



Chairman's Summer Newsletter 2023

Dear Member

My first pleasant duty is to welcome the following new members to our Society: Ross Mackinlay, Linda Benson and Mark Pritchett. I hope you enjoy your membership of this great Society and look forward to meeting you at our events. I sadly have to report the recent death of one of our members, Tom Lewis. Tom regularly supported our lectures and will be greatly missed.

The Annual General Meeting was convened on Wednesday 10 May 2023, with 70 members in attendance. The Chairman's Report had been circulated with the agenda, prior to the meeting. The Treasurer's Report was presented, which indicated a working loss of approximately £5k. The Treasurer explained that the main contributors to this loss were 1) the November 2022 Erasmus Darwin Lecture, which lost £1800, due to a below par attendance of some 150 – probably a reflection of continuing Covid concerns – and reflects the importance of maximising ticket sales and 2) the significant charge from the Garrick for the use of the Main Theatre for the December lecture (an additional £2.2k compared with the Studio charge). I am pleased to confirm that following discussions with the new Garrick Management, the charge for the use of the Main Theatre will revert to the Studio rate, with effect from December 2023.

Our highly supportive President, Professor Rik Bryant then took the chair and announced the completion of Mike Beeson's three-year Chairmanship of the Society and thanked Mike for a very successful tenure. I was elected Chairman and likewise thanked Mike for all his hard work as Chairman in particular having to grapple with the impact of Covid and then presented him with an engraved paperweight and a bottle of his favourite tipple. Peter Pallett was elected as Deputy Chairman and Visits Secretary and I would like to thank Peter for taking on these two roles. I thoroughly enjoyed my six-year period as Visits Secretary and would like to thank the members, who so enthusiastically supported the visits. The remainder of the committee was elected as follows: Irene Ordidge – General Secretary, Peter Stubbs - Treasurer, Jenny Arthur - Education Officer, Bob Giles – Membership Secretary, Carol Hannam – Social Secretary, Mark Richards – Lecture Recorder and Young Members, Claire Robinson – Assistant Membership Secretary.

Monthly Lectures and Events – the 2022-23 lecture programme had had three changes to that printed, unprecedented, I believe in the history of the Society, but all for understandable reasons on the part of the intended speakers. Mike has already reported on the February change.

On 10 May, Robin Stafford Allen offered to speak to us at very short notice. Robin, formerly of the Culham Centre for Fusion delivered a fascinating talk entitled **Fusion Power: Within our Grasp?** Robin started his talk by illustrating the still strong global demand for fossil fuels. explain the basics of how fusion energy is produced and described two production methods, Tokomak's Magnetic Confinement Fusion and Laser Inertia Confinement Fusion. He explained ITER (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor), which is currently being constructed in the South of France. It is truly a global project with collaborating nations including China, EU, Russia, Japan, USA, Korea and India. The total cost is likely to be between Euro 25-30 billion and with construction commencing in 2007, it should be operational by 2025, producing experimental fusion energy. Based on current investment models, moving to demonstration production volumes will be another huge step and is best estimated to be circa 2050/60, with bulk production reactors rolled out globally by the end of this century. 102 members, 1 student and 6 visitors attended.

On 6 June, we were once again saved from having to cancel the evening with an excellent lecture entitled **"Temporary Works: The Hidden Engineering and its Failures"** given by our newly elected



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Deputy Chairman and Visits Secretary, Peter Pallett. Peter's talk included a number of photographs of local interest, including the current HS2 construction around Lichfield, some historical A38 work which went wrong and the well-known hoardings at the traffic lights between Birmingham Road and Upper St John's Street. Peter was able to provide us with his expert knowledge on hoardings as he chaired his Institution sub group that produced the UK's first document on Hoardings. Thank you again, Peter. 71 members, 4 visitors and 2 from the Burton Engineering Society attended.

Summer Supper - On a beautiful midsummer evening on 14 June, we held this annual event for the first time since 2019 and at a new venue, the Whittington Golf Club. 74 members enjoyed an evening full of friendship and enjoyment, which included an interesting talk by Peter Walker, the former Artist in Residence at Lichfield Cathedral. I would again like to thank Carol Hannam for organising a very successful evening and those members and friends, who supported the event.

Visit to Total Sim, Catesby Tunnel Project on Wednesday 17 May – this was a follow up visit to that made in November 2019, at which time, no construction work had commenced on this real time wind tunnel. The 12 members, who attended, were given a presentation by Alex Cundy, the Project Manager, on the history of the tunnel and the status of the project. The tunnel now has a tarmaced surface and the members had the privilege of being driven down the track and back. Subaru, the Japanese car manufacturer has taken a 25% stake in the Project, which is attracting great interest from a wide range of potential clients. The following day, a cycling garments company was due to test the wind resistance of its products and Tesla were due to visit in July.

Visit to William Lennon & Co Ltd on Thursday 22 June - 22 members were given a tour of this interesting Company situated in a former mill in the picturesque village of Stoney Middleton in the Derbyshire Peak District. The party was split into two groups and each group was shown around by a 4th generation member of the Lennon family. The company employs 8 people and each week, produces around 30 pairs of traditional footwear and safety shoes, with a 20 week lead time. We were shown all the processes, including clicking (punching out the various pieces of leather), riveting, sewing and sole fixing. A £170 cheque was presented to the Company for their nominated charity Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Rutland Air Ambulance and was gratefully received.

Visit to Sheepwash Farm, Whittington on Tuesday 4 July – 32 members were well entertained by Bob Gray, the farm's owner, who provided an informative tour of this large farm from a trailer pulled by a John Deere tractor. Ten different crops are grown on the farm, the most important of which is potatoes. There are 400 acres of potatoes, all destined for the crisp market to customers such as McCoy's (KP). We were given a closeup explanation of the farm's 60metre tall wind turbine, which was installed in 2015, at a cost of just over £1m. The turbine has a life expectancy of 20 years. We were shown an area of the farm, where sand quarries had been landscaped and brought back to agricultural land. The evening was completed with a fine supper served up at the farm's fishery.

Our 2023-24 lecture programme is included with this mailing and the Committee and I hope you will enjoy. Please mention the Annual Erasmus Darwin lecture, which is open to the general public, to your friends and family, so that we have a bumper audience for this prestigious lecture.

Wishing you and your families an enjoyable summer break.

Alan

Alan Hooper

Chairman