NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

As many of you will know, in September we had the sad news of the death of Alan Owen, YPS Vice President. We send our deepest condolences to Mary and the family, and in this newsletter you will find appreciations of the incomparable service to the Society Alan gave for 50 years.

This season's lecture programme was opened by Professor June Barrow Green from the Department of Mathematics and Statistics, The Open University, with an insight into William Henry Fox Talbot's mathematical studies. In early October we welcomed Sixth Form students who, over the summer, had taken part in science research projects with the Nuffield Partnership Awards scheme. The students put on a display of posters showing the results of their research at a reception held in the Atrium of the Museum, and were then presented with Gold Crest Awards from The British Science Association. This was followed by a well-illustrated lecture on “Explosives: The past, Present and Future” by Professor Jackie Akhaven, Head of the Centre for Defence Chemistry, Cranfield University.

Two study tours were organised in September. Rod and Margaret Leonard led an extensive journey through Northumbria which was greatly enjoyed by participants and included visits to Cragside, Bamburgh Castle and Holy Island and boat trips to the Farne islands and along the Tyne. At the end of September we went ahead with the Charles Rennie Mackintosh Tour to Glasgow, following the programme arranged by Alan Owen. During the tour there were talks from Glasgow School of Art graduates that were much appreciated. The Scottish Marathon slightly changed Sunday's itinerary with more walking than anticipated, accompanied by the race front-runners!

Sharon Lusty continues to run the well-supported programme of afternoon get-togethers for members at The Star Inn, Museum Gardens. In September we included an informative walk around the Gardens with Dr Peter Hogarth, who shared some gems of his recent research into the gardens' history (challenge yourself with Part 2 of Peter’s Gardens Quiz inside).

Enclosed with this Newsletter is our Programme of Lectures from January, with a mini-series on engineering, generously supported by the Institution of Engineering and Technology (North Yorkshire). Amongst other highlights of the programme in July we are staging a joint lecture with the University of York, to coincide with the British Society for the History of Science's International Conference, contributing to our programme of collaboration with other organisations sharing our ethos.  Catherine Brophy, Chair, YPS

With this Newsletter
✦ Subscription Renewal Form (only for members paying by cheque or cash)
✦ Lecture Programme for January to July 2017
✦ Advance Flier - Study Tour of Portsmouth area & Mary Rose

LARGE PRINT COPIES OF THE NEWSLETTER ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE LODGE
Alan Owen, 1935 to 2016

Alan and Mary Owen joined the YPS fifty years ago in August 1966. Alongside his work as an engineer and with Mary bringing up their young family, Alan found time to serve on YPS Council from 1969, in 1971 chairing the YPS preliminary committee on urban archaeology which eventually led to the setting up of York Archaeological Trust. From 1974 to 1989 Alan was the Editor of the YPS Annual Report. In the 1990s he again served on YPS Council and became Chair of Council from 2000 to 2005 and then Vice-President. Over the years Alan organised many thoroughly researched study visits and touring holidays for YPS members, and as Mary says “It was his great joy planning and carrying out all those visits”.

Alan Owen, an appreciation by Frances Chambers

Crossing the Museums Gardens on the morning of Alan’s funeral I paused to watch a squirrel, and remembered standing in the same spot almost 15 years before on the grey November morning when I met him for the first time. I was on my way to be interviewed for the Clerk’s post and hoping I would have the chance to work in such idyllic surroundings. Alan, then Chairman of the Society, put me at my ease with a cup of tea made with fresh milk, which he had brought in specially, as the Lodge has never had a fridge. After explaining the duties and responsibilities he moved on to the questions, of which there were only two: “Does that sound alright?” and “When can you start?” I thought at the time that he must be desperate to fill the vacancy, but on knowing him better I suspect also that he knew what he was looking for and had decided he had found it.

As the Society had been without a Clerk for some weeks, I arrived for my first day expecting a certain amount of chaos and ventured to say so. Alan raised a quizzical eyebrow, “Oh no, no chaos!” I did not entirely believe him but it gradually became clear just what a superb manager he was, calm, practical, clear and decisive, always seeing the bigger picture while attentive to the detail which comprises the Clerk’s work. Ever the engineer, if we needed something, he enjoyed inventing it. He devised a frame for making a neat fold in the menus for President’s Evening and, to save me having to reach down to switch on the computer, a stand to raise it to a convenient height.

In those days, before the use of email allowed Council members to work at home, Alan spent a lot of time in the office. He had a prodigious ability to concentrate and on more than one occasion I saw him look up from his desk genuinely surprised to find me in conversation with a visitor to the Lodge who had come in and greeted him by name several minutes earlier. Though we both preferred to work quietly away at our respective tasks, we shared a sense of humour about the idiosyncrasies of life at the Lodge, to which at times Alan contributed. I once found a pest controller looking incredulously at a neat sketch plan of the environs of the building on which a dotted line, complete with arrows, was labelled “Route of Rat”.

As for many members, my recent memories of Alan are of the tours and excursions he organised after his Chairmanship ended. As well as making use of his administrative skills, these also provided an outlet for his wide cultural interests. Alan’s trips usually had a theme and so enticing were they that I found my horizons expanding. I had always thought of myself as a devotee of Mediaeval architecture and the landscapes of the Mediterranean, but my favourite holiday memories now include the endless grey horizon seen from Orkney, the fascinating workings of the Anderton boat lift, discovering the decorative detail in the buildings of Pugin and Rennie Mackintosh, and riding along in a coach looking out at a rain-swept Hadrian’s Wall while listening to Alan reading a selection of poems about Roman soldiers.

For me, of course, his legacy is far more than the happy memories in my photograph albums. I shall always be grateful to him for giving me a job I enjoy immensely, and above all for what I learned from working alongside him and watching the calm and orderly way he approached a problem. “Look at what it’s doing”, he told me on that first day, when I was struggling ineffectually with an awkward key to one of the Lodge’s cupboards. It is advice I have often found useful, and not only when dealing with mechanical objects.

We would welcome further memories and tributes to Alan (please send to the YPS Office) and hope to bring these together to be presented to Alan’s family.

Subscription Renewals

The festive season approaches which means it’s the time of year to think about subscription renewals. Next year’s rates remain unchanged as follows:

- Single membership: £26
- Joint membership: £42
- Single concession: £19
- Joint concession: £32
- Institutions: £40

Subscriptions fall due on 1 January and if you pay by cheque or cash, you will find a renewal form enclosed with this newsletter. We would be very grateful if you could pay your subscription promptly so that your membership cards can be sent out with our first newsletter of 2017 in late January or early February. Your 2016 card remains valid until then.

If there is no renewal form in your envelope, this means either you have already paid up to the end of 2017 or you have a Standing Order in place. In both cases you need do nothing, and your membership
card will come to you automatically with the next Newsletter.

**Paying by Standing Order:** If you wish to set-up a Standing Order to pay your YPS subscriptions it would be very helpful if your form could be returned to the Lodge before 19 December in order to allow time for banks to set up the Order before the due payment date.

**Paying by Paypal:** An alternative way to pay your subscription is via our website using Paypal. You don’t need a Paypal account - just use your credit or debit card. On the YPS website go to the "Donate to YPS" page (click on the "Payments" link at top right of the Homepage) and follow the instructions. Please state "Subscription" and your membership category in the "Purpose" box.

*Please don’t hesitate to contact Frances at The Lodge if you have any questions about your membership or subscription payments.*

**Café Scientifique**

**Are personal air quality monitors still a thing of the future? 7 December**

Poor air quality is linked to over three million deaths each year, and 96% of people in large cities are exposed to pollutant levels that are above recommended limits. In response, start-up companies are rushing to produce low cost air monitoring sensors. All this excitement, however, presumes that these low-cost air pollution sensors are fit for purpose. Dr Pete Edwards (University of York) will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the technologies behind these devices, and question if we are yet at a stage where we can all monitor our personal air pollution exposure.

Café Sci discussions are sponsored by YPS and held on the first Wednesday of the month. Tickets are free and can be pre-booked by phone or online with City Screen (0871 9025726), or on the night at the City Screen Ticket Desk. Doors open at 7 for 7.30pm.

Details of forthcoming events can be found on the YPS website: www.ypsyork.org/events/categories/cafe-scientifique/.

**Café Scientifique at Northallerton College**

**Wednesday 16 November 7 for 7.30pm**

Dr Liz Rylott is repeating her presentation on "Explosives and the Disarming Power of Plants" (first given at the September Café Sci in York) for Sixth Form students, parents and friends. This event includes time for networking over a buffet supper, to encourage students to talk more freely with adults.

**YPS President’s Evening**

Members enjoyed the President’s Evening on 19 October, held at the Hotel du Vin. John Hampshire, Hon Vice President, said Grace, and reflected on the Society’s sadness and indebtedness after the recent untimely death of Alan Owen. Catherine Brophy, Chair of YPS, gave the Loyal Toast, and a tribute to retiring YPS President Jim Matthew, followed by a short address highlighting a few of the many activities organised by and for members of the Society.

Our principal guest and speaker was Dr Charles Lane, Senior Scientist at FERA’s Plant Clinic at Sand Hutton near York. He entertained guests with fascinating stories and insights of his twenty years’ work investigating both indigenous and alien plant diseases - ranging from combating Parsnip Yellow Fleck Virus in Lincolnshire, to being dragged out of a Scottish peat bog by a farmer and his tractor (learning the hard way that wellies are not appropriate for exploring bogs!) A current, serious threat under investigation is Phytophthora ramorum, first identified in California in 2000 where it causes a highly damaging
and apparently unstoppable tree disease known as Sudden Oak Death. P. ramorum has since been found on nursery stock in several European countries, the UK included, and causes a new disease of rhododendrons and viburnums. Dr Lane involved guests in a practical demonstration of a simple diagnostic test kit he has devised for use in nurseries and in the field, able to quickly show up the presence or absence of anti-bodies in sample material.

Thanks are due to Sharon Lusty for organising the evening. Feedback has been very positive regarding the excellent service and conducive atmosphere at Hotel du Vin. If you would like to share your thoughts, this will help us to plan next year's event - please pass your comments to Frances at the Lodge.

Liason with Universities
Judith Glover, Vice Chair
I've handed over the role of Lecture Secretary to a new Lectures Group headed by Roger Pinder - but the Chair is keen to make sure that I don't rest on my laurels(!) and has asked me to take on the role of liaising with universities.

Of course we already have many links with universities both in York and further away, mainly in the form of speakers contributing to our lecture programme and Café Sci discussions, and through our annual awards to the best undergraduate and postgraduate students in the Archaeology Department, University of York. And we regularly participate in the University of York's Festival of Ideas held in the early summer.

This year we have two new links with the University of York. First we are collaborating with the Centre for Medieval Studies on their new four-year programme 'Normans in the North' - the programme will be introduced by Prof Sarah Rees Jones on 8 November at our joint lecture, "Blizzards of Steel: Viking Poetry and the Battles of Fulford and Stamford Bridge" (Dr Matthew Townend). Second, we will host a lecture for the British Society for the History of Science's Annual Conference, coming to the History Department in July 2017. In connection with this we are also organising a Café Scientifique discussion, which we hope will be particularly popular with the many overseas delegates arriving in York.

YPS has a long history of interest in geology and we have developed a link with the University of York's Centre for Life Long Learning which offers a Post Graduate Diploma in Geology. Last May, we invited staff and students to join a special YPS geology field trip to Flamborough Head, and now YPS has established a small bursaries fund to assist students in participating in future field trips.

Somewhat further afield we are sponsoring the annual John and Anne Phillips prize for the best final year Undergraduate Geology Mapping dissertation at the University of Hull.

Going forward, Catherine Brophy and I have recently discussed with Prof Karen Stanton, Vice Chancellor of York St John University, the possibility of organising an annual joint lecture that will reflect the university's existing and developing strengths, including biomedical sciences, linguistics and sports science. We are also pleased that Prof Stanton has accepted our invitation to become a Patron of the YPS.

Activities Programme
Margaret Leonard, Activities Committee
YPS members will be aware of how many trips and excursions Alan Owen organised for the YPS. What many may not realise is just how much background work this involved, for which we are all so much indebted to Alan. The Activities Group now faces the difficult task of deciding how best to proceed to organise tours and holidays without Alan's support. No single member feels able to match the level of research and planning needed to run the many trips which Alan committed to every year, and we are proposing to make greater use of the services of a professional travel company. This would also have the advantage of giving the Society some protection from increasing legal requirements and responsibilities.

Currently we are negotiating to set up a 5-day Study Tour to the Portsmouth area for spring 2017, giving us the opportunity to view the Tudor ship, 'Mary Rose', among other sites. At least one other multi-day trip is in the pipelines, as well as a number of day trips and other events for next year, but these are still in the very early stages of planning.

Congratulations!
Our congratulations to YPS member Professor Ewan Anderson who has recently been awarded Doctor of Letters (D.Litt.) by Oxford University for his contribution to the field of Geopolitics. We had the pleasure of hearing a lecture from Professor Anderson on "Geopolitics: strategic non-fuel minerals and the China-Africa connection" in our 2014-15 programme.

Questions:
As with Part 1 of the quiz in the last newsletter, answers first, questions second! The answer to each question is "The Museum Gardens", but why...

1. ‘Cannons to right of them, cannons to left of them ...’ Where are they? And when?
2. Where did Emperors Hadrian (76-138AD) and Constantine (272-337AD) meet? And when?

Answers on P5

Registered Charity No. 529709
An affiliated society of the British Science Association

NOVEMBER 2016
A Surprising Fact!
Members may be surprised to learn of the presence of a rocket in the heart of York! The new headquarters of the Hiscox Group in Hungate is probably one of the most interesting and unusual buildings recently erected in the city. Externally clad in interwoven brickwork and glass, and internally in spectacular concrete, it has a large atrium, modern office accommodation and a garden with beehives on the roof. It also has a Russian rocket in its entrance hall.

Robert Hiscox was originally looking to commission a sculpture for the atrium when he found the perfect example of functional excellence at a country sale in Sussex. The decommissioned rocket is the result of a peaceful collaboration between Russia and the USA and was used for scientific research. It was created as part of a project code-named Kholod (‘cold’ in Russian) in the 1990s, using a pioneering propulsion system that was thought could revolutionise space travel. For ten years it was the fastest thing on the planet - capable of achieving Mach 6.47 (equal to 20 times the top speed of a McLaren F1).

Answers to Gardens Quiz on p4
1. In front of the Yorkshire Museum, in 1858. After the Siege of Sebastopol in the Crimean War, two of the captured Russian cannon were given to York. They were displayed for a year or so on the terrace in front of the Museum before being moved to the Blue Bridge, where they survived until the Second World War. Alternatively, in 1644 during the Siege of York, the same location was midway between the Parliamentary cannon that forced a breach in the Marygate wall and the cannonball strike next to the Multangular Tower.

A 3rd possible answer links the Rev. William Vernon Harcourt, one of the founders of the YPS and Canon of York Minster, who, as a midshipman on HMS Theseus, saw (cannon) action while serving in the West Indies.

2. In the York Museum Gardens, during the York Historical Pageant of 1909.

*Imagine York* has a fine photo showing the two emperors, possibly standing inside the Multangular Tower - see the full-size image at https://cyc.dp.sirsidynix.net.uk/client/en_GB/search/asset/1013598.

Peter Hogarth, YPS Librarian

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York Science Trail Meeting - 5 December
Several local groups are getting together to organise a "York Science Trail" and John Bibby has convened a meeting to discuss details at 12 noon on Monday 5 December, in the Refectory at Kings Manor, Exhibition Square.

Please come along and tell your friends too - we welcome your ideas, eg on places or people who might be included, and which media to use (print, web, app, etc). Further information from John, who prefers to be contacted by email: jb43@york.ac.uk, otherwise tel 01904-330334.

Christmas Mince Pie Reception! 13 Dec
We will be holding our informal social to celebrate Christmas, with wine and mince pies, on 13 December following the lecture on “Medicine and Health Care in Roman Britain” (Dr Nick Summerton). The event will be held in the museum atrium and everyone is welcome, with no need to book in advance. Tickets costing £3 will be on sale both before and after the lecture. Do take this opportunity to chat to old friends and make new ones.

In past years a highlight of this event has been the homemade mince pies and related goodies contributed by our members. If you would like to add to this year’s spread, please get in touch with Margaret Leonard by email MLeonardYork@gmail.com, or via the YPS Office at the Lodge. We are keen to stress this is not a baking competition and all contributions, including mis-shapen pies, are welcome - all part of the spirit of Christmas!

Closure of Marygate Entrance
We know that members with mobility issues appreciate that we are the one group allowed to enter the Gardens in the evening via the Marygate entrance; however YMT has recently had problems with both lighting failures and security issues in the Gardens which resulted in this entrance being closed on one of our lecture evenings. A temporary solution has now been found, but members wishing to use that entrance are requested to leave lectures promptly, as lighting at that side of the Gardens cannot be guaranteed after 9pm. YMT has asked us to thank everybody for their patience while permanent improvements are put in place, and if there are any further problems, we will try to ensure we let people know in advance of any closure of the gate. We recommend that members keep an eye on announcements on our website, and of course continue to follow any safety instructions given to us by YMT staff on the evening.

Office Closure
The Lodge will be closed for Christmas and New Year from midday on Friday 23 December, re-opening on Wednesday 4 January 2017.

Registered Charity No. 529709
Tuesday 8 November 7.30pm - YPS Lecture
"Blizzards of Steel: Viking Poetry and the Battles of Fulford and Stamford Bridge"
Dr Matthew Townend, University of York will mark the 950th anniversary of the Battles of Stamford Bridge and Fulford. Joint lecture with the University of York’s ‘Normans in the North’ programme.

Tuesday 15 November 7.30pm - YPS Lecture
"In Racket Town: Exposing Organised Crime in Wartime Leeds, 1941-1945"
Dr Mark Roodhouse, Department of History, University of York. Joint lecture with the York Branch of the Historical Association.

Wednesday 16 November - Café Scientifique at Northallerton College, 7 for 7.30pm
"Explosives and the Disarming Power of Plants"
Dr Liz Rylott, University of York, will repeat her presentation from September for Sixth Form students, parents and friends. This event includes a buffet supper.
YPS members are welcome, RSVP to Frances Chambers in the YPS office 01904 656713 or email info@ypsyork.org.

Thursday 17 November - Members’ Social Get-together
Margaret Leonard will speak about the role of the Activities Committee
The Star, Museum Gardens (no need to book).

Tuesday 29 November 7.30pm - YPS Lecture
"Ancient Egypt in Yorkshire"
Professor Joann Fletcher, Department of Archaeology, University of York.
This lecture will be preceded by Presentation of the Charles Wellbeloved and Herman Ramm Awards.

Tuesday 6 December 2.30 - Members’ Social Get-together
Join us for a Christmas drink and sparkle!
The Star, Museum Gardens (no need to book).

Wednesday 7 December - Café Scientifique
"Chemical sensors for air pollution research"
Dr Pete Edwards, University of York.
City Screen Basement Bar, Coney St. Y01 9QL.
Café Sci tickets are free and can be pre-booked by phone or online with City Screen (0871 9025726), or on the night at the City Screen Ticket Desk, doors open 7 for 7.30pm.

Tuesday 13 December 7.30pm - YPS Lecture
“Medicine and Health Care in Roman Britain”
Dr Nick Summerton, GP, East Yorkshire and Medical Director, Bluecrest Health.
Followed by YPS Christmas Mince Pie Reception!

Tuesday 17 Jan 7.30 pm - YPS Lecture
“Tunnels and Tunnelling: from Brunel to the future of underground space”

Help Needed
We are immensely grateful to the volunteers who deliver our newsletters, saving us a significant amount on postage. The newsletter comes out four times a year and delivering them is a good reason for a stroll around your local area. If you have received this by post and might be able to help us in this way, please contact Frances Chambers at the Lodge, who will be able to check if there are other members living near to you.
We are particularly in need of help in Haxby and Acomb.
Frances Chambers, Clerk, YPS, e: info@ypsyork.org

Urgent - Trip Photos Wanted!
Did you go on a YPS study tour or day trip this year? I’m very short of illustrations for the next edition of the YPS Annual Report, so if you took photos on any of the visits, do send them to me.
Carole Smith, Editor, YPS, e: smith.york@gmx.com

Members set off for the Farne Islands, N’umbria Tour

For up-to-date information on current and future YPS events see our website: www.ypsyork.org
Please send any relevant news stories, forthcoming activities and announcements for the website and/or newsletter to web@ypsyork.org
Website Blog: please send items for the blog to chair@ypsyork.org