



To offer friendship through social and educational activities

EUC Exeter Branch Newsletter

Number 45

<http://eucexeterbranch.org.uk>

December 2020

January to March 2021

Message from our Chair, Frances Canning

I take this opportunity to wish all members of our Club the happiest Christmas that you can have in the circumstances. The officers and committee are very sorry that we have not been able to organise any activities for many months, and it looks as though it will be well into next year before we can. However, we hope that soon we shall enjoy the benefit of the vaccine and return to some sort of normality. Christmas blessings.

Club news from the Secretary

Pamela Lee reports that she and Clive had a Zoom champagne celebration with a group of surgeons, to celebrate 50 years of the Exeter Hip. Clive also made an appearance on BBC South West, in celebration of this special event.

We were pleasantly surprised the other day to get a phone call from Ian Thomson in Germany. All goes well, and his health is improving. He and Elisabeth have done well to have landed up in a home with such excellent facilities.

Why not join the special online event for alumni at 12.45 on 8 January 2021, when our new Vice-Chancellor Lisa Roberts will give us the latest news from the University and tell us their plans for the future?

We are delighted to have received a short article from Richard Westlake about the planned reopening of the Okehampton railway line. Some of you may well have seen Richard recently on Rob Bell's TV programme *Walking Britain's Lost Railways*.

To enliven this issue of our Newsletter, Susie and Louise have kindly devised a Christmas Quiz (see pages 3-6). Do please take part. It is open to all alumni and ex-staff of the University of Exeter, and the deadline for responses is 30 January 2021. There is a prize to be won.

The Statistics of Covid-19

Peter Wingfield-Digby

As I start to write this, I have just heard that a 90-year-old woman, Maggie Keenan, has become the first person in the world to receive an officially approved and fully tested Covid-19 vaccine.

It is a sobering thought that it has taken a pandemic to show us the importance of statistics. Hardly a day goes by when we do not hear some new statistic reported by the Office for National Statistics. This is how my newspaper put it recently:

Now, we are a nation of armchair statisticians, obsessing over seven-day rolling averages and data transparency, and challenging bad statistics whenever they appear....Now, figures about testing, deaths, cases and hospital beds are essential.

Guardian Weekly, 13 November 2020)

Naturally, as a statistics 'geek', I have been monitoring the pandemic on a daily basis. I began doing this back in March, by keeping a daily count of the number of cases and number of deaths, in the UK and worldwide, and more recently I have been doing the same for Devon and Exeter. We all know some of the broad trends, but what do the detailed figures show?

By the beginning of December some 64 million cases of Coronavirus had been reported worldwide, and there had been about 1½ million deaths. For the UK, the corresponding figures were 1.6 million cases and 59,000 deaths. This means that the death rate from Covid-19 is about 200 per million persons worldwide. The corresponding figure for the UK is much higher, at about 900 per million persons.

During the first wave back in April, there were about 800 deaths per day in the UK, whereas recently, during this second wave, daily deaths have been averaging 400 to 500. One major change has been the increased effectiveness of the Track and Trace system. Back in April only 4,000 or 5,000 cases of coronavirus were identified each day, whereas recently the daily count has been closer to 20,000. As a result, the proportion of cases leading to death has reduced from about 1 in 6 back in April to about 1 in 40 now.

Because of the way local government works, my counts for Devon exclude Plymouth and Torbay. The Devon figures remained relatively low throughout the summer, but then shot up in October after the return of university students to Exeter. Recently the Devon count of cases has been running at about 900 per week, of which Exeter accounts for about 200. Thankfully, there have been relatively few deaths in Devon recently, and hardly any in Exeter.

As a statistician, it has been comforting for me to see Professor Sir Ian Diamond on the TV from time to time. He is now in charge of the Office for National Statistics. Incidentally, I was fortunate to be the first student that he supervised, when I was preparing a short thesis while studying for a master's degree at the University of Southampton in 1980.

How well do you know your University ?

EUC Christmas Quiz

*A chance to win a £25 book token (or Amazon voucher)
This quiz is open to all alumni and ex-staff of the university.*

1. What was the name of the very first Hall of Residence in Exeter?.....
2. By what name was Exeter Hall more commonly known?.....
3. What name does the former Hartwell House now have?.....
4. In which Hall did the 'Jentlemen' live?.....
5. Name the hall that had a library and music room
but where the dining room was a large hut.....
6. After whom is Reed Hall named?
- 7-9. Three Halls built in the 1960s were named after Devon hills. Which were these?
.....
10. Name the architect of the Mary Harris Memorial Chapel.....
11. Who was Mary Harris?
12. What is the connection between Exeter and sewing machines?
.....
13. What do the initials UCSWE stand for?
.....
14. What do the initials LSI stand for?
15. What large new residential development opened on campus in 2020?
.....
16. In what year did the University gain its Charter?
17. Before that time, which University conferred degrees on Exeter students?
.....

18. What is the name of the University's Bar?.....

19. Who laid out the gardens and planted the arboretum around Reed Hall?
.....

20. Where did the name 'Streatham' come from?
.....

21. In what year was the Prince of Wales Road opened?

22-23. What replaced the Exeter Theatre Royal, and when?
.....

24. Who is the current Vice-Chancellor?.....

25. When did St Luke's join the University?.....

26. When did the Camborne School of Mines join the University?.....

27-28. What Group has the University joined, and when?.....

29. What building is this?
You will find the AccEPT clinic here.

.....
.....



30. Who is this person?
.....

31. Why are her hands included ?
.....
.....

32. What TV programme did she present?
.....



33. When was this building officially opened?

.....

34. Who opened it?

.....



35. This art work is called Reflected Vision.
What place on the campus is it associated with?

.....

.....



36. Identify this building.

.....



37. What event does this sculpture commemorate?

.....



38. Who is the sculptor of this artwork?

.....



39. Who is this person?

.....

40. Why was he awarded an honorary
doctorate?

.....

.....



Please fill in the information below, and send your completed (or partially completed) quiz sheets by 30 January 2021 to Susie Hewitt, either by email to susiehewitt@gmx.com or by post to her at 67 East Wonford Hill, Exeter EX1 3DB.

Name.....

Email or tel. no.....

Which years at the University of Exeter?.....

What subject / activity ?

Reopening the Okehampton to Exeter rail passenger service

Richard Westlake

On 25 November the Chancellor of the Exchequer presented his spending review to the House of Commons, and at the same time the Treasury unveiled a National Infrastructure Strategy. Included in the Strategy was the surprise announcement that priority would be given to restoring some rail services that had been lost in the Beeching cuts of the 1960s. Two particular services were mentioned for restoration: one of these involved 'restoring rail links to Okehampton in Devon'.

I felt like jumping for joy but refrained my enthusiasm, knowing that in the middle of a pandemic the Government can easily change its mind. Forty-nine years earlier my father and I stood on the platform at Okehampton watching the last train slowly departing. The platform was packed with excited men, women and children, there to witness its departure.

The line had once been part of the Southern Region of British Rail, running from Exeter Central to Plymouth via Okehampton and Tavistock. Passengers changed at Okehampton for services to Bude, Launceston and Padstow. The famous through-service from London Waterloo to Padstow was known as the Atlantic Coast Express.

My father was determined to keep freight traffic on the line, and he made sure that any proposal to remove the track from Crediton to Meldon Quarry was frustrated, much to the annoyance of management in London. Meldon Quarry also supplied ballast to a large part of the Southern region around the London commuter belt, and it was not until 2011 that the quarry became mothballed and all workers were made redundant.



Filming the Channel 5 programme 'Walking Britain's Lost Railways'. Richard with Rob Bell.

Over the years groups have been formed to promote the reopening of the line to Exeter. In 1997 Devon County Council purchased the station buildings and old goods shed which is now a successful youth hostel. The line is still owned by Aggregate Industries and until mid-2020 was leased to the British American Railway Services who have now gone into administration. We understand Network Rail will take over the running of the line.

Devon County Council supported a Sunday Rover service to Okehampton promoting the excellent access to Dartmoor and the cycle route from Okehampton to Tavistock over the Meldon Viaduct, listed as a scheduled monument by Historic England.

The Dartmoor Railway Supporters Association plays a vital role helping to maintain the track and building, running a shop and buffet (now closed), as well as the heritage centre on the old down platform featuring the Arthur Westlake Museum which I had the pleasure to open. The local OkeRAIL Forum has worked tirelessly to lobby for the re-opening of the line, and it has organised rail charters to London, Stratford and Weymouth to promote the line and the potential for economic growth within West Devon and North Cornwall.

Momentum for opening really took off the day after the great storm of 2015 which washed away the sea wall at Dawlish and closed rail access to Plymouth/Torbay and Cornwall for two months. MPs and Local Government politicians all started to press Network Rail to look at reopening the rail route via Okehampton. "We cannot have the peninsular cut off again" was the cry from business groups and leading politicians. So coming to the end of a year that we all wish to forget, the possibility of a rail service back to Okehampton in 2021 is something to welcome.

Local Exeter news

Exeter's Recovery Plan

Over the past 12 months public sector organisations and local businesses have been working together to develop plans to support Exeter's recovery from Covid-19. The plan ('*Building Exeter Back Better*') was recently approved by the Executive of Exeter City Council.

The plan has also been endorsed by the Liveable Exeter Place Board, confirming key partner support and collaboration to drive forward a successful recovery for the city. What, you may ask, is the Liveable Exeter Place Board? It is a new board, recently set up, of about 25 people - 'the great and the good' - to strengthen collaboration between Exeter City Council, Devon County Council, and their partners, to address issues relating to placemaking and housing. It meets three times a year. The Chair of the Board is none other than our own Professor Sir Steve Smith, now newly retired.

For some of us placemaking is a new concept. It aims to strengthen the connection between people and the places they share. Placemaking capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people's health, happiness and well-being.

The recovery plan identifies three key interventions to support Covid-19 recovery and also deliver the city's 2040 vision for a carbon-neutral, sustainable, healthy and active city:

- Investment in Exeter City Centre
- A bespoke digital skills and training package, and
- Investment to support Wellbeing Exeter

Christmas greetings

