
	Essex	The LINGUA Programme in Higher Education
	Newcastle	First year course materials
	Oxford	The Olympus satellite and the teaching of French
	Liverpool	Using <i>En fin de compte</i>
	Glasgow	<i>Ab initio</i> and <i>faux-débutants</i> courses
1991	Surrey	Stylistics (with SFS)
	Birkbeck	Teaching grammar
	Oxford	The history of the French language
1992	Surrey	French for Business
	Portsmouth	Languages for All in HE
	Surrey	Science and Language
	Middlesex	Teaching a language to a large number of students
1993	Swansea	Assessing written French at degree level
	Birkbeck	Modularisation
1994	Sussex	Preparation for the year abroad
	Teesside	Science and French/German
	Middlesex	The AFLS grammar brochures / Introduction to research
	Middlesex	Research methods
	Southampton	Classroom research
	Southampton	Testing
1995	Birkbeck	Getting started on a research topic (with BAAL)
	Birkbeck	Classroom research (with BAAL)
	QM&W	Second language acquisition research (with BAAL)
	QM&W	Statistics in research: design and data analysis (using SPSS) (with BAAL)
	Birkbeck	Research methods in inter-language analysis (with BAAL)
	Limerick	Languages for engineering and science: LSP theory and practice
	Institute of Romance Studies	Remapping Modern Romance Languages III (with Institute of Romance Studies)
	East Anglia	Using and accessing databases