

# Heriot-Watt University Wins European Student AUV Competition



The Heriot-Watt University team was third time lucky as it triumphed over international opposition at the third edition of the Student Autonomous Underwater Competition—Europe (SAUC-E 2008), held at the IFREMER deep wave tank near Brest, France.

This year the event was hosted by La Délégation Générale pour l'Armement (DGA). The Heriot-Watt University team designed a hover capable Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV) capable of carrying out a complex in-water mission with no direct human control. The team of students worked hard to ensure that the AUV completed all the mission goals. The work paid off for the first time in the history of the competition, the AUV, named "Nessie", completed all of the tasks including touching a submerged buoy, dropping markers on a target on the tank floor, and surfacing in a marked zone above two tyres. Team Captain Nick Johnson said, "I would like to thank our sponsors for their generous contributions. I would also like to thank the organizers for making the competition possible and all the opposing teams for their camaraderie during the event. We are also grateful for the effort of the previous three years' teams from Heriot-Watt, whose work we were building upon. Finally, I want to thank all the members of the 2008 team. Nessie has been a labor of love this year and it has required a lot of dedication and extra long hours."

Heriot-Watt Principal Professor Anton Muscatelli said, "Many congratulations to our team of students on winning this prestigious award. It reflects the reputation and expertise in our Ocean Systems Laboratory and demonstrates the caliber of the University's students and graduates which makes them so attractive to employers and to industry." Each year the competing teams rely on sponsorship from industry to develop their AUVs.

Nessie was sponsored by BP and SeeByte, and this support was crucial in enabling the team to produce such a successful entry. Jonny McKane from BP said "We are really proud to have supported the Nessie team during 2007/08 and are impressed by what they have managed to achieve. BP has been supporting AUV development for a number of years as they represent a quicker, more flexible and more efficient way of maintaining our subsea assets."

"The SAUC-E competition is a great way to foster innovation and train young, bright engineers." David Lane from SeeByte said. "We'd like to extend our congratulations to the Nessie team. They have accomplished a lot over the last three years and their victory is well deserved. SeeByte is constantly looking at ways in which it might engage with and improve the underwater robotics community. It is, therefore, important for us to have supported this effort. We plan to continue our relation with the Nessie team in years to come."