



Chairman's Christmas Newsletter 2025

Dear Member

I have great pleasure in welcoming the following new members to the Society, who have joined since my last Newsletter – Liz Barnes, Chris Barnes, Sue Williams, Joseph Carter, Tony Power, Gay Jones, Robert Lowries, Stephen Aylin, Alison Thornley, Peter Thornley, Glynnis Jeavons, Christopher Princep, Alyson Kettel, Julia Jessel, Debra McGregor, Matthew Allen, June Baskerville, Robert Sheldon, Tom Marshall, Sona Moshirfar, Alireza Hamedbarghi, Carolyn Hurley. 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.

Congratulations to Dr Fred Mitchell, who will be celebrating his 104th birthday just before Christmas. Fred joined the Society soon after its creation in 1985 and has held various positions including General Secretary 1987-92, Deputy Chairman 1992-94 and President 2001-03.

Committee – I am pleased to inform the membership that Mary Hutchinson has agreed to serve on the Committee and Mary was co-opted at a recent Committee Meeting, as permitted by our Constitution.

Educational Support

1. Our Education Officer, Jenny Arthur, has been busy securing our local high schools' nominations for the Annual Lichfield Science and Engineering Society Prizes. The following students have now received their financial award, thanks to and provided by, the Society's Educational Fund.

Friary School: the student, who secured excellent results in GCSE, is now studying sciences at A Level, with the desire ultimately to read a Biomedical degree. She achieved the best ever engineering result at GCSE at the school.

Netherstowe School: the student achieved exceptional results at A Level (Chemistry A*, Biology A, Chemistry A) and is now studying Medicine at Hull University.

Chase Terrace Academy: after achieving excellent results at Science A Levels, the nominated student is now studying a combined Masters degree in Biochemistry and Neuroscience at Keele University.

Lichfield Cathedral School: Two GCSE students were nominated by the school and shared the prize. The first student achieved A*'s and A's in all subjects and is now studying Physics, Chemistry and Maths at A Level - an excellent decision, I must add. The second student achieved similar level GCSE's and is now studying Biology, Chemistry and Maths.

Erasmus Darwin Academy: the successful student is now studying various Science subjects at A Level.

King Edward V1 School: this student is now in her first year of studying Product Design Engineering MEng at Loughborough University. This is a course offered by the Wolfson School of Mechanical, Electrical & Manufacturing Engineering.

2. **Lichfield Junior Schools** – the Society has been in contact with Five Spires and Chadsmead Junior Schools, with a view to supporting future STEM projects.

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Lichfield Science & Engineering Society

3. **Keele University Bursary** – the Society has provided initial financial support to a computer science PhD student, who had been recommended by the University.

Providing financial help to support local schools in advancing their understanding of science and engineering remains a key ethos of the Society. Should any member have a close relationship with any of our local Junior and High schools, please let Jenny Arthur, our Education Officer or myself know.

Monthly Lectures and Social Events

Since my previous Newsletter, the Society has held the following lectures and social event:

Our 2025/26 season of lectures opened with an interesting lecture entitled “**Extreme Weather and a Changing Climate – Adapting and Building Resilience to Extreme Weather**” and was delivered by Dr Elizabeth Wood of JBA Consulting. Dr Wood provided a number of astonishing facts regarding the changing weather patterns in Lichfield over the last 40 years. She explained the global predictive analysis work, in which her company specialises, to give communities with a high risk of flooding, early warning signals.

On Tuesday 7 October, our highly supportive President, Professor Janet Lord of the University of Birmingham, delivered her Presidential Lecture, which was entitled “**Geroscience: A New Approach to Treating Age-Related Disease**”. Janet’s excellent lecture focussed on the ability to prevent or delay the onset and progression of multiple ageing-related conditions, many of which, the evening’s audience could intimately empathise.

Our Annual Dinner was held on Wednesday 15 October at Aston Wood Golf Club and was particularly well supported by members and friends, with 85 attendees, compared with 65 the previous year. We were particularly pleased to have the opportunity to welcome our new Patron, the Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire, Prof Liz Barnes, to her first formal function with Society. We were also delighted that our President, Professor Janet Lord and her husband Derek were able to attend. The convivial evening was rounded off by an informative talk by Jonathan Deeming, Lichfield Cathedral’s Architect. Thank you to Carol Hannam for all her organising.

The Society’s main outreach event within our local community, the Annual Erasmus Darwin Memorial Lecture was held on Thursday 6 November and was given by Professor Dame Helen Atkinson of Cranfield University, with the title “**Advances in Air Mobility**”. Helen, one of the UK’s most eminent engineers, focussed her lecture on the potential for electric powered small aircraft for localised transportation. It was well delivered and illustrated and afterwards, drew a wide range of considered questions from the audience. Whilst the subject attracted excellent support from Lichfield’s local high schools, with over 60 students and staff present, together with a good number of our local dignitaries and Society Members, unfortunately, the support from the general public was disappointing. The Committee will be considering the possible reasons for this downturn in demand, when preparing for next year’s Darwin Lecture.

On Tuesday 2 December, Professor Mamidipudi Thirumala Krishna (TK) of the University of Birmingham presented a fascinating lecture entitled “**The Allergy Epidemic**”. As usual, the December lecture was held in the main auditorium at the Garrick, to assist the Theatre with their pantomime planning. The subject attracted an excellent audience of around 150, with good student support from Lichfield and Sutton Coldfield schools. TK showed a number of examples of the “Hygiene Hypothesis”, including West and East German allergy comparisons and Finland /Russia, where allergy incidences have risen dramatically with increasing affluence, cossetting and industrialisation.



Visits

On Wednesday 10 September, 12 members were treated to an excellent visit to **Amcor (formerly Berry Plastics)** in Leamington Spa. We were well looked after by Mark Roberts, the facility's Sustainability Director. This plastic recycling plant, which became operational in 2023, is part of the US Amcor Group, a \$20b turnover company and the world's largest plastic packaging manufacturer, producing over 4 million tonnes of packaging per annum. Mark initially provided a fascinating presentation on Amcor and then gave us an informative plant tour. The air temperature within the factory was unbelievably hot and a high priority capital expenditure project is planned to reduce the temperature.

Severn Trent at Minworth deal with waste water from most of our Membership and on 23rd October we went to see how. The weather could have been more suited to an outdoor visit but 30 hardy Members had a tour of the extensive works from the river of waste flowing in from as far away as Dudley to the dried end product. I went 30 years ago; the main difference was the new technology involved in ensuring that the resulting effluent is clean and that anything useful is recovered

Back a bit further up the road at Minworth the following Monday to view another large scale project that affects many of us. Amazon generously hosted 28 Members to breakfast lunch and tea, these events punctuated by an introduction to the Amazon business and its ethos and a tour of their huge EMA4 state-of-the-art fulfillment center that spans over 1 million square feet. For a robotics warehouse it seemed to have a very large car park but 3000 people work there too, handing 60,000 parcels a day, many of them from the thirteen million items they keep on the shelf. (If you haven't seen it, v. <https://www.umcarchitects.com/projects/amazon-ema4-peddimore/>).

Accompanying this Newsletter is the latest membership list. To comply with GDPR please do not share it with non-members and destroy previous ones.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee for all their hard work and support to me and the Society in general, which ensures its smooth and successful operation.

Wishing you and all your families a Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.

Alan

Alan Hooper

Chairman