



STAR GROUP NEWSLETTER

No 5 - November 2014

WHAT HAS STAR GROUP BEEN DOING?

STAR Group has had a variety of interesting sessions over the Summer and Autumn Period and we have had some very pleasant visits to various scientific locations.

In **July Simon Harris** from BGS came and told us a little of the projects that he has been involved with. He also brought along Chris Wheatley and they told us about their **Thin Film Collection** and explained how these films are created. In response to their request, a number of STAR Group Members have volunteered to help BGS with the work of making and cataloguing the images.

They also demonstrated the **BGS GeoIndex** and explained that this is freely available to anyone.

Simon then went on to discuss a number of current projects that are ongoing including another of their public facing projects, their **3D Fossils Project**.

Then in **August**, we had a visit from **Geoff Mason** who gave us a very informative talk called **“The German Parachute Mine”**. This traced the history of the technology of the magnetic mine and its mechanism. We were able to inspect an actual mine mechanism. It also chronicled the failure of magnetic mines and how the Germans found another military application for them.

We had a special treat in **September** when **Dr Jan Zalasiewicz** came to give us a talk entitled '**The Anthropocene: a new epoch in Earth history?**'

The Anthropocene is an informal geologic chronological term that serves to mark the evidence and extent of human activities that have had a significant global impact on the Earth's ecosystems.

He demonstrated how much of what we, as a species, do has a direct impact on our environment on Earth. He outlined how quickly and extensively these changes have come about and he left us with many questions to ponder regarding our future on our planet.

Then moving on into Autumn at our meeting in **October. John Howarth** kindly agreed to give us a talk entitled..'**The Changing Face.**

This gave us a brief Introduction with reference to coal mining in Nottinghamshire and included a mine layout showing the relevance of the coal face. It outlined a number of items of equipment that had been used over the years and showed how the designs had changed over time.

John interspersed this talk with a number of anecdotes from his career in mining.

In **November, Robin Wilcockson** gave a very interesting presentation entitled...'**Aspirin – Past, Present and Chemical Engineering**'.

Robin spoke of his involvement with the process development - Manufacturing and European marketing of Aspirin. He demonstrated how Aspirin was made and traced the history of the product development over many years. It showed how the various Aspirin products had been marketed and how various uses for the product has developed. He outlined its history and how it works – and work that lead on to, what was then, new uses for Aspirin.

Robin went on to discuss chemical engineering and how similar many chemical manufacturing sites are because of the nature of process. He showed an number of slides showing various types of chemical plants to demonstrate similarities.

ANY INTERESTING VISITS?

1. BGS SITE VISIT

On **TUESDAY 19th AUGUST**, a small party of STAR Group Members paid a visit to the BGS Facility in Keyworth.

We were astounded by the size and diversity of the various projects and by the international reputation for excellence.

We were, first, given a talk on the History of both BGS and of the Buildings in Keyworth.

We had a conducted tour of the Library and were then shown around the Core Store and given an overview of the Palaeontology Records.

We then went to the 3DVis Theatre and Geovisionary overview and shown how the various items of specific software works.

Finally, we were conducted to the BGS Geological Walk. This is an impressive set of specimens and natural stone paving that shows the diversity of the geology of the UK.

A FULL Report (with photographic images) is available on the STAR Group Section of the K&D U3A Website.

2. NTL OPEN DOME EVENING

On **Monday 27th October 2014**, a number of STAR Group Members visited **Nottingham Trent University** for one of their **Open Dome Events**.

This was not a group visit but for individuals who wanted to go. The evening was devoted to the magnificent **Rosetta Mission**. The aim of this project was to land a small probe the 'lander' portion of **Philae** on a comet (**67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko**) and to conduct various tests to learn more about comets and to determine how important they were in the early life of Planet Earth. We now know that it landed safely after its ten-year journey and is now sending back data to Earth.

The members who went on this visit were suitably impressed and the STAR Group will consider organizing a full group visit in 2015.

3. THE ROYAL SOCIETY

STAR Group has, for some time, been considering a visit to The Royal Society. The main difficulty is that many of the interesting public meetings are held on a first come – first served basis. It would not be appropriate for our group to arrive, after a long coach drive, only to find that all seats were taken.

However, there are some events forthcoming in 2015 that are in Royal Society Venues that we will, hopefully, be able to reserve seats for. In addition, The Summer Exhibition will also offer us opportunities to visit this fantastic centre of Scientific Knowledge.

FUTURE STAR GROUP SESSIONS FOR 2014/15

A new Programme has been released today and should appear on the STAR Group section of the K&D U3A Website.

Please note that if anyone has any ideas that they think would be of interest for future Sessions then please contact Chris Mason on Tel: 0115-846-0821 or e-mail at christhedad@hotmail.co.uk.

If you are suggesting someone other than yourself to lead one of our sessions can I ask you to discuss it with the “nominated” person first to ensure that they are in agreement and are prepared to lead one of our sessions.

Then either include their contact details in with your suggestion (e-mail address and phone number) or ask them to contact me direct.

For full details of events for 2014/15 refer to the STAR Group Program.