

SUPER COTSWOLD LINK MEETING

There was an excellent turnout on 4th June at the Pavilion at Cheltenham to hear three excellent speakers on the Brave New World of AI (or Artificial Intelligence). Our first speaker was John Handby who talked about both the benefits and the dangers of AI. He said that in many of our homes we have pets, who may think that they are in charge, but they are not. In the future AI may move into our homes, but we must not let it take charge!

John said that, on the AI world stage, the UK comes third, after China and the USA. The EU and Germany are lagging behind us. The automation of many routine "office" jobs by AI will put a lot of people out of work. He felt that in the long term the challenges posed by AI may be greater than those of global warming. He said that, if our grandchildren want jobs that will last, then they would be wise to become plumbers or electricians!

Professor Mike Corcoran spoke on, "Does your Computer Sleep well at Night?" He suggested that, if we wanted to sleep well, we should turn off our computers at night! Mike reported that the UK is doing a lot to prepare for, and to counter cyber-attacks, so much so that the hackers are now putting more effort into attacking Health Companies in the USA.

One of the problems Mike spoke about is that the interests of the private sector are no longer aligned with the interests of society. Some criminal and drug gangs utilize AI to pursue their illegal activities, and to track them down, the authorities need to be ahead of their game. In Ukraine cheaply available drones are being used to deliver grenades to pinpointed targets.

Barry Kirby rounded off the day with an illustrated lecture on Ergonomics, which he defined as the interactions between humans and technology. He has worked in a great variety of fields. He talked about how AI can be used to turn on the heating and the lighting in your home, while you are still driving home along a motor way.

Barry has been involved in accident investigations. For instance, when bottles of very different pharmaceuticals were sold in identical bottles, and the one was mistaken for the other. In many accidents the pilot or driver or operator is often thought to be responsible, when the real cause is that the buttons they had to press were very badly labelled, or that the information on the indicating panels was very misleading.

It was a very informative day in which we all learnt a lot. It was good to be able to listen to such talented speakers. There was a good sandwich lunch. A good day was had by all! There was a very good crowd there, but it was a pity that there were relatively few of us from Ledbury.

Hugh Wakeling