



# Lichfield Science & Engineering Society

PATRON

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H.M. Lord-Lieutenant of Staffordshire

PRESIDENT

Professor Carolyn Roberts  
FRGS, FIEnvSc, FCIWEM, CEnv, CWEM

## Chairman's Newsletter December 2020

Dear Member,

The distinction of being one of the first Chairmen to hold the office during a Global Pandemic does have its downside, I greatly miss meeting Members in person. But the apparently boundless wonders of modern technology have enabled us to continue the Society's activities to a limited extent and I'm grateful not only to the Committee members who have made it happen and continue to do so but also to all those Members who have Zoomed along with us. To the speakers as well, probably easier than travelling to Lichfield but they all agree it's not the same as a live talk. However we have decided to stay on-line until at least the March meeting, virtual lectures do seem to have been a success in spite of a few glitches. Thanks to Mark Richards all of them are, or will soon be on the website to watch again.

Some good and reassuring news; Bob Giles the Membership Secretary tells me that despite our concern that the lack of our usual socialising might cause a drop in membership this has not happened and we currently have 358 Members. This has kept Bob and Treasurer Peter Stubbs busy. I welcome all our new Members and assure them that it isn't always like this

Professor Andrew Beale's talk in September ranged from 17<sup>th</sup> century paintings to the Diamond Light facility, elegantly combining art, physics and chemistry. Professor Gina Rippon trod on dangerous ground in her presentation on the differences between male and female brains but emerged unscathed from the long and searching question period.

In November the very topical lecture on Dangerous Pathogens attracted an audience of 240 devices belonging to Members and invited guests which suggested a most encouraging number of people watching them. Dr Tim Brooks reviewed the history of plagues, their causes and rather nasty effects and introduced many of us to ones we'd never heard of but will now be able to worry about. Thanks Tim!

Professors Nicky Clayton and Clive Wilkins gave an unusual and fascinating talk on Cognitive Illusions, with illusions, involving not only human brains but corvids' as well. Nicky and a sledging crow later appeared on the BBC's "Winter's weirdest events" programme.

The remainder of this year's programme includes those talks which were cancelled at the end of last year. Our programme for the 2021 – 2022 season is almost complete and we hope you will find it at least as interesting as its predecessors.

Our usual programme of visits has also been fatally affected by Covid but Visits Secretary Alan Hooper has risen to the challenge and the virtual tours which he has suggested have generated a lot of interest.

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The Legacy Fund has recently been augmented by a contribution in memory of Bill Colman, a long-standing and very active Member. During Bob's Chairmanship it was suggested that we should make use of these generous bequests by sponsoring a student at Aston, a University with which we have close ties. Thanks to the assistance of Past President Professor Peter Lambert and a previous Schools' Lecture speaker Dr Alan Goddard this has come to fruition. The Society is funding the LSES Scholarship for a student in Biomedical Science and we look forward to hearing of her progress in the coming years. Jenny Arthur has, as usual, recently presented the annual awards to students at local schools.

With my best wishes for Christmas and my hopes of seeing you, one way or another, in 2021. A return to normal would be nice but does anyone remember what normal was?

Mike Beeson