

KierLink

The magazine for the Kier Fellowship | Issue 48 | Autumn/Winter 2025



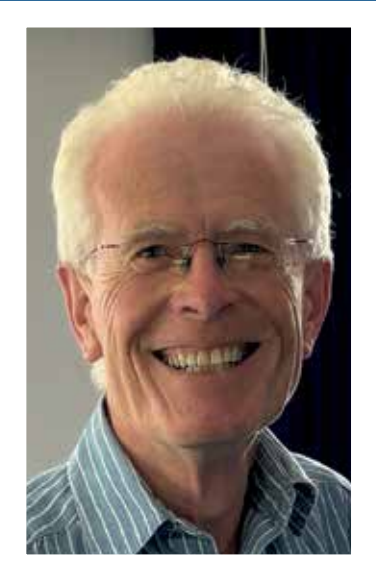
NATIONAL GOLF DAY
PAGE 8

AROUND THE REGIONS
PAGES 10-33

THANK YOU, HAROLD
PAGES 38-39



Pictured:
**HS2/EKFB: Sheephouse Wood Bat
Mitigation Structure visit**



Neil Meixner

Chairman’s matters and Administrator’s report

As we write this the Kier Group 2024–5 results have just been announced and an excellent set of results they are! Improved profits and a final dividend of 5.2p, making 7.2p with reduced debt is really great news.

We must thank Andrew Davies for his stewardship during a particularly torrid time and for his efforts which have seen Kier emerge stronger and fitter than before. Also, we wish Stuart Togwell all the very best in continuing the strong growth in all areas.

In July 2025 a number of the Fellowship directors and area organisers (AO) met with senior Kier staff at the newly reopened Foley Street headquarters in London to further reinforce the now stronger links between the two organisations. This allowed us to identify the people within Kier who are best placed to assist us going forward.

We’d like to express our heartfelt thanks to Viv Chesterfield. She has decided to stand down from the Fellowship board after some 20 years’ service encompassing editing KierLink, organising the garden parties and latterly serving on the Tempsford organisers committee which she will continue to do going forward.

We decided it would be great if this year’s visit to the flagship HS2 project should concentrate on saying thank you to the Fellowship leaders and organisers who do so



Brendan O’Boyle

much for all of us. See the report on our visit to the ‘Bat Tunnel’ later in this issue.

Please contact your AO or one of us if you’d like to help keep the Fellowship vibrant! We still need an organiser for the Liverpool/Manchester area and helpers in all other areas are always welcome.

We are sure you’ll enjoy this edition of KierLink. We are always seeking interesting items for inclusion in future editions. If you have been on a memorable holiday, have celebrated a special event, or indeed want to share some work experiences, please contact any of us noted at the end and we will be pleased to assist you.

Interest in the Fellowship remains high with new members joining since the last KierLink. We currently have 1,339 members compared with 1,338 in March 2025.

We make no apology for reiterating that we need to encourage a new crop of retirees/leavers so if you know of any why not see if they’d like to join the Fellowship. The application form is available on the website, or you can get one by contacting Brendan.

Please also make sure that you notify us of any change of address either to your AO or Brendan so that our records can be updated. It is helpful to have any new telephone number and email as well to ensure that you continue to receive invitations to events and copies of the KierLink magazine.

Contact emails:

- brendan.o’boyle.ext@kier.co.uk
- neilmeixner@gmail.com
- andrea.mcdaid@outlook.com

Neil Meixner & Brendan O’Boyle

Editor’s note

Dear members, welcome to this issue which is 44 pages!

You will notice that we have a ‘Kier branded look’. Since the Group has taken the Fellowship back under its wing, we now must adhere to the Kier brand guidelines – something I know much about having worked in the graphic design team from 2001 to 2015.

Since my last note, I have been on two holidays in September both of which were in Norfolk.

The first was a week away with friends. We stayed at Daisy’s Barn, Mattishall – a tiny village five miles from Dereham. The property sleeps eight with large private garden and hot tub.

The second was a long weekend in the East Wing Airbnb, Thornham, for mum-in-law’s 80th birthday. Again, a tiny, but beautiful, village with a three-mile coastal walk on the doorstep. The property also sleeps eight.

I would recommend both properties. The locations are good, beds comfortable (which is a must) and I’m rating them five stars – unusual for me as I’m fussy!

Best wishes, Andrea

READER’S FEEDBACK

We would like to ask members to write in with any suggestions for future editions. You may fancy, for example, gardening tips on flora or vegetable growing, recipes or anything that matters to you. Please send your ideas to Brendan.

COPY DEADLINE FOR ISSUE 49 2026:

Monday 13 April 2026

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New members

A warm welcome to the following new members

Name	City/town	Area	Workd for	Service
Kevin Barnes	Reading, Berkshire	Central	Kier Central	14
Bernard Biel	Clifton, Bristol	Bristol/Newport	Kier Design	8
David Coleman	Northampton, Northants	Rushden	Kier Transportation	16
Mick Cutler	Northallerton, North Yorks	Leeds	KME	3
Mark Dady	Wisbech, Norfolk	Waterbeach	Kier Eastern	39
Maxine Dady	Wisbech, Norfolk	Waterbeach	Kier Eastern	15
Patrick Haddaf	Tiverton, Devon	Devon/Cornwall	Kier Utilities	7
David Hendy	Plymouth, Devon	Devon/Cornwall	Kier Western	19
Tracey Jones	Bingham, Nottingham	Central	Kier Construction	2
Denis Lightfoot	Stamford, Lincolnshire	Waterbeach	Kier Eastern	22
James McDade	Colchester, Essex	Waterbeach	Kier Eastern	2
Andrea McDaid	Bedford, Bedfordshire	Tempsford	Kier Limited	24
Mike Palmer	Southampton, Hampshire	Solent	Kier Southern	25
David Pritchard	Wisbech, Cambridgeshire	Waterbeach	Kier Eastern	28
Mitch Ross	Patchway, Bristol	Bristol/Newport	Kier Construction	13
Howard Sanger	Sutton, Surrey	Solent	Kier National Resources	18
Michael Sealy	Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire	Waterbeach	EKFB HS2	8
Tanya Shuttleworth	Woking, Surrey	Solent	Kier Construction Strategic Projects	7
Owen Smith	Great Barr, West Midlands	Central	Kier Transportation	7
Stanley Wilson	Cambridge, Cambridgeshire	Waterbeach	Kier Limited	20



1956-2025

Shirley Taylor

I first met Shirley while at school through Young Enterprise. Our first ‘date’ was on 7 April 1973 and that was the start of our 52-year relationship. She was extremely intelligent achieving 8 O’levels in English, German, French and Spanish plus A’levels in English Literature, French and German. Having a gift for languages, she went to Cardiff University studying Spanish, French and Italian. She majored in Spanish and Portuguese.

At her graduation she was invited to work for the government translating and started working for the Secret Service (SS), MI6. I was the only one she told. She heard some disturbing things which upset her. That, together with having to lie to her family and friends, made her decide the work wasn’t for her.

The SS arranged for her to work in DTI. Here she worked on the trade desk for Spain and Portugal. She produced helpful guidance for exporters with one commenting on ‘Portugal – A country Profile’ saying that it was:

“An informative, clear and concise publication... free of what is commonly termed @official ambiguity.”

Praise indeed although what the civil service thought who knows!

In 1985 Shirley wondered how intelligent she was so sat the Mensa test. The result was she had an IQ of 153.

Later, she transferred to the Air Division, part of DTI, and had been in post for a couple of days when rumours of the Westland Crisis surfaced. She found herself having to brief Micheal Hesletine who invited her to stand behind the speaker’s chair while he performed.

She had to meet executives from Westland and travelled to Italy a number of times during

negotiations with Agusta, the Italian Helicopter manufacturer. Having strong links with Westland she was invited to the presentation of the World Helicopter speed Record Certificate at Battersea heliport by Prince Andrew and Fergie. The Westland Lynx helicopter achieved a speed of 249mph which to date has not been beaten.

Shirley moved on from the Air Division and became involved in Audio Visual Eureka (AVE). It was concerned with getting all European content producers to work together to improve innovation and reduce costs. She travelled to Brussels and the film festival at Caan for meetings, with a final meeting in Paris where Sir Richard Attenborough addressed the conference.

AVE was a success. Her boss at the time gave her:

“Many thanks for her excellent work holding together Audio Visual Eureka through the crucial months. A real success for us given the background and very much down to you.”

She left this department to head up the Latin America trade desk. On the first day of negotiations in Argentina there was an attempted coup on the streets with tanks and gunfire. The Argentinians weren’t too bothered saying:

“It’ll soon be over.”

Around this time Shirley had reached a promotional ceiling with very few opportunities in the Civil Service. She took voluntary redundancy in 1995 and retrained as a solicitor while doing voluntary work at the Citizens Advice Bureaux.

In 1996 she obtained her law degree from the University of Westminster. She was finally admitted as a solicitor of the Supreme Court in April 2001.

She continued her training but to join Cancer Research UK as a charity legacy officer. She enjoyed the work but heard of a company called Legacy Link who did the same work but filling in for various charities when they had vacancies or illness. Shirley liked the idea so left Cancer Research and worked for Legacy Link until she retired. She said:

“It was the best job she’d ever had.”

Work wasn’t Shirley’s only passion. She loved travel, ‘The Arts’ and most of all learning. We travelled around Europe visiting most countries either skiing or going to art galleries, the opera or classical concerts.

She continued studying, gaining a Certificate of Higher Education in history and one in history of art. She also became a Selection Event Volunteer for the 2012 games.

Shirley also appeared in series 18 episode 11 of Eggheads beating Judith, the Egghead, with whom she was paired – a great achievement!

Shirley ran her first London Marathon in 2004, raising ‘more money by an individual and handed over in the shortest time’ the organiser had ever seen. She also ran many half marathons one triathlon, so she could say she’d done one!

For our big anniversaries we had some amazing trips. Our 20th was to Canada staying at Lake Louise. Our 25th was to Peru at the Sanctuary Lodge just outside the gates to Machu Picchu. For our 30th we followed the itinerary given in South Africa given to me by Tony M – many thanks Tony. For our 40th we did a tour of Northern Spain.

Unfortunately, we never made it to our 50th anniversary, as Shirley was diagnosed with Lewy Body Dementia in January 2023. It slowly robbed her of her movement, then her languages, and she died in hospital in September this year. A sorry end for a many talented person, but it was a blessing, as she hated the person she had become.

Shirley will be greatly missed by her husband, Jeff, along with all their family and friends.

“YES DICK”

My mobile rings. I ignore it. It rings again. I’m under my yacht antifouling her, the second muckiest job on a yacht. You need overalls, face mask, gloves... the lot. It’s mid-February 2010 with an easterly wind whipping around Gosport Boatyard. This call had better be worth it. It’s Dick Side, our chairman.

“Ah, Graham, just the man. I would like you to start at Solent area of our Fellowship now that Maple Cross is combined with London. I have spoken to Peter Wallbank, Tony Wager, Rod Christensen and Graham Baker. They are all keen to help you do the work and in fact you could take all the credit.” He manages to suppress further comments.

“What does it involve?” says Graham.

“Just a lunch every year – an absolute doodle,” says Dick.

I could see my brushes hardening in the paint can!

All my years in the construction industry have taught me to resist ‘opportunities’ like this one. However, I was out maneuvered by Dick’s persuasive charms and his pincer techniques.

“Yes Dick.”

Now, over 15 years later, the Solent area is thriving with over 100 members, six enthusiastic organisers’ and monthly events. The dictionary describes fellowship as ‘a society of people sharing mutual interests, activities, friendship etc.’ Corny, I know, but I’m so pleased that on a windy February day I said:

“Yes Dick.”

Graham Willoughby

Message from the chief executive



Andrew Davies

Hello everyone, and welcome to the latest edition of KierLink.

Andrew Davies

TO DO

National golf day

**St. Neots Golf Course:
15/09/2025**



Winner: Malcolm Burton

It was with some trepidation that we gathered in 45-50mph winds amidst some fallen trees on the course at the club for our annual event. In the end, the course proved to be remarkably



Nearest the pin on 8:
Julian Armitage

well protected from those winds and even a little rain towards the end did not dampen the spirits.

The day started with the traditional bacon roll and tea/coffee prior to a morning tee.



Back 9: Paul Kenworthy



Front 9: Jeff Kercher

Many thanks to Malcom Burton who totted up the scores and established



Nearest the pin in 2 on 17:
Tim Upward

the winners. Also, to Ian Tidey for arranging the day although unfortunately in the end he couldn't attend.

We very much enjoyed the two-course late lunch provided by the club in our own private room.

Neil Meixner presented the prizes as follows:

- Nearest the pin on 8:
Julian Armitage
- Back 9:
Paul Kenworthy
- Front 9:
Jeff Kercher
- Nearest the pin in 2 on 17:
Tim Upward
- Kier Fellowship winner:
Malcolm Burton

Neil Meixner

Obituaries

Our thoughts are with the loved ones of those who have passed away.

Hugh Aitken	20/08/2025
George Barnes	17/05/2025
Simon Boddy	06/09/2025
Adrian Brown	24/06/2025
Hubert Burrows	24/04/2025
Raymond Butt	30/06/2025
David Carter	20/06/2025
Leslie Carter	09/07/2025
Rajinder Chhatwal	15/04/2025
Rod Christensen	20/07/2025
Linda Clark	15/06/2025
Alan Collick	19/04/2025
Irene Dupree	24/09/2025
Rosemary Easton	19/04/2025
Gillian (Gill) Feeney	04/10/2025
William Ferry	11/08/2025
Malcolm Gandy	10/08/2025
Paul Gillett	09/06/2025
Graham Harris	08/07/2025
Delia Heppenstal	14/05/2025
Frank Hodgson	TBA
William Hollister	07/08/2025
Brian Holmes	17/06/2025
Avril Huges	14/07/2025
Wilfred Jones	29/06/2025

Stephen Kiss	03/08/2025
Vijita Kulatunga	01/07/2025
Roy Mills	27/06/2025
James Mitchell	03/08/2025
Carol Moore	20/07/2025
Iris Murfet	12/07/2025
Kenneth Nelson	20/08/2025
Marlene Newton	17/06/2025
Edward Nicholls	28/06/2025
John Nock	21/07/2025
Harbans Panesar	07/07/2025
Graham Phillips	14/07/2025
Douglas Pomphrey	26/08/2025
Robert Powell	22/08/2025
Ruby Roberts	04/07/2025
Ronald Shrimpton	19/04/2025
Eric Smith	22/05/2025
L Sneddon	12/08/2025
Shirley Taylor	04/09/2025
John Wayte	24/06/2025
Vera Westmacott	04/07/2025
Gerald Whitty	20/08/2025
Ian Weir	16/05/2025
John Young	05/04/2025

Around the regions

BRISTOL/NEWPORT



We arranged a site visit to a major new section of the A417 road on the edge of the Cotswolds, near Cheltenham, followed by a lunch.

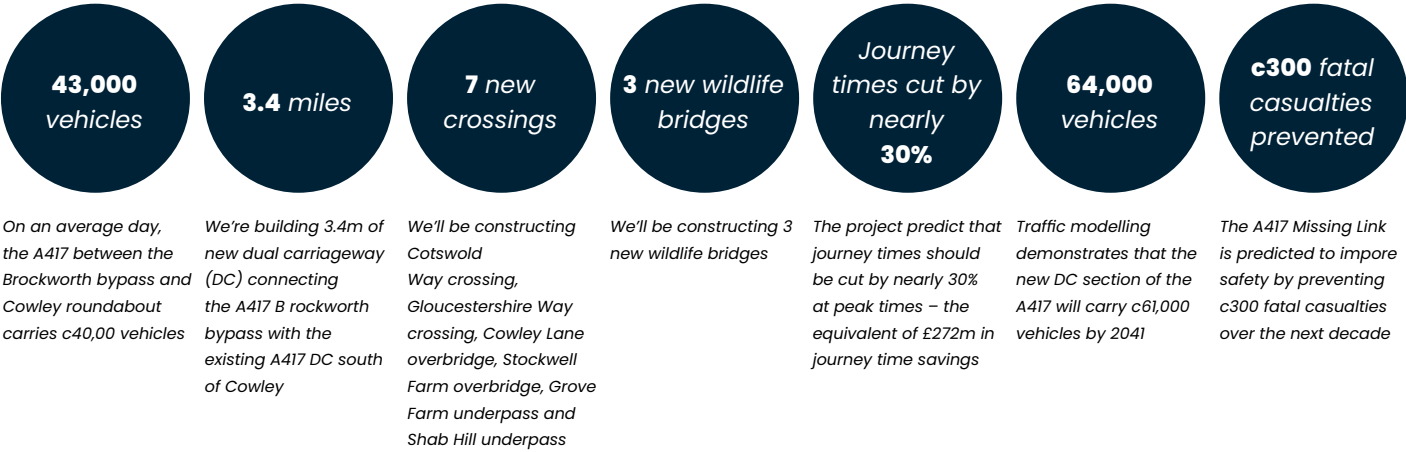


Various schemes to bypass this congested and dangerous section of road near Birdlip have been put forward and discussed for many years, but it is finally happening and Kier Transportation Ltd are currently well ahead of programme. The new route through farmland had to take account of the climb from the Severn flood plain,

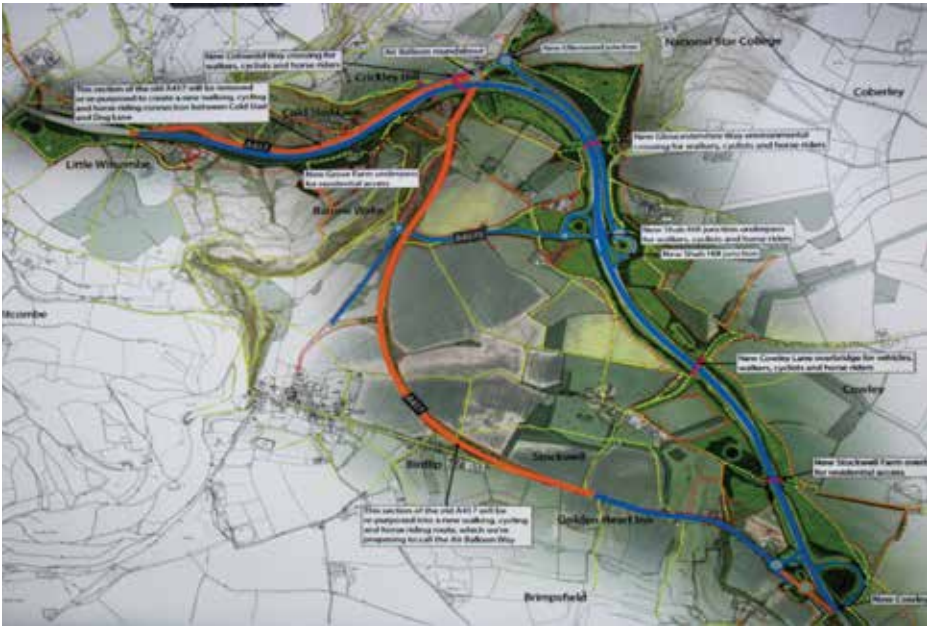
long-distance views, important areas of grassland and rare wildlife. Eleven of us had an excellent presentation from Carolyne Ferguson MCIPR, head of stakeholder, customer and communications. The 3.4 mile stretch of road currently handles 40,000 vehicles per day but this will rise to 64,000 by 2041. It is currently a very dangerous and congested length of the A417. It is estimated that, as well as reducing journey times by 30%, this new section will save some 300 fatalities over the next decade. Kier ran into difficulties recruiting experienced local masons to construct the many miles of new drystone walls and had to recruit from Ireland but then also had to re-train these masons in the local style of wall using new Cotswold stone.



Some fascinating project statistics relating to the A417 Missing Link system:



During construction of the new A417:		H&S statistics:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">4.5mT of earth excavated36,000cu.m of surfacing works20 miles of drainage work14 miles of road restraint systems installed.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Over 2.5m man hours have been worked to dateLot time incident LTI, 1RIDDORS, zeroMHFA'S, 17 on siteLighthouse charity/ MIndProstate testing on site, cholesterol, women's related testing.
<p>Following the presentation, we were able to go to the windy viewing platform over-looking the major new 24m deep rock cutting. All the rock from</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Currently 3cum of earth excavated150 large machines on site, the largest is 300TDeepest excavation to date is at Shab Valley, 24mAverage age of machine drivers excavating is 55500 people on site70% of people live away from the projectRenting, hotels, shopping, supporting local economy.



this went through the on-site crusher to form a new easier gradient up the escarpment. Our event ended with a very good lunch at the nearby Green Dragon Inn. A most enjoyable day. Our Christmas lunch is booked for Thursday 11 December 2025 at The Old Barn Inn, near Newport. David Priddis

CENTRAL

What a lovely summer and a regular itinerary of events in the central area helped us to enjoy it together.

In May, a group of 15 enjoyed an excellent guided tour of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. Our knowledgeable guide initially told us about the history of the theatre from the original 1800's building destroyed by fire in the 1920's to the current theatre which underwent a major renovation and re-opened in 2010 in a style that suited how Shakespearean plays were originally performed, effectively, in the round. The new configuration meaning that no seat is more than 15m from the stage.

We visited the auditorium and viewed the stage set for the production of Much Ado About Nothing which was being performed that evening. We then viewed the stage manager's control booth and heard how technology is now being used to assist in the productions. We continued our visit seeing wardrobe areas where costumes for the current production were stored and maintained. We also saw a very well-equipped laundry area where the costumes are cleaned and ironed after each day's performances. Our guide showed us quite a few props including wigs, beards, prosthetic noses and fake blood.

After an excellent and thoroughly recommended guided tour we retired for lunch at the Dirty Duck, a pub a few yards from the theatre, which has been frequented over the years by many of the famous actors who have performed at the theatre.

The start of June saw us once again visiting Sheila Heath's beautiful garden in the middle of The Forest of Dean for another barbecue and some very



Deep in the Forest of Dean

competitive croquet on the lawn! Some joined an enjoyable ramble deep in the forest with a commentary from Sheila on local heritage including an early 20th Century gold mine.

June also saw our regular golfing group visit to Thornbury Golf Club hosted by John Blagg who is a former captain there. John showed us all how to play his course and comfortably won his winner's prize back!



Staying in the air-conditioned bar at Newbury races

Our active group from the former Newbury office had a busy August with a great day of racing at Newbury and their regular lunch gathering at the Hatchet Inn, Newbury.

The summer events ended in September with a walk along the beautiful River Churn and through some stunning Cotswolds countryside, before returning to North



Newbury office team at lunch

Cerney and lunch in the Bathurst Arms. Our walk leader, Tony Large, gave us a fascinating insight into the history and significance of the area which, because of its Roman connections, has been extensively investigated by archaeologists. The River Churn became Corin under the Roman occupation, hence Cirencester's Roman title, Corinium. We also passed by the site of the Oppidum of Bagendon, one of the first towns in Europe, built over 2,000 years ago by the Dobunni Tribe and a major centre of power in the Iron Age. Now it's only visible as hillside earthworks.



Walking in The Cotswolds

The end of our year of events will be our Christmas lunch to be held again at Lilleybrook Golf Club, Cheltenham, on 10 December and we look forward to seeing many old friends there again this year.

Robin Butler

DEVON/CORNWALL

On a very rainy and blustery day in September, 21 members and guests congregated once again at The Marsh Mills Beefeater in Plymouth for our late summer get together.



We were again looked after extremely well by the staff and enjoyed a leisurely meal with friends and colleagues plus some new members that we hadn't seen in many years. They were met with surprise and delight to our core membership. Thank you to David and Brenda, we hope you will become regulars at our Fellowship lunches.

Our Christmas lunch will be held at the popular Boringdon Park Golf Club at the beginning of December – further details to be advised.

Shirley Riddle



LEEDS

Since my last report, I organised a lunch which was held on 18 May 2025 at the Bridge Hotel and Spa, Walshford. This continues to be a favoured venue due to its location and proximity to the AIM.



Walshford lunch

Twenty-three members attended which is the largest number since I have been area organiser. Looking around the room, it was just so great to see members deep in conversation, enjoying themselves and happy. The food from the carvery was great, the service good and everyone went home filled with good cheer.

Our next lunch will be held on Sunday 19 October 2025. While I would dearly love more members to attend, I have come to realise that I will never manage to get a date that is suitable for all so all I can do is ensure that those who attend have the best time. Our December lunch will be held on Sunday 7 December 2025.

Sadly, I must report the death of Frank Hodgson – he leaves a widow, Mairi. Condolences were conveyed to Mairi from our members. Our active membership currently stands at 44 which is a slight increase on last year.

I am encouraged that we are starting to contribute to the KierLink and in this

edition we have, what I hope, will be a regular contribution from Frank Heleniak called ‘Frank’s corner.’ We also have a contribution from David Hicks about his time at Kier back in the 60’s when he was a young engineer at Ferrybridge ‘C’ power station. We received a lovely note from Sue Simpson in response to the article about Jimmy Empson featured in the last edition of KierLink. I would like to thank Andrea McDaid for all her help in producing the magazine – I know our members appreciate receiving it.

I added up the years’ service that I had of our active members at Kier and it came to over 800 so I am sure there must be a few more stories to share given that length of service! Hobbies and interests of members are areas which I am hoping can be explored and featured in further editions. Watch this space!

I met with Dan Doherty, managing director for Kier Northern and Scotland. Dan had been approached by the senior team at Kier to get involved with the Fellowship on a national basis and this is something he is very keen to do. Dan was encouraged by all our efforts to be involved with the Fellowship, recognising that logistical, health and other matters may well hinder attendance at our lunches.

Dan has also very kindly suggested and offered site visits for our members and mentioned a couple that may be of interest, namely Leeds Town Hall and the Rother Valley site.

Members have been reminded that they are eligible for the Kier Benefits.

Finally, I would also like to thank my friend and fellow member, Sarah Topping, for her support at our lunches, and for her help when IT gets the better of me!

Glenda Hamilton

Ferrybridge ‘C’ power station

When I took over from Anne Leslie as area organiser for Leeds in March 2024, I asked members to complete a questionnaire to provide a little bit of information about themselves and their time at Kier. David Hicks was one member who did exactly that.

David said he thought that his brief time at Kier, just over three years, would not be significant enough to share. David said:

“He would, if I was interested, tell me of his experience during his service where he really enjoyed every minute and was forever in his memory.”

I could hardly turn down this opportunity and told David that even though he may not have been at Kier long, it was what he had done or experienced that was just as important.

David then sent me a treasure trove of material. These included Kier vintage, blue-covered brochures, dating from the early years of J.L. Kier and Co. Ltd. One of the brochures refers to Kier’s head office moving to Bedfordshire in 1967 and states ‘the famous, blue-covered brochure was first produced some 30 years ago’. They certainly offer a fascinating insight into the variety of work undertaken by Kier from building a penguin pool in London Zoo, to building flats, bridges, and power stations to name a few projects.

He also sent newspaper articles, now tinged brown, plus photographs of Ferrybridge Power Station where he worked and which this article is primarily about.

I could not let this opportunity pass me by so armed with the documentation received, I met up with David and his lovely wife, Diane, earlier this year with Sarah Topping, a fellow member. David

and Diane have four grown up sons: Jonathan, Matthew, Steven, and James, who they are immensely proud of. They are also grandparents to two grandsons and two granddaughters. Oh, and they have a much-loved dog, Barney.

David has glaucoma and annoyingly for him he can no longer drive. They both love travelling and not being able to drive has not stopped them going to places, although they do now tend to travel in the UK by coach or rail. David still has a keen interest in Kier and on his travels looks out for the Kier name and noticed work was underway at Rother Valley which is not too far away from where he and Diane live.



David and Diane

David’s story

David’s journey into construction and engineering started through a family connection. David’s much-loved uncle asked him what he wanted to do as a career, and he said he wanted to be a civil engineer like him. This came as a surprise to David’s father as he had presumed that David wanted to work in the family garage business in Sheffield.

David’s aunt and uncle lived in a flat in Richmond, London, where they had just returned from South Africa as it was removed from the Commonwealth.

David's uncle was second in command of United Steel Construction.

His uncle fixed David up with four weeks' work experience with Kier. His uncle's office was in Grosvenor Gardens, London, and Kier's head office was just around the corner. David thought his uncle used to socialise with Kier management and that was how he came to be offered work experience at Northumberland Park at the age of 16. David was paid £3 17s 6d a week, but it cost him five guineas just to get to work by tube and rail. His father subsidised him by paying for his rail fare. David worked a 5½ days week, working on a Saturday morning like most people used to do at that time.

David is unclear about how it came about but he later received a letter from Kier offering him a full-time job as a junior engineer at the now decommissioned Ratcliffe-on-Soar power station, at the side of the M1, which he accepted.

David was later transferred to Ferrybridge power station which he thought happened because he was not particularly good at his job. It turned out that it was thought it would be in David's best interest and safer to be a little closer to home. He had been travelling some 50 miles each way, every day, from his home in Sheffield to Ratcliffe-on-Soar and had had a near-fatal accident in his beloved Volkswagen Beetle, in which he turned the car over and nearly killed himself.

When David arrived at Ferrybridge, there was a man there who he looked up to. That man was called Tommy McGinn. He was Scottish and lived in Edlington, Doncaster, at the time. Tommy was David's hero and he looked after David. Tommy was the tower foreman on Tower 2B, later becoming the tower foreman on Tower 3A, which was David's tower, and they got on very well.

The cooling towers

The design of the cooling tower shells was the responsibility of Film Cooling Towers (Concrete). Half its shares were held by Film Cooling Towers (1925) Ltd and half by JL Kier and Co.

David explained that the cooling towers stood 385ft tall with only the bottom 90ft used to hold water, the rest allowing steam to escape and cool naturally. Beneath the towers, culverts carried water, sourced from the River Aire, which was an essential source as power stations require vast water supplies for steam generation and cooling. Water travels up a standpipe and then along a flume and from the flume there is a network of pipes that come out of the side of the flume. They go around the circumference of the tower allowing the water to cascade down the interior.

At the base of the tower there are legs which support the towers which allow the breeze/wind to aid in evaporative cooling. There were no tanks, just under tower culverts and river-fed systems. It is the hot water, the steam, which makes the turbines work producing electricity.

David said that it took six months to build a cooling tower from start to finish, the programme being to build one ring a day. A ring was 3ft 4" high. A climbing scaffold was used which Kier devised, so you could move it, lift it, and climb it, while some other companies e.g. Holst, used scaffolding that went all the way up the tower. Half a ring was completed first then, when that was finished, the other half would be started and finished.

Six rings were built in a week. Sunday was a working day when maintenance was undertaken, and the climbing scaffold & shutters would be lifted ready for the week ahead.



Climbing scaffold

There were usually between 26 and 28 people working on a cooling tower, which included eight scaffolders. Health & safety measures were in place, not to the standard they are today, and not everyone chose to wear safety protection.

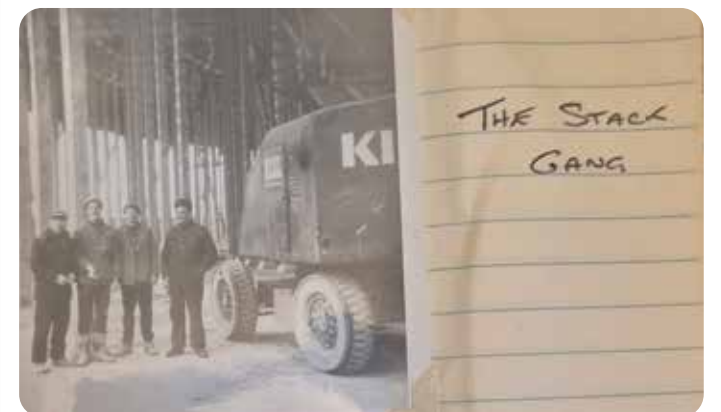


Workers wearing no safety equipment

Anyone working in a dangerous position e.g. scaffolders and shutter hands who were lifting shutters off from the outside, used to wear a short belt and clip themselves on to the scaffold. Another shutter hand would be on the inside of the scaffold doing the same and then they would fix the bolts and tighten them. David would then go along and tighten the bolts to the shape of the tower. David had to check that the concrete was 5" thick or within the permitted tolerance of 3" either way. Anything over this and the ring would have to be demolished which was a rare occurrence.

Cooling towers are wide at the bottom, slimmer in the middle and wide at the top. At the bottom of the tower the concrete was 18" thick. Over six rings which was circa 20" high, the thickness reduced from 18" to 5" and it went 5" all the way up until the coping and then it went to a foot.

Looking through many photographs David had taken, he referenced one showing a 'stack' and one showing the 'stack' team, which was made up of a crane driver and three other men. David did the setting out and levelling out for the stack team.



The columns, brought in from a company in Cullingworth, near Bradford, were made of precast concrete and they also manufactured the concrete beams used within the towers. One of the most difficult jobs was the actual beam work itself – feeding the beams through the columns.

Once this was completed the timber work commenced.

The fateful day: 01/11/1965

David had bought a camera to take photographs on site and it came in particularly useful on 1 November 1965 when disaster struck. Sixty years later, David still remembers that day when three of the eight cooling towers collapsed.



The layout of the towers

David explained that the eight towers were positioned in two parallel staggered rows and were numbered 4b, 3b, 3a – that was David's tower – and 2a, 2b, 1b, 1a and 4a.

David recounted the story that on that morning he was in one of the surrounding buildings with a handful of people when the wages clerk and the site secretary joined them. Bearing in mind it was very windy and it had already blown the toilet roof off plus various other things, the wages clerk said:

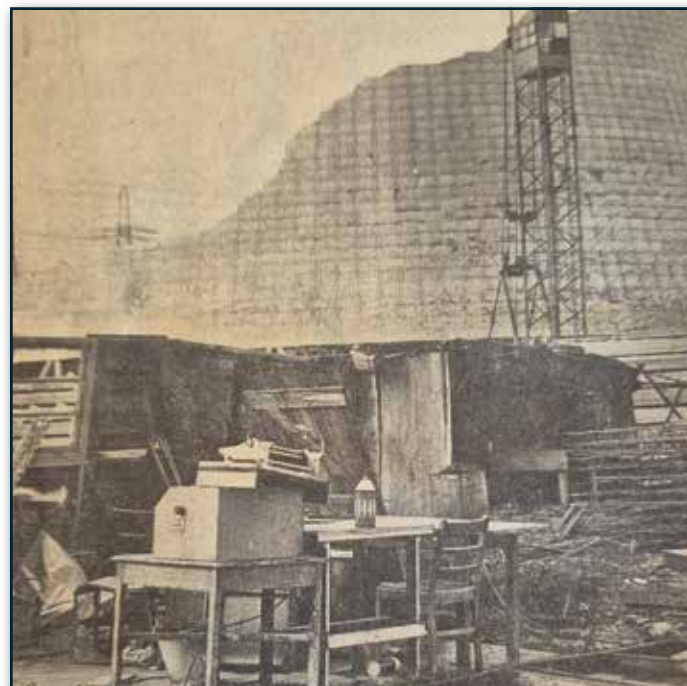
"Do you know, this wind is strong enough to blow that tower down." The secretary said: *"Oh don't say things like that,"* and within about 20 minutes a tower was down.

The cooling towers were built to stand 100 miles per hour (mph) gales but the three cooling towers collapsed in strong 84mph winds, creating a funnel effect among the towers due to the placement

of them. David described how the extreme wind hit 1b first at around 10.20am which collapsed, closely followed by 1a at around 10.40am and then 2a about 11.00am. David said there was little rubble following the collapse as it had fallen inside the towers.

Only three workers were injured out of the 48 or so inside the towers and they were all sent home after treatment. Fortunately, there had been fewer men inside the towers than there would normally have been. They had been sweeping up in readiness for the handover of two more towers to the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB). It had been that windy that they could hardly sweep, so the general foreman decided to send them home.

One of the injured, a young man, who was sweeping inside the flume told the story that he was unaware what was happening because suddenly it had gone quiet. He said he knew that something was not right and decided to leave the tower to find out.



What's left of the chairman's cabin

There was a staircase that went down around the standpipe. He came out of the door of the cooling tower and started walking down and out of the door where

the cooling tower was behind him. Given this, he would not have seen the tower because he was on the other side of the flume. He did not know what was happening until he got to the very bottom and then he just sat and froze. Two men had to pick him up and take him to the cabin. The other two men's escape route took them to a sewage farm across from the site where they jumped and unfortunately landed in the sewage.

A local barmaid had gone to the site with her dad armed with a camera. She snapped away not knowing if the photographs would be any good, but they turned out perfectly. One taken of the third tower collapsing appeared in the Daily Express on 2 November 1965.



Taken by the barmaid: shows the collapse of the third tower

David called home to inform his parents what had happened, but his uncle had already told his mother. When she answered the telephone, she was that surprised to hear from David she fainted in relief.

Before the three towers could be rebuilt they had to be fully demolished. Kier rebuilt one of the towers and Holst the other two. Kier secured more work from the strengthening of the shell on

the remaining five towers and 4" of concrete was added to the 5" thickness. Additionally, most cooling towers now have a third vertical leg providing more support to the shell.

Newspaper reports and industry publications initially suggested several reasons for the collapse. An investigation took place and a Committee of Enquiry set up by the CEGB. In a report published in August 1966 it was found that 'there were errors and omissions in the design and specifications of the towers' which led to a serious under-estimate of the reinforcement necessary to resist severe wind pressure. It produced overwhelming evidence that the collapse was started by vertical tensile failure within the shell fabric.

No blame was apportioned to any company associated with the building of the cooling towers and the Committee of Enquiry made several recommendations, including a careful study to be conducted of the whole philosophy of the structural design of cooling towers.

After Kier

After leaving Ferrybridge power station, David had a varied career in the construction industry. He worked at Sammy Foxes Steelworks in Sheffield on a project for Henry Boot. He then worked directly for Henry Boot as an engineer which David recalled was 'one of the worst experiences of his life.' He was there a year and worked on Woodhead Pass, the trans-Pennine route across the Peak District National Park, North of England, connecting Greater Manchester to South Yorkshire.

There are three tunnels under Woodhead Pass, two original ones and one that was still working at that time which was electrified, to take trains from Sheffield

Victoria to Manchester Piccadilly. David was part of the team that took the overhead cables down and replaced them with cables which run through the tunnels.

David then secured a job as a surveyor with Derbyshire County Council on highways at Matlock. He enjoyed his time at the council, the people were nice, and he stayed for a year. He then joined Sheffield City Engineers. This went through too many local government re-organisations which spoilt it and it was not the same workplace that he joined.

David said that: *“Working for Kier was the best part of his working life.”* He said: *“We were a happy family and if someone got hurt, it affected everyone.”* Anecdotaly, David was asked what he learnt at Ferrybridge. David said: *“He learnt to swear!”*



Note:

This is an abridged version of our meeting as there simply would not be enough space in KierLink for all of David’s stories! David has often wondered what became of Tommy as he lost touch with him. However, in an earlier edition of KierLink (2022), he noticed the name Thomas McGinn in the obituary column. David is unsure if this is the same Tommy that he remembered so well. If anyone reading this can shed any light on whether this is the same Tommy, or has any information about him, could they please contact Brendan O’Boyle.

Glenda Hamilton

Jimmy Empson

It was so interesting to read the article on Jimmy in the last issue of the KierLink as I know Jimmy from my time as senior receptionist at Kier Northern, Boston Spa offices.



Jimmy and I had many a conversation when he came into reception and I was aware of his joinery expertise. Seeing the photographs of some of his work brought to mind the wagon with a carved driver in memory of my late husband Denis. He made it over 17 years ago for my first grandson. All five grandsons have enjoyed playing with it over the years. Such treasured memories of both Denis and Jimmy.

Sue Simpson

Frank’s corner

I am delighted to let you know that Frank Heleniak who spent 41 years at Kier Northern, Leeds, latterly as site manager, has agreed to contribute to KierLink.

Frank used to provide some facts for the in-house magazine that I used to edit for Leeds called ‘Coast to Coast.’ Frank’s contribution was called ‘Frank’s corner’ and was always an interesting read.

Andrea McDaid, editor of KierLink, may well remember this as she created the magazine from the articles sent.

So, here’s Frank’s first submission – we hope you like it.

Did you know?

- Nowhere in Britain is more than 74.5 miles from the sea
- The town of Beverley, near Hull, was named after the large number of beavers that lived in the area
- Britain is the only country in the world which does not have the country name on its postage stamps
- The bell called ‘Big Ben’ is housed in St. Stephen’s Tower
- The flag of England is called the Union Flag when it is seen on land and Union Jack when it is being used on a ship – ‘Jack’ because it must be flown on the ‘Jack mast’ of a vessel
- Los Angeles’s full name is ‘El Pueblo De Nuestra La Reina De Los Angeles De Porciuncula’ and can be abbreviated to 3.3% of its size – LA
- ‘The sixth sick sheik’s sixth sheep is sick’ is said to be the toughest tongue twister in the English language.



LOUGHTON/WITHAM

Lawn bowling day: 04/06/2025



Here we go – bowling at Writtle

Twenty-four members and guests met at Writtle Bowls Club for, what is fast becoming, our annual ‘Lawn Bowling Day’. We were blessed with fine weather and once again enjoyed the beautiful surroundings of the club.

After coffee, biscuits and a quick briefing we took to the green for an hour or so until it was time to go into the club house for a splendid buffet lunch and a drink from the bar for those that wished. It was quite noticeable during the morning that the accuracy of some of the bowling was much improved from last year and that everyone was enjoying themselves. Chris, Steve and Jim call in the umpire

After lunch we bowled for another hour, followed by tea and cakes back in the club house. We then departed with our grateful thanks to the members at Writtle for their help and encouragement, plus the catering team for their sustenance.

John Abbott



John and Jeanne enjoy a sit down in the afternoon

River Lea cruise: 03/07/2025



On a pleasant sunny day, 18 members met at Ware town quay for a cruise on the River Lea. After boarding the boat, we had a fish-n-chip lunch. The bar was open – beer, wine and later tea or coffee were available. We passed the unique Ware gazebos that overhang the river’s edge.

We then cruised through the contrasting town centre and beautiful Lea Valley’s Amwell Nature Reserve seeing swans, coots and rare glebes – not forgetting the ducks!

We traversed Hardmead Lock and returned back past the Ware town quay down to a large weir. Once again, the scenery was lovely and everyone commented how good the cruise was.

John Spray

Golf Day at Dyrham Park Country Club: 23/07/2025



Group members and guests

After holding the golf day at Abridge Golf Club for some years, the grand setting of Dyrham Park Country Club was selected as the new venue for the 2025 event.

This year the members were playing for the John Simson Trophy. John was a great supporter of this golf event, so it was fitting for the trophy to be named in his memory.

The day was well attended with eight members (M) and seven guests (G) who prior to teeing off enjoyed sausage baps and tea/coffee.

The golf course fairways were not in the best of condition, having had a lot of work undertaken to improve drainage and also suffering from the

very hot and dry conditions. The tees and greens however had been sprinkled with water and were in good condition. The weather was very kind to us on the day as it

was overcast and warm with little or no wind to effect shots. As the rounds were completed there was sufficient time for a cooling drink before consuming a very tasty dinner of chicken and leek pie with chips and vegetables. After dinner there was a selection of prizes awarded and the winners were as follows:

- Nearest the pin on 148-yard par 3 Lauren Major (G)
- Nearest the pin in 2 shots on a 305-yard par 4 was Rob Henshaw (G)
- Best points total on front 9 holes was Gary Brinn 18 points on countback (G)
- Best points total on back 9 holes was Steve Game 19 points on countback (M)
- Best overall points winner Rob Ray with 37 points (G).

Malcolm Burton



Winner: John Simson

MAIDSTONE

We held our annual summer BBQ on Thursday 19 June 2025 in the garden of the Cornwallis Suite, Maidstone. Forty-four members attended and the weather was hot – in fact so hot we sat and ate our BBQ inside and then went into the garden with our drinks where everyone had a good catch-up.

Boat trip

On Tuesday 9 September 2025, 23 members embarked on the Kentish Lady for a boat trip to Allington Castle which is privately owned so not open to the public.

Our tour of the castle involved a look around the beautiful grounds and its impressive Great Hall. We learnt about the incredible history of the castle while strolling through the courtyards, ‘Italian garden’ and ‘lavender walk’ which are surrounded by a moat fronted by two great lakes.

Allington Castle is certainly an impressive building and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon. Again, the weather was fine, sunny and dry. On the return journey back



Members at Allington Castle

to the centre of Maidstone town, tea and coffee was served along with cake.

Christmas lunch

Our annual Christmas lunch will be held on Thursday 18 December at the Cornwallis Suite, Maidstone.

All of our events this year have been well supported which is very encouraging and makes the work organising these trips worthwhile.

We are now in the process of organising events for 2026.

Anne Ransley

MAPLE CROSS

Valentines day meal



It was raining lightly as the 23 of us arrived at Biggles restaurant next to the airfield at Denham where the food is consistently good. As usual we met at

the bar with our old friends, catching up on how our Christmas’s went. We also remembered my old friend Eddie McCudden who sadly passed away on Christmas day.

We sat down for our meal and I had the mushrooms followed by Peri Peri chicken and both were delicious.

The ‘sweet trolley’ was not available so we were told a long list of what was

available. However, I could never remember what was on offer at the start by the time the list ended. Still there was plenty of variety.

At the end of the meal Norman advised that Maple Cross had been sold and would be vacated by the end of the month. The end of an era indeed! I’m sure many people remember other offices, as do I, so I guess it is progress and the company is continuing.

St. Georges Day Meal

Once again, on a sunny day, a welcome return to the Blue Check Restaurant in Bushey. The food has always been good there with a great choice made on the day.



There was the usual mingling before the meal, catching up with old friends with a drink from the bar in hand.



Unusually the restaurant wasn't busy so there was plenty of room for small groups to form and places to sit.



We had one long table in the centre of the room for the 22 people at the meal which was a nice place to be especially as it wasn't noisy.



The service was good though you had to remember what you'd ordered as they only noted the quantity of each meal, not who'd ordered it!

I think everyone ended up with something to eat and probably what they'd ordered as well. The food was again very good and I enjoyed it as I think most people did.

Jeff Taylor

Roger Forbes' abseil



I'm Roger Forbes. I used to work for Kier Southern, generally based at Maple Cross. I worked on several site-based projects around

the home counties and Southampton, eventually becoming the quality manager for the three offices.

I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in 1994. Over the years I've moved around the Home Counties and raised two sons who have now flown the nest.



I used to attend the Harrow MS Centre where I served as a trustee for several years while still working at Kier. I was medically retired in 2009 due to ill health.



I now live in a lovely bungalow in Bradley Stoke, North Bristol, conveniently close to the Brightwell MS Centre. The centre

offers oxygen therapy and physiotherapy for those living with neurological conditions such as MS. I've been a trustee of the Brightwell centre for five years now and have been fortunate to help raise funds each year.

This year, I joined other supporters of the centre in an abseil off the roof of the local village hotel – approximately 65 feet high! I was lucky enough to raise about £1,300. Altogether, the abseil event raised a staggering £12,000. These photos feature me and some of the other amazing supporters of the centre.



The Brightwell centre is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year and has set an ambitious challenge to raise £40,000 to mark the occasion. You can find out more at:

www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/40k-for-40-years which ends 30 June.

To find out more about the centre you can visit:

www.thebrightwell.org.uk

Roger Forbes

"Well done Roger, I'm glad you had good weather for it," Ed.

Caroline McDonagh

In 1998-99, I was working in Cobham, building a new office for Countryside with Warwick Stevens and Caroline McDonagh. It was an interesting building with old air raid shelters found during the excavation, and problems with the wood capping to a spiral staircase which had been made by the Kier joinery shop as flat sections rather than a spiral. It was eventually put right with a lot of onsite planning. There were some other things which Warwick may remember but I won't mention in case they were true!



We were working with IEI (part of Kier) as the M&E contractors with Andy Benham running their section of work. It was the first time I'd come across modular wiring where the 'conduits' are prewired off site and just plugged into junction boxes. All switches were electronically controlled much like 'Alexa' compatible switches do today, but without the voice.

We were lucky enough to win the 'safety cup' and 'housekeeping cup'. Andy Benham received the IEI safety cup as well.

Months if not a year or so later, I received copies of the photo of us with the cup. By then I'd lost contact with Caroline so never gave her a copy. I think she'd left the company. I was told she'd called Maple Cross wanting to speak to me but she didn't leave her telephone number. By then

my personal organiser had been stolen from my company car, along with the company laptop, so I'd lost the number I had for her also.

Forward to December 2024: for Christmas I received a brand new Psion 5MX which was the organiser I'd had stolen. This is very old tech and finding one still boxed and wrapped was amazing. I still had my old backup, a lot of which I'd been able to convert to Word, Excel etc, but the databases didn't convert so I loaded my backup to play with it. I was just browsing all the files and came across my Cobham database and the second name was Caroline. Tyd Grey was the first and the person who introduced me to the Psion. I then remembered the photo and wondered if she had ever received her copy.

Amazingly I found the photo in my filing system so rang her number. No, there isn't a happy ending the number was discontinued!

If anyone knows of Caroline, maybe no longer McDonagh, let her know I still have the photo if she wants it.



Pictured l-r: Warwick Stevens, Jeff Taylor, Caroline McDonagh and Andy Benham, photo © Reflections Watford

RUSHDEN

The activities restart has seen a very positive response from those attending. Awareness is spreading and we want to encourage more colleagues to be (re)involved and give suggestions for activities.

Lunch at the Woolpack Inn, Islip, saw 14 members enjoy some excellent food and great conversations. Once again, lunch drifted on well past the eating!

A coach trip to the Nottingham Christmas market on 15 November has been organised and so far, we have 11 members joining us on the day. This is a great opportunity to see the bespoke market and explore the city centre.

We are returning to the Stanwick Hotel on 19 December for our Christmas lunch. The meal there in April was a great success and we are hoping for a large turnout.

The database only has an email address for 25% of the members. If you have not

previously provided one to us, please let us know on: roncgulliver@gmail.com

This would save a huge amount of work for hard copy communications and quicker communications with all our members.

In the meantime, a WhatsApp Group Chat has been set up, and if you are interested in being added to this, please let Ron Gulliver know via email: roncgulliver@gmail.com or mobile: 07910 9925674 and you will be added to this group.

There are only three committee members at present. If any of you are interested in joining us, please do let us know. We would be delighted to have you on board and help us with the organisation and direction of activities.

We very much look forward to welcoming more of you in the future and don't forget, any suggestions of venues or activities please let me know your thoughts. Coach trips require in excess of 45 persons to yield realistic costs.

Ron Gulliver

SOLENT

Hurst Castle visit: 14/08/2024



Members met at the car park for the ferry on a lovely sunny August day for the short ferry ride across to Hurst Castle – an English Heritage site at the narrowest part of the Solent.



Built in 1544, Hurst was part of Henry VII chain of artillery fortresses which, along with its smaller sister, Fort Victoria directly opposite on the Isle of Wight, protected the western approaches to the Solent and the naval base at Portsmouth. Hurst Castle remained in military use until the mid-1950s playing an active role through both World Wars.



Over the years, the castle was expanded and strengthened to meet new military threats. One of the most significant upgrades came in the 1860s when the construction of massive east and west wings added space for over 40 large guns, reinforcing its defensive power.

Another benefit of its location is restricted access, either by boat or a walk along a two mile shingle spit. Because of this the castle has been used as a prison holding King Charles I before his move to London for trial and execution. In the early 18th Century, it became a prison for those convicted of promoting Roman Catholicism.

The looming threat of a Napoleonic invasion in 1803 prompted further reinforcements, particularly around Dover and the Solent. Hurst Castle underwent a significant transformation, particularly at its core. A robust brick vault was installed at the former roof level of the keep supporting six formidable 24-pounder guns. Beneath this, a second vault was added to safeguard the castle's basement gunpowder magazine. The Tudor bastions also received structural



reinforcements, with their timber roofs replaced to allow them to bear the weight of additional eight-pounder French guns. These extensive modifications were carried out by a mix of military personnel and civilian labourers, with the work likely reaching completion in early 1807.

There's an impressive range of guns at the castle with the mighty 12.5" rifled muzzle-loading (RML) Mark I 38-ton guns taking pride of place. These guns fired 818lb shells capable of penetrating 14" of wrought iron at a range of 2,000 yards.



Smaller anti-aircraft guns are also based at the castle used in WWII.

In view of its perilous location a lighthouse was added to the spit in the late 18th Century. This was supplemented by a second lighthouse at the western end of the spit and later replaced by the one standing at the eastern end today.

Thruxton retro event: 22/06/2025

A small group of motoring enthusiasts met at Thruxton Circuit near Andover, Hampshire, at the annual historic two-day meeting to see legendary machines and racers on the fastest race circuit in the UK. This year the meeting was 'expanded' to include a mini-music festival and additional family attractions with a 70's theme. Abba and Dolly Parton tribute



bands provided the music along with DJ sets.

The grids for the Sunday included the Heroes of FF1600 Sixties Cup, Super performance Ferrari Club Classic Series, Mighty Minis, Heroes of FF1600 Sprint Series, Adrian Flux MG Owners Club Championship and the Jochen Rindt Trophy. There was also a demonstration of 'retired' F1 cars.



In addition to the day's racing a number of classic clubs exhibited their precious cars showcasing Jaguars, Ford GT 40's (some not necessarily originals!), Aston Martins, Austin Healis, McLaren's and a contingent of Fiat 500s and Alfa Romeos. A number of these cars took part in a parade around the track during the lunch break. We were also given the opportunity to visit the pits to see the cars in preparation and talk to the drivers/owners.

For the younger attendees there were various motoring themed attractions and

the opportunity for the kids to paint a vehicle with interesting results!



Annual barbeque: 25/06/2024



The barbeque was again arranged at the Royal Victoria Country Park on the banks of Southampton Water. This event has proved very popular and attracted 26 members with their partners. We were blessed with fine weather on one of the hottest days of the month and the food was enjoyed by all.



The park is on the site of the Victorian military hospital initially built in the 19th Century to treat military personnel across the Empire and later provide care for the injured in the Boar Wars and WWI and II.

The main hospital building was demolished in the mid-60's when a box containing a Victoria Cross, Crimea medal and a set of coins originally placed by Queen Victoria beneath the foundation



stone was removed and opened. The original hospital chapel has been retained and refurbished and is now open as a visitor's centre and exhibition space and venue.

Derek Ward

Solent 'tree huggers' visit Sir Harold Hilliers Gardens and Arboretum near Romsey: 22/07/2025



It was a changeable day when 13 of us arrived ready for our tree extravaganza! Trees are amazing. They communicate. They create their own rainfall. The mycelium network under the soil connects tree roots and it has been likened to a wood wide web! Yes really, they share resources like water and minerals. Who would (wood) have known! **Apologies on the pun hehe!**

The arboretum covers many acres starting with the 'centenary walk' and we admired the many shrubs and plants. We were of mixed fitness, some fit enough to explore most of the grounds while others slower and less able. It was my decision to split off in groups according to ability.

It rained for a while then after lunch the sun came out and we found more areas to explore. There are amazing natural and man-made sculptures, beautiful trees and a pond to marvel at. I did actually hug a huge chestnut tree – too big to reach all round. Some humans don't feel a connection.



It's lovely to see the wonderful trees all doing their own thing – doing their best to live, grow, flower and reproduce. We benefit from their waste product oxygen. Their bodies, wood. Their fruit, nuts. Their





There were a shop, art section and cafe which some of us took advantage of. You could buy plants as well if you wanted to.

If you ever want a day out to enjoy this tree collection, give it a go. One tree stands out. It's a youngster but one of the longest living trees on our planet – a sequoia, giant redwood. It's 50ft at the moment but will outlive all of us living now, as long as it survives human intervention and disease of course!



Happy tree hugging!
Sue Bridger

Tree huggers

John and Carol Clayton, Margaret Cook, Dave and Julie Latimer, Trish Edward's and companion, Graham and Linda Baker, John Bridger, Mike and Dawn, Susan Bridger, Kier Solent committee member, former estimator's assistant, Havant and Southampton.



beauty and magnificence to sooth our souls let alone being able to climb them!

When I was younger of course hehe!

We all appreciated the visit and enjoyed seeing each other even though we were not actually following each other around. Being of mixed ability did mean that some could not appreciate the vastness of the area, but those who could venture further saw more in the limited time we were there.



TEMPSFORD



Above/below: Harrold country park



As indicated in our last report, we have held a number of lunches at new venues. The first of these was at The Fox in Carlton near Bedford, on 11 June with 11 in attendance, preceded by a short walk for a few in the adjacent village of Harrold and around the country park. The second on 8 July, was at The Rising Sun in Potton near Biggleswade when 13 were present. Our third new lunch venue was The Fox and Hounds in Riseley, north of Bedford, on 11 September when 14 attended. On all occasions, we partook of quality food with excellent service. It's fair to say we will likely be visiting them again in 2026.



Members at The Fox and Hounds, Riseley

We have had two day trips so far. The first was a coach trip to the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire, on 28 May with 20 in attendance. The second was on 12



A view on the Ouse

August when our group of 20 enjoyed a leisurely 2.5 hour cruise on the Ouse followed by lunch at The Hartford Marina, Huntingdon. We had a similar cruise last year but this time we travelled upstream rather than downstream.



Members on the cruise

Our visit to The National Memorial Arboretum on 28 May was wonderful and thoroughly recommended to other AOs. The memorial has only been open since 2001 but commemorates most (if not all) conflicts around the world since WWI. There is even a tribute to those who have suffered recently in Ukraine. Upon arrival, there was opportunity to listen to the daily service of remembrance in the multi-faith chapel followed by coffee and biscuits. We were blessed with lovely weather – it had been very wet! Before lunch, we enjoyed a leisurely ride around the arboretum in a land-train listening to a recorded guide to the multitude of memorials erected within it.

Lunch had been pre-ordered in the onsite restaurant and then there was time to walk around the memorials, visit the internal museum and gift shop plus enjoy a coffee or ice-cream before returning to our coach. The following pictures show but a tiny fraction of the memorials and their peaceful surroundings. Many thanks to John Busby for organising a memorable outing.

We have a third day trip booked. We are looking forward to a return to the Thursford Spectacular (a West End Christmas show in Norfolk) on 20 November as it is some years since our last visit.



Falklands



Duke Of York's Military School



Fire and rescue



Glider Pilot Regiment



Land train



Royal Military Vet. Corps



The Polar Bear Regiment



The Railway Industry



The Queens Regiment



Womens Land Army WWI & II

On 5 November, at The Anchor, Great Barford, we will have a talk about Tempsford and the SOE operations in WWII followed by a buffet lunch. We will have our usual Christmas lunch at Pavenham Park Golf Club on 11 December but our next lunch will be on 9 October at The Park Pub, Bedford.

My thanks as always to my committee members who have undertaken most of the arrangements for these events.

Harold Thompson

Events 2025–2026

Date	Detail	Comments
Thursday 20/11/2025	Thursford Spectacular Christmas Show. Details to be confirmed. Additional bookings required by 20 December 2024. Contact Jane Gulliver on email: janemarytab22@gmail.com or Tel: 07884 118556.	Book/pay in advance, approx. £55+ PAYG meal
Wednesday 05/11/2025	Talk by Debbie Land (a Shuttleworth Collection volunteer) on Tempsford and the SOE operations in WWII, followed by a carvery lunch at The Anchor, Great Barford.	Book/pay in advance
Thursday 11/12/2025	Christmas get-together at Pavenham Park Golf Club, MK43 7PE. Rendezvous 12.15pm. Tel: 01234 822202. Return to a great venue.	Price TBA (£20-£25)
Tuesday 10/02/2026	Lunch at The Barley Mow, 27 Crosshall Road, Eaton Ford, St. Neots, PE19 7AB. Tel: 01480 474435. Rendezvous 12.15pm.	PAYG but pre-order
Thursday 12/03/2026	Lunch at The Mermaid, High Street, Ellington, Huntingdon, PE20 0AB.Tel: 01480 891106. Rendezvous 12.15pm.	PAYG

WATERBEACH

The Waterbeach area is seeing a steady growth in member numbers driven mainly through recent retirement of long service individuals.

I attach two photos from our recent ‘afternoon tea’ held at Congham hall, northeast of Kings Lynn, on Sunday 22 June.

A very pleasant afternoon was had by all 24 attendees with plenty of fizz to wash down the cakes.

We have our Christmas lunch already booked at our regular venue The Crown Lodge, Outwell, for Wednesday 10 December – invitations will be sent out shortly.

Mark Jude



Sayings from Duncan

Today I was in a shoe shop that sells only shoes, nothing else. A young girl with a tattoo and green hair walked over to me and asked: *“What brings you in today?”* I looked at her and said: *“I’m interested in buying a refrigerator.”* She didn’t quite know how to respond – had that deer in the headlights look.

When people see a cat’s litter box they always say: *“Oh, have you got a cat?”* I just say: *“No, it’s for company!”*

The easiest way to find something lost around the house is to buy a replacement.

The sole purpose of a child’s middle name is so he knows when he’s really in trouble. (It’s always a ‘he,’ Ed).

Eventually you will reach a point in life when you stop lying about your age and start bragging about it.

Ah! Being young is beautiful but being old is comfortable.

The older you get the tougher it is to lose weight because by then your body and fat have gotten to be really good friends.

Employment application blanks always ask who is to be called in case of an emergency. I think you should write: *“An ambulance.”*

Have you ever noticed or even thought about it? The Roman Numerals for forty (40) are XL. But no one will admit it.

I was thinking about old age and decided that old age is when you’re still on the ball but you are just too tired to bounce it.

Some people try to turn back their ‘odometers.’ Not me, I want people to know why I look this way.

I’ve travelled a long way and a lot of the roads were not paved.

Lord, keep your arm around my shoulder and your hand over my mouth. Pity, I didn’t learn that sooner.

May you always have love to share, cash to spare, tyres with air and friends who care.

HS2/EKFB

Sheephouse Wood Bat Mitigation Structure visit: 09/09/2025

Mark Pengelly and Neil Meixner hatched a plan to visit HS2 again this autumn, but this time around with the aim of thanking some members of the Fellowship for their hard work for the organisation. The invitation was therefore extended to the area organisers, their helpers and the directors.



To start the day, Mimi El-Sanhouri, EKFB’s project director for the Calvert area, headed up an excellent presentation giving us the background to the Bat Mitigation Structure (BMS), assisted by EKFB’s construction manager for the BMS, Paulo Bento, and his delivery team.

Here are some of the fascinating facts about this significant piece of engineering:

- The structure is around 1km long, around 23 metres wide, and up to 10 metres high. Built with the future in mind, the structure will accommodate for four track beds
- The 56-hectare woodland (which the structure will run alongside) is

home to several different bat species, including the rare Bechstein’s bat. All bats are legally protected in the UK so the structure is designed to allow bats to cross the HS2 line without the risk of being harmed. Please see David Priddis’s article on the ‘bat community’ follows over

- The structure is made up by a series of BEBO arches connected by steel mesh panels to allow natural ventilation
- Each BEBO arch is made up of two curved segments weighing between 12 and 27 tonnes. Two cranes are required to lift each segment into position and support them while the joint is sealed with concrete.

There followed an extremely interesting site visit during which the attendees were captured in front of the north portal of the structure.

Mark Pengelly summed up the sentiments of all who attended with this quote.

“A massive thank you to Mimi and her team at Calvert for hosting a visit for the Kier Fellowship (retired Kier staff). It was great to see the engineering excellence and the progress being achieved across this section of EKFB’s works. It never ceases to impress me what we have achieved and the positive legacy we will leave behind. Thank you once again and best of luck going forwards.”

Attendees were:

Mark Pengelly, Graham Garvie, John Abbott, Carol Abbott, Neil Meixner, Norman Elliott, John Stamford, Jane Gulliver, Kevin Byrne, Ron Gulliver, David Priddis, Peter Wallbank, Paul Tucker, Martin Scarth, Julian Dowling and Kristian Dowling.

Note:
David is the Kier Fellowship area organiser for Bristol/Newport. His amateur 40 years of bat conservation and research, mainly into rare Greater and Lesser Horseshoe bats, has led to many SSSI’s and a ‘Special Area of Conservation’ being designated. He was co-lead of the Bechstein’s Bat Survey for Gloucestershire in 2010 and holds Natural England Bat Licences.

Neil Meixner

HS2 and Bechstein’s bats – background information

We have 17 species of bats breeding in the UK. Bats have been living on our planet for 50 million years whereas humans only evolved about 100,000 years ago.



Bechstein’s Bat. © David Priddis

All our UK bats use ultrasonic (above our hearing) echolocation calls to navigate and find their insect prey – common

Pipistrelle bats may catch over 2,000 midges each in one night. Each species of bat has its own ecological ‘niche’ and many, like Bechstein’s, are confined to southern or southwest UK as they are on the northern extent of their range and have special needs in order to survive.

Bechstein’s bats (Myotis Bechstein) are one of several species of Myotis bats and are also now one of our rarest. Thousands of years ago, when our islands were all forest, they were one of our most common.

A number of species of moths and other insects have developed ultrasonic hearing so they can hear bats coming and take evasive action. Bechstein’s and a few others have tried to counteract this by having very quiet calls so insects cannot hear them coming. These ‘whispering bats’ have to have very large ears, even by bat standards, to hear the extremely



Retrieving a bat from the Harp Trap

feint echoes returning from their calls. This makes them very difficult for us to pick up their calls on a ‘bat detector,’ a transistor radio-like device which converts the ultrasonics to audible sounds. They also



‘glean’ insects off leaves while hovering and the hearing of some is so acute that they can hear a ladybird walking on a



leaf! It is also possible to analyse bat calls on a computer and identify many to a particular bat species. Bechstein’s calls, being so quiet and similar, when analysed to other related Myotis species, makes this very difficult.

Bechstein’s bats live only in mature and ancient woodland, using trees for roosts and often moving from one roost to another. They may also need to travel long distances in the autumn to favoured mating areas so the female can produce its single baby the following spring. The most certain way to identify this illusive



species is to catch them as they can then be identified when handled. This is not easy and also needs a licence from Natural England.

To catch these bats, we usually use a ‘harp trap’ and try to lure them into it by broadcasting some of their calls. The frame has fishing wire, instead of harp strings, and bats flying into it slide down into the trough below and are prevented from climbing out by an overhanging flap. In Gloucestershire, despite volunteers travelling 6,000 miles and a total of 1,200hrs, in 15 nights of surveys we only caught two Bechstein’s bats during the summer, yet we know from catches at their autumn ‘swarming’ (mating sites) that there is a significant population in the county.

David Priddis

Thank you, Harold



Harold Thompson has stepped down from The French Kier Benevolent Trust (TFKBT) due to illness. He has for the past 37 years acted as a truly excellent administrator, secretary and Trustee.

The Trustees presented him with an inscribed glass decanter at a charitable trust meeting in appreciation for all he had done over the years of his involvement.

In 1988, following the Beazer takeover of French Kier, Dick Allen (the then managing director of French Kier) called me into his office and said:

“There is this Charles S French Benevolent Fund (CSFBF) with £1.3m, what do you think we should do with it?”

Over the years I had been concerned with the insurance policy retirees. After numerous discussions around the Group, we decided that we would devote it to the employees on fixed pensions because

unlike the staff pension fund there was no inflation linking with the insurance pensions.

With the help of John Mantle, we wrote to every pensioner with over 10 years’ service on the books and asked if they needed any help. Many had pensions elsewhere but the outcome was that 356 said they would like some help.

The next step was to find Trustees to manage our activities. David Sheppard, Tony Clarke, Pip Pitts and I as chairman took on the task. I had always been

Joanne Challis has agreed to take over the administration. Joanne is the Charles S French Charitable Trust (CSFCT) manager and we are pleased she can assist. The TFKBT is currently funded by grants from the CSFCT and Kier. The current Trustees are Pip Pitts, Martin Scarth and John Stamford as chairman. It started in 1988 and had originally 356 beneficiaries. It has eight currently.

Over the years it has paid pension suppliants in June and December yearly as the beneficiaries have had no company pension entitlement. The Trustees send to the trust beneficiaries birthday cards and Christmas wishes to its members.

Thank you, Harold, and best wishes.

Martin Scarth

impressed with Harold Thompson’s secretarial work so Harold became our secretary – that was 37 years ago!

We decided that we wished to become more active Trustees and so sent all beneficiaries a birthday card. We then decided to have contact with our members and the initial party was held in the church hall in Epping New Road. What was strange is that 129 people said they were coming and 129 turned up! Subsequently, we moved our half yearly

functions to the Hawkey Hall, Woodford.

To follow on with the contact, we had Len Seymour (who had worked for WC French) appointed as visitor. Len loved the job and would let the Trustees know of any hardship cases which needed special help. We also decided to make two payments a year in June and December. In those days Harold had to issue income tax certificates so the workload was very busy but he managed admirably.

The CSFBF was very inefficient taxwise and after taking legal advice we changed the fund to a charity named ‘TFKBT’ which has benefitted the beneficiaries considerably. All this put a lot of work on Harold who coped with it extremely efficiently.

Harold would periodically do life expectancy calculations to calculate how long the fund would last with its twice-yearly payments. In 2008 it became apparent that we would run out of money in a few years so I wrote to Johns Dodds who gave an undertaking that Kier Group plc would cover the twice-yearly grants which continues today. With the deaths of David Sheppard and Tony Clark, Harold was appointed a Trustee of the CSFBF.

Over the years our beneficiaries have dropped from 356 to just eight currently. In April this year, Harold notified the Trustees that he had been diagnosed with a very serious illness which would require extensive treatment. The Trustees decided that it would be unfair to expect Harold

to continue and that he should concentrate on his treatment.

With the appointment of Martin Scarth as Trustee over the last few years, the TFKBT has had a closer working relationship with the Charles S French Charitable Trust. At a meeting in Stevenage in June, the ‘charitable trust manager’ Joanne Challis agreed to take over the administration of the FKBT.

The Trustees thanked Harold for 37 years of truly excellent administration where he had dealt with many issues successfully. We presented him with an inscribed wine decanter in appreciation of all that he had done. Harold said that, although he will be retired, he would help in any areas where he could.

John Stamford



A TRIBUTE TO...

09/07/1938–
12/01/2025

John Michael Hebblethwaite



John was born in Harrogate on the 9 July 1938. His mother was from Darlington and his father was from a Yorkshire Dales farming family. He has a younger sister, Anne. His father was in the Black Watch Regiment and sadly was killed in Italy just two weeks before the end of the WWII.

John's mother brought the two of them up in very straitened circumstances as a war widow, and consequently John started working on building sites at an early age. He was lucky in that he was advised to register with the Technical College for a City & Guilds apprenticeship. However, a far-sighted man dealing with his registration booked him on the Ordinary National Certificate Course, now equivalent to an 'A' Level, and this set him on the path to a good job in the building industry, ending up via home study with a Fellowship of the Institute of Builders. He worked initially for a firm called Beaumont & Wilson in Harrogate where he became a quantity surveyor.

John and Margaret married in 1964 and he then made a move to work with Conspan in York. Following two years with Conspan, he came down to Tempsford Hall in 1967 to work for Kier (then solely civil engineers) to start a building division. He started with Kier in the time of Olaf and Mogens Kier and developed a great respect for them. John worked at Kier for just over 30 years (having a 25-year presentation in 1992) finishing his career as financial director of Kier Build as well as being a Trustee on the Kier Pension Board. A wonderful achievement from his humble beginning carrying roof timbers on site! He retired in 1998, having often acted as a mentor, forging connections and making friends throughout his career with Kier.

John's willingness to help others was demonstrated when in 1998 Kier created the Kier Fellowship. John volunteered to become one of the founding Trustees and he continued to serve in the role for 12 years until April 2010.

Not being satisfied with that, he took on the responsibility to be area organiser for the Tempsford area for five years until 2003, organising lunches and other events for the members. Eventually he handed a thriving area over to John Skull to continue the good work.

Following the move south to Buckden in 1967, John became a committed member of the village community, taking the role of chair of the Buckden PTA as well as of the Village Hall Trust, and was instrumental in the building of the new village hall and club.

John was a great family man, with three children: Claire, John and Sonya. Plus, four grandchildren, all of whom he loved spending time with. Sport was also a must for John, and it was while he was in Harrogate that he started playing football for the local 'boys' club and cricket in the summer. The football and cricket continued in Buckden plus his part in the Kier summer cricket team. He had a lifelong interest in horse racing, pursuing this interest on-line as well as attending race meetings, and on his retirement took up golf.

All his life John had great enjoyment in music, the natural world and poetry. His favourite poem, which was read at his funeral, was Housman's 'Loveliest of trees, the Cherry now' which encompassed two of his greatest interests – the natural world and poetry. John is both missed and fondly remembered by all who knew him, friends and family alike.