



Chairman's Spring Newsletter 2024

Dear Member

April 2024

Firstly, it gives me great pleasure to welcome a number of new members to the Society, who have joined since my previous Newsletter – Pauline Hegarty, Peter Dimeloe, Pam Beale, Corinne Spickett, Chris Mitton, Andy Vincent, Colin Waters, Sally Fox and Billy Young. I hope you will enjoy your membership of the Society and I look forward to meeting you at our future lectures, visits and social events.

Regretfully, I have to inform you that Peter Pallett, our Deputy Chairman and Visits' Secretary has been in hospital for some weeks and I am sure you will all join with me in sending our best wishes to Peter for a full and speedy recovery.

Educational Support – having had a record number of students attend last November's Darwin Lecture, where the Society provided complimentary tickets to all the students via our Educational Fund, I am pleased to report that the Erasmus Darwin House Science Day in March, also attracted a record number of children, for which we also provided financial support. We are continuously reminding local schools of the availability of grants for projects in STEM subjects and your Committee is reinvestigating the possibility of providing financial support to an engineering/science student at Aston University.

Monthly Lectures

On Tuesday 9 January, Professor Corinne Spickett of Aston University gave an entertaining lecture entitled "**Oxygen: Essential but Detrimental – A Fine Balance**". Prof Spickett brought a whole new perspective to oxygen, with the unusual addition of some audience participation. Corinne introduced the concept of oxidative stress and how to control it, leads to lipid and protein oxidation and ultimately to diseases. It was fascinating to understand how extensive oxidative stress is present in so many inflammatory health conditions. The lecture also included an understanding of the positive effects on inflammation of Omega 3. Whilst the audience had previously heard of Omega 3 and that it is good for you, by the end of the evening, we all knew why.

Professor Colin Waters of the School of Geography, Geology and the Environment at Leicester University gave a thought-provoking lecture entitled "**The Scale of Human Impact During the Anthropocene**" on Wednesday 7 February. The Anthropocene is the period in which humanity has caused irreversible changes to the Earth and has proven to be a controversial concept among geologists worldwide. Prof Waters used the year of 1952, when this epoch is purported to have commenced and showed numerous graphs, where from that year, there were clear ascending trends e.g. oil production, plastic production. Note: post this lecture, the Sub-commission on Quaternary Stratigraphy (of which Prof Waters is an important member) voted against making the Anthropocene an official epoch.

"**The End of Eggborough Power Plant**" was the title of this year's interesting Paul Bettson Lecture and was delivered on Tuesday 12 March by Billy Young, Director of Birmingham based DSM Demolition Ltd. Billy took us through the meticulous planning stages of the demolition and then showed a number of amazing drone videos at the various stages of the demolition. I attach the links to a couple of the spectacular videos.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fvw94QY2dsM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KyJlitf70-l>



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This huge plant, which included a 192metre high chimney and 90metre high cooling towers, resulted in the necessity to dispose of 4000 tonnes of asbestos (at DSM's cost) and 100,000 tonnes of scrap steel, for which DSM received the income.

On Wednesday 10 April, Professor Kevin Harrington from the Institute of Cancer Research gave a fascinating lecture entitled "**Can Cancer Therapy Really Go Viral**". Professor Harrington opened his talk by showing photographs of the effects of some of the world's most common viruses (not for the faint hearted). However, these scourges of mankind for millennia, were now being harnessed to tame and remove potentially pathogenic viral agents. Whilst viruses themselves cause 25% of all cancers, it was remarkable to see photographs of patients with severe facial tumours, physically disappearing during this ground breaking treatment.

Social Events

Annual Supper – Also included with this Newsletter is the invitation to our next Summer Supper on Wednesday 12 June, which will once again be held at Whittington Golf Club's attractive new Club House. On a high summer evening, it makes the perfect venue for this social event. Please support this long-standing social event in the LSES calendar and forward your applications to Carol Hannam as soon as possible.

Visits

Marley Tiles, Burton-on-Trent, Tuesday 13 February – situated on the A38 between Lichfield and Burton, 29 members were treated to a first-class visit, including a presentation by senior management of the history and ethos of the company, which remains the largest manufacturer of roofing tiles in the UK. The shop-floor tour included a visit to the Company's well-equipped laboratory, the operation of the wind tunnel and the assembly lines and robots.

Maun Industries, Sutton-in-Ashfield, Thursday 13 April – this specialist plier manufacturer, which was founded in early 1944, provided a very interesting visit for 20 members of the Society. We were warmly welcomed by Martin Sharp, Sales Director and given an introductory presentation of the business, which has a turnover of £3m and 35 employees. Maun's niche product is their pliers, which operate with 2 pivot points, ensuring that the jaws always move in parallel. The benefits of the design provide a better grip, especially for nuts and bolts, easier straightening of wire and the necessity for less handle force for equal jaw pressure. The business also manufactures cylindrical ferrules. Customers are wide ranging and include utilities, jewellery and dentistry. Our thanks must also go to Tim Sims, who suggested the Company for a visit and who is the proud owner of a pair of Maun Pliers, purchased whilst qualifying as a dentist.

Prior to falling ill, Peter Pallett arranged an interesting Summer Programme of visits, details of which are included with this Newsletter. Please ensure that your applications for the visits are addressed to **Mike Beeson** at mikeb@lses.org.uk, whilst Peter is convalescing.

Thank you for your continued support.

Alan

Alan Hooper

Chairman