

KierLink

The magazine for the Kier Fellowship | Issue 47 | Spring/Summer 2025



TRIBUTES
PAGES: 8/29/32

JIMMY EMPSON
PAGE 10-11

70TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY
PAGES 30-31



Pictured above:
Maidstone members 'afternoon tea'
at the Chilston Park Hotel



Neil Meixner



Brendan O'Boyle

Chairman's matters and Ad

It looks and feels as though Kier Group has weathered the storm and has emerged leaner & fitter to embrace the challenges to come. As we write this, the share price does not, in our opinion, reflect this renewed confidence. All of us, who are shareholders, are delighted that dividends are now being paid.

We are grateful that Kier has increased its financial support of the Fellowship which will help the area organisers respond better to the individual needs of their membership.

We have continued to reinforce links with the former regional business units and while good progress has been made in the period there is still a bit to do!

We reiterate the appeal on behalf of all the area organisers – they need your help in any way you can, however small, to ensure the continued prosperity of your area. Positions on organising committees and event organisation are constantly becoming available. Contact your area organiser or one of us if you'd like to help. In particular, we still need an organiser and helpers for the Liverpool/Manchester area.

Once again if you'd like to help, for example, with mock professional interviews, one-to-one mentoring or indeed providing work-winning expertise, do get in touch with either of us.

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 or have celebrated a special event, or indeed want to share 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 nine of our eleven active areas since the last KierLink and we currently have 1,344 members.

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Administrator's report

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 O'Boyle as below.

Please also make sure that you notify us of any change of address, either to your area organiser or Brendan O'Boyle, 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.

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.

Contact emails:

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

Neil Meixner & Brendan O'Boyle

*“Enjoy the spring
and summer
months!”*

COPY DEADLINE FOR ISSUE 48 2025:

Monday 22 September

Editor's note

Thank you so much for your contributions. We have another 32-page issue full of your regional events plus a few worthy 'tributes' to colleagues that have undoubtedly contributed to the success of the company with their skills and long-term service.

With a heavy heart, I report we have lost many loved ones. My sincere condolences go to all affected. If any of your loved ones aren't mentioned in the obituaries, please email Brendan, he will inform head office and we will make sure they are placed in the next issue.

On a lighter note, my nephew, Stephen, is coming to stay with us the first two weeks in August as he did last year. Due to many circumstances, we haven't been able to visit him early this year like we usually do and I'm missing him greatly.

Thankfully my sister, Lisa, has booked the two weeks off this year so we can share all the physical activities. Hopefully I won't be as shattered as the previous two years – I'm no 'spring chicken'!

We've already had the following ideas:

1. Fishing on the Ouse, Biggleswade – the only thing I'll probably catch is weed or a tree!
2. Willen Lake fair ground – I may suffer with vertigo!
3. Swimming at the Oasis, Bedford, and MacDonald's after for lunch – bad but yum!
4. Tennis in Bedford park – I need to buy rackets!
5. Langford Park, near Biggleswade – football, climbing and gym equipment – it's usually busy in summer so Stephen will make friends and we can rest with a picnic!
6. Corner 5, Box End, Kempston – they have an aqua park which Stephen would enjoy but this would depend on the weather as the water will be freezing!
7. Herrings Green Activity Farm, Bedford – Lisa bought tickets for us last year and it was a lovely experience
8. Lisa's found a place in Bedford town which has the old Space Invader game plus modern stuff – a chance for mum and I to leave them to it and do retail therapy!
9. Games, quizzes, baking... I'm tired already!

I'll let you know how we get on in the next issue.

Best wishes to you all.

Andrea McDaïd

A warm welcome to the following **new members**

NAME	CITY/TOWN	AREA	WORKED FOR	SERVICE
Jonathan Bennett	Leicester, Leicestershire	Central	Natural Resources, Nuclear & Networks	22
Amanda Byrne	Bonnyrigg, Midlothian	Tempsford	Kier North & Scotland	23
Dennis Cotton	Fakenham, Norfolk	Waterbeach	Kier Eastern	17
Shiona Curtis	Rushden, Northants	Rushden	Kier Group	5
Michael Davies	Pontypridd, Rhondda Cynon Taf	Bristol/Newport	Natural Resources, Nuclear & Networks	2
Armando Di Pietra	London	Loughton/Witham	Kier London	1
Stephen Dicks	Northampton, Northants	Rushden	Kier Eastern	42
Michael Duncalf	Kings Lynn, Norfolk	Waterbeach	Kier Eastern	40
James Fowler	Colchester, Essex	Loughton/Witham	Kier Eastern	30
Roy Francis	Chingford, Essex	Loughton/Witham	Kier Eastern	18
Mike Fullam	Bedford, Bedfordshire	Tempsford	Kier Group	35
Richard Heyes	Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire	Waterbeach	Kier Eastern	37
Kevin Hoare	Southport, Merseyside	Leeds	Kier Construction	23
Suresh Kumar	West Bromwich, West Midlands	Central	Kier Group Transportation	5
Brian Lancaster	Henbury, Bristol	Bristol/Newport	Kier Western	15
Martyn Lucas	Guildford, Surrey	Solent	Kier Group Transportation	6
David MacLeod	Reading, Berkshire	Maple Cross	Kier Engineering	10
Andrew Powell	Leeds, West Yorkshire	Central	Kier Northern	20
Graham Pryor	Dunstable, Bedfordshire	Maple Cross	Kier Construction	33
Sharon Pryor	Dunstable, Bedfordshire	Maple Cross	Kier Southern	17
Philip Randall	Maidstone, Kent	Maidstone	Kier Southern	17
Gillian Rogers	Northampton, Northants	Rushden	Kier Group	10
Roy Saunders	Swanley, Kent	Maidstone	Kier South East	17
Maro Stride	Brantham, Suffolk	Loughton/Witham	Kier Transportation	42
John Turney	Hitchin, Hertfordshire	Loughton/Witham	Kier Southern	21
Trevor White	Fordingbridge, Dorset	Solent	Kier Southern	14

Message from the Chief Executive



Andrew Davies

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

Thank you for continuing to be interested in Kier and how the company is performing. I would like to take this opportunity to update you all on our continued positive financial position and operational highlights.

I'm pleased to be able to report that we continue to go from strength to strength as a Group – bringing in high-quality new business, growing our cash and dramatically cutting our net debt.

It is likely you will have seen our interim results, which you can find on our website kier.co.uk. In the six months to 30 December 2024, we reported a 5% revenue increase on the same period last year, with an operating profit growth of 3%. In addition, our net cash has increased from £17m to £57.9m and average month-end net debt reduced from £136.5m to just £37.6m. This is all in line with promises we have made to the market in the past few years and, as with previous recent results, it shows that we are continuing to operate as a trustworthy, responsible business which consistently does what it says it is going to do.

Our strong cash performance has had two additional effects – allowing us both to launch an initial £20m share buyback scheme, which was announced in January, and to increase our interim dividend payment to 2.00p from 1.67p.

We owe our successful performance to the fantastic work of our 10,000 colleagues across Kier and our superb supply chain.

We continue to deliver infrastructure which is vital to the UK and have truly become a trusted partner to a range of government departments, public bodies and blue-chip private companies. This is down to the skill and professionalism of our people, and I would like to thank them for the role they have continued to play in Kier's growth.

A great example to illustrate the continuity of our work and our relationships is with the prisons we are building across the UK. In March, HMP Millsike was handed over to the Ministry of Justice and is already being used to reduce the huge amount of pressure on our prisons. This was an exceptional project completed on time, on budget and with zero serious incidents. As this project has been handed over for occupancy, we have turned our attentions northwards, signing the full contract for the Scottish Prison Service's new HMP Glasgow which will be a much-needed replacement for the ageing HMP Barlinnie.

We have also begun to prepare for work brought in with water companies across the country through their AMP8 mobilisation.

Elsewhere in the business, Kier Places has been awarded a place on Pagabo's £814m framework to provide a range of services to public sector organisations, while our Property division has created a new industrial joint venture with long-term partner Investec, to be known as Kier Realis Logistics, and successfully exchanged on its first site in Hemel Hempstead.

Before I finish, I'd also like to note the retirement of a Kier stalwart – the managing director of Construction's Eastern & Midlands division, Mark Dady. I'm sure many of you will recognise the name, as Mark retires after 39 years with us – starting out as a trainee quantity surveyor and rising to manage a Kier Construction region.

"Mark has been a vital part of what we have achieved and an incredible servant to Kier, and I would like to offer him a huge thank you and a wonderful retirement."

Thank you to all of you for your continued support.

Andrew Davies

Obituaries

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

Elizabeth Bell	22/01/2025
Arthur Bishop	28/11/2024
William Boulton	15/03/2025
Leonard Britton	12/11/2024
Raymond Butler	31/03/2025
Richard Bysouth	06/02/2025
Graeme Cassells	04/11/2024
Jean Chapman	06/01/2025
Douglas Clark	26/01/2025
Hazel Cooper	26/02/2025
Paul Coslett	31/10/2024
Susan Cox	26/10/2024
Neil Dobie	01/11/2024
Lewis Dobinson	07/10/2024
Peter Eaton	22/09/2024
David Edkins	02/03/2025
Michael Empson	28/10/2024
Jeanie Erskine	22/09/2024
Ethel Evans	05/11/2024
Anthony Feeney	16/11/2024
Susan Fenlon	01/10/2024
Benita Fuller	13/11/2024
Robert Franks	03/01/2025
Sylvia Freeth	26/02/2025
Paul Froggitt	01/01/2025
Michael Gibbs	09/09/2024
Iris Gillett	17/10/2024
George Gratton	08/03/2025
John Hartland	27/03/2025
Peter Hayman	03/01/2025
John Heeles	26/11/2024
Don Henderson	27/03/2025
Jeremy Hillier	02/11/2024
S Holland	11/09/2024
Angelika Hughes	18/02/2025
Stephen Jellett	28/12/2024
Patrick King	05/10/2024
Iris Lord	21/10/2024
Edmund McCudden	25/12/2024
Merik Malendewicz	27/10/2024

Moira Mann	07/11/2024
Brian Marston	09/10/2024
Annamarie Martyr	01/03/2025
Joseph Middlemiss	29/10/2024
Violet Moody	03/09/2024
Peter Morris	13/09/2024
Patricia Mott	10/10/2024
Richard Nash	23/03/2025
Joseph Nelson	26/01/2025
Peggy O'Hare	02/11/2024
Edna O'Toole	12/08/2022
Charles Oxford	20/09/2024
Roger Page	21/11/2024
Andrew Plummer	30/09/2024
Uter Potter	16/01/2025
Christine Preston	25/10/2024
Patricia Radley	22/10/2024
Ann Riddell	10/10/2024
William Ross	31/12/2024
Ron Shrimpton	04/2025
Colin Silver	29/09/2024
John Simpson	14/02/2025
Dermot Smallman	28/02/2025
Bernard Smith	31/08/2024
Helen Steadman	25/02/2025
Joan Swift	25/01/2025
Terence Tatham	13/12/2024
Sally Tomlinson	16/11/2024
Jacob Thompson	16/01/2025
Peter Thompson	09/03/2025
Eric Trotter	19/01/2025
Janet Wales	15/11/2024
Michael Ware	23/01/2025
Christine Wilcox	08/11/2024
Martin Willey	29/03/2025
Joyce Wilson	29/03/2025
Stuart Wilson	24/02/2025
Daisy Wordsworth	21/02/2025
John Young	04/04/2025

65@65: The final races...

...for the Fightback Fund

Due to some bad weather in the spring which caused the cancellation of a few Park Runs I had earmarked for my 65@65 challenge, I had to book myself into some races at fairly short notice. I had decided to finish on 8 June leaving me a week to spare in case something else cropped up – luckily it didn't!

This led me running several races in which I had not previously competed. These included half marathons at Milton Keynes & Stratford Upon Avon and 10k runs at Flitwick & Hitchin. In the latter, I met a guy whom I had been competing against for at least 15 years. I explained to him what I was doing and he kindly came to support me at my final run, plus a 5k run at Marston on the Friday before my final race.

I approached the Park Run team at my 'home' course for the final run. They were glad to help me by advertising what I was doing on their social media. This led to quite a few of my current and former runner's buddies to attend. Along with several of my family members it made for a very special day.

Over the course of the year, I raised around £3,500 for the MND Association. The giving page is still open should you wish to contribute.



Pictured l-r: John (Jerry's brother) and Jerry

Thanks to all of you that sponsored me – I am very grateful.

Jerry Pullinger



Scan the bar code to follow his epic journey here for 'Fightback Fund'.

EVENT: Kier Fellowship National Golf Day

Date:	15 September 2025	Includes:
Time:	From 10am	– Bacon roll and coffee/tea from 10am
Venue:	St. Neots Golf Club	– 18 holes of golf – first tee 11am
Contact:	Neil Meixner, kierfellowship@gmail.com	– Two-course late lunch
		– Prizes

A TRIBUTE TO...

06/02/2025

RICHARD BYSOUTH

It is with most heavy hearts we share the sad news that our friend and colleague Richard peacefully passed away on Thursday 6 February after a short illness.

In a career spanning more than 35 years at Kier, so many of us were touched by Richard's kindness, dedication, caring, funny and infectious personality. While studying at Salford University he first joined Build London as an industrial placement student in 1989, then rejoining full-time as a graduate engineer in 1991.

Richard became a chartered civil engineer (MICE) in 1999 and worked as a project manager on a mixture of commercial & education projects, before becoming a contracts manager. Richard then progressed to divisional director in 2012 followed by operations director in 2015. Richard also held the position of SHEA director for London & South East during this period. In March 2020, Richard joined the Aylesford office as operations director overseeing education and general works schemes across Kent.

Through this project delivery, Richard built strong relationships with the Department for Education. In January 2022 he became the education sector director for clients & markets leading the Kier Education team. Within these last few years Richard continued to support Kier Construction and its colleagues in delivering some truly life-changing projects. He brought joy and enthusiasm to day-to-day team life, celebrating successes and championing the team at every opportunity. Richard's steadfast passion for improving outcomes – be that the quality of the schools we deliver, striving to achieve the highest possible KPI scores, advocating for kSchoolTM and driving educational biophilia as a way to improve health, wellness and social mobility – is work his team will take forward as part of his lasting legacy to Kier.



Most recently, it was a joy to share with Richard that the award submission he wrote recognising all of our efforts, resulted in Kier winning 'Contractor of the Year' of Education Estates in October 2024. Although he was not well enough to attend in person, the trophy took pride of place at his home in recognition of his commitment to education and Kier.

Throughout his extensive career, Richard's pragmatism has been complemented by his unbounded passion, dedication and warmth. Richard has truly been one of our most inspirational and admired leaders, putting those around him at the forefront of everything he did.

We send our deepest and most heartfelt condolences to Richard's family; his wife, Delyth, and two daughters, Zoe and Zara.

NATIONAL GARDEN PARTY

BY JOHN STAMFORD

THE GARDEN PARTY TO CELEBRATE THE 26 YEARS OF THE FELLOWSHIP WAS HELD AT THE PAVENHAM PARK GOLF CLUB ON SUNDAY 30 JUNE 2024. ALTHOUGH NUMBERS WERE DOWN ON LAST YEAR THIS MAY HAVE BEEN DUE TO THE INCREASED COST OF COACH HIRE.

All visitors were greeted with sparkling wine or a soft drink. Grace was said by the long-standing Rushden member, John Boddington.



The staff then served a delicious three-course meal, where every wish was catered for, washed down with either red/white wine or soft drink. Coffee or tea was on a self-serve basis with a pause before the formal speeches.



First up was chairman Neil Meixner who said that the Fellowship was recovering from the Covid lockdown and that progress had been made during the year. Relationships with Kier Group were now on a positive footing. We were able to welcome Louisa Finlay (chief people officer of Kier Group and a long-term employee) as our guest speaker. This was the first time we had a Kier director attend one of our meetings for a long time.



Louisa spoke with confidence about the Group and its recovery. She was keen to develop employees to make Kier the strong construction company it had once been. She is a keen supporter of the Fellowship and hopes to have a closer working relationship with it in the future. Louisa mentioned that the Fellowship could provide mentors to some of the younger employees as she felt this would be helpful in their development and ultimately the Kier Group.



The event concluded with the usual big raffle organised by Viv Chesterfield which was generously supported.

Jimmy Empson

By Glenda Hamilton

This article shines a light on one of our Leeds members, namely Jimmy Empson. Jimmy and his wife, Ruth, have been attending the Fellowship lunches for many years. Jimmy will have been married to Ruth 63 years this year and they live in Upper Poppleton, near York. They have two children – a daughter, Jane, and son, David. They are proud grandparents to six grandchildren and are now great-grandparents to a 21-month-old girl called Maeve (at the time of writing).

Jimmy started his working life at the age of 15 in a joiners' shop in York called Biscombe and Friths where he learnt many aspects of joinery work, including working on coffins, with hand tools. As he progressed, he worked in peoples' houses and shops. He still remembers working in an office in York when he was an apprentice and, being the 'gofer,' was asked to get the 'elevenses'. He ran downstairs, then 'rattled a triangle with his ruler' on exiting the door. On his return, he could not understand why everyone was stood outside. Oh dear!

Jimmy decided to widen his experience and started working on building sites. His experience included, for example, the construction of roofs of varying types, fitting kitchens and all aspects of housing joinery.

Jimmy moved again, spending some time at York railway learning how to fit-out carriages. 'Townies' were not taken to very well at the railway, but it was not long before they found out 'who knew

their stuff' when they struggled to undertake a job or two.

Jimmy then joined Kier. The saying: "It is not what you know but who you know" springs to mind when you learn how Jimmy came to join Kier, albeit that Jimmy was, indeed, a skilled joiner. Ruth sang in a choir and in the choir was a lady called 'Angela.' Ruth and Jimmy attended one of the choir's dances, and it was there that Angela asked Jimmy if he would undertake some joinery work for her and her husband, Dave. At the time, neither Ruth nor Jimmy were aware of who Dave Bull was. However, before long, Jimmy found himself working for Kier whose office was in Boston Spa, West Yorkshire. It only turned out that Dave Bull was the managing director of the Leeds section of Kier!

Jimmy travelled all over when he first joined Kier. A couple of jobs he remembers working on are New Earswick for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and the maintenance of Seacroft Hospital, Leeds. He recalls working with Maurice Elliott, who is still a great friend today, and a Fellowship member; together they have many a tale to tell. Indeed, Jimmy thinks he could fill a book with what he has seen and done in his working life, so this is only a very brief 'potted history.'

Jimmy enjoyed his varied work at Kier but, sadly, at the age of 64, he was told he would never work again due to his failing health. Jimmy then had open heart surgery which he was lucky to come through. It

was following the heart surgery that Jimmy taught himself the art of wood-turning – more of which later.

His family say he is: "The cat with 10 lives" with what happened to him following his heart surgery and this is certainly true. Jimmy's health took another 'turn for the worse' when he started to suffer from severe headaches which sadly were not initially taken seriously by the medical profession. Ruth took matters into her own hands when, after a night out with friends, she took Jimmy to York A&E as he had been talking gibberish and walked as though he was very drunk when he clearly was not. He was diagnosed with a large subdural haematoma plus a small one on the other side of the brain's surface. Rather than operate, it was decided to try steroids and thank goodness they worked in stopping the bleed. A 'cat with 10 lives indeed'! Jimmy is not in the best of health now but he soldiers on.

Jimmy has plenty to occupy his days. He enjoys time spent in the greenhouse where he enjoys growing tomatoes and bedding plants. When not tending his produce, he can be found in the garage wood-turning which is great therapy for him. Jimmy is now an extremely talented wood-turner. He makes all sorts from bowls to stools, swords to gonks! 'You name it, Jimmy can do it.'

Jimmy makes the gonks for members of his family and friends; he brought a couple of them along to the Christmas

carvery lunch held in December as raffle prizes. In case anyone is not sure what a gonk is, it is a Nordic-style decorative figure that originated in Scandinavian and Nordic folklore. His next project is to make a platform for Maeve, his great-granddaughter, to stand in so that she can learn to bake and help her grandma in the kitchen, preparing things and undertaking other little jobs. The platform will, on completion, be adjustable to accommodate Maeve growing, and have a support so she cannot fall out. Other projects on his list to undertake include a toy chest and a 'Humpty Dumpty' stool, like the one he made for Maeve's uncle.

Jimmy still thinks he is 20 so will continue creating beautiful things as long as he can and as long as he receives requests to do so. Not bad for an 87-year-old! Commissions welcome! Jimmy continues to pass on his wood-turning knowledge to his family.

Here are a few fine examples of some of the things Jimmy has made over the years.



The stool (a 'Humpty Dumpty' stool) is Ricky's, Jimmy, and Ruth's grandson (Jane's son).



The swords were made for a friend who gives history talks in York.



The bowls, made of Ash, were made at the request of a friend.



The 'infamous' gonks made for family/friends.



The spinning stool comes apart; this type of stool was made in order that 'country ladies' could carry them from house to house and work while mixing with friends.



The pike was made for a friend who gives history talks in York.

Around the regions

Bristol/Newport

We had a good turnout from our fairly small area for our pre-Christmas lunch last November. Both this meal and our successful end of March lunch were at The Old Barn Inn at Langstone with over 20 attending each meal. The venue is about halfway between Bristol and Cardiff and is easily accessible from the M4 Motorway.



2024

On both occasions we were well looked after, the food and company were excellent and it was good to meet up with former colleagues – some of us have known each other for 55 years!



2024

On return home after the successful March meal, I was sad to learn that our Fellowship's most senior member, Dick Nash, had died four days before at 102 years old (please refer to separate obituary).



2025



2025

Unfortunately, it was not possible to have any other winter meetings this year but we hope, with the aid of some who have joined fairly recently, to arrange some visits during the summer. If not, too many members are on cruises!

David Priddis



2025

Central

'Missing Link' found in the Cotswolds

There was a lot of interest when we were offered a trip to see progress by Kier on the locally infamous 'Missing Link' (A417 dual carriageway). Valued at approximately £400m and passing through the special landscape of the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, it is a high-profile scheme with lots of local interest.

We received an enthusiastic presentation from Kier staff member Luke Geraghty and Megan Hughes from National Highways on the many archaeological and environmental challenges that have had to be addressed. Moving an abundance of adders to an alternative habitat was one of the many examples cited (event photos below).

Other activities in the region since the last KierLink have included our annual Christmas lunch at the

Lilleybrook Golf Club which was well attended, and a lunch at the ever-popular Beckford Inn to plan our events for the year. Future events planned include a guided backstage tour of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon in May, a garden party in The Forest of Dean and golf at Thornbury Golf Club, both in June.

For nearly 10 years a group from the old Newbury office have been meeting for lunch at the local Wetherspoon restaurant and have extended an invitation to all other Kier Fellowship members. Next gatherings are planned for 20 May and 19 August. They usually number 10-12. Occasionally we organise an away-day and are currently planning to revisit Newbury Races. We plan to open invitations to other members.

Robin Butler



Devon/Cornwall

Once again, members met up at Boringdon Park Golf Club for our annual Christmas lunch in December. Eighteen members and guests enjoyed a traditional lunch and the opportunity to catch up with friends and colleagues.

In March we visited the Marsh Mills Beefeater for our spring lunch which was enjoyed by all.

Our next lunch will be held in September (date to be confirmed). Our numbers are depleting so if anyone can encourage new members to join us then either bring them along or give them my contact details – a few new faces would be most welcome.

Shirley Riddle



Leeds

It is now over a year since I took over the role of area organiser from Anne Leslie for the Northern region. During that time, I have organised two lunches, one in May 2024 and one in December 2024, both held at the Bridge Hotel and Spa, Walshford. The first lunch was attended by 11 members and, although small, it really was a lovely occasion.

Numbers for the lunch in December were slightly higher at 19, and all attendees had a wonderful time. Anne organised two quizzes and ran a raffle to win prizes donated by members who were extremely generous. The money raised will be added to monies raised in future raffles for a charity/charities that will be chosen by members.

The Bridge Hotel and Spa was busy with other guests also enjoying their Christmas lunch. 'Father Christmas' called in to see us which added to the lovely lively atmosphere our members created. Compliments to the Bridge Hotel and Spa staff for providing us with a great carvery lunch and attending to our needs.



I am pleased to report that our membership is now finally up-to-date and streamlined so that only those members who wish to receive all correspondence do so. We have 42 members who wish to receive all correspondence including the KierLink magazine. Additionally, there are a further six members who only wish to be sent the KierLink magazine. Twenty-one members decided they no longer wished to receive any correspondence at all. Birthday cards are being issued and are being well-received.

Loughton/Witham

Since the last edition of KierLink, sadly I must report the deaths of two ex-employees of Kier Northern, namely George Gratton and John Simpson; sympathy cards were sent to their family on behalf of all Fellowship members.

I am trying to encourage our members to 'have a think' about submitting an article or two for KierLink and I am pleased to say they have started to deliver which is great.

I would like to thank Dan Doherty, managing director, Kier Northern, for his support of the Kier Fellowship, and to Yvonne Capitano, administrator, for her help with issuing correspondence to those members who prefer it to be posted rather than be sent by email.

A big 'thank you' to all members for their ongoing support in attending the lunches and for their appreciation of my efforts. The next lunch will be held on Sunday 18 May 2025.

A big 'shout out' for members to ask their Kier friends/ex-colleagues to consider joining the Kier Fellowship if they are currently not a member. Membership is now offered to those who have retired and leavers with more than five years' service.

Finally, I am looking forward to the next 12 months as area organiser when I hope members can continue to enjoy the organised lunches, our friendships, and hopefully we can continue to attract an increase in attendance, appreciating that the dates will not always be convenient. Additionally, I would welcome any suggestions for organising events other than lunches.

Glenda Hamilton

Royal Opera House tour: 23/10/2024

While many showed interest only 15 members were on the tour which was excellent and enjoyed by all!

Our tour host, Kavita, was very good and full of knowledge about the building and most other questions asked. The Royal Opera House theatre on this site was built in 1732. Being timber it burnt down in 1808 and 1856.



Queen Victoria was a regular visitor and raised funds to build a stone (brick) theatre in 1858. The main auditorium is Grade I listed. The architect was Edward Middleton Barry.

On our tour we saw the principal ballerina rehearsing and she will use three pairs of pointe shoes in each performance. We also saw rehearsals for forthcoming operas.

The area with the clothes for the performance was fascinating. Apparently, storage for scenery etc, was in Wales. It was unfortunate that when we entered the marvellous area where the scenery was made the staff were at lunch!

The building has the largest theatre lift in London.

John Spray



Christmas lunch: 19 December 2024

Forty-five members attended our annual Christmas lunch. This time we returned to Mulberry House which while being a bit more expensive, was welcomed by members.



The organising committee agreed to increase the subsidy from The Fellowship in an effort to make it as affordable as possible.

Members and guests were greeted with a welcome drink when they arrived at the Mulberry Suite which had been beautifully decorated for the Christmas period. We enjoyed our choices from the three-course

menu with a glass or two of wine (alternatives were available) and, as usual, the service from the team was excellent.

John Abbott

Events for 2025

DATE	EVENT	DESCRIPTION	COST
Wednesday 04/06/2025	Day at Writtle Bowls Club	This was a very popular event last year. Come and try your hand at the gentle art of lawn bowls. Or just join us for an excellent buffet lunch, a drink from the bar and afternoon tea, watch the entertainment and enjoy the company.	£12.50 p/p
Sunday 22/06/2025	National Garden Party	Held at Pavenham Golf Club, Bedford from 12pm onwards and includes a three-course lunch with wine.	£20.00 p/p
Thursday 03/07/2025	River Lea cruise	A fish and chip (plus starter) lunch cruise on the River Lea departing from private moorings at Broxbourne Riverside. Parking is available nearby. The cruise will last approximately two and a half hours.	£23.00 p/p
Wednesday 23/07/2025	Golf Day at Dyrham Park Country Club	Address: Galley Lane, Barnet, Hertfordshire, EN5 4RA. We will be playing for The John Simson Trophy. For those who have not played here before it does come highly recommended. To quote the club: "The golf course presents a rich and varied challenge for golfers of all abilities with tree-lined fairways and several water hazards." The day will comprise of a light breakfast on arrival at 9.30am, 18 holes and a one-course lunch after play. Places are limited to 16. To reserve your place contact Barry Sadler at bcsletterbox@gmail.com (*Before any contribution from The Fellowship)	£75.00 p/p (see *)
Thursday 11/09/2025	Day at Writtle Bowls Club	We return for an autumn buffet lunch, a drink from the bar and afternoon tea. There will be another opportunity to try our hand at lawn bowls provided that the weather is suitable.	£12.50 p/p
Wednesday 08/10/2025 (TBC)	Biggin Hill Aerodrome visit	Former SHE advisor John Callaghan is a guide. The visit will include a guided tour, talk and lunch. A coach will run from the Metropolitan Police Club at Chigwell.	£TBC
Thursday 11/12/2025	Christmas lunch at Mulberry House, Ongar	This will include a traditional three-course festive lunch with a welcome drink and wine on the table.	£36.00 p/p

Maidstone

Last year we only managed to hold two events which was our annual summer BBQ in June and our annual Christmas lunch in December 2024. Both of these events were very well supported. Unfortunately, we did not take any photos.

About 50 members attended our 'afternoon tea' on Thursday 24 April at the Chilston Park Hotel which is a 17th Century Manor House. The staircase is a beautiful and one of the staff members took our photo for this memorable evening enjoyed by all.



We have our annual BBQ reserved for Thursday 19 June 2025 and we also have our annual Christmas lunch reserved for Wednesday 17 December 2025.

We hope this year to organise a theatre trip to the Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury. The reason for visiting our local theatre is that it is now becoming so expensive to organise a trip to a London theatre with rising coach costs.

Anne Ransley

Maple Cross

Events for 2025

DATE	EVENT
Thursday 20/02/2025	Valentines Day lunch
Thursday 24/04/2025	St. Georges Day lunch
Sunday 22/06/2025	Kier Fellowship garden party
Monday 21/07/2025	Windsor Horse Racing
Thursday 09/10/2025	Autumn lunch
Wednesday 10/12/2025	Christmas lunch

Windsor Horse Racing



The OddsOn area had the advantage of 'allocated seating' whereas in the Jubilee Club area we had to dash in to grab tables and chairs.

The luck was with us again with the weather getting better as the evening progressed and it was a bumper turn out with 16 people.



Norman had reserved an area with two tables of eight at the OddsOn. We'd previously been in the Jubilee Club enclosure but all the tickets had gone when he came to book. The OddsOn area had the advantage of allocated seating whereas in the Jubilee Club area we had to dash in to grab tables and chairs sufficient for our group.

The food and drink availability was the same as before – fish n chips, pizza plus many other things.

There were the usual eight races with the first at 5.18pm and the last at 8.50pm. There are many ways to place bets (all the better to relieve you of your money) and I'd not really figured out what was what. There were four different accumulator style bets, so if one of the horses doesn't win or place, everything is lost. I preferred to bet individually as there's always 'next time'.

I learnt from Nigel the difference between 'place and each-way' bets which I usually do as there is a greater chance of winning, though less money. At the end of the eight races, between me & Shirley we lost and won precisely 'nothing'. Others had similar luck. We and a few others wandered off before the last race as it started to feel a little cold. Some people stayed on for the after-race party which was 'Soul & Motown'.



Autumn lunch

On 24 October we returned to the Blue Check Restaurant, Bushey, with lovely memories of our previous visit. It was a sunny autumn day and even the road outside didn't seem as busy to cross as last time (at least for me).

Amongst the 24 people present, I was pleased to see David MacLeod and his wife Monica. It seemed years since we last spoke and probably was. Unfortunately, I was a little late in arriving so I didn't get much of a chance to chat as I was taking pictures for this magazine.



We were greeted with menus on the table, which I ignored as we'd already chosen our meal, however I soon found out that the menu changes every two weeks so had to make new selections.

I decided on the melon starter as it was my selection before. The manager said that it wasn't the best but I still chose it and it was lovely. There were many items similar to our previous choices so I stuck to these and again the food was lovely.



Whilst talking to Nigel Burrows I learned that his wife Anna couldn't make it as she had a bad reaction to the flu/covid jab the day before. Hopefully she recovered quickly.



The time passed quickly, always a sign of a good time, and it seemed all too soon that we were heading back on the M25 to home. My wife Shirley mentioned the food a number of times over the next few days, wishing the restaurant were nearer. Hopefully we can return again next year.

Christmas lunch

It was a cloudy dull Thursday when we arrived at Shendish Manor for our annual Christmas lunch.

There were 34 people at the meal including Graham and Sharon Pryor, who are our newest members.



Terry & Pam Delany also came (their first visit for a while) and it was the second visit of David & Monica MacLeod.

As usual, we met for drinks at the bar for a general chat before sitting down for the meal. There were four tables, which we found slightly small due to the size of the plates, however the food was good and the conversation and wine flowed.



Norman gave a speech at the end advising that Kier was going to increase its contribution to the Fellowship which would be welcome and also advised that the rumours that Maple Cross was being sold were true. Finally, he announced the sad news that Arthur Bishop, a well-known fellowship member and contributor to this newsletter, had passed away. Sad news.



At the end of the meal, we set off home in the rain, some using the misclassified M25 which, was very slow this time.

Jeff Taylor



Norman advised that the rumours that Maple Cross was being sold were true.

A Samhain New Year



The 'witch' is reclaimed through drumming, storytelling, poetry and song and that is what we witnessed and took part in.

To explain... One night towards the end of October I celebrated Samhain (pronounced Sow wen) – the Celtic New Year. A Celtic fire festival that marks the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter... or as Celts used to believe that on the night of Samhain the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead became blurred and the ghosts of the dead returned to earth!



Ghosts of the dead returned to Earth!

It was a beautiful clear and relatively mild night and my friend and I, both having an interest in mysticism, decided to have some fun exploring our inner selves at the Earthhouse! I had heard and read about this fascinating outdoor education centre primarily for children to experience historical and rural skills.

The Earthhouse has a huge heavy roof of earth which is supported by 21 oak trees, ash purlins and dozens of pole rafters. The bedrock chalk has been terraced inside to give tiered seating for 250 people and the building is used for teaching purposes and hosting evening storytelling events, like Samhain. It is a unique and awe-inspiring building. It seeks to replicate several families living together during the Iron Age.

Evidence suggests a central hearth, and secondary hearths along the walls together with dumps of sheep dung (quite possibly domesticated animals were often living inside these buildings).

The archaeological evidence for this building comes from three excavations on the Isle of Man in the 1960's. The volunteers who built this were awarded

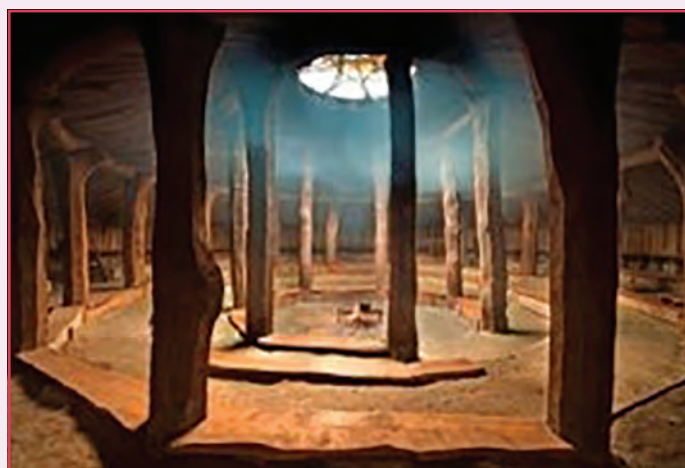


Photo © from <https://ancienttechnologycentre.com/>

the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2021. The Earthhouse also received a second Royal Award – the Princess Royal Training award 2023. So, in our eyes, definitely a place to visit.

Having set the scene, what happened? It is known throughout witchcraft that Samhain (All Hallows' Eve or Halloween) is one of the most important festivals marking the end of summer and the start of the dark half of the year. A time to remember lost ones and honour our ancestors. It's the last of the harvest festivals – the 'witch' is reclaimed through drumming, storytelling, poetry and song and that is what we witnessed and took part in.

Arriving in darkness, carefully walking along a delicately lit pathway we entered one of the outlying earth buildings where we were invited to contribute to the feasting platter to honour our ancestors.



Earth building

Imagine the scene – autumnal coloured garlands, only lit candles glowing for light, aromatics burning and a central low large oak table laid with a feasting platter. We sat on one of the low stools to enjoy and appreciate the calmness and serenity of the moment and were invited to contribute to the plate – bringing a

prepared morsel to add to the platter – be it a drink, a sweet-treat, something to smoke or anything else that our ancestors loved – I took a cigarette as my parents were both heavy smokers! I also made a spiced apple cake and took a small portion to add to the collective offering as were advised in advance to bring along only a small offering because the evening would comprise over 200 attendees. The idea of it being a symbol of acknowledgement, respect and gratitude to our Ancestors to directly ‘feed’ them.



An illustrative feast table. Photo © from <https://kindredspirit.co.uk/> by Stacey Demarco.

It was then time to indulge ourselves in a glass of mulled wine standing outdoors looking up at the moonlit night, under a starry sky with no light pollution and reflect on our passed-over families and ancestors. A very emotive time for us both.

Again, walking over rough grassy tufts lit only by lightly glowing fairy lights (and with the help of our phone torches I admit!) we made our way into the Earthouse itself and took our seats on the upper tier – imagine the Colosseum in Rome but on a smaller scale – looking down onto the central firepit. What a different experience to people watch – many turned up in witches’ outfits, others with headdresses, some carrying musical instruments to bang, others in warm coats.



Drumming chant followed – started softly and getting louder and louder...

The evening started with welcoming of the Wheel – the wheel of the year represents the eight festivals – the continuing cycle of life. Imagine riding a giant Ferris wheel, rising to the top and experiencing the joy of



My hat (exMorris dancing days put to good use) tarted up with fresh rosemary and bay leaves!

movement (or not if you are squeamish!) and then riding to the bottom again. The fire was lit and started to crackle and burn brightly. We all turned to the four elements in turn chanting as we open arms to them.

Drumming chant followed – started softly and getting louder and louder – we all joined in with the drumming, picking up plastic tubes or whatever was lying around – it got very loud at the end and suddenly stopped to welcome in the four Witches connecting the elements of East, South, West and North. Each one telling a vivid story of long ago.

East represents Air – we breathe in air every day as a vital part of our life to survive. Hermes, the fleet-footed Greek God who would fly through the air delivering messages (Roman Mercury). Closely linked to air is sound, the way it travels on the breeze and lifts our spirits.

South represents Fire – the masculine element. Fire creates smoke, ash and heat. It can be destructive when it gets out of hand (volcanoes) but also extremely useful creating warmth on a cold winter’s night. Fire is linked to passion, movement and leadership.

West represents Water – a feminine element. We all need water to survive. It flows into and out of our lives just as people come and go - a sensitive element.

North represents the Earth - mother of all things and the spirit of creation central to every living thing. The most nurturing element.

There was a halfway break, and we made our way to the Longhouse for refreshments if required. Volunteers were serving a vegetarian 'roast' dinner from huge trays on open fires – how they managed to cook sprouts and roast potatoes and parsnips and rice in bulk, I will never know, but it looked good.

Continuing with the story telling and drumming chant, we then welcomed in the Ancestors. Four people entered the Earthhouse and carried the huge feasting platter to the fire for a ritual of singing, chanting and tossing the platter onto the fire with atmospheric drumming.

The Wheel was closed when we all again turned to the four elements with open arms and repeated the drumming chant:

**The Earth, The Air, the Fire, the Water,
We turn, we turn, we turn, we turn...**
If it doesn't serve you, give it to the fire...
**Crossing the river of spirit and breathe,
Crossing the river of life and death...**
**All you who have gone before
Please listen now, we are listening too
All you have gone before, join us in peace.**
**One tribe, one heart one beat,
We share a rhythm!**



Gill Ball

INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM:

- Some narrative extracted from *The Beginners guide to Wicca*
- Some text written through research
- See <https://www.earthkinevents.co.uk> or
- <https://www.facebook.com/earthkinevents> for details

Rushden

Since taking on the helm as area organiser for Rushden in September 2024, the refreshing and restart of activities has required time and work.

The existing database required updating that included adding new members, removing those who have departed and adding available email addresses. The previous range of activities provided a start point for many telephone and email conversations.

The Rushden area database now has 152 members, but we only have 37 email addresses on file. If you have an email address which you have not previously provided to us, please let us know. This would save a huge amount of work for hard copy communications.

Since the restart of our area, we have had two very enjoyable lunch gatherings:



- The Pizzeria Venetia on 19 March 2025 and The Stanwick Hotel on 9 April 2025 both with 16 members attending (pictured above)
- Four more events are planned for 2025 including a Christmas lunch in December.

The response from members has been extremely positive. The general consensus agreed that it is good to see the Fellowship activities restarting, encouraging of colleagues to be (re) involved, and suggestions for activities are gaining momentum. A WhatsApp folder has wide backing.

The plan is for 'simple to arrange' activities this year. The 2026 programme will have a wider range including coach trips, a river cruise, stately home visit, historic markets and similar.

The progress made is only achievable with the unstinting help of Sandra Smeeton (committee member), Jane Gulliver and the Rushden office staff. The biggest thank you goes to Harold Thompson. His input, help and knowledge have been our cornerstone.

Ron Gulliver

Solent

January lunch: 15/01/2025



Once again members gathered at the Hayling Island Golf Club for their annual lunch. With season's festivities out of the way, 26 members met on a typical grey January day in the club house to enjoy the convivial atmosphere and good food. The club's caterers didn't disappoint and a good time was had by all. The sun even came out in the afternoon to enliven the views over the Solent.

Derek Ward

God's House Tower, Southampton: 28/02/2025

On the Friday, a small group of members visited God's House Tower. This historic building is part of the old city walls with the oldest section, originally known as God's House Gate, dating back to 1189. It earned its name due to its close proximity to the nearby God's House Hospital. The original gate was constructed to provide access to Platform Quay and served as a defensive structure to protect the town from attack by sea. We were fortunate to visit on a bright, sunny day which allowed us to access the roof and enjoy stunning views of the city and the Southampton Dock area.

Steve Malone



New Forest walk: 14/03/2025

The New Forest around Lyndhurst was chosen for, what has now become, an early spring walk. Unfortunately, we were beset by three late withdrawals leaving five members to complete this five-mile walk.



Starting at Bolton's Bench car park on the outskirts of Lyndhurst, we climbed up to take in the view of the surrounding area then set off to crest the Ridgeway before descending to enter the forest in an area of coppiced hazel undertaken by the Pondhead Conservation Trust. This area has not been grazed by animals for centuries so has a rich array of flora, birds and butterflies which can be seen in late spring. Staying within the woodland we entered the beautiful beech and oak woodland of Denny Enclosure.

Emerging from the forest we again rose the Ridgeway and headed back to the car park. Refreshments awaited a short walk away in the Stag Hotel, Lyndhurst.

Derek Ward

Battlefield of Cheriton Walk, near Winchester

The little-known battle at Cheriton in 1644 was a pivotal event in the Civil War. The Royalists had taken a commanding position on a down while the Parliamentarians, larger in number, were less experienced. Cheriton Wood before dawn was occupied by the Parliamentarians but beaten back by the Royalist. However, an impetuous Royalist commander



suffered losses having left high ground. The cavalry became trapped in narrow lanes that crossed the battlefield. Cheriton Wood was reoccupied as panic spread among the Royalists as two enemy wings began to close in. They retreated northwards destroying the village of Alresford.



Winchester remained in Parliamentarians control until 1645. Charles First was beheaded in 1649.

Fourteen members, on a sunny November day, toured the infamous sunken lanes, the distant woods and where the opposing armies set up their camps. We all retreated to the Hinton Arms for a right royal lunch.

Happy Hikers (pictured top of page 25)

The BBC forecast said it would be sunny. The Met forecast said heavy rain. Shall we cancel? We settled for Payne's Grey, our default setting in winter. Winter walks are invigorating, blowing away the New Year lethargy. The Titchfield canal's initial function was believed to be navigational as the Meon River estuary feeds into the Solent.

Graham Willoughby



Tim Stretton

Tim Stretton is the 'golden boy' at Kier Construction, Southern, having served 53 years of continuous employment. Long service runs in the family as his father, Fred, served 43 years working for Kier in the UK and also Kier International in Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the Caribbean.

Tim joined Kier on 10 April 1972 as a chain boy working at Stevenage on a multi storey car park where his father was the general foreman. After about 18 months he looked for a greater challenge and moved on to try his skills as a shuttering carpenter on a number of large projects.

The nice warming environment in the cab of a tower crane became increasingly attractive so this is where he next honed his skills. He seemed to have a natural aptitude for operating machinery. Over the years his list of machinery qualifications became quite extensive and included crawler cranes. He did somehow manage to lose one into the Thames where his lack of swimming ability was exposed!

He went on to be a piling foreman out of the Heathrow office working for French Kier and worked on prestige projects like the Thames barrier.

In 1990, Tim moved to Lymington where the cost of houses was a lot less than that in Maidenhead and the environment was more attractive in which to raise a family. He continued to commute to London and also worked for numerous years with Kier

from the Maple Cross office.

The acquisition by Kier of Henry Jones (Portsmouth) and later Brazier (Southampton) enabled him to work more locally where he was, and still is, employed as a general foreman.

Throughout his working life, Tim has hugely enjoyed the close comradery of his colleagues and made numerous great friends. He has a great natural cheerful disposition and the smile never seems to leave his face.

He enjoys his social time attending when he can to watch Southampton FC.

He has always stepped into the breach and made himself available to work overtime plus unsociable hours when others weren't available.

Tim's experience and knowledge gained throughout his working life is invaluable and he remains a significant asset to the company where he is still employed as a weekly paid staff member.

Steve Malone



The Vyne visit: 29/04/2025

On a glorious sunny day in April, a group of 27 members visited a National Trust (NT) property called 'The Vyne', near Basingstoke.

A guide from the NT provided an informative talk about the origins of the house, from its Tudor roots as home to Henry VIII's Lord Chancellor to the ownership by several generations of the Chute family over several centuries until 1956 when it was bequeathed to the NT.

After our tour of the house, we took a leisurely stroll through the delightful Bluebell Wood on the estate.

Later, we retired to the local hostelry, The Swan Pub in Sherborne St. John, to eat, drink and continue our merriment. A splendid day had by all.

Joan Murray



Tempsford

Since our last report, we had a very interesting talk and lunch in November at The Anchor, Great Barford. There was a good attendance and we learned much about Isambard Kingdon Brunel following which we enjoyed a lovely buffet lunch.

Our Christmas lunch on 12 December was at Pavenham Park Golf Club where the service was superb, food excellent and all 34 of us enjoyed the table quiz & raffle. A donation of the raffle proceeds was made to Carers in Bedfordshire. Huge thanks to John Busby, John Stamford, Viv Chesterfield and Stephen Jarvis for organising the various elements of the event.





Our 2025 events started as always in February with lunch at The Barley Mow, St. Neots. Once again it did not disappoint with lovely food served by enthusiastic staff and we all enjoyed a good chinwag.

Another popular venue is The Mermaid, Ellington, near Grafham where 17 of us gathered for lunch on 13 March and enjoyed our choices from the extensive menus. It is a cosy venue so 20 is about the maximum comfortable capacity.

Our April lunch was at The Five Bells, Henlow, Bedfordshire. Twelve of us attended and enjoyed our menu choices, along with plenty of catchup with some whom we have not seen for a long time.

In the coming months we will have lunches at The Fox at Carlton, near Bedford, and The Rising Sun, Potton, near Biggleswade. In addition, we will have a day at The National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire (28 May) and a two-hour cruise on the Ouse followed by lunch in the Hartford Marina restaurant, Huntingdon (12 August). Plus of course, the garden party on 22 June.

We are hoping for a return to The Wheatsheaf, Tempsford, which was so popular when many of us were working at Tempsford Hall. The pub has reopened under new owners and we will keep an eye on how the business develops.

Further into the future we are looking forward to a talk on 5 November about Tempsford and the SOE operations in WWII, plus a visit to the Christmas Spectacular, Thursford, on 20 November.

Harold Thompson



Waterbeach

Our Christmas lunch was held at the Crown Lodge, Outwell, near Wisbech, on 11 December 2024 (pictured below).

This year we had 50 attendees which is an improvement on recent years. This was a very enjoyable event to such an extent that we have already booked the venue for our 2025 lunch.

In fact, we are seeing a general increase in new members and, most importantly, more interest, especially from recently retired individuals.

Our next planned event is for an afternoon tea at Congham Hall Hotel near Kings Lynn on 22 June 2025.

Mark Jude



A TRIBUTE TO...

2 June 1927 –
16 January 2025

JACK THOMPSON

Jacob Bowman Thompson (JBT), or Jack as we all knew him, was a big man, with a big personality, a big generous heart and a big appetite for life. Jack was very loyal to those he loved and to the various organisations that he was associated with including the company he worked for most of his life.

Following his National Service in 1951, Jack joined Moss Construction as a setting out engineer working in the shipyards along the Scotswood Road in Newcastle. Two years later he moved to London to work on the Lea Valley tunnel running from Edmonton to Ponders End. It was on this project that he first met Bob Hare and they would go on to work on subsequent projects together becoming lifelong friends.

In 1962, Jack teamed up with Bob again on the North Circular Road at Staples Corner for WC French.

Diddington Dam near Huntingdon was the next big project for Jack. Bob was the contracts manager and Jack was the site agent. The job was necessary so that the new town of Milton Keynes could be built. The dam formed the reservoir now known as Grafham Water and was required to supply water to the new town with the water coming from the river Ouse. A tunnel was constructed under the dam to take water via the pumping station to the treatment works. This was a massive civil engineering project requiring the number of workers based on site to be supplemented by 28 more bus loads every day, seven days a week. On completion after four years, the project was formally opened by the Duke of Edinburgh. Jack had the privilege of escorting the Duke and other dignitaries around. The Duke, in his usual forthright way, expressed his surprise that the project was actually completed since most projects he had to officially open were not.

The 1970's brought about a huge change for Jack as he joined Kier International to work on two large tunnelling projects in Papua New Guinea. It was here that Jack had a trainee engineer working for him; a young man called Paul Sheffield. Paul went on to be the chairman of Kier Group and subsequently the president of the Institute of Civil Engineers. He must have had good training! Jack went on to train and mentor many more young engineers over the years.

The 1980's saw Jack in Scotland, initially working on motorways but then on the nuclear facility at Faslane, Coulport, Loch Long, Gareloch and Lossiemouth. Jean, Jack's wife, was able to join him and they lived in Helensburgh for a few years.

In 1987, Jack retired, or so he thought. He was invited to do some estimating for Kier Eastern in the Romford office. Little did he know the excitement that awaited him! He happened to be there the day that the



office was attacked by three armed robbers looking for the wages. Fortunately, he was not injured or taken hostage.

This second career developed into working for Kier London and Kier Southern up until 2007 (Jack was 79). Jack was always first into the office every morning, sometimes sitting in his car in the car park waiting for the office to be opened.

Most of us know that Jack has been a lifelong cricket fan and was a member of the Cricket Society since 1947. He also loved his football and his fishing. He was a member of the Morpeth School 'Old Boys' and did their accounts. He was a Spitfire pilot in the RAF and subsequently had two books published. He was a member of two Probus groups and did the accounts for one of them. He was a member of the Kier Fellowship Trust but not just one group, he was in three: Tempsford, Maple Cross and London. And, of course, he played an active role in supporting his church.

Jack was a big man, with a big personality, a big generous heart and a big appetite for life. He will always be remembered by all of us whose lives he touched.

Jim McCluskey

This is an abridged version of the eulogy given by Jim McCluskey at Jack's Memorial Service held on 13 February 2025 at St. Thomas's Church, Oakwood.

Former Kier Employee Les Ablin and BY MICHELLE KNIGHT

LES ABLIN AND HIS WIFE ETHEL CELEBRATED AN AMAZING 70 YEARS OF MARRIAGE IN DECEMBER 2024 AND WERE DELIGHTED TO RECEIVE A CARD FROM THE KING AND QUEEN FOR THEIR PLATINUM WEDDING ANNIVERSARY.



Les and Ethel met following Les' National Service and were married in 1954. They began their life together in Thurrock, Essex, and went on to have four children, & 20 grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



THE ROYAL CARD

Les has always had a great enjoyment of music and he and Ethel spent many an evening dancing to bands at local social clubs in Thurrock. A life-long motorcycle fan, Les owned a motorbike and sidecar and took Ethel and the children out on many a mystery tour. As one of the treats for Les' 90th birthday in 2022, the family arranged for him to take a nostalgic motorbike and sidecar ride.



National Service



Ethel's 70TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY



Les was a scaffolder with Kier for most of his working life at many locations in Thurrock but mainly at Northfleet Cement Works in Kent. Part of his role was to erect scaffolding within the kilns, including attending emergency call-outs. Les stayed at Northfleet for over 30 years, as a scaffolder then a foreman/site supervisor, until his retirement.



At Beaulieu Motor Museum, Hampshire



70th Anniversary Photo of their wedding day



Dad's 90th Birthday

Les enjoyed his time with Kier, seeing many changes and developments over the years, and says he will never forget his time there.

CONGRATULATIONS LES AND ETHEL!



A TRIBUTE TO...

1922-2025

RICHARD JAMES ('DICK') NASH

It is with sadness that we report the peaceful passing away in March of Richard Nash, The Fellowship's oldest member, aged 102.

I was privileged to be able to meet Dick, as he was known within Kier, on his 100th Birthday on 29 November 2022 at the nursing home in Cwmbran, South Wales, where he spent his last years.

Born in New Tredegar in the South Wales Valleys, at 14 Dick had to become a 'breadwinner' following the death of his father. Dick left school and started work at the Elliott Colliery as a carpenter where he also served as a union representative, until 1966 when the colliery closed.

After leaving Elliott Colliery, Dick who never smoked or drank alcohol, and was always keen to help others, became a civil defence instructor. He was at the terrible 'Aberfan Disaster' and for one day he was in charge of the rescue operations. Dick also became councillor in Bargoed and as a young boy was a member of the church choir.

It was following this that Dick commenced work with G.E. Wallis in Newport which later became an integral part of Kier Western. Dick was yard foreman for the small works department and: "An excellent one, too," added former colleague, retired director, David Orr.

Despite working for the Coal Authority for some 30 years, Dick did not qualify for any pension from them and Sandra, his daughter, said Dick was so grateful for his Kier Pension which meant he was able to have a comfortable retirement.

Dick told me of his own humble beginnings but how proud he was that his four children went to university – something almost unheard of when he was young.



A long and remarkable life! Our thoughts go out to his children: Allan, Phil, Linda and Sandra, his seven grandchildren and to his great grandchildren at this sad time.

David Priddis

REMEMBERING...

The beauty of a memory
Is that it's always there,
Like a penny in your pocket,
You can take it anywhere.

And when your heart is heavy
And your eyes are filled
with tears,
You can focus on a memory,
And travel through the years.

Your heart can visit
happy times,
When laughter filled the air,
And the presence of your
loved one,
Will lessen your despair.

So, as you travel on in life,
Take comfort as you go,
In a lifetime of
'sweet memories,'
Of one who loved you so!