



To offer friendship through social and educational activities

EUC Exeter Branch Newsletter

Number 25

December 2015

January – March 2016

We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year



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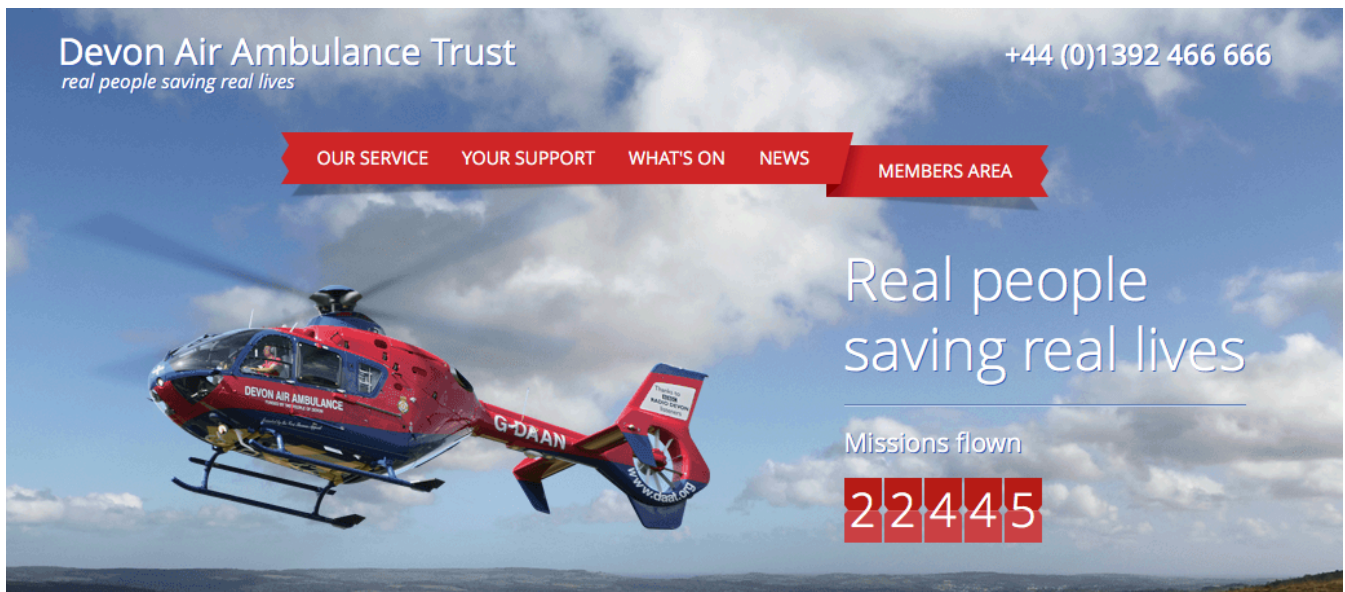
Future Events

January Tuesday 19th 2016

Talk – Devon Air Ambulance by Mike Saffin

The Devon Air Ambulance Trust was formed by Ann Thomas, in memory of her son, 18-year-old Ceri Thomas, who was fatally injured in a road traffic collision in 1986. At hospital, his mother learned that the quicker a patient receives hospital treatment, the greater that patient's chances of

survival. Subsequently, she started a campaign to launch an air ambulance service for Devon. The service went into operation on 27 August 1992, covering the entirety of the county of Devon, including the rural and inaccessible moors of Exmoor and Dartmoor. The trust currently operates two helicopters and can reach 50% of locations in Devon within 5 minutes of taking to the air, with remaining locations accessible within 20 minutes. Source: Wikipedia



Web address: <http://www.daat.org>

To book your place, please contact Susie Hewitt by Monday 11th January on either Tel: 01392 273895 or e mail– susiehewitt@gmx.com

Tuesday 9th February 2016

Winter Birdwatching Cruise on the River Exe

Gwyneth has booked 16 places on a Stuart Line Bird Watching Cruise on **TUESDAY 9TH FEBRUARY 2016**, leaving from Exmouth Quay at 1.30 p.m. **However, please be on the Quay ready to embark at 1 p.m.** If you have never done one of these special winter cruises before, they can be highly recommended. An R.S.P.B. ornithologist gives a commentary on all the overwintering birds to be seen on the estuary. The cruise lasts between 2 and 3 hours – only fog causes cancellation –and the group rate is **£11.50 p.p.** There is heated indoor accommodation on the boat with hot drinks and snacks available, but if you intend to do your birdwatching on deck, please wrap up warmly and bring binoculars if you have them. There are good train and bus services to Exmouth. If you are driving, Stuart Lines and the seafront are signposted. There is a small car park near the docks, and plenty of parking at the western end of the seafront, a short walk away from Stuart Lines.

Contact: e-mail:

gbvgarner36@btinternet.com a.s.a.p. for more information and eucexeterbranch@gmail.com for the address to send your cheque.



Tuesday 23rd February 2016

Lunch at the Lamb Inn, Sandford



Venue for our Lunch:

This is an award-winning 16th century coaching inn in the centre of a small Devon village, with a charming atmosphere and reputation for good food.

Parking: As visitor parking in the Square is extremely limited, it is suggested you drop off guests in front of The Lamb and then proceed to the Parish Hall car park. Facing The Lamb, turn right up Church Lane, left at the junction, then immediately right into Fanny's Lane. The Parish Hall is 100m on right.

Paul and Simone Romain have recommended this for our February lunch outing, and Mike Aspray will take your bookings.

Meet at 12noon for lunch at 12:30 - <http://www.lambinnsandford.co.uk>

Contact:

Mike Aspray on 01884 242606 or MikeAspray@btinternet.com by 14th February 2016 *at the latest* for the pre-ordering menu.

Tuesday 8th March 2016:

Talk by Sir Eric Dancer, former Lord Lieutenant of Devon

On **Tuesday March 8th 2016** we are privileged to have **Sir Eric Dancer K.C.V.O., C.B.E., J.P., F.R.S.A.**, as our speaker.

Sir Eric retired in May 2015 after 17 years as **Lord Lieutenant of Devon**. As he is an Honorary Graduate of Exeter University we felt it appropriate to invite him to speak to us on the Exeter campus, rather than in a room at the back of a pub!

We have booked a room at **Reed Hall** (on the first floor) for his talk, starting at 2 p.m. We have invited him

and his wife to have lunch with us at Reed Hall beforehand, at 12.30 p.m. and we do hope as many members as possible will join us for lunch in the restaurant. Reed Hall is not charging us for the room, on the basis that a good number of us will be patronising their restaurant.

We have asked Sir Eric to tell us of his ambitions when he first stepped into the role of Lord Lieutenant, to what extent he feels he achieved them, and also about any surprises along the way. In lieu of a fee Sir Eric has asked E.U.C. to make a donation to one of the many charities of which he is patron, The Devon Community Foundation. The normal charge of £2 will apply, but please supplement this so that we can present him with a worthwhile sum.

Please let Gwyneth know if you are coming to this event, and whether you will be having lunch beforehand, by **23rd February**. Tel: 01392 881330 e-mail: gbvgarner36@btinternet.com

Advance notice: The 2016 EUC Annual Outing and Weekend

This will take place on **11 and 12 June**. The Annual Outing will be on Saturday 11 June and will be at LACOCK (near Bath).

Not only is the Lacock Abbey, a National Trust property, rich in its 800year history, and splendid architecture, it was also the residence of William Henry Fox Talbot, who created the first photographic negative. On the ground floor, there is a museum illustrating the birthplace of photography and upstairs there is an exhibition relevant to photography. The wooded grounds of the Abbey include a botanic garden, a greenhouse, orchard and rose garden. Also Lacock village is stunning with its timber framed and stone cottages and is worth seeing.

As in previous years we start with a picnic at lunch-time and in the evening there will be an evening meal at a nearby hotel.

News of one of our long-term members.

Genie is moving to Surrey

Genie Ridgeon who has been a member of Exeter Branch since the 1980s is now moving to Surrey to be closer to her son and his family. Now in her 90s, Genie's loss of sight means she has found it increasingly difficult to get out and about independently. We will miss her in Exeter Branch but send all good wishes for the move.

By the time you read this, I hope to have a forwarding address for Genie.

Louise Clunies-Ross

Reports

Talk: A journey of discovery in China by Peter Wingfield-Digby

A conference in Hong Kong was to be the excuse, if one was needed, for Peter Wingfield-Digby's fascinating journey of exploration into what was for him the unknown. He decided to prolong his time in China to include a visit to Songpan in Sichuan, West China, where his great-aunt Lily Digby had been a missionary at the end of the 19th century and early 20th century. Lily had worked in China with the Church Missionary Society, so to get information, Peter spent time in Birmingham looking at their archives, and reading the reports his great-aunt had regularly sent back to the head office in London. Whilst these reports were rather formal in nature, they gave clear information about her work and places visited. Peter then planned his itinerary and booked hotel accommodation.

For his trip to Songpan, Peter decided to travel light. He packed a small rucksack with bare essentials including a torch, soap powder and a washing line to wash clothing and dry it indoors en route. Unsure of banking facilities in Sichuan, he took with him the money he estimated he would need on his travels there by train, bus, on hired bicycles and on foot.

As we followed Peter's travels we were introduced to a fascinating variety of people and places. The first part of his journey included Chongqing, an impressively modern city with its numerous skyscrapers beside the Yangzi River; and Hangzhou, where he had an I-pad supper, and explored West Lake on a hired bicycle; and Shanghai with its famous towers where Peter witnessed early morning street drumming and dancing, and attended a tea ceremony involving flowering tea, where a bundle of dried leaves wrapped around dried flowers opens up when steeped. Many strangers stopped Peter in the street, sometimes to practise their English or to have their photo taken with him.



Peter's Great Aunt



Sichuan Province Scenery



On the second part of his holiday, he visited Xi'an, home to the famous Terracotta army and famous pagodas, towers, and temples; and Sichuan province, an area with beautiful mountainous scenery of rivers and lakes, where Peter's aunt worked, travelling over mountains, sometimes in a sedan chair. He travelled by bus with fellow Tibetan travellers to Danba, with its 1,000 year-old Tibetan Suomo towers. And finally he got back to his starting point, Chengdu, where he had been befriended by Jack and Lotus, and tasted hot-pot dishes flavoured by the spicy Sichuan peppercorn. These are just some of the highlights of Peter's travels.

To sum up, Peter gave us a truly interesting talk about a fascinating journey of discovery.

Text: Dorothy Wagland; photos: Peter Wingfield-Digby

Lunch at The Thatched House, 19th October 2015

A group of fifteen Exeter EUC members gathered at the Thatched House in Exwick, not far from the banks to the south of the Exe. The building is a former farmhouse that has been a pub since the late 1930s. It has been recently renovated, but has not lost its charm and its long-term landlord and landlady were there to greet us.

Although bound to a brewery, they are free to sell a selection of real ales, which change quite frequently. The menu is quite comprehensive, too, so there is something for everyone. There is an A la Carte menu and so-called light bites to choose from. All choices are both substantial and very reasonably priced. The landlady looked after us very well and drinks and orders were quickly taken. We all got deeply engaged in

animated conversation until our freshly cooked and tasty meals (The landlord is the chef) arrived. Silence suddenly reigned as we tucked in. Many of our number were pleasantly surprised by the welcome, the food and the service and thought of returning again at a later date.

Ian Thomson



The Bar at “The Thatched House”, Exwick

11th November 2016 – Lunch followed by: “Conan Doyle in Devon” - a talk given by Sarah Obermuller-Bennett.

We all met as usual at the City Gate Hotel in Exeter on 11 November for an excellent talk by an enthusiastic and very knowledgeable speaker.

She emphasized that it would not be on Sherlock Holmes - although many people still believe that this fictional character actually existed. Even to a point, where a survey gave a higher proportion of people believed he had, whereas more thought that Sir Winston Churchill was fictional.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was a British writer and physician, born in Edinburgh in May 1859, where he studied medicine from 1876 to 1881. Due to his father's decline as an alcoholic his childhood was spent in quite poor circumstances. He was sent to a Jesuit preparatory school in Stonyhurst with the support of wealthy uncles. He later rejected the Catholic faith, eventually becoming a spiritualist mystic. During his medical studies he started writing short stories, some of which were unsuccessfully submitted to a magazine. He was first employed as a doctor on a Greenland whaler in 1880 before his graduation in 1881.

In 1882 he joined a former classmate in Plymouth as a partner in a medical practice, but this proved difficult, and he moved to Portsmouth where his practice was initially not very successful. The patients were few and far between, so he started writing fiction again.

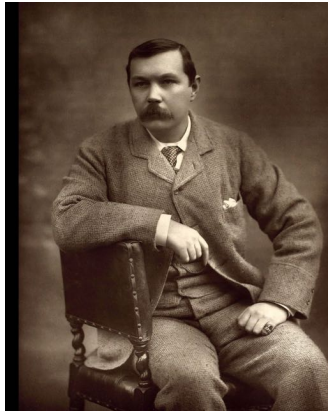
After further studies in Vienna he eventually moved to London to practice as an ophthalmologist. This too was not so profitable as it was very near to Harley Street, the result being that he continued writing. His detective's character was based on the deductive methods his former Edinburgh professor used to assess patients. During his medical studies he started writing short stories, some of which were unsuccessfully submitted to a magazine. He was first employed as a doctor on a Greenland whaler in 1880 before his graduation in 1881.

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Conan Doyle

Conan Doyle often visited Devon and it was there he set the scene for his famous “Hound of the Baskervilles” that featured Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson. Baskerville was chosen on a visit to friends in Devon, when he was fascinated by the name of the coachman that drove him. Holmes and Watson had first featured in a “Study in Scarlet” for which he had sold the copyrights for a meagre sum. He did not repeat this mistake again and began writing short stories for the Strand magazine. These were extremely popular and when he killed off his detective at the Reichenbach Falls, the outcry was tremendous. In fact he was forced to explain a reason how he had miraculously survived in a later story. Before he had caused the “demise” of his popular hero, he had complained to his mother that he had enough of him!

He had also attempted the guise of increasing the price of his Sherlock short stories to avoid writing them, however, they were so popular that the publisher always met his demand, and he became very wealthy. After losing a number of close relatives, he turned to spiritualism in an attempt to contact them. His friend Houdini who performed séances tried to convince him that these were only illusions that he performed. This resulted in the end of their friendship.

He remained interested in mysticism until his death at the age of 71.

Ian Thomson

Some recent Diamond Jubilee Celebrations at Exeter University

Events attended by Exeter Branch members Louise and Mike this autumn.

It is now 60 years since The University of Exeter received its Charter. To mark this milestone, special events are taking place throughout the 2015/16 academic year. The Diamond Jubilee had a suitably academic start, with the launch of a wonderful book entitled ‘The City on the Hill’ by Exeter’s Prof. Jeremy Black on **28 September** at the Streatham campus. The author gave a fascinating talk to a packed audience, centred on the university’s growth and development from small beginnings in the city centre to the world-renowned centre of learning and research it is today. An impressive history. And we are part of it.

On 5 November – note the auspicious date – we attended the House of Lords Reception in Westminster; the last such occasion hosted by Exeter’s Chancellor Baroness Floella Benjamin, together with the Vice Chancellor, Sir Steve Smith and Jeannie. Over 200 Exeter graduates gathered in the Cholmondeley Room and linked Terrace with its wonderful views across the Thames and enjoyed much chatter over the drinks and canapes. After the speeches we left for a most interesting tour of the House of Lords and House of Commons and walked along various corridors of power through the ancient Palace of Westminster to exit near Palace Yard into a drizzly November night.

The next event was on **20 November** in Exeter’s Forum when we joined other alumni and guests in the Street for drinks before moving into the Great Hall for a wonderful piano recital by John Lill. This world-famous pianist played works by Mozart, Schumann, Chopin and Beethoven – some pieces familiar, some less so. You could have heard a pin drop in the attentive audience. The hall was full on what proved to be a magical evening and we managed to see and chat to several other members of Exeter Branch during the

interval and beforehand.

Another musical treat followed on **28 November** when we joined a surprisingly small alumni audience in the Mary Harris Memorial Chapel for a performance of Mendelssohn's wonderful oratorio 'Elijah'. Organised as an opportunity for alumni from far and wide to 'come and sing' with the Exeter Chapel Choir and invited soloists, this was the second such event to be held at the University. Rehearsals take place during the day, culminating in an early evening performance under the direction of Michael Graham, Director of Chapel Music.

Do watch for next year's event, when Handel's 'Messiah' will be performed and come along to listen or to sing. We were invited to a drinks reception beforehand where there was an interesting talk on excavations at Ipplepen by Prof. Stephen Rippon from Exeter's Archaeology team.

Look out for other special events as the Diamond Jubilee year progresses – they are interesting and well worth supporting.

Louise Clunies-Ross and Mike Aspray

Meetings at City Gate Hotel – Do try Exeter Park and Ride

A good alternative to driving into the centre of Exeter is to use the Park and Ride facilities on the edge of the city. Parking is free, and travel into the city centre by bus is free with a bus pass, or a return ticket can be bought for £2.50. There are three car parks: Honiton Road, Sowton, and Matford. The details of each one are as follows:

Honiton Road: The Red Bus runs in to Paris Street every 12 minutes. Journey time – 18 minutes.

Sowton: The Blue Bus runs in to Paris Street every 15 minutes. Journey time – 16 minutes.

Matford: The Green Bus runs in to South Street every 10 minutes. Journey time – 15 minutes.

The locations of each Park and Ride are shown at

<https://new.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/parking/park-and-ride/>

How to get there: In order to get to City Gate Hotel, the most convenient method would be the Green Bus from Matford. One can get out at British Home Stores on Fore Street (see map below), and then turn left down North Street to arrive at City Gate Hotel. For the return trip, go to the stop on South Street.

As with all car parks around the city, there is a risk that your chosen car park may be full. If so, you need to have a Plan B, which may involve driving into the city centre to look for somewhere else to park.

Peter Wingfield-Digby

