

President's NEWS EXTRA - "Zooming"

Zooming was very much in the air when IESF Council met online for the first time on 28th July 2020. Amongst the matters being discussed by Council this year is a Resource Diversity Paper. Within it, we are working



to explore what opportunities there might be to change the diversity profile of our Society. Jean Venables, with Roger, was asked to meet with Les Amis to 'determine their expectations'. With their combined social and IT networking know-how, Jean and Roger then made a series of Zoom Socials happen. We began with the concept of 'Online Tea-Parties' and 'Meet the President' to enhance the Society's social contact in these difficult Covid times.

We report on seven Zoom Socials held with Members and Guests through August and September. In all, we heard back from over 100 members and had 44 members join in the 7 events with 27 Guests. Fourteen members joined in a second time with their guests and the Host 4 members (Hughes & Venables) were fortunate enough to say 'Hi' to all of them.

Zoom Social 1

Tuesday 27th August

Les Amis were invited to take part in an exclusive meeting for "Tea with the President" supported by Jane Hughes (Amie) and managed by Council member Jean Venables and Roger Venables as lead techy!



Five of our seven Amis were able to attend. We were excited that Amis had successfully overcome the challenge of joining us online. Pam Crozier had invited her grand-daughter Melanie as techy and Jennifer Curtis called in her son Michael. Later, the combined efforts of Roger and Melanie enabled Maisie Modro to join. Ro and Christine Cox sent their apologies, but were able to join our final Zoom.

Jillian Taberner told us of moving home. She is glad to have a security specialist as a new neighbour.

Jennifer enthused about her garden, prompting Michael to swing her laptop round so that we might be given a tour!

Maisie Modro is sure she had a mild attack of COVID19, which she caught from an Irish Rugby supporter!

Pam had lunched with the Barwells and taken coffee out separately with Joan. The President invited Les Amis to discuss the proposition that an Ami should sit on Council. Afterwards, email and telephone contacts gave this matter thoughtful consideration. Within an overall positive response there were some searching questions seeking clarification by Council. I will write more on this question in due course.

Zoom Social 2 Tuesday 8th September

We took tea with 8 members and 6 guests on 12 screens. The Baylys reported that their GP son in law had founded a mental health Charity last year - before COVID arrived.

The Greenways had met with the Walkers and Barwells for lunch, to raise a glass to Peter Varley on the day of his funeral.

Humphrey Pocock told us he had finally achieved a booking for a physical visit, with his son, to see Gwen. He reported worsening Parkinson's. It is arm chair cricket now. Our scientific topic proved to be ventilators. Barry Brooks and colleagues are working to develop a field ventilator for low income countries in particular. Chris Kraushar reported that his son in law, working with McLaren F1, is putting a more hi-tech model through the necessary Medical and Technical Standards Evaluation.

COVID lock down has clearly driven everyone into the garden! The Kraushars and Coxs have kept up 'coffee in their garden' visits. We heard several accounts of Horticultural success. Janet Groome displayed enormous peppers and Jane Hughes showed spray carnations, propagated from her 70th (shhhh...) Birthday Bouquet.

"Can we do this again?" said Dixie!

Zoom Social 3 Wednesday 9th September

The Gang of 4 enjoyed morning coffee with 8 more members and 6 guests on 10 screens. It was good to learn that Betty Hattersley was mending well after breaking both wrists.

We had a Travelling theme. Jean and Roger Venables's son Hugh is a scientist working for British Antarctic Survey (BAS). Jean explained that the jetty on the BAS Base Rothera on Adelaide Island is being extended to take the larger "Sir David Attenborough". This new vessel is currently part way through it's sea trials and the testing at sea of the scientific instruments is the next phase. When COVID caused International Lockdown, BAS staff and the Contractors came home on a British Caledonia Cruise ship which had been laid up in Stanley.

A luxurious but slow way home and likely to be repeated this coming season in both directions!

Tony Miller reported on the growing popularity of men's sheds down in Kent!!!

Len Threadgold has proved that his electric car can do Northamptonshire to Cornwall on one charge. He and Roger swapped electric car experiences. Jean and Roger aim to charge their new electric car for approximately half the year from the solar power system mounted on their house roof.

Tony Barber revealed special knowledge of the wave energy involved in humming a hymn. As in earlier Zoom Socials, the President called for any tales from earlier Voyages, reflecting wistfully that he and Jane never seemed to travel anywhere these days!

David Shillito had tele-watched the Tour de France through the Charente region. Aerial views of the terrain recalled to him the Grant's 2004 Voyage to La Rochelle.

We heard more - fond tales of a mussel feast, char-grilled on vine leaves and leading to blackened faces - and a secret giggle group munching Kit Kats! Whilst others washed face and hands, there was one who used a toothbrush! Susan Shillito, lilac haired, listened and smiled.

Karen Park took the computer-generated photo below. She followed up with email instructions for future photo shots.



These included the words...." the challenge is usually to find where your computer has filed it". This put the President right off and consequently we have no quality photos of later Socials!

Zoom Social 4 Thursday 10th September

As the sun sank over the yard arm, we gathered again with a total of 16 members and 12 guests crowded on to 14 screens. The particular themes this time appeared to be vineyards, rail track, trains and family celebrations.

The Coackley's grapes yielded 100 bottles of white wine last year and they hope to trial vines in Derbyshire. Our assembled company also commended wines from Chapel Down Kent (Chris and Nancy Head), Burn Valley Norfolk (Graham and Margaret Owens) and Tinwood, West Sussex (Philip and Anne Pascall). Daniel and Catharine Fayolle, joining from France, boasted historic vineyards in their village near Versailles. In Roman times these were the largest vineyards in Gaul! Clare Bruce spoke of her ancestor Thomas Brassey, by his death in 1870 responsible for laying 1 in every 20 miles of the world's railways (Coackley Spring Voyage to Chester 2019). She has now joined the Brassey Society!

Peter Blair-Fish has been taking near empty trains to fairly distant points and cycling home!! He and Diana were unable to travel to Canada this year to celebrate his Godmother's 100th Birthday. Keith Cima, also joining from France, reported heightened discipline and organisation during COVID. He now has time to pursue his hobby, building a 7 1/4" Gauge Railway in 7 hectares of garden.



Post zoom emails from petrol head Jane Hughes revealed shared delights in Keith's classic MGB with chrome bumpers and connected John and Frances Beck with carefree pre-carrycot days! Jean and Roger had to postpone their 50th Wedding Anniversary celebrations. However

Graham and Margaret achieved theirs by joining their socially isolating family, who were staying in the Owens' Norfolk holiday house at the time, only to sleep in the garden, under canvas, in the rain!!

Zoom Social 5 Monday 21st September

A large group of 21 members and friends, 5 members for the first time, gathered on 13 screens at 6pm. Suitably prepared to bring rosé wine, our participants drank a toast to Gwen Pocock who had sadly died on 14th September. We did this in the company of Humph who joined us again, glass in hand.

Isobel Pollock-Hulf told us about lock down in London and reported daily walks, taking her camera through deserted streets. Being at home so much, she now knows her neighbours and finds herself a member of a street full of friendly helpful residents. She is still busy chairing IMechE committees.

Douglas Oakervee and Olive spoke of their two daughters catching the COVID virus. Olive mentioned a big garden and Doug reported successful weight loss as well as more online meetings. Not surprisingly, we enjoyed briefly his insights into HS2.

Chris Head mentioned preparing a talk to U3A on the Hydrogen Economy. The President pounced, inviting another article for our Website!

Zoom Social 6 Tuesday 22nd September

We hosted a small group for coffee in the second of our second series of Zoom meetings. Only Stephan Jefferis was a first-time joiner. The Greenways returned, as did Pam Crozier. We were 6 members, including 2 Amis and 2 guests on 6 screens.

Stephan told us about living in the village of Adderbury in north Oxfordshire. He described the geology. This area had been intensively strip mined up to WW2 for iron ore for armaments – the largest UK source at that time. This mining had resulted in some very unusual landforms. He mentioned a neighbouring house, named 'Chemin de Fer'!

Pam Crozier asked how the Les Amis matters were progressing and Jane and the President responded. Jane & David then spoke about their

summer. The large garden has been getting nearly all the attention it demands - for a change. When we told the story of smelly heating oil, Stephan explained that it was always difficult to get an effective seal in fuel pipe joints. He went on to explain that the human nose is most sensitive to sulphur, as well as related Mercaptans and Butyric Acid (rancid butter). These are strongest odours of bad food! He continued by telling us about a colleague Prof. Spector at Kings College London and his survey of subjects who have *not got* COVID 19. Apparently, this research has alerted science to the significance of a COVID skin rash developing in children.

Zoom Social 7 Thursday 24th September

We gathered for tea on the final session welcoming 6 first timers including Ro and Christine Cox and also Andrew and Elaine Tyrrell who we have not seen for some time. There were 15 members including 4 Amis, with 7 guests, with 5 of the number coming back for a second visit, all on 11 screens.

John Duthie joined us, armed with a plate of freshly baked scones with jam, ready to share. We were surprised. "But of course, it is tea-time, is it not?" he twinkled! A recent stay with his daughter and family in Bristol ended in a hurried return north to lockdown when his grandson tested positive for COVID 19 at school.

The Shillitos were invited to speak of their Presidential Voyages in 2007, in Spring to St. Malo, and the Voyage d'Etude to Montpellier. The President then asked about the curious object on the easel in view. It was a template for drawing curves of many radii. This led to David Shillito reporting difficulty relaunching his Life Drawing Classes in these COVID times. He asked for advice!

Frances Beck spoke of fund raising over £55,000 with National Tangent & 41 Clubs (Ro Cox is a member too). This will fund ten jet-skis and equipment for the RNLI. Jean (who is on RNLI Council) expanded on this RNLI initiative, referring us to the current BBC2 series "Saving Lives". Jane recalled running down to the slipway when the maroon went up, to see the Lifeboat

launched, in Swanage at weekends, during her Business Degree placement year in Dorset.

Golf is a valued activity, enjoyed by Valerie Grant, Chris Kraushar, Dixie Bayly and Elaine Tyrrell. Andrew Tyrrell finds walking in the gardens and grounds of the RAC Country Club, nearby, most helpful. He explained his absence from IESF as being due to his diagnosis of Parkinson's 12 years ago. Valerie Grant also told us of her son Elliot's house in California covered with dust indoors and out, from the fires all around.

The Wolverhampton Lockdown had now put a stop to the coffee mornings for the Kraushars and Coxs. In this their first Zoom Social, it was evident how much Ro and Christine were enjoying our Group tea!

Finally, we had Standing and Staring as a theme. The Nuttells had observed goats grazing randomly but the sheep moved systematically, all in the field at the end of their garden. The Baylys were absorbed watching 'Jack the Lad' and 'Number 54'- two builders working on a site over the fence and below their garden!

Reflections

Interaction with family featured in every Zoom Social, of course, as the obstacles and challenges of COVID19 were met and overcome. Philip and Anne Pascall reported the arrival of 7th grandchild, Ted. So life goes on! The Coackley's became on-line schoolteachers, running a 2-hour morning school daily for their grandchildren in Germany. For online homework, Ann Nuttall taught her 5 and 8 year-old grandsons how to make rhubarb crumble. Karen Park is still being restricted by her grandchild to choosing always the same bedtime story!

These seven Zoom Socials have been a major undertaking by Jean and Roger Venables. I am sure our Society applauds them. The Socials have reconnected us to the way we were before the SARs-CoV-2 virus restricted our activities. We may need to see Online lectures and Zooms as part of our COVID future. But do not despair. They have proved educational in themselves, as well as being great fun!

David R Hughes President 12th October 2020

