

THE SUSS-EX CLUB

NEWSLETTER No. 55, Winter 2021

Edited by Adrian Peasgood

First of all a Happy New Year to all, and fingers crossed that 2021 will be happier and healthier than last year. A few people I know have already had their vaccinations so I think things are finally looking up, even if we still have some weeks of difficulties to face. After the disappointment of not having a pre-Christmas get together in December we hope that our event planned for the end of January will be something to enjoy.

Steve Pavey

OUR NEXT EVENT

We have persuaded Dr Alexandra Loske to give us a Zoom talk based upon her 2018 book *Moon: Art, Science, Culture*, co-authored with Robert Massey. Alexandra really needs no introduction, having given us a number of brilliant talks and tours stemming from her role as curator at the Royal Pavilion here in Brighton. Robert is Deputy Executive Director of the Royal Astronomical Society in London and is a well known science communicator. The book itself is beautifully produced with many marvellous images of the moon in art and science, which Alexandra will share with us during the talk. You can see more details, and sample images from the book, on Amazon's website: just search on the title or Alexandra's surname. The book itself is available at all good booksellers.

The talk will be at 7pm on Thursday 28th January over Zoom and we will send out joining instructions nearer the event. I imagine that most of us have become Zoom competents over the past year, but for novices there are some good training tutorials on the support section of the Zoom website (zoom.us).

Looking forward to seeing you at the talk. Best wishes again for 2021, stay safe and we will meet again soon.

Steve Pavey

POSSIBLE FUTURE EVENTS

It is not clear when arrangements can be made for the possible future events listed in Newsletters 52 and 53. The steering group will try to take up opportunities as they arise; a (Zoom) talk on bees is an additional idea being pursued.

SUSS-EX CLUB FACEBOOK GROUP

Facebook group membership now exceeds 100!

Our private Facebook page for ex-Sussex employees, launched just under a year ago, gains new members all the time and is now in excess of 100. We have been recruiting new members from all parts of the University - they include academic staff, administrative faculty, and support and technical staff, and are a mixture of retirees and those who have moved on to new jobs.

We rely on the group's existing members to spread the word and encourage even more ex-staff to join. The Facebook group is a forum where members can communicate with each other, posting memories, photos and current news to share with the group. It is for members to use, although information about forthcoming events will always be posted on the page by the Steering Committee. So if you join or have done so already, we would love to see your posts and memories over the coming months.

The Steering Committee would particularly value your ideas about the kind of events you would like to see organised that would be interesting and which would keep us all in touch. You could post your idea on the Facebook page and ask other members to comment on whether they would be enthusiastic about attending such an event. For the time being we still unfortunately have to think in terms only of online events, but it would also be useful to have your ideas for the post-pandemic future.

The Facebook page is here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2507222389510329> but, as it's a private closed group, non-members won't be able to see any posts until they've joined.

We look forward to seeing you and your posts on Facebook during 2021.

Rossana Dowsett and Jackie Fuller

OBITUARIES

Anthony (Tony) W. Simpson

2 April 1928 – 19 March 2019



Tony in 1974

Materials Science was one of the new university subjects that emerged after World War 2, when it was recognised that important advances in understanding were often made at the boundaries between traditional disciplines. Tony Simpson was appointed in 1965 as one of the four founder-members of the Subject Group at Sussex. The others were Robert Cahn, Michael Ertl and Roger Doherty. The Group was located in the then School of Applied Sciences, where undergraduates studied materials in the context of engineering as a whole. Other students were based in the School of Chemistry and Molecular Sciences (MOLS) and, later, in the School of Mathematics and Physical Sciences (MAPS). Students with different backgrounds were brought together for specific materials courses.

The number graduating in materials reached a peak in 1971, but a later decrease resulted in closure of the subject group in 1983. Tony was involved from its inception and oversaw the orderly redeployment of resources at its end. He was a popular teacher of undergraduate courses, organised laboratories, supervised research projects and literature surveys, and for some time was subject chair. He contributed chapters to books and scientific papers on his specialist subject of magnetism, and the interdisciplinary nature of his interests led to publications on research initiated in other areas of the University.

When the Materials Science subject group was closed his colleagues went on to successful academic careers in other universities or industry, but Tony chose to stay as a reader in the Electrical, Electronic and Control subject group in the renamed School of Engineering. He continued to supervise undergraduate research projects for several years. Some of these involved cooperation with local engineering companies and he would tell me about them on the

Lewes-Falmer bus. One that I remember was from the days when bus destinations were displayed on blinds turned by hand. Tony said he and a student were helping a local firm to make an electronic indicator of the kind now used almost universally.

His wide-ranging interest in electronic control and his home in Lewes High Street (Georgian at the front and mediaeval at the back) are described more fully in the contributions below.

David Smith, Emeritus Reader in Chemistry

Our friendship began in the early 1970s, when we both lived in the village of Kingston. We discovered a mutual interest in early music and 18th century musical instruments: I from the standpoint of teacher, performer, restorer, and Tony as the academic, polymath and inventor that he was. Eventually both families moved into Lewes.

Before the final move to a cottage in East Hoathly, Tony had a wonderful workshop in the basement of Castle Hill House, in the High Street, where he could pursue his many and varied interests (see his son's tribute below). I still treasure the plastic gemshorn which he made for me, and also a picco pipe (of a similar material)—just two of his many projects to recreate and understand how instruments of an earlier period worked. Tony was very excited to discover and make a successful bid for a rare 18th C. example of a picco pipe (no more than 3.5" high) at Sotheby's auctioneers. Because it was such a fragile little thing I had volunteered to collect it in person for Tony, but contrary to instructions the pipe was consigned to Royal Mail ... and to our unending disappointment, never seen again.

Once resident in East Hoathly Tony became fascinated with crystal sets. Large coils, one metre across, were visible in the downstairs study. He would happily discuss Q factors over a cup of coffee. However, he was frustrated in that due to having a pacemaker, he could not take some of the measurements he wanted to. Fortunately, his wife Leila was able to wave the 'probe' as directed so his tests could continue.

I shall always remember with affection the warmth of the welcome that I received from Tony, and Leila (who died in January 2020) and the lively conversations which ensued over all manner of topics.

Sheila Wood

I have been compiling a list of Dad's activities and interests outside his 'official' label of scientist (which in itself seems sufficient including seventeen patents and countless published papers). All of these interests have associated memorable stories attached to them.

Cacti, Crystal Sets, Sailing, Beekeeping, Robots, Early Music, Mistletoe propagation, Hieronymus Bosch Paintings, Carnivorous plants, Stereo photography, Insect vision, Cartoons, Religious Neon Lights, Animation, Valves, Tree Frogs, Neural Nets and Brain Modelling, Victorian Optical Toys, Cream Cakes, Duelling Pistols, Snails, Early Plastics, Baird Television, Electric Cars, Injection Moulding, Giant Hogweed, Consciousness, Formula One, Woodwinds, Explosives, Water-Meadow Plants, Gourds, Kinder Eggs, Bat detectors, Space flight (he was

friendly with the head of NASA, also a magnetician, during the moon landings), Pinhole Cameras, Printing and Etching, Music Theory, Junk Markets, Amateur Radio, Early Computing, Watercolour.

(Most days when I think of him I remember something else to add to the list!)

Tony's son, Leigh Simpson, the photographer

Nancy Holmes

Nancy Holmes died at Oaklands Care Home, Hove, on December 23rd, aged 91. There will be a memorial service at High Hurstwood church in the summer. An obituary notice will be published in the next issue of the Newsletter.

David Smith

Suss-Ex

Patron: Sir Gordon Conway

The website

More information about Suss-Ex is available on its webpage at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/suss-ex/>. 'Suss-Ex Club' in Google will get you there, as will <http://tiny.cc/sussex>, or you can find us in the A-Z on the University's homepage. The website has copies of past Newsletters.

The steering committee

Suss-Ex activities are organised by a steering committee, which currently comprises:

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