

# SCIENCE IN THE NEWS

May 2019 – Monthly Newsletter



Dear Members

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

## Monthly Meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019.

The meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> May was kicked off by Richard W with a round up of the planned programme for the next few months. Arrangements were agreed for the first of our two group visits to the John Innes Centre in Norwich. Both visits are now fully subscribed and so any latecomers will have to wait until a future re-visit, if it is organized.

This was followed by a general open invitation to discuss any topics of interest. This part of the session was mentored by Jon Roots and attracted a range of subjects which really reflects on the enormously wide range of our in-house interests and also the breadth of scientific know-how we have within our ranks.


Subjects covered included:-

- a discussion on the representation of statistics related to climate change which are being publicised and can give a totally distorted picture of reality. Oh “Lies, damned lies and statistics” oft attributed to Mark Twain – so true.
- this discussion widened to include the poor progress in the development of alternative carbon-free power sources and indeed the poor deployment in the UK of recharging facilities, not just for electrical power but also hydrogen. It was pointed out that current UK infrastructure would be unable to meet the potential demand for car recharging – the supply lines are simply insufficient to carry the power required.
- we moved on to a short item on space detritus and proposals to initiate cleaning such potentially damaging items. And then an item on farm mechanisation in the development of a system for detection of weeds by a camera mounted on a field-weeding vehicle. This was followed by a description of the trial development of a vanadium-based power storage system.
- the final topic raised was an interesting talk on tree fungus and its near relations in mycology. Rod Parker (a welcome return by our founder) showed us examples of some actual fungi including a sizeable section of so-called Hoof fungus.

Overall a very successful and interesting meeting, well received by the large audience. Thank you to all contributors.

## Looking ahead,

Later in May we have the first of our outside visits scheduled. The **John Innes Research Centre** outside Norwich is an independent, international centre of excellence in plant science, genetics and microbiology. They provide guided tours of the facility and with a limit



of 15 persons per tour we have agreed two separate two-hour tours for **7<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> May**. As mentioned earlier, both are now fully subscribed.

**June** this year is a month focussed somewhat on local farming. We have organised a farm visit on the **19<sup>th</sup> to Frostenden Hall** in Suffolk. This farm has apparently reduced its workforce from something in excess of 40 people to single figures by extensive use of mechanisation. **John Bailey** has agreed to give an introductory talk about this at our usual U3A SITN on **4<sup>th</sup> June** and the farmer, John Watson, will be “driving” the visit on the day. He is keen to make this a really lively session and invites any questions and will do his best to answer them. 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.

**July 4<sup>th</sup>** 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 5<sup>th</sup>** 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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