



Chairman's Spring Newsletter 2025

Dear Member

Congratulations – to our highly supportive Patron, H.M. Lord-Lieutenant of Staffordshire, Sir Ian Dudson, whose knighthood was announced in the New Year's Honours and also congratulations to Committee Member, Mark Richards, who had the privilege of meeting the King, during the Monarch's recent visit to JCB's HQ at Rocester.

I have great pleasure in welcoming the following new members to the Society, who have joined since my last Newsletter – Tim Baron, Stephen Shaw, Sara Dyott, Quintin Watt, Michael Wooldridge, Michael Kelly, Alex Kent, John Davies, Martin McQuaide, Lesley Dolby-Glover, Linda Warwick, Susan Hambleton, Ben East. 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.

As you can see from the above heading, this year is a special one in the history of our Society. In 1985, John Kibble, a Lichfield based mechanical engineer, had the vision of bringing together from the Lichfield area, people with a common interest in science and engineering and also to provide assistance to local schools and to help with information on science and engineering careers. Taking the opportunity of the availability of a speaker and demonstration equipment from a local pneumatics firm, John organised an initial double event. In the morning, a number of schools sent parties to a meeting, where technologists were present to answer their questions. A repeat presentation in the evening was well attended by adults and at its end, it was agreed that activities of this kind could be the basis for a society. Hence the LSES was born. Regretfully, John died a number of years ago, but his legacy, I am pleased to say, lives on and our Society continues to go from strength to strength.

I would like to take this opportunity to say how delightful it has been to see Fred Mitchell at a number of our recent lectures. Fred is now 103 years old and one of our earliest members and past Officer of the Society. Thank you for your wonderful support, Fred.

Educational Support

1. **Erasmus Darwin House** - I am pleased to report that the Erasmus Darwin House Science Day held on Saturday 8 March, once again proved very successful with over fifty 8-12 year old children plus parents attending. LSES provided financial support for the purchase of some of the raw materials used in the engineering and biology workshops.
2. **Lichfield Repair Shop** – “Team Repair” Initiative – LSES have provided financial support for this interesting project, facilitated by Pam Beale, an LSES member, which shows children how to safely dismantle old electric products and understand how the various components work. Christchurch Junior School will be first school in Lichfield to participate in the scheme.
3. **Chadsmead Junior School** – the LSES has agreed, again in principle, to provide financial support for a Science Week, which the school is planning for next year.
4. **University Bursary** – the Committee continue to try to resurrect this initiative with a local university and are in the process of making an approach to Keele 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.



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Monthly Lectures

Since my previous Newsletter, the Society has held a number of lectures. The Committee has increased the Society's social media presence and in particular with the use of Facebook, which appears to be attracting younger visitors. Attendance levels have been good for all the talks.

On Wednesday 8 January, Dr Alex Kent of Canterbury Christ Church University and Mr John Davies of Sovietmaps.com spoke to us on “**Unravelling the Secret Soviet Mapping of the UK**”. This talk, provided by two enthusiastic cartographers, attracted a large audience, which included over 25 visitors. The speakers enlightened the audience to the vast extent of maps of the UK and the World, produced by the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

The February talk held on Thursday 6, was presented by Dr Matt Derry of Aston University and entitled “**Too Much Information? Using Polymer Science to Tackle the Data Storage Crunch**”. Dr Derry's specialisation is in the development of plastics and polymers for potential use in energy storage, data storage and water filtration. He took the audience on a fascinating journey through the motivation, planning and implementation of a university research project.

On Tuesday 11 March, Professor Martha Clokie gave a fascinating lecture entitled “**Antimicrobial Resistance – is Phage Therapy the Answer?**”, Professor Clokie's talk focussed on the current work she and her team are undertaking at the Becky Mayer Centre for Phage Research at Leicester University. Martha was quick to dispel the common misperception that all viruses are “bad” and she showed that Phages are “good” viruses. Martha gave a brief historical background to the discovery of phages and described the success the Centre has had with animals and the plans to develop for human applications.

The Paul Bettson Lecture for 2025 was held on Wednesday 9 April. It was delivered by Jim Richings and Martin Hooper of Balfour Beatty VINCI Joint Venture HS2 and entitled “**HS2 Area North Construction**”. Jim's presentation focussed on the construction of the Delta Junction, where the line splits to go to into and out of Birmingham and the straight through line to the north. Martin concentrated on that part of the project to the north of the Delta Junction and in particular the Lichfield portions at Streethay and Darnford Lane. The two experienced civil engineers provided an insight into the various construction techniques on the project.

Forthcoming Social Event

Annual Supper – included with this mailing is your invitation to our next Annual Supper to be held on Wednesday 18 June, when we will be celebrating our 40th year. The Supper will once again be held at Whittington Golf Club's attractive Club House and on a high summer's evening, it makes the perfect venue for this social event. We will be honouring our Patron, H.M. Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire, Sir Ian Dudson, who will complete his tenure as Lord Lieutenant in mid July this year. Sir Ian has agreed to say a few words about his time in this prestigious role. Please support this long-standing social event in the LSES calendar and forward your applications to Carol Hannam as soon as possible.

2025-2026 Lecture and Social Programme – I am pleased to confirm that your Committee has now completed the compilation of next year's lecture and social events programme, to commence in September. Details will be sent to members in the Summer Mailing.



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Visit Reports – I would like to thank Mike Beeson, our Visits Secretary for the following reports.

Thanks in part to ex-Director David Dimeloe, 23 Members visited **Thorlux Lighting**, Redditch in January. We went there several years ago when they were just starting to look at the LED lighting which is now their main business. Thorlux is a genuine British company founded in Birmingham. They specialise in lighting for such environments as schools, hospitals, streets and prison cells. This time we were warmly welcomed by Richard Caple, Marketing and Lighting Applications Director who described the history and global operations of the firm. As well as having a guided tour of the factory we had an “immersive experience” through a video showing how properly designed lighting can improve both working and leisure surroundings.

In February, 24 of us went to the **Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre** at the Black Country Innovative Manufacturing Organisation in Dudley. Various organisations take advantage of BCIMO’s facilities to develop urban tramways and necessary infrastructure. One of the companies there makes use of a disused railway tunnel to work on communication technology. As if that tunnel weren’t enough 40 Members followed up last year’s memorable trip to HS2’s Delta Project by going to the Bromford Tunnel East Portal site near Water Orton in March. We were not allowed in the tunnel but had a good description of the operation by the TBM Manager who had recently completed the Long Itchington tunnel. There was a scale model of the Bromford boring machine which is currently somewhere under Washwood Heath; the attempt to convince Members that the model was actually a full-size machine which they used for the drains was generally not accepted. As with the previous HS2 visit the scale of the operation was huge. A nice example of sustainability was that all the material excavated from the tunnel is re-used on other stretches of the line to make embankments.

Accompanying this Newsletter is an invitation from the Visits Secretary, for future visits and please reply direct to Mike.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee for all their hard work behind the scenes, which ensures the smooth and successful running of your Society.

Alan

Alan Hooper

Chairman