



To offer friendship through social and educational activities

EUC Exeter Branch Newsletter

Number 51

<http://eucexeterbranch.org.uk>

June 2022

July to September 2022

Club news

Message from our Chairman

At our Annual General Meeting on 4 July 2022 my term of office as Chairman of Exeter University Club (Exeter Branch) ends. I would like to place on record my sincere thanks to all who have supported the Club during the past year. I am particularly grateful to Peter for his work as our Secretary, for editing our quarterly newsletter, for maintaining our website and for hosting our meetings on 'Zoom'. I also thank Susie, our Treasurer, for all her work on the Club's finances. My thanks also go to members of our Committee and to other members who have organised our activities throughout the year.

But I have to make a plea: well, not one, but three pleas.

Firstly, please will all members make every effort to attend the AGM at 11 a.m. on 4 July. It is being held using 'Zoom' so as to enable all to take part in the comfort of their own homes, particularly with our members living in the West and North of Devon and further afield in mind.

My second plea is for members to volunteer to help to run the Club. Please put yourselves forward as Committee members to play a part in organising our programme of activities. We need new blood, new ideas. The Club cannot run by itself. At last year's AGM we had no nominations for the position of Vice-Chairman until Frances Canning put her name forward, and this means that Frances will succeed me as Chairman for 2022/23, thus serving as Chairman for three years out of four. At the 2022 AGM we again need a Vice-Chairman who will follow Frances in 2023/24 as

Chairman. We also need Committee members willing to serve for up to three years. So, please play a part in keeping the Club alive.

My third and final plea is again addressed to all members. We need to grow our membership. If you know any alumni or ex-staff members, please encourage them to join us.

We do need more participation in our activities and in the running of our Club. As things stand, we shall have to consider the viability of our Club. And I am sure that none of us would wish to see the Club close

Mike Aspray

Future events

Friday 1 July 2022: Visit to Ugbrooke House and Gardens, 12 noon

Sadly, we have had to cancel this event, due to a shortage of members wanting to go.

Monday 4 July 2022: Exeter Branch Annual General Meeting, 11 a.m.

Zoom meeting. Please support your Club by attending this meeting. If you have suggestions for events, or if you are able to serve on the committee, that would be much appreciated. The duties of a committee member are not onerous!

To book: Contact Peter Wingfield-Digby at pwdigby@btinternet.com or on 01392 424 781 by 27 June, and you will be sent a Zoom link a day or two before the meeting.

Friday 22 July 2022: Visit to Cadhay House and Gardens, 1.30 p.m.

Cadhay is listed by Country Life as 'one of the top ten manor houses in the country'. It was built in 1550, and is constructed around its central Court of the Sovereigns, so-named because of the carved images of four Tudor monarchs that overlook the court.

We shall have a private guided tour of both the house and the gardens. The house tour takes in the Long Gallery and Roof Chamber, with a brief history of the house and the families who have lived there. The garden tour will include a visit to the mediaeval fish ponds and walled kitchen gardens, followed by a cream tea. Toilets (including disabled ones) are available. Teas may be taken in the barn or on the terraces.

Cost: £15, paid for on the day in cash or by credit card. Please confirm that you would like to have the cream tea, which is included in the price.

Contact information: Cadhay House, Ottery St Mary EX11 1QT, <https://cadhay.org.uk>



Directions:

By car: Cadhay lies between the A30 and Ottery St Mary. Approaching on the A30 from the west, leave the A30 at Patteson's Cross, and follow the signs for Fairmile and Cadhay. Coming from the east, leave the A30 at the Iron Bridge turnoff and then proceed as above. Cadhay is approached from Fairmile Lane by a long tree-lined drive. Parking is in a field on the right. Members are encouraged to offer lifts to those without their own transport.

By public transport: There is no bus calling at Cadhay. The only option is to get the 4/4A bus to the hospital at Ottery St Mary and then walk almost a mile to Cadhay. The alternative of car-sharing is recommended.

Meet: In the carpark (Grid reference for Cadhay: 091962 on OS Landranger 192 and OS Explorer 115)

To book: Contact Anne Mayes by 14 July on a.c.mayes@exeter.ac.uk, 01647 252603

Monday 8 August 2022: EUC Committee, 11 a.m. on Zoom

The newly elected committee will meet to plan the programme for the year ahead.

Tuesday 6 September 2022: Lunch at The Stables, Cowley, Exeter

After a gap of two years, we thought it was time to sample some pub lunches again. The Club has not been to this pub before, but it looks very promising. Besides offering standard pub main courses at £15, they also offer some of the dishes at £9 for 'smaller appetites'. We shall meet in the upstairs dining room, which can be accessed directly from the carpark, without climbing any stairs. Meet at 12 noon for 12.30 lunch.

Travel

By car: Approaching from Exeter, turn left at Cowley Bridge towards Crediton. The pub is on the left just after Bernaville Nurseries. There is a large car park up the slope behind the pub; turn in just before the pub.

By public transport: There is a good bus service (5, 5A, 5B, 5C) every 20 minutes from Exeter Bus Station, stopping in Paris Street. The bus will drop you at Bernaville Nurseries, just before the pub.



To book: Contact Gwyneth Garner at gbvgarner36@btinternet.com or 01392 881330

Wednesday 21 September 2022: Horse-drawn barge on Tiverton Canal, 11.30 a.m.

This is one of the last remaining horse-drawn barges in Great Britain, and offers a truly unique and memorable heritage experience of a time before steam. Boarding starts at 11 a.m. The barge leaves at 11.30, and returns at 1.00 p.m. There is a licensed bar/cafe onboard, with beer, cider, wine, spirits, soft drinks, tea, coffee, ice cream and canal gifts. Please note that it is cash only – no cards – so please be sure to bring enough cash to pay for the trip (£15.90) and any extras. There is also a toilet on board the barge. This will be a public trip, so we shall be sharing the barge.

Afterwards some of us may wish to adjourn to Ducks Ditty Bar, which is permanently moored at Tiverton Canal. It offers the same range of food and drink as served onboard, as well as Devon-made hot pasties. <http://canaltearooms.co.uk/>
Let's hope for better weather than we had ten years ago, when we last did this trip!

Location: Tiverton Canal Company, The Wharf, Canal Hill, Tiverton EX16 4HX
Tel. 01884 253 345 www.tivertoncanal.co.uk



Transport

By car: The canal is south-east of the town centre. Approach along Great Western Way (A396) and then turn up Old Road which leads into Canal Hill. The canal is on your left, and there is plenty of parking space (Parking charge - £3 – goes towards funding and maintaining the canal).

By bus: There is a half-hourly bus service (55/155) from Exeter to Tiverton. For instance, the 10.00 bus arrives in Tiverton at 10.37. It is a 10-minute walk to Canal Hill, or else take the 353 Dartline bus at 10.45 which reaches Canal Hill at 10.50.

To book: Contact Gwyneth Garner by 25 August on 01392 881 330 or at gbvgarner36@btinternet.com

Event Reports

Talk by Jon Curtis: 'Exeter Food Action', 4 April 2022

Jon Curtis gave members an inspiring talk on his work for Exeter Food Action. In 2011 as an A level teacher, he decided to give up money and see what could be done without any. He saw waste food at the back of a co-op store and this inspired him to investigate what could be done with it. Most of the waste food was covered in blue dye but was perfectly edible.

He spoke to Martyn Goss who worked for the Exeter Diocese as a community organiser and they agreed to form The Exeter Food Action in cooperation with Devon and Plymouth Food Association. Initially all the supermarkets were very reluctant to give away their waste food so food was sourced through growers and other outlets.

After a few years supermarkets like Waitrose and Aldi started to give away food to recognised organisations with strict conditions on where this food should go. With other supermarkets agreeing to give away their surplus food there was a demand for more space and freezer capacity. The first storage facility was in Sidwell Street but, following the development proposals for Sidwell Street, Exeter Food Action moved to a storeroom off Blackboy Rd. and subsequently to a much larger warehouse on the Marsh Barton Estate.

Exeter Food Action's constitution does not allow food to be given to individuals. All food must go to organisations such as St Petrock's, St Sidwell's, and the Salvation Army. In 2021 Exeter Food Action joined forces with a national food charity, FareShare South West. This enabled the charity to guarantee food supplies which FareShare could access at a national level.

Supermarkets are becoming far more proficient in controlling their food waste especially fruit and vegetables, and are quite prepared to discount and sell misshaped vegetables to the public. With this in mind Exeter Food Action has struck up partnerships with local producers of fruit and vegetables and will arrange to pick and remove surplus stock.

Jon never envisaged when he started this venture that after ten years the need to provide food for families and individuals would still be very high, with over 200 people a week relying on Soup Kitchens and other food outlets. The latest addition will be a state-of-the-art chiller to store all items including frozen food which could equate to over 30 tonnes of food waste year. We all agreed what a vital service Exeter Food Action is providing. Instead of expenses Jon asked for a donation to Exeter Food Action. If anyone would like more information on how to become a Friend, the website is at www.exeterfoodaction.org.uk/become-a-friend

Susie Hewitt

Talk by Elisa Franco: ‘What is neonatal diabetes?’, 23 May 2022

Dr Elisa De Franco, scientific lead for Exeter’s world-wide neonatal diabetes genetic testing service, spoke to members of Exeter Branch about her work. Elisa gained her PhD at the University of Exeter and is now based in the Medical School within the College of Medicine and Health.

Neonatal diabetes is a very rare condition affecting only about one in every 100,000 live births and is diagnosed in babies under the age of six months. It is known to be caused by a change in a gene that affects insulin production. This means that blood glucose levels rise and typically a baby will not thrive, displaying symptoms of thirst and often other conditions including urinary tract infections, epilepsy and, in some babies, developmental delay. The big challenge is to identify the genes that bring about the disease and this lies at the heart of Elisa’s research work in molecular genetics.

When symptoms of neonatal diabetes were first noted in the mid-1850s the babies affected did not usually survive beyond one or two years of age. However, by the 1920s the use of insulin was found to make a massive difference to babies’ health and hospital staff were able to care for them and monitor their blood sugar levels in the first few months of their lives, leading to better outcomes.

Today Elisa’s research focuses on exploring and understanding the genetic basis of neonatal diabetes which is still a potentially life-threatening disease. So far research has revealed that around half of these babies who have early treatment in the first few months of their lives will go on to live normal lives and require no additional treatment (transient), while almost half are likely to require treatment throughout their lives (permanent). Many are able to take tablets to control insulin levels which can prove much easier to manage than having injections, and thus transform their lives. The research also shows that some ten per cent of these babies are found to have complex needs in addition to neonatal diabetes, requiring sustained individualised treatment (syndromic).

Elisa explained how new technology had revolutionized this research since 2010 when the next generation of gene sequencing became available. This enabled far more data to be analysed with greater speed in the search for genes associated with the incidence of neonatal diabetes. To date there are 28 genes known to cause diabetes. Free genetic testing is available world-wide and currently data from 111 countries contributes to this vital research work.

The search for genetic causes of neonatal and early onset diabetes goes on, and in thanking Elisa for her talk we said that our donation would be used to support this important world-leading research.

Louise Clunies-Ross

Visit to Okehampton by Rail, 26 May 2022

Our trip to Okehampton was to explore the town and to support and experience the newly reopened branch line, now called The Dartmoor Line. We were very fortunate that Richard Westlake had devised the programme and very kindly guided us around. As someone born and bred in Okehampton and then having spent a lifetime working on the railways, including from Okehampton, there was no one better qualified to show us around. Some boarded the train at Exeter Central and then looked out for those of us joining at St David's. On arrival at Okehampton we caught the bus down to the town; the trains and buses were on time and not crowded.

Our first port of call was The Museum of Dartmoor Life. We had been given a little booklet which linked places round the town with the multicultural history of Okehampton. The Museum itself was a real gem with displays and exhibits through time. We were shown round by Kristy Turner, the Curator/Manager, who cheerfully answered all our questions. Richard was able to expand on the section devoted to the opening and running of the railway. A very impressive Museum, well worth visiting. From there it was a very short walk to The White Hart, scarcely recognisable inside since my last visit, and now a Wetherspoons and our venue for lunch.



Following this, a group of us set off with Richard as guide on a walking tour of places of interest in the town. A former doctor's house, former police station and then into Simmons Park which, like the Museum and, indeed several alms houses, was named after the benefactor Sydney Simmons, an Okehampton boy who had made his fortune in America with a carpet cleaning mechanism.

From the park we walked past the old Fire Station to the Victorian Arcade. We were impressed by the variety of independent shops here. A chance to sit down in St James Chapel which looks more like a church - it has a tower. It is a chapel of ease to the parish church of All Saints which is some distance away. From here it was over to the Red Lion Yard before heading to the bus stop to catch the bus back up to the station. We weren't being soft, it's 0.7 miles up a rather steep hill!

Some members took advantage of the train in the platform to return to Exeter by an earlier train but the rest of us crossed over to Platform 2 to have a private visit to the Arthur Westlake Museum, named after Richard's father who was running the station at the time of closure. Richard talked us through all the exhibits and then we were able to buy a drink and cake in the storeroom next door. It is not yet open to the public, but was opened purely because of Richard! There are plans to open a cafe and toilets on Platform 1 later this year.

A very enjoyable visit and our grateful thanks to Richard for his input.

Anne Mayes

Talk by Trish Oliver: 'Exeter – City of Sanctuary', 9 June 2022

Trish Oliver, a City Councillor and last year's Lord Mayor of Exeter, gave us a very interesting talk on the various initiatives and programmes that make Exeter a City of Sanctuary.

Her initial experience was through working closely with a Syrian refugee to raise awareness of the plight of the Syrian people. Money raised went to support displaced people in Al Albra Camp in Lebanon. She then became involved in the Home Office scheme to house Syrian Refugees. It is part of the policy of this scheme not to use social housing. This is because the waiting lists for social housing are so long. A friend of Trish's bought a house with her inheritance and used it to house a family under the scheme. This scheme is organised by the Home Office from Syria. Recipients have to qualify as asylum seekers there. A group of volunteers then prepare the property and form a social network for the refugee family when they first arrive. The government pays the rent initially, but the family are expected to become self-supporting within 2 years.

When the British withdraw from Afghanistan 70 refugees from Kabul were housed in a hotel in Exeter. Trish was involved in helping them, as many had left Afghanistan with hardly any belongings. The staff of the hotel deserve special praise for adapting to this unusual state of affairs. Sadly many are still there. If they turn down a house they lose their refugee status. Exeter City Council are paying the bill at the moment, but Trish considers the money should come from the government.

When Russia invaded Ukraine, at first there was no government help, but then the host scheme was set up. In this scheme people with some space in their homes offer it to Ukraine refugees. There is a procedure and those coming must have visas. Some hosts are becoming concerned because benefits are slow in coming through. There is a centre called the Conversation Café in Paris Street where refugees and hosts can meet and get advice.

Inclusive Exeter is a multinational, multicultural group which was developing several initiatives when Covid struck. It is beginning to revive, and has set up a hot food delivery to people who do not have access to hot food. At the end of her talk Trish was promised a donation of £50 which she requested should go to Inclusive Exeter.

Frances Canning