Plans for Sutton Courtenay land

UKAEA presented plans for the future of its land in Sutton Courtenay at a public meeting attended by over 60 people.

UKAEA's former water treatment works there operated for almost 50 years before closing in 1995. The waterworks supplied AERE Harwell with a million gallons of water a day, extracted from the River Thames. UKAEA has been considering options for the site following the complete demolition of the waterworks buildings earlier this year.

Three options were described. Firstly, indefinite care and maintenance with no public access, secondly, comprehensive remediation and development and, finally, low impact remediation and development. UKAEA's favours the third option and will be applying for the necessary planning consent.

The consent will cover restoring the site, including the installation of a one metre thick cap to prevent access to the contents of the former quarry, stabilisation of soft soils and sludge and to develop a part of the site for residential use. The development would help fund the remediation work. In the longer term UKAEA intends that the restored land would become a public amenity area alongside the existing angling lake.

Work would commence in 2003 and involve bringing in 500 lorry loads of capping materials over a three-month period. This option causes least damage to the environment and the restoration will provide a positive environmental benefit to the village of Sutton Courtenay.



Post-restoration site plan

A leaflet explaining the plans in more detail may be obtained from Jon Blackmore H4013 or jon.blackmore@ukaea.org.uk

Recruitment drive

A successful recruitment drive by the UKAEA Constabulary has resulted in nearly 700 applications. Of these, 190 candidates were invited to attend a one and a half day assessment at UKAEAC headquarters at Culham Science Centre.

During the last three years the authority's police force has mounted an almost continuous campaign to attract new recruits due to an expansion in UKAEAC duties and to keep pace with natural wastage. The latest promotion included national and regional advertising. For the first time airtime was taken on Fox FM, Oxfordshire's independent local radio station, with productive results.

"Advertising on local radio was a pilot for us, but judging by the response it was very cost effective," says Kay Timms, who has managed the recruitment exercise. "The advert was probably heard by lots of people who would not normally have considered such a career choice."

Over a two week period the hopeful candidates were thoroughly assessed at Culham. Written and practical exercises, interviews, firearms assessments and physical exercises were undertaken. In this campaign, for the first time, UKAEAC civilian support staff acted as interviewers alongside police officers.

Approximately 40 will now undergo security clearance, medicals and reference checks before beginning thirteen weeks of intensive Police Constables' training at the UKAEAC training centre in Cumbria. Those who successfully complete this course will take up positions at most sites policed by UKAEAC.


Hopeful candidates were thoroughly assessed at Culham.

VenturefestOxford.net

A new web forum for Oxfordshire's entrepreneurial community will be launched this month. The membership-driven, interactive network will offer a news channel for and about Oxfordshire's high tech community. It will feature news releases, a diary of important events, a membership directory and a searchable jobs & CVs section. The network is a product of the county's popular Venturefest business fair which brings together entrepreneurs, investors and support services to provide the advice, ideas and funding necessary to cultivate new technology-based businesses.

eCHO BRIEF

No lift off for balloon

Weather conditions have foiled an attempt to fly a manned balloon to a record altitude. As reported in the October issue of Echo, a small window remained for the launch of QinetiQ 1 but the project team has decided to postpone the attempt. Suitable conditions may occur as early as May next year.

Needy children

The BBC Children in Need campaign will take place on Friday 15 November 2002. A number of fundraising activities are being organised by staff. If you would like to co-ordinate your events please contact UKAEA's Sue Bradbury in B521 on H6862.

Soccer academy


A soccer academy for Oxfordshire was held recently at Abbey Sports Centre in Berinsfield by Pat Wright, ex-Derby and Birmingham City footballer. Budding footballers aged 7 to 16 enjoyed expert tuition during half term week from Pat and other coaches including Frank Upton (ex-Wolves, Coventry and Derby) and Bobby Thompson (ex England, Wolves and Birmingham). SOLL Leisure, based at Culham, manages the Abbey Sports Centre, and hopes to stage soccer academies each school holiday at all of the SOLL managed leisure centres. To date the academy has successfully placed many young players with professional football clubs throughout the country.

Ridgeway audit

A recent audit of the state of the Ridgeway by the National Trails Office found that 61% of the surface does not meet the agreed set of surface standards. Draft proposals to improve the surface of the Ridgeway will be posted on the NTO website at www.nationaltrails.gov.uk/ridgewayframeset.htm marking the start of a public consultation. A public meeting will be held on Tuesday 19 November at Didcot Civic Hall starting at 7pm. All are welcome to attend and further details are available from NTO on 01865 810224.

Thermal testing for Beagle 2

Before its launch into space on the Mars Express spacecraft next year, Beagle 2 - the instrument that will land on Mars and analyse the planet's surface for signs of life - will be thoroughly tested to ensure the delicate electronic components survive the huge temperature extremes they will encounter on the long journey to the red planet.

An accurate model of the Beagle 2 probe, which contains the lander during the trip to Mars, will be tested in the three-metre vacuum chamber at CCLRC Rutherford Appleton Laboratory (RAL). The tests will recreate the thermal conditions that the probe will be exposed to during its six-month, 400 million kilometre journey to Mars.

While onboard Mars Express, Beagle 2 is shaded from the sun by the body of the spacecraft, and is cooled by the absolute cold of deep space. The layers of special space insulation around Beagle 2 will keep it warm during this stage of the journey and heaters are placed at strategic positions inside to prevent it getting too cold.

The five-day free-flying phase is by far the most challenging for the thermal engineers at RAL. Battery power must be conserved for landing Beagle 2 on Mars so heaters cannot be used. However the sun shines on the back of Beagle 2 during the approach to Mars and the finish of the external surfaces has been optimised so that only the required amount of sunlight is absorbed. This design is called 'passive' because there are no devices, like heaters or thermostats, used to control temperature. Because a passive design has more uncertainty than an active design, testing is essential to ensure the instrument does not freeze, or overheat.

Visit www.beagle2.com for more information about the project.



All rights reserved Beagle 2

The Beagle 2 lander showing its solar panels outspread and its instrument arm being deployed.

High flight is **highlight**

A flight in a Puma helicopter began an auspicious day for staff and governors celebrating the official opening of the new Chilton Primary School. Also on board was guest of honour, Prof John Wood, chief executive of CCLRC (Council for the Central Laboratory of Research Councils) with a site at nearby Rutherford Appleton Laboratory.



Special day - from back left are Prof John Wood, headteacher Christine Dunsdon and Colin Hills, school governor, with Chloe Woods (4) and Elliot McIntyre (10).

Sqd Ldr Jonathan Harrison, a parent with three children at the school, had arranged for the helicopter from RAF Benson, where he was formerly a pilot.

The party was greeted by the youngest and the eldest children in the school, four year old Chloe Woods and Elliot McIntyre, 10. Prof Wood cut the ribbon to mark the opening of the £2m development which has eight classrooms and a nursery class. The new school also has an IT suite, a food technology room, staff room and library. It has been built on the site of the old school which was more than 50 years old.

SAFETY *Update*

There were no reportable events at Harwell since the last issue of ECHO.

A dozen years on

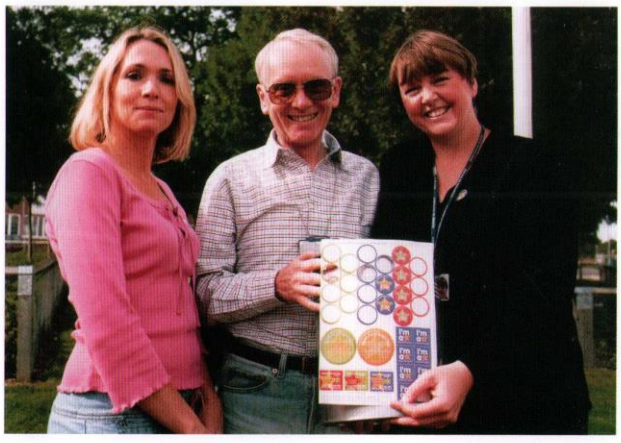
The Harwell-based kidsunlimited nursery threw a party for parents, pupils, past and present, and staff to celebrate 12 successful years. Earlier this year the nursery had another reason to celebrate as it received a second excellent Ofsted report. Once again the nursery was recognised for having no weaknesses in any learning areas. Its many strengths included a lively and varied curriculum programme, staff making good role models, and the quality of teaching and assessment was found to be very high.

Nursery manager, Liz Hurley, said "I have been here for 10 years and am proud that the nursery has the reputation of being a very special place to lay the foundations for early learning."

Ian Cox, chairman of the Parent Nursery Association presented Liz with a bouquet as a thank you from everyone involved with the nursery. For further information on kidsunlimited nursery call 01625 586333.

Denim donations

Over £600 was raised by staff at Culham and Harwell who took the opportunity to wear denim or dress down for the popular Jeans for Genes day this year. Several different charities carrying out research into genetic disorders affecting children will benefit from the national campaign. Pictured on the day are UKAEA chief executive, John McKeown, with Sue Bradbury (right) and Angela Vincent of UKAEA corporate communications.



The practice of pollarding

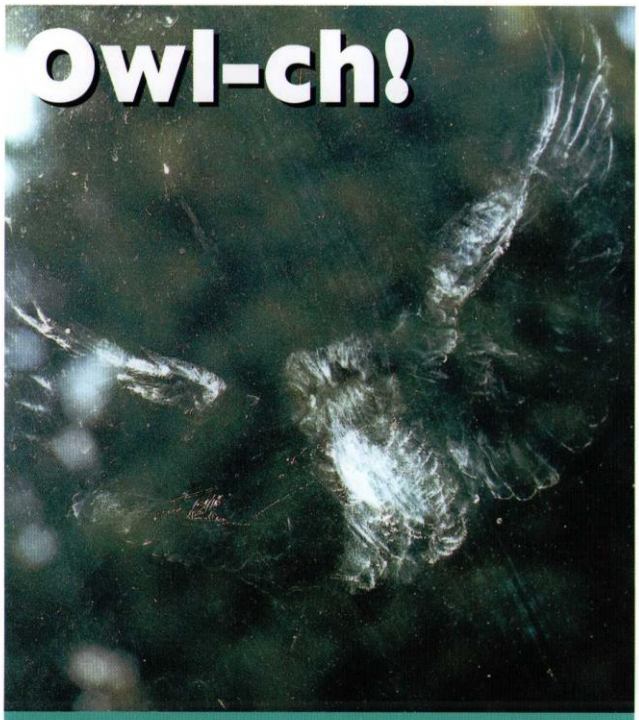
Pollarding is the ancient practice of cutting a tree at a height of 6-8 feet, so that it produces a head of useful poles above the height that cattle and deer can browse. In medieval times the wire fence did not exist and cattle often escaped from their hedged enclosures. The crop of poles was used for cottage roofs and for firewood, with the branch ends being used as fodder for cattle. But the important point is that the pollard is an ecological winner.

It is a paradox that most of our native hardwoods, if pollarded, will live at least half as long again as a non-pollarded or standard tree. This is because they lose most of their height, and when cut, the process of decay begins, which in time turns the former trunk into a hollow tube, one of the strongest structures known. After the 1987 gale, most of the standard trees in Windsor Forest were lying flat on their backs, while all the pollards survived. The longer life of pollards with their decayed centre, also makes them uniquely useful as homes for invertebrates, especially the long lived ones.

Two years ago, several trees were pollarded down to about 6 ft on the Mound beside B521. Three have died, but the others are doing well, with the re-growth noticeably coming from side branches, where the bark was thinner than on the main trunk. The process of decay has begun but will not be obvious for a few years. Even the dead pollards will be a useful resource for invertebrates. Pollarding is yet another method of achieving greater bio-diversity at Harwell.



Owl-ch!



UKAEA staff arriving for work at B392.10 recently were surprised to discover an attempted entry to the building had occurred overnight. The culprit, or rather, victim appears to have been an owl! The unfortunate bird must not have realised it was heading for a closed window. Apart from a bruise or two, the bird must have made a recovery as the only evidence was the print left on the glass pictured above.

Stowaway hitches a ride

Duncan Rogers, of UKAEA estates office, writes, "We've all seen reports in the news of illegal immigrants hitching rides on freight lorries and fishing vessels. I wonder how many would attempt to travel into the UK in the overpack of a nuclear materials flask? Crazy you might think but believe it or not it happened.

In fact the flask was empty and you can forgive the stowaway for not appreciating the potential hazard for the adventurous little passenger was a four inch long lizard-like reptile! The flask was part of a consignment from Thailand delivered to B466 at Harwell. Staff unpacking the flask acted quickly to catch the lizard which made a bid for freedom.



A small lizard was found in nuclear materials flask from Thailand.

Apparently none the worse for the journey the lizard was duly collected by the RSPCA. As yet we do not know what species our visitor is. Perhaps someone will recognise him?"

Plague of flies

Chris Pickford of Harwell Scientifics, writes, "Building 551 suffered an unusual invasion during September and October this year. In some laboratories and offices, hundreds of large flies appeared, many dying on floors and window sills and some even choosing beakers full of acid or coffee cups to dive into!

The culprits, as pictured, were cluster flies, pollenia rudis. These 8mm long flies are harmless to humans and are pollen feeders, unlike houseflies which they closely resemble. The larvae feed on earthworms in the ground, and then seek roof spaces to hibernate in over the winter. Any warm weather can bring them out in large numbers and cause infestations locally.



Pollen-feeding cluster fly.

The roof spaces of 551 are being treated to eliminate the problem. In the meantime, if anyone has a hungry gecko or chameleon..."

OUT & ABOUT

Backstage with Time Team

An evening with Phil Harding from Channel 4's popular archaeology programme 'Time Team' is being organised by Hanney History Group at Hanney War Memorial Hall on Tuesday November 26 at 8pm. Tickets are £3 and available from Wantage museum or Valerie Reason (01235) 868375.

Kids Christmas party

This year's UKAEA kids Christmas party will be held on Saturday 21 December at Harwell village hall. Starting at 3pm and finishing at 6pm the party is open to all children and grandchildren (aged eight and under) of UKAEA staff. Attractions include a bouncy castle, face painting, tattooing and a visit by Father Christmas. As in past years tickets at £2 per head are available on a first come basis and early booking is advised for what has proved to be a very popular event. Contact Trudie Evans on H5958 or by email.

Celebrating British song

As the Queen's golden jubilee year is drawing to a close, mezzo soprano Julia Reynolds and pianist Grahame O'Connor have devised a fitting tribute with a recital comprising British composers. All the songs are early 20th century and the repertoire includes some delightful rarities. 'Speak, music - celebrating British song' is the title of the event which will be held on Saturday 16 November at 7.30pm in the Challow Park Recital Hall near Wantage. Tickets are £6 from the tourist information desk in Wantage museum, or tel 01235 760233 or 01235 223439. Tickets can also be obtained from Julia in B220, H4121 (mornings).

Energy choices

A one day conference takes place on Thursday 5 December 2002 in London to discuss energy choices. Organised jointly by the British Nuclear Industry Forum (BNIF) and British Nuclear Energy Society (BNES), the event will bring together politicians, civil servants and key opinion formers in an open forum with senior managers from the nuclear and other energy industries. To book a space or find out more contact Catherine Carte on 020 8542 8223.

Learn to play Bridge

Among retired or semi retired readers there may be some interested in learning to play Bridge. Starting on the 12 November the Wallingford Bridge Club will be running a 12-session starter course. The sessions will be two hours every Tuesday morning starting at 10am. The first two sessions can be attended free of charge as a tester. Course tutor is Mike Brown, who worked at Harwell for over 40 years before retiring from Harwell Instruments in 1995. For further details call Mike on 01235 850135.

Knockout success

It was fun and games for a team from Culham who entered this year's It's a Knockout competition at Oxford Thames Four Pillars Hotel. Three local charities benefited from the event, namely Harwell-based Against Breast Cancer, Seesaw which provides support for bereaved children and the Clive Project for young people with dementia.

From the 36 teams taking part the UKAEA contingent finished in eighth place and raised a magnificent £973. The team included Cary Young, Perry Beaumont, Darren McDonald, Joelle Mailloux, Sam Jackson, Colin Hogben, Alex Goodyear, Mark Hough, Richard Robins and Alan Wilson.

The wacky games included bouncy boxing (huge boxing gloves and an inflatable boxing ring), giant rubics cube, 5-a-side table footie, spider's web (all team members pass through the web without touching it) and pole joust (reminiscent of Gladiators).



Joelle Mailloux is threaded through the spider's web.

Coffee *break*



Sue Bradbury (left), who organised a coffee morning in B521 raising £155 for Macmillan.

Taking a coffee break at Harwell generated hundreds of pounds for Macmillan Cancer Relief and helped towards the charity's Guinness Book of Records attempt for the largest event of its kind. Several coffee mornings were organised across the site including one in B521 and another in B552, organised by Mike Gardiner of UKAEA and his wife Ann who works for ETSU. In B220 Myra Hardiman organised the now famous men's cake baking competition - won by Tom Charlesworth for an Austrian fruit cake recipe - while other staff baked cakes to boost funds. With nearly 80 people calling in for a coffee, the B220 total was £500. This will be supplemented by proceeds from a sponsored slim which has been underway since January 2002 and over 111 kilos has been shed so far. Sponsorship will be split between Macmillan and the British Heart Foundation.

Studies rewarded



Double celebrations were in order when two members of the Culham Fusion & Industry team - Deniese Willis (left) and Miriam Mason - attended their graduation ceremony at Oxford Brookes University. Deniese, industry events co-ordinator, was awarded the certificate of management gained in July 2001. For Miriam, industry liaison co-ordinator, an MBA with distinction was the culmination of three years' part-time study. Both believe that their academic achievements will deliver significant business benefits for the industry programme at Culham Science Centre.

Join in **football** fun

The Harwell 6-a-side football league has started again in earnest. Four new teams have joined this year making a total of 13. The games are played at lunchtime, 15 minutes each way, with kick-off at 12.45pm, on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Crowds at the games have grown steadily and now average at about 40 per game - though some supporters (see photo) are taking the fan club a bit seriously! The league has been successful in recruiting new members to the Harwell Rec Soc which continues to provide superb facilities for the league. Further details about playing football can be found on the website www.hlra.co.uk

From left: Jenny Dallimore, Nikki Daley, Judy Long, 'The Official Supporters Club'



eCHO exchange

Adverts on this page are free to all staff at Culham, Harwell, JET, MRC, Nirex, NRPB and RAL. Please submit your ad (30 words maximum) to the editor, Valerie Judd, by e-mail: vjpr@globalnet.co.uk or by fax: 01865 331154. They can also be sent c/o Nick Hance, UKAEA, B521, Harwell, Didcot, Oxon OX11 0RA. For next copy deadline see back page.



All ads, apart from holiday accommodation, will be run for one month. Please resubmit any ads to be repeated. Telephone prefixes are: C Culham; H Harwell; J JET; M MRC; NI Nirex; N NRPB; and R Rutherford Appleton Laboratory.

FOR SALE

CLOTHES, children's clothes various 80 items 0 to 24 months, £20 the lot. H5564 or 01488 668455.

GLASS CABINET, rosewood bow fronted 2 shelves, £30. Glass shower enclosure £20. H5564 or 01488 668455.

MENS OVERCOATS, British warm £50, Harrods grey £50. Fur stole £30. Ladies navy jodphurs 32 reg £30. Silk lampshades £5 each. Log basket, trolley, folding wheelchair, offers. 01235 520471.

TV, 21" Sanyo Nicam Stereo TV, 2 x Scart, Teletext - £80, contact 01235 819245 or 07974 985550.

WEDDING DRESS, Jasper Conran, size 12, ivory silk with low cowl back and small train. £150 ono. Phone 01235 862584.

MOTORS

BMW 316i (1.9 litre) SE Compact (3door) 2000(W), blue, 34000 miles, air con, ABS, CD, cruise control, airbags, electric windows, FSH, excellent condition. £ 8900 ono. Tel. 01235 445453 or 07730418319.

MAZDA Eunos Roadster (MX5) 1.6 16 valve. 1990 45k miles. Gleaming classic red coachwork. Black interior. PAS, air con. New hood a year ago. Sony minidisk, face off, D-Bass stereo + upgraded 7" infinity speakers (just fitted). Headrest speakers. 12 months MOT. A cracking car, great fun, new car forces reluctant sale. £4050 ono. 01635 201410 g.j.lee@rl.ac.uk

TOYOTA EMINA (Previa) auto, L-reg, 2.2 diesel, 4WD, air con, power steering, electric windows and mirrors, stereo, 2 x sunroof, taxed and MoT until Feb '02. £4500 ono. Tel 01235 530317.

TOYOTA RAV4 1996, excellent condition. Forest Green, 3 door, power steering, brakes. Electric windows, immobiliser, alarm. Taxed, MOT, new tyres. £4995. Telephone RAL 5482, or s.j.martin@rl.ac.uk

ACCOMMODATION

ABINGDON, one large dble room in 3 bed house in quiet cul-de-sac, available from mid Jan 2003, suit female professional or student, non-smoker, £70 per week bills incl (except tel). Call 01235-559367 eve 01865-393255 day.

ABINGDON, large room for rent in comfortable four bedroom detached house in North Abingdon half a mile from town centre. Off-road parking. Please call 01235 436806.

ABINGDON, 3-bed house, good sized garden front and back (incl. bbq). Close to Thames and 10 mins walk to town centre. £600 pcm. Please phone: 0032 3218 6525 email: phil.salmon@skynet.be

B&B, nr Milton in 2 bed fully furnished self-contained cottages. Dbl and twin rooms. Continental breakfast. Off road parking. Dbl £50/night, both rooms £70/night or from £280/week. Sleeps max 4. Non-smokers only. 01235 820717.

B&B, Steventon. Luxury dbl rooms, en-suite or private bathroom, col TV. Private guest breakfast room with drinks making, fridge. Off-road parking. Rates from £32. Sorry, no smoking. Call Helen on 01235 834664 or 07801 381250 9am to 9pm.

B&B, Steventon, peaceful listed farmhouse overlooking village green. Dbl, twin, sgl rooms all en-suite with TV, tea/coffee facilities. Private guest breakfast and TV room. Sorry no smoking. Contact Melanie on 01235-831333 or 07816-652840.

DIDCOT, room to let in smart, modern flat sharing with professional single lady. Available to end Jan. Mon-Fri basis only. Rent £300 pcm (incl bills except telephone). For viewing and further information contact Emma on (01235) 817317.

DIDCOT, furnished double (15 mins walk from rail station). Use of all facilities. Must like cats. Mon - Fri £65/wk (bills included except phone). For more details phone 01235 434226 (daytime) or 07941099593.

DIDCOT, two rooms for rent. £260 and £280 pcm incl bills. Professional non smoker preferred. 5 mins from station. Contact Andy 07774 866708.

DIDCOT, 3 bed furnished house to rent on 6 month contract initially. Close to A34 and train station. Call 07786 364505 or email mariaslk@hotmail.com for more info.

DIDCOT, Ladygrove, newly decorated room to let. Professional female preferred. N/S. £320 pcm + telephone + deposit. Please call for more details 01235-510851.

DIDCOT, large double room in modern, spacious house on Ladygrove, use of all facilities. Suitable for non-smoker. £300 pcm inclusive of bills except phone. Tel: 01865 407740 day or 01235 510463 after 6pm.

DIDCOT, single bedroom, private sitting room. Non smoker. £55 week. Ring 01235 819890.

HARWELL, unfurnished period cottage, 3-bed - 2 dble (1 en-suite), bath/shower, 2 reception, large breakfast kitchen (all appliances). Double garage, parking for 3 cars, 70ft rear garden. £900/mth. No agency fees. 01235 861641.

MILTON, 3-bed unfurnished house (1 dbl, 2 sngl), 2 bathrooms, sunroom, garden, garage, quiet village location. Family or professionals. £900 pcm. Call 01235 834634.

STEVENTON, self-contained annex part of peaceful listed farm house overlooking village green. Double bedroom, kitchen/dining*room, shower. Semi-furnished.£550 pcm incl bills. Non-smoker please. Contact Melanie on 01235-831333 or 07816-652840.

SUTTON COURTENAY, room to let with use of all facilities, off road parking, non smoking, would suit professional. £280 per month incl. bills (excl. phone). Tel 01235 848714 or 01491 829380 or 07990647466.

WEST HENDRED, self contained 1-bed accommodation. No cooking facils, B&B provided. £30 per night. 01235 833216.

MISCELLANEOUS

ABINGDON KUMON STUDY CENTRE for after-school English and maths. Tuesday and Friday afternoons at Christchurch, Northcourt Road. Ages 4-18; Kumon helps strugglers and extends superstars. Caroline Thetford (01235-221139) or www.kumon-abingdon.co.uk

COMPUTER TRAINING by experienced tutors. Frontpage and all levels of Microsoft Office, either on-site or in fully equipped Wantage training suite. Contact Training Unlimited on 01235 770011 or enquiries@training-unlimited.co.uk

PERSONAL 1 to 1 diet and nutrition advice. Assessment and personal recommendation plan that will help you choose healthy alternatives. Appointment 01235 821259 or email karen@diets4us.com

QUALITY second-hand furniture, china, brass, linen, pictures, bric a brac wanted, courteous service. Tel. 01235 815633.

Harwell history on video

The historical background to the Harwell/Chilton campus is now available on two one-hour video recordings. These contain fascinating glimpses of pre-war rural Berkshire, the RAF bomber station and scientific research done by AERE scientists from the late '40s to the modern day. The history is illustrated with over 100 dramatic photographs, old maps and rarely seen images. The running commentary is by Nick Hance, and the videos were recorded when he gave them as lunchtime talks to staff at Harwell and Rutherford Appleton Laboratory earlier this year.

"People identify with the history of the place where they work or live and I regularly give these talks to the local community," said Nick. "Why not buy them as a Christmas gift for someone you know has worked here?"

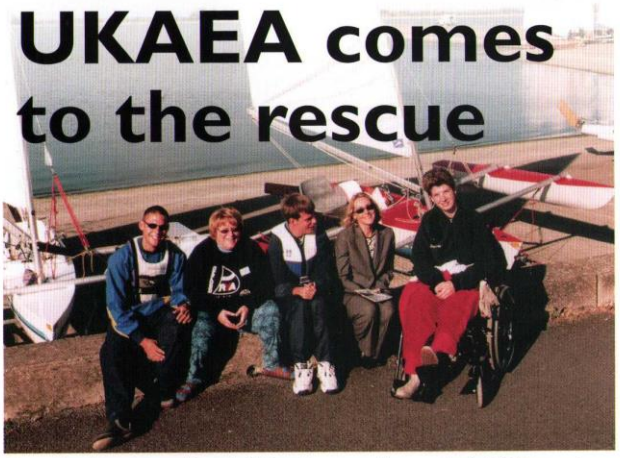
The two videos are on sale to the public at £15 the pair (Part 1 1900-1948 and Part 2 1948-2002), cheques payable to UKAEA. UKAEA staff may purchase a set for only £10. Orders please to Sue Bradbury or Nick Hance in UKAEA corporate communications, B521, Harwell.

Charity cards

Against Breast Cancer, the Harwell-based charity has a choice of four Christmas cards for 2002. Sold in packs of ten they cost between £3.99 and £5.99 with 60 per cent of the price going directly to ABC. Call into their offices at B363 Curie Avenue or contact them for an order form on 01235 820777 or email info@aabc.org.uk



UKAEA comes to the rescue



Pictured at Farmoor are (from left) Dan Newton, who won the Sailability event, Sarah Laws (UKAEA), James Greaves (Oxford Sailability), Angela Vincent (UKAEA) and Kirsten Pollock (Sailability competitor).

Disabled competitors could sail in safety at the UK Challenger Championships thanks to UKAEA at Harwell. Six rescue boats were sponsored by UKAEA during the event organised by Oxford Sailability at Farmoor Reservoir a few weeks ago. HRH Princess Anne presented prizes to winners during the final day of the competition. UKAEA's Sarah Laws is an Oxford Sailability volunteer. She said "Safety is such an important issue for an event such as this and the donation from UKAEA's Harwell site funded the use of six rescue boats, which were manned by volunteers."

Best conference to date

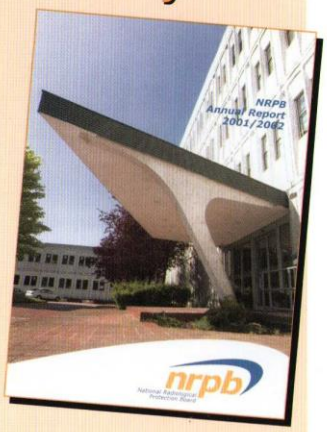


Organiser Richard Peckover (left) and Dudley Goodhead, MRC (second left) with other conference speakers.

The potential effects on health from low levels of radiation, which continues to be a puzzle, was explored at the 4th BNES international conference in Oxford. Intriguing experiments using microbeams reveal unexpected behaviour in colonies of cells subjected to radiation. However the afternoon debate indicated that the present use of a linear relationship between dose and harm by regulators was almost certainly conservative. Roger Clarke (NRPB) indicated a strong likely thrust in the new ICRP advice whereby all radiation levels are related to those of our natural environment. 'The conference was among the best I have attended' said Will Atkinson of RWE Nukem at Harwell. The conference talks, both invited and submitted, are available on a CD which can be obtained from Thomas Telford on 020 7665 2464.

Momentous year

The recently published NRPB annual report describes how the year 2001-2 has been a productive and eventful period for the organisation.



NRPB has a new logo, a new website and a new future. In January 2002 the chief medical officer for England and Wales announced the formation of a new agency - the Health Protection Agency - to address biological, chemical and radiological hazards, whether naturally occurring, accidental or terrorist induced. The HPA will be formed by merging NRPB with other public bodies including the Public Health Laboratory Service (PHLS) and the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research (CAMR).

"In terms of radiological protection NRPB had another outstanding year," says Prof Roger Clarke, director of NRPB. "Commercial activities expanded leading to increased income, staff numbers have increased and the relaunch of the website has been very successful."

The report looks at the work of NRPB's independent advisory groups and their studies. It also reviews other NRPB work including emergency response, electromagnetic fields, optical radiation, effects of ionising radiation, medical exposures, intakes of radionuclides, radon, environmental assessment, occupation dosimetry and promoting public health.

A copy can been seen on the website, www.nrpb.org or contact the information office on 01235 822742.



Car comes top

Love it or hate it, the car has been voted the technological invention local people could least live without. As part of a Europe-wide exercise an online poll, conducted from UKAEA Culham Science Centre, asked people in Oxfordshire to choose the item of technology they would least want to give up. The radio came second, followed by spectacles or contact lenses. In fourth place was the refrigerator, then the washing machine, internet, television, antibiotics, the cooker and the PC came tenth. Teams of students from eleven Oxfordshire schools will each investigate the basic science behind one of the technical innovations. The best research project will be judged at Culham on 8 November and the winning team will visit the home of the European Space Centre in the Netherlands.

Triplets!

Many congratulations to UKAEA's Sandy Forrest whose triplets arrived on Thursday 17 October. All boys, they are Aleck, 4lbs, born at 11.45, Benjamin, 5lbs 2oz, born at 11.46 and Stuart, 4lbs 8oz, born at 11.48. Mother and babies all doing well!



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