Newsletter – Autumn 2018

Welcome to the first issue of your newsletter

Following our successful first open evening for members on 24th July I thought it would be a good idea to circulate a short newsletter that summarises the various suggestions and comments made by members at that event and keep everyone up to date with recent society activities.

It is my hope that this newsletter will become a medium that will be increasingly used by members to keep in touch with each other, to let other members know about forthcoming events that may be of general, or specific, interest and also to submit notes, letters or articles for inclusion in this space.

The 2018/19 Lecture Programme

Malcolm Savidge has prepared an interesting and eclectic lecture programme for 2018/19 for which very many thanks. The number of members and guests attending both the September and the October lectures was encouraging with no less than 89 people listening to Jill Poyton telling us all about the problems and successes of the massive Great Western electrification project. There was also good attendance for Hugh Barr's exhilarating September lecture about using light to treat disease.

We still have some space left in our usual RAU lecture theatre so do please tell your friends about future CSTS lectures and visits. We are always keen to try and attract younger attendees and, as I am sure you know, there is no charge for students.

School and College grants

We have now started a more formal process of expanding our programme of small educational grants to schools and colleges in the Gloucestershire area.

We now have a simple grant form that enables schools to apply for grants that may be used for a range of STEM related projects. So far, this year, your committee has approved and disbursed £450 to the Churn Project to assist in funding a school visit to Bristol and £480 to Powells primary school in Cirencester for electrical teaching kits. The Churn Project application was to enable families, who don't usually have the opportunity, to visit "We The Curious" at Bristol Science Museum and engage with science.

We have also recently received an application for £550 to fund the costs of new microscopes for Deer Park school, Cirencester. This application together with one from Chesterton Primary school for an astronomy project will be reviewed by the committee at our next meeting.

Members' Social Evening – 24th July 2018

Luckily the evening of 24th July was sunny and warm and we were able to enjoy our drinks and nibbles on the attractive grassy area outside the RAU's Bathurst Suite. Approximately 30 members turned up for our first informal evening which included drinks and canapes provided by the helpful RAU staff. I think the relaxed atmosphere enabled a useful exchange of ideas for the future direction of the society including many ideas for future lectures and visits that are summarized below:

1) Several members said they would like to see more applied science in lectures while others would like to see lecturers demonstrating the application of more mathematics, where relevant, to the lecture content.

2) Another idea was to look at the possibility of combining lecture content with a relevant visit. A specific suggestion was of a lecture on electric cars followed by a visit to Mitsubishi Motors.

3) The need to recruit new younger members has always been an unmet priority of the society and some people felt this could be achieved through appropriate use of Facebook and/or other social media websites. One member gave an example of the successful use of social media in generating help and money in fighting a huge housing project planned in Cirencester.

4) Another idea was to make available information within the society of members' professional experience and specific interests with possible sub-groups reflecting say, physics, chemistry, engineering and technology, as far as is permissible by GDPR.

5) In order to make the activities of the CSTS better known and recruit more younger members it was suggested that we should use some of our cash to advertise locally.

6) The idea of expanding the reach of CSTS to include areas outside Cirencester was raised again with the particular aim of attracting members from the Cheltenham and Gloucester conurbations. This has been under consideration for some 3 years but to do this requires careful thought as we do not want to damage the existing strong community links with Cirencester and the RAU.

7) Suggestions put forward for future lectures and visits include:

    a. One on developments in plant breeding using CRISPR technology with the suggestion of approaching Professor Keith Edwards from Bristol University to talk to us again

    b. Medical genomics and the potential for personalized medicine (Oxford University?)

    c. The problems of pollution associated with the increasing use of plastics

    d. Need to update the national grid

    e. A trip on the Gloucester to Sharpness canal

8) More social opportunities: possibly sometimes before, or after, a lecture as it's too easy to attend but have little or no interaction with any other members and speakers.

9) Debates: This would obviously need to be carefully staged, but we do have funds to maybe pay 2 people to debate a subject briefly and then lead Q and A's on a given topic, possibly instead of

the open lecture or as an extra event. People who suggested this said that they often debate a lecture amongst themselves on the way home but more time to do this rather than just a few questions after a lecture would be preferable.

10) Occasional lunchtime meetings/lectures/ debates as so many members are retired. This could also include more social time.

11) A suggestion that members have 2 free guest passes to encourage new members but practical problems especially for membership secretary who has little time to check

12) Publicise the value of the CSTS by taking space in local papers to discuss specific problems such as fracking.

13) We need to fill the posts of Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer within the next few months in order to keep the society vibrant and active so, if you know of anyone who might like to get involved do please get in touch with me or any committee member.

Promoting our society

Theo Stening has very kindly paid for a half page advertisement in the Tetbury Advertiser featuring forthcoming CSTS lectures. This ad will be followed by a short editorial piece in the next issue of that publication.

If anyone would like to use his editorial as a template for a short piece in their own local paper or parish magazine do please let me, or any member of the committee, know and we can send you the editorial and help spread the news about our activities to a wider audience.

Our re-vamped website

Very many thanks are due to Richard Gunner who has organized the re-design and updating of our website so that the society presents a more modern face to the world. Do please check it out and let us know of any problems as well as suggestions for further improvement.

Contacts

Do please get in touch with me or any member of the committee with any ideas or suggestions for improving your society or with contributions to this newsletter and any of our activities.

John Mulligan
CSTS Chair
November 2018