

SCIENCE IN THE NEWS

June 2019 – Monthly Newsletter



Dear Members

A summary of our meeting and some details on our future programme and plans.

Monthly Meeting 6th June 2019:

In the absence of myself, the meeting on 6th June was managed by **Jon Roots**, for which I thank him for his support. Jon started with the usual round up of admin items including welcoming two new participants:-

- **Jane Newbold**, with a background in bio-science and environmental projects and
- **David Barratt**, a car design engineer with substantial experience with Lotus cars.

We look forward to them continuing within the group.

The meeting then got into its main topic, farming and mechanisation. Paraphrasing Jon's own words

*"... today's meeting was a **talk by John Bailey on 'Arable Machinery and Cultivations'** which would partly serve as an introduction for those of us going on the farm visit. John's presentation of a subject that could easily be overwhelming benefited from his light touch and wry humour.*


He briefly explained his background in agriculture from his degree to his involvement in various government organisations such as ADAS, supplying reports, advice and information to the farming world and later to his specialisation in irrigation, farm waste and mechanisation.

There followed an overview of farming in general referring to farm ownership, size and character. The development of the machinery, especially tractors, and the solutions found to reduce the compaction of soil in the combination of two or three tasks in one machine. The increase in yields that he had observed in his time in the industry and the correlation of the rise in effective machinery and the fall of employment levels on the farm.

The meeting continued with an open discussion on the visits in May to the John Innes Research Centre, particularly aspects of the GM work being carried out there, including the following topics:-

- testing of GM crops in overseas sites
- problems of bio security
- the current ability to map a genome rapidly and accurately
- the collection of rare books at the Centre's library and its importance

Overall a very successful and interesting meeting, well received by the audience. Thank you for all your contributions.



Activities during June:

This month farming continues as our principal topic. We have set up a visit to the **Frostenden Hall farm**, a local working farm, with the visit hosted by David Watson. The visit is scheduled for **6.30pm on Wednesday 19th June** and tea/coffee and some pastries will be provided. David is keen to have the opportunity to speak to us, and will be able to cover many subjects associated with the countryside including climate change. He has said that refreshments will be available. Directions on how to reach the farm are available on the web site under the **LINK** section.

Please email or phone Richard W if you would like to join this visit, and let him know if you can help in any car sharing, either as a driver or if you require transport.

Looking ahead:

July 4th is being kept open for a full two-hour session of SITN items. Please do your best to bring along your items of news and let us all learn something and perhaps assist all in understanding something new.

Now our tradition, **August** will be treated as a vacation month. Enjoy your holidays, take the family to the beach or perhaps a day treat to the Science Museum in Kensington. Back on **September 5th** and we will catch up on all the science news before embarking on our Autumn/Winter schedule in **October**. In **November** we hope to host a visitor from the Sizewell 'C' project. We are also in the process of agreeing a presentation on aspects of dendrology or in layman's language, the scientific study of trees. Watch the web site for details as they develop.

Just to remind you, our Meetings take place **2pm to 4pm** on the **first Thursday of the Month**, in the **St Michael's Undercroft**, unless otherwise advised.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible. And to remind you that all our newsletters are available on our U3A Group web page. Just access Beccles U3A and follow the link to Science in the News/ LINKS/Past Newsletters and then select the month you would like to access.

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