



To offer friendship through social and educational activities

EUC Exeter Branch Newsletter

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October to December 2020

Club news

As reported in the last newsletter, our Club activities are suspended for the time being because of the Covid-19 pandemic, and we shall not resume anytime soon. Our programme will only resume when we deem it safe for it to do so.

50 Years of the Exeter Hip

We offer congratulations and best wishes to Clive and Pamela Lee as they celebrate 50 years of the Exeter Hip. We had hoped that we would be able to celebrate this landmark at a special meeting in September, which would have been held on the University campus, but because of Covid-19 this meeting could not take place.

Talking of the Exeter Hip, the University website mentions an interesting article that has recently appeared in a journal, suggesting that the success of a hip replacement depends more on the implant chosen than on the skill of the surgeon. The research demonstrates the high quality of the Exeter hip implants, designed by Clive and Professor Robin Ling. It is now used globally, including at the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital, which incidentally was shown in the study to be the hospital with the best outcomes for hip replacement.

The lead author commented that patients need to feel empowered to ask their surgeon not only what implants they plan to use for their hip replacement but more importantly to ask for the long-term evidence that the implant works well. If they do not feel happy, patients should ask for another opinion or even vote with their feet and go elsewhere.

Reference: Jonathan Evans, Michael Whitehouse, et. al., Factors associated with implant survival following total hip replacement surgery: A registry study of data from the National Joint Registry of England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man. *PLOS Medicine*, 2020

News of Ian and Elisabeth Thomson

Back in February we sent a greetings card to Ian and Elisabeth, signed by all those who attended Ted Neather's talk. It was to wish them both well, since we had heard that Ian had been poorly. He responded, telling us that after a lot of hospital treatment, he was settling in well at his care home, and Elisabeth had secured a flat in the same building (Hanse Residenz, Lübeck, Eschenburgstrasse 39, 23568 Lübeck, Germany).

Now we have received a more recent message from one of our members, Val Ayres.

"Greetings to all dear members of EUC.

"Since Ian and Elizabeth Thomson moved to Lübeck in Germany I have had lovely emails from them with news that their accommodation is superb and they are being extremely well cared for.

"The latest news was to the National Trust Committee members, and the strangest news from Ian says their relaxing area is in the grounds of the local Church Graveyard! With lovely old trees and wild flowers and, just as it should be, peace and quietness. They could have enjoyed the grounds around the Home where they now live, but it is now filled with noise, and there are too many folk around. Like with us, the Virus is a problem, so the Graveyard suits them both."

BAME Scholarships

Four additional scholarships will be awarded to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students attending the University of Exeter this year, thanks to the support of Exeter alumni.

Each of the new scholarships will support a high achieving student to come to Exeter to study at any of the Colleges across all campuses. Last year the first two BAME scholarships supported by alumni were launched, so there are now a total of six opportunities funded, thanks to Exeter's alumni community.

Reminiscences

In our last issue, we asked Club members for any reminiscences of their time at the University of Exeter. Here are a few.

Louise Clunies Ross (née Boa), student, 1962-6

I can remember very clearly arriving at Hope Hall in early October 1962 and being greeted by Di Spencer and Pat Alexander, two members of the Hall Committee. Having checked my name on their list I was then shown to my study bedroom which was in Main Hall.

This proved to be a large room in the Victorian part of the house, with a high ceiling and tall sash windows giving views of the city between the trees surrounding Hope Hall's tennis courts in the garden below. I shared this room with two other freshers,

Tina and Judi, so the room was furnished with three beds, three bureau-style desks, three bedside tables and a huge solid mahogany wardrobe. This magnificent piece of furniture had multiple mirrors, deep drawers, shelves that pulled out like trays and masses of hanging space. We reckoned it was simply too big to move and probably 'came with the house'. The three of us soon learned not to make too much noise as the Warden's rooms were literally on the other side of the wall!

I liked being in Hall as it was a very sociable place and it had the additional great advantage of being centrally heated. This was especially important in the long cold winter of 1962/63 when snow and ice lingered for months and the trek along Prince of Wales Road to the University had to be made with great caution. I was very sorry for the students in digs and flats who had to use the few hot showers in Devonshire House because their water pipes had frozen.

Several of my lectures, I soon discovered, began at 9.00am. This was not such good news as I liked to stay up late and preferred a gentle morning. But I did my best, despite the challenge of Stocker Road hill, and with help from friends in the honours geography group who would save me a seat at the end of a row, managed to get there pretty much on time. With a group of around 30 it was quite easy to see who was there and who was not! One of our row had an endless supply of peppermints that would find their way along towards me at some stage during the one hour lecture. Most refreshing!

We had a number of characterful lecturers, led by Prof. Arthur Davies who had a somewhat theatrical mode of delivery; he would hold us spellbound until, after a significant pause, providing the final nugget of information. His glasses, which he would take on and off, contributed to the dramatic effect. We enjoyed his lectures which included some entitled 'medical geography'. Then there was Ken Gregory whose energetic lecture style matched his speed at covering the ground on fieldwork expeditions as he inspired us with the ins and outs of geomorphology. One day, however, he went missing. We all turned up, we waited quietly, enjoyed our peppermints and after 20 minutes began to wonder what to do. (Remember, this was well before the days of mobile phones.) Suddenly he burst into the lecture room, full of apologies to tell us that on his drive in to the university he had been held up in a country lane by a herd of cows!

Dr Revetz had us spellbound with his enthusiastic exposition of matters meteorological, Ewart Johns left us with plenty to think about in our consideration of urban geography and Dr Shorter's thoughtful deliberations on historical geography encouraged us to look around us, to reflect on what was there and to seek an understanding of why it was so.

Then, of course, there was Rodney. In the Geography Department either Rodney in his white lab coat or Miss Bethell with her secretarial role would answer your query or point you in the right direction so you could find the answer yourself. Generations of students will have benefited from their wisdom and patience. They shared an office between the lecture room and the practical laboratory and as you can imagine, were rarely on their own!

Anne Mayes, staff, 1968-2010

After 42 years at Exeter there are many memorable occasions but maybe the one I should offer is the 40th Anniversary of the granting of the Charter in 1995. I was the Chairman of the ASA (Academic Staff Association) that year - it replaced the RLA, the Readers and Lecturers Association. As such I was included in the line-up to meet the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh. I was surprised at how short Her Majesty was. Typically she asked searching questions to which I didn't have the accurate answers. I realised afterwards that I just needed to sound convincing. The same thing happened when she awarded me my MBE at Buckingham Palace - never learn!



George Garner, occasional lecturer

When I retired from school teaching I decided that I would try for a PhD in Physics and turned up at the University. I soon realised that I was too old, too stupid and too lazy to achieve it but the department needed to run a remedial course in A-level Maths and I was offered a part-time job, which I enjoyed.

Teaching mature students who had done Foundation courses was particularly rewarding. They were very keen and hardworking; worksheets were completed almost as fast as I could write them.

One thirtyish student stood out. I think he had been a milkman and a lorry driver before setting out on an academic life. He was as fat as butter, smoked like a chimney and his usual response when he found something difficult was "I think that's a load of crap!" He went on to get a very good degree and became a lecturer in the department. When I last saw him he was still as fat as butter and still smoked like a chimney. Another girl student worked as a part-time barmaid. If she did not know the answer when I asked her a question she was likely to say "I don't know, darling. Why pick on me?"

Peter Wingfield-Digby, student, 1964-8

The subject of statistics is not everyone's favourite cup of tea. I had a superb lecturer at Exeter named Dr Frank Oliver, who was the major influence in getting me started on my career. Many Social Science students might have found his lectures difficult to comprehend. The University's Golden Jubilee publication *University of Exeter: A Brief History* contains a splendid photo of Frank and some bored-looking students, with the caption: 'The late great Dr Frank Oliver won the RAG 'Most Boring Lecturer' competition a record number of times'.



I thought I would research this a bit further. It appears he also took part in a national competition run by Leeds University (<http://streetdogs.co.za/stdgarticle.asp?readID=425>):

'In March 1986 (the previous winner) was outclassed by Dr Frank Oliver of Exeter University who delivered an unbeatable lecture on 'Co-efficiency correlations'. With his back to the audience throughout, he explained in a series of comprehensively detailed blackboard diagrams exactly how to 'measure the strength of the relationship between two variables at points between minus one and plus one'. It is a subject which, Dr Oliver says, is essentially fascinating.

'So resounding was his triumph in this annual competition that the event was cancelled the following year. No one felt confident to pit themselves against the reigning title-holder. When the event was revived in 1988 Dr Oliver won yet again by the simple device of repeating exactly the same lecture.'

Good for you, Frank. In particular he taught a wonderful course called STESP: Statistical Treatment of Economic and Social Problems. That one lecture course taught me most of the basic statistics that I needed to get me started in 40 years of statistical work around the world with the British Government and several international organisations. Frank was not only a great lecturer, but a great character – as the photo and the caption hint at.

New Vice-Chancellor

On 1 September 2020 Professor Lisa Roberts became the new Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive at the University of Exeter, taking over from Professor Sir Steve Smith who had been Vice-Chancellor since October 2002. We all wish her well.

As she took up her appointment, she told us:

“I am delighted to join the University of Exeter; one of the UK’s strongest Universities that is committed to excellence in research and education. I am looking forward to working with an exceptionally talented community of staff and students to realise even greater success for the University and for each individual within it. It is a time of major challenge and opportunity in higher education and I want to build on the outstanding work of Sir Steve Smith to ensure Exeter continues to lead the way in providing a first-class education that is accessible to all, collaborative and dedicated to success for all of our students.

“In research, I want to foster strong partnerships across disciplines, across the region and across the world to ensure that our brightest minds make the strongest possible contribution to society and a tangible difference to people’s lives.

“The University has a key role to play in the South-West, helping to draw on the region’s strengths to make progress together on jobs, economic growth, developing talent and improving the lives of our citizens.”



East Park development

In the last issue, we reported on the vast new blocks that are being constructed on the east side of the Streatham campus (see plan below). Work on the North Park development has not yet started, but the East Park development is coming on at quite a pace. Phase 1 (100 standard bedrooms and 504 ensuite rooms) was due to open in September 2020, and Phase 2 (170 standard rooms and 408 ensuite rooms) in September 2021.

Construction was inevitably affected by the pandemic, but the contractors (Vinci) have still managed to deliver the first part of Phase 1 (blocks A to D) by mid-September, and the first occupants have moved in. Blocks G, H and J (the white blocks in the distance in the photo) should soon be ready for occupation. Work continues on Phase 2 (shown on the right).



East Park – Phase 1 and Phase 2



East Park – Phase 1 – 14 Sep 2020

Local Exeter news

Like the centres of so many towns and cities across England, Exeter has not been able to escape the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Many businesses, large and small, have been forced to close, and no doubt there will be more closures in the future. But readers may be interested to hear the latest news about the fate of two major buildings in the centre of the city which have remained empty since well before the start of the pandemic.

Royal Clarence Hotel

The devastating fire at the hotel took place four years ago, in October 2016. The hotel was totally destroyed. The hotel traced its history back to about 1770, and it is possibly the first building in Britain to be called a 'hotel'. It has seen many famous visitors, including Admiral Nelson in 1801.

During the first year or two after the fire, very extensive archaeological work was done to try to get a better understanding of the history of that site, since the hotel was situated in such an important location at the corner of Cathedral Close. They have managed to restore and protect the site's historic fabric. We thought that rebuilding would then begin, but nothing happened. Then in mid-2019 the owner announced that he planned to sell the site. Finally, in August this year, we learned that the site had been sold to South West Lifestyle Brands, which is indirectly owned by a Devon businessman (James Brent) and his wife.

At present there is planning permission in place for a 74-bedroom hotel, but some people wonder whether it is realistic to rebuild the hotel there, when there is no parking available. For instance, it has even suggested that it might be more realistic to develop the site as an arcade with shops on the ground floor celebrating local produce, and with apartments above.

House of Fraser

The giant House of Fraser building, between the High Street and Catherine Street, closed down in early 2019. It had only taken on the name of House of Fraser in 2007. Before that, there had been shops on the site for at least 200 years, operating for most of the time under the name Colsons. The store had been rebuilt in the 1950s, after much of the centre of Exeter was flattened in the wartime blitz. When workmen removed the canopy in the High Street to begin the current renovation, the previous name of the store was revealed – Colsons.

Earlier this year the building was purchased by Prydis, which is a wealth performance management firm. Their original plan was to redevelop the existing building so as to create luxury shops, a hotel, and rooftop restaurant and bar overlooking the Cathedral. But they have recently submitted a fresh plan to Exeter City Council which would see a spa and speakeasy bar added in the basement, with the restaurant moved from the rooftop to the ground floor. The target date for opening the hotel is Christmas 2021.

From Susie Hewitt (our Treasurer)

Susie has kindly passed on to the Newsletter a photo taken at the EUC Jubilee Dinner of 1976. Does anyone recognise themselves or others? Her father, W.G. Hoskins, is in the centre with hands clasped.

