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Future Talks

Meetings are held in Hillingdon Baptist Church on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month at 10:00. The link for hybrid meetings will be sent out to everybody before the meeting.

Date	Title	Speaker
3/5/2023	Caroline Herschel	Carol Mitchell
17/5/2023	Medicine in the Ancient World	Judith Sinclair

If anybody wants to join the *Geology* meetings they are on the 4th Tuesday of the month at 10:00. If you are not on the mailing list let Judy Peddie know so that she can send a link

Next one is on Tuesday 23rd May

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The Mona Lisa and a Canal

contributed by John Howard

At the last U3A S&T session, I made an updated presentation of the FALKIRK WHEEL canal lift. A 'Millennium Project to reopen the 1779 Union Navigation from Glasgow to Grangemouth and rejoin it to the Edinburgh canal at Falkirk where a previous eleven 'flight' lock system was unrepairable after forty years of disuse. (Both canals were rendered obsolete/ unusable by the M8 and A80 road schemes; until the 2001 reopening for leisure and water management.) We should all have a passing interest in canals for their strategic and social importance. Dating from the greatest ever canal project, the fifth century BCE 'Yangtze canals and navigation'. Ostensibly completed in the sixteenth century, to controlled the Yellow River flooding and make it navigable for over a thousand mile south, from Beijing to the South China sea. The critical importance of the Suez Canal to British India and French Indo-China, is still crucial in a post colonial world; as graphically demonstrated when a 'Pana-Max' sized contained ship got blown sideways across the canal for a few weeks! The staggering modern engineering feat by the US Corps-of-Engineers, which is the constructed of the Panama Canal, (by first annexing a country and then defeating Malaria); linked both sides of the Americas and the far-East to the European west, much quicker than Marco Polo! (Anyone for the Trans-Siberian Railway ?).

When in Paris, every tourist goes to the Louvre Palace museum and queues to see Leonardo's Mona Lisa; but why is she there ? Because an ageing Leonardo da Vinci was invited by the young and enlightened Francis I of France, to reside in southern France and Leonardo always carried the rolled painting in his baggage. Da Vinci was not primarily there to paint but carry out what he was much better known for, as a Civil and Military engineer; (fortifications / docks / canals etc).

Francis I objective was the construction of what is now known as the Canal-du-Midi, to link the Atlantic coast at Bordeaux to the Mediterranean sea; thus circumventing the 'enemy' Iberian Peninsular entirely. Leonardo died in Francis' service four years later and it was the spend-thrift and long lived Louis XIV (Sun King) who finished the job about a hundred years later. But the Mona Lisa belonged to the king, hence his fortress palace of the Louvre became its home; in the royal apartments. There has been years of speculation about the painting's origin and whether it was a work -in-progress, until someone asked Sigmund Freud for an opinion. Freud said "it is Leonardo's portrait of his MOTHER hence it went everywhere with him". (end of story).



Websites for You to Check

[Sunshine vs. the grid: Why the Czech Republic had to shutdown their solar plants over Easter \(msn.com\)](#)

['Disturbing' find made on one of the world's most remote islands off coast of Brazil \(msn.com\)](#)

[Pictures from above: What a bird's eye view of Africa reveals - BBC News](#)

[Heat pump blow as Government blamed for 'disappointing' £450million boiler scheme failure \(msn.com\)](#)

[A strange new secret about the Earth's inner core may have been discovered \(msn.com\)](#)

[The secret ingredient in Roman concrete that means buildings can last for millennia \(msn.com\)](#)

[Wind turbines are getting old. What happens to the ageing fleet? | Watch \(msn.com\)](#)

Hunga-Tonga Hunga-Ha'apai eruption

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-63953531>

[Britain signs up old coal units as back-up in case of winter power crunch \(msn.com\)](#)

[Amazing moment neutron stars collide seen in world first video \(msn.com\)](#)

[Oxford nuclear fusion spin-out raising £400m after energy breakthrough \(msn.com\)](#)

[This bubble barrier stops Amsterdam's canal plastic from reaching the North Sea | World Economic Forum \(weforum.org\)](#) Also used in Holland's rivers.

[Jupiter, too! New James Webb photos show giant planet's rings, moons and more \(msn.com\)](#)

['Sand batteries' could be key breakthrough in storing solar and wind energy year-round \(msn.com\)](#)

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Lectures

Harrow and Hillingdon Geological Society

Meetings are currently on Zoom. If you would like to join, and are not an HHGS member, please let Hilary Place know so that you can be sent the link. Non members can have three free meetings. After that we would want you to become a member.

Second Wednesday of the month. Login at 19:45

Date	Title	Speaker
10/5/23	AGM	
14/6/23	The Geology of the Fforest Fawr Geopark	

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Struggling to understand the hype around Jeff Bezos and Richard Branson going to space when a guy from Wigan (and his dog) reached the moon in a homemade rocket in 1989? Why is the media silent on this?



Sent by Sheppy