



Lichfield Science & Engineering Society

PATRON

Ian Dudson CBE

H.M. Lord-Lieutenant of Staffordshire

PRESIDENT

Professor Rex Harris,
FREng, FIMMM, FInstP, MIEEE

CHAIRMAN

Paul Bettson

WELCOME

Welcome to my Newsletter. Although I am sad that this is my last Newsletter as Chairman I am pleased to be able to report that I am handing over the Society in a sound condition. We have 331 members, an encouraging number of whom are students, and with a healthy bank balance and Education Fund.

MONTHLY LECTURES

The January Meeting caused some disappointment when owing to misunderstanding between the Society and the Garrick management it was billed for the Main Theatre but was actually held in the Studio. This was the first serious breakdown in the lecture programme since a speaker failed to turn up about twenty years ago. Those who had seats were treated to an excellent lecture by Dr Zsuzsanna Nagy on Alzheimer's disease and the reasons why 100 years of research has produced neither an accurate diagnosis nor a cure. Because a number of Members had to be turned away Dr Nagy kindly gave a repeat, and equally enjoyable, performance at the end of March. In February Dr Sherratt explained some of the benefits and mysteries of consumer wireless technology, including the way in which mobile phones connect people on the move around the world. The March lecture by Dr Nick Lane took us back to the origins of complex life, which apparently was created by accident four billion years ago. The application of Graphene to metrology was Dr T J B M Janssen's subject in April when he showed how the NPL is trying to relate all the units of measurement to universal constants.

The very encouraging attendance figures for these lectures were as follows:-

| | Members | Visitors | Students | Total |
|----------|---------------------------------|----------|----------|-------|
| January | 162 | 0 | 0 | 162 |
| February | 134 | 3 | 1 | 137 |
| March | 155 | 14 | 6 | 175 |
| March | (Repeat of the January lecture) | | | 113 |
| April | 139 | 12 | | 151 |

SCHOOL'S LECTURE

Roma Agrawal, who delivered last year's December lecture on constructing the Shard, gave the School's lecture in January. Her topic was 'Stem subjects as a route into a career in engineering'. The total attendance of 70 sixth form students from local schools was a little disappointing, perhaps because the subject was not directly related to the curriculum. However those who did attend were inspired by her enthusiasm and success.

DISCUSSION LUNCH

The controversial topic for the fifteenth lunch was Badger Culling, led by Simon Spencer, Secretary of the Lichfield, Rugeley & Tamworth Branch of the National Farmers Union,. As usual Members enjoyed a good lunch and a lively discussion followed.



VISITS

The January trip to the construction site at New Street Station was outstanding. Network Rail originally offered to show ten of us round but eventually were persuaded to cope with three sessions of 18 people each. Our insight into the job of rebuilding one of the busiest stations in the country, in the city centre, while the train service is maintained, was fascinating. Interesting too to see Members “fully Tangoed” in bright orange suits and blue hard hats, in itself a good reason to look at the Visits page of the website. We hope to be able to go again next year to see the final stages of the construction.

Two groups of 15 visited the Castle Bromwich GKN Driveline factory in February where we saw the production of driveshafts and associated parts for almost every well-known automotive manufacturer. The Plant Director gave an introduction to GKN and a very encouraging view of both his Company's business and British manufacturing in general, before we toured their modern plant. We were impressed by the induction hardening of the shafts and subsequent automatic straightening, the dry turning with CBN tooling, the electric and friction welding machines and automated prop shaft balancing machine.

Visits continue to be popular and the Visits Secretary welcomes suggestions for places that the general public don't get to. He also welcomes, but often doesn't get, applicants who acknowledge e-mails and letters and read the attached instructions. The Members' page of the website has the dates when places have, or have not been allocated. If you have applied but haven't been informed one way or the other then please let Mike or Tim (whose assistance is much appreciated) know. Booking slips for the next two events are enclosed, apply early.

2014 ERASMUS DARWIN MEMORIAL LECTURE

The 25th Erasmus Darwin Memorial Lecture is on Thursday 20th November and will be given by Professor Colin Blakemore, Professor of Neuroscience & Philosophy, University of London, on “Evolution of the Human Brain: a tale of two Darwins”. Tickets for this will go on sale from the 28th April at the Garrick box office. This is a week prior to the general release to the public. I would urge you to purchase them early to avoid disappointment.

IN CLOSING

My thanks as always to the committee for all their hard work both during the last year and in the preceding two years. To run the Society's affairs requires a real team effort and it has been a great pleasure working with the committee. My very best wishes to Carol as she takes over the helm.

Paul Bettson
Chairman