Bulletin Issue 4
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Editorial

Any Bulletin of this type relies on the inputs from members and the Editor would be most grateful to receive any contributions – visit reports, interesting facts, book reviews etc.

As we come towards the end of another very successful season it is appropriate that we offer a grateful vote of thanks to Jo Newbould for organising such a varied and interesting programme.

Members

We welcome the following members who have joined the Society since the previous Bulletin. Sarah Allbury, Brian Caruthers, Edward Boxhall, Bernard Cooper, Elisabeth Gerver, John Harrop, Donald Howard, Trevor Jones, Simon Kettle, Geoff Ludbrook, Philip Luxton, Angela Morrison, Edward Penfold, Dennis Peters, Michael Roe, Cynthia Tilbury, John White and Ed White.

In January, our oldest member, Professor Patricia Clarke died. If anyone would like to learn more about her life and works there is a short obituary to be found on www.guardian.co.uk/science/2010/feb/15/patricia-clarke-obituary. A detailed summary of a 1994 three-hour televised interview with Professor Gareth Morgen about her life and work can be found on www.filmandsound.ac.uk. In May another member, Marcus Wood, also died and we extend our sympathies to both families.

Forthcoming Events

The Times Cheltenham Science Festival will take place on 9 – 13 June 2010. As usual, the programme covers an impressive range of topics: details can be found on cheltenhamfestivals.com.

Every year events across the country celebrate British biodiversity. In this, the International Year of Biodiversity, there has never been a better time to get

involved and learn more about the flora and fauna on your doorstep. For details of what is happening near you visit www.biodiversityislife.net'

News/Comments

After years of negotiations and discussion, in 2009 it was announced that work would start on the Bristol & Bath Science Park (S-Park). The £300 million 10-year project would be based on a 25 hectare site at Emerson Green adjacent to the M4 in the Bath/Bristol area.

It wil eventually provide 77,000 square metres of accommodation in a variety of building sizes and specifications and will be comparable to the best in the UK including Warwick and Cambridge. The partners in the project are the South West Regional Development Agency, Quantum Property Partnership and the Universities of Bath, Bristol and The South West of England.

It was expected that the first buildings would be available for occupation in 2009/10. To date there is no information about any progress and it is possible that the project may have become a victim of the recession. However in March this year, the University of Bristol announced that the National Composites Centre would be located in the park so hopefully all is not lost.

This year the Meteorological Office's Hadley Research Centre has been open for 20 years. It is now recognised as one of the top research institutions in the world on climate change. The following four extracts are from the latest Newsletter:
In February the Met Office called for a new international project to modernise global temperature records. In an article in Nature (Nature 456 pp158-159, 13 May 2010) Stott and Thorne argue that it is now essential for climate community to gather all local daily and sub-daily temperature measurements into a single global database in a transparent and comprehensive way. Details of the plan, endorsed by the World Meteorological Organisation, will be finalised at a workshop in September.

Met Office forecasts for the North Atlantic tropical storm season, running from June to November, have been accurate for the past three years. This year's forecast, to be published in June, suggests that this season will be much more active than last year.

Questions have been raised about the possible effects on climate of the recent eruption in Iceland. Volcanoes emit two major gases: CO_2 – a significant greenhouse gas and SO_2 – which can cause short-term cooling. So far the indications are that the Icelandic eruption will not have any significant impact on our climate.

A study on how climate change could effect the frequency of extreme droughts in the UK found a range of possibilities – most of which showed severe droughts will become more common. Using 11 different versions of their climate change model the range of outcomes show that a 1976 benchmark style drought could be as rare as they are today i.e. once every 50

–100 years. However in the majority of cases they will be more frequent – at the highest end about once every 10 years. Undoubtedly, how droughts could affect the UK in the future is vital for plans to adapt to climate change.

Visit Report - Rolls Royce Aero Engine Museum and Concord, Filton, 25 March 2010

Herbert Mould organised an excellent and instructive visit for eight of us (Sarah Allbury, Robin Andrew, Peter Frost, Eric Gibson, George Jennings, Roy Shepherd, Peter Stoward and Herbert) to the Aero Engine museum at the Rolls Royce factories complex at Filton near Bristol, followed after lunch by a visit to the last Concord to fly. The Museum is maintained by volunteers of the Rolls Royce Heritage Trust. Our knowledgeable guide explained the company's heritage from its beginning s 100 years ago to the present day by taking us through the development of the engines in the museum's collection. The engines included the Jupiter, Lucifer and Cherub progressing through Mercury, Hercules, Proteus, Olympus and on to the present-day Pegasus and the RB199. The tour concluded with lunch in the Company's superbly appointed restaurant.

Tailpiece

To date Tailpiece has omitted to say anything about engineers, so here are two views on this noble breed.

An optimist sees the glass as half full
A pessimist sees the glass as half empty
An engineer sees the glass as being twice the size it needs to be.

A priest, a lawyer and an engineer fell foul of a remote French colonial island and were all sentenced to be guillotined.
The priest put his head on the block, but when the rope was pulled, the blade did not fall. "Divine intervention" claimed the priest and he was released.
The blade again failed to drop when it was the lawyer's turn and he claimed that he could not be executed twice for the same crime and was also released.
As the engineer knelt to put his head on the block, he looked up and said "Wait a minute, I can see what is causing the problem".