



Hampshire

Association of Open University Graduates Region 02 – The South

Newsletter 17

Welcome

If you are a new member of the Association of Open University Graduates, welcome! Please enjoy reading about the social activities that have been organised in the Oxford and Portsmouth areas recently. Our local contacts have been working hard to produce a varied programme for 2016 with many visits to places of interest so do please try and join us for one of our events if you can. If you would like us to organise a particular event or visit a particular venue please contact me and I will see what I can do.

Budget Report

In the last newsletter I included details of the budget for the region which is normally taken up in producing the hard copies of the newsletter. The budget for 2016 has been reduced to £60. One very kind member from Hampshire who receives the newsletter by e-mail has kindly donated 4 books of 12 second class stamps to ensure that those members who are not able to receive the electronic version of this newsletter can receive a postal version for one more issue as the largest part of the costs of the hard copy are the postal costs. I would like to thank him very much for this donation.

Recent events

Portsmouth & South Downs Area

On a bright February morning a dozen members joined together to visit the Bombay Sapphire Gin Distillery in Hampshire. It was good to welcome a number of new faces to this as well as some long-time supporters. The distillery moved to Laverstoke Mill in 2014 from its previous location in Warrington. The surroundings are rural and peaceful and we enjoyed a guided tour of parts of the distillery including the history of the brand and some of the work involved in selecting the botanicals that are an important part of the process to make Bombay Sapphire gin. Many of these botanicals can be seen in the glasshouses at the mill which were designed by the same gentleman who designed the 2012 Olympic cauldron.

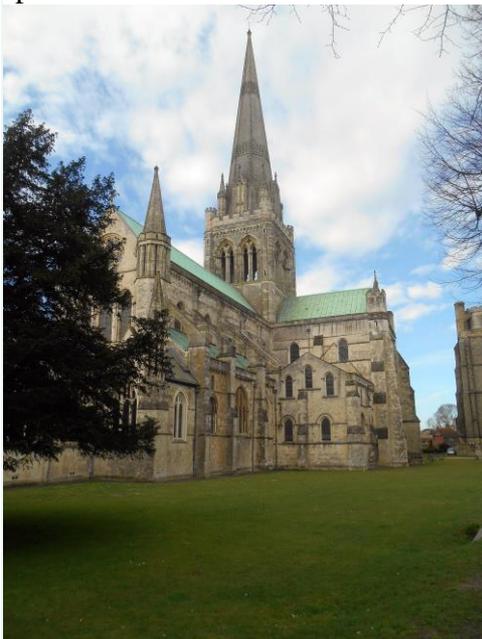
Laverstoke Mill where the distillery is based has interesting history of its own. For many years it manufactured the paper for bank notes and also the bank notes themselves for countries in the British Empire. The main stills for today's gin production are housed in India House, which used to produce the bank notes for India. Many of the buildings have been restored but there is also work still required, including the restoration of what were originally worker's cottages on the site.



Laverstoke Mill – photo courtesy of Mike Bechley

A group of us joined with a couple of members from Region 13 for a handshake visit to Chichester Cathedral. A visit to the Cathedral is rewarding in many senses – there has been a church on the site since Norman times, with a previous cathedral having been sited in Selsey, some ten miles away. By a small distance, the cathedral is the widest in England (due to transepts having been added after the main building was completed). The 15th century spire collapsed in 1861 and was replaced within five years (it is the only English cathedral which can be seen from the sea) – this partly explains the separate Norman bell tower which stands a few feet to the north – again, unique in England.

Although there was no evidence at the time of our visit, peregrine falcons have nested in the spire since 2009.



Chichester Cathedral – photo courtesy of Mike Bechley

Oxford and Area

A small group of Oxford members recently visited the Bodleian Library to see two of the current exhibitions – one on Harold Wilson and one on Bodleian Treasures. The latter exhibition was an opportunity to see some of the rarer items that the library holds including a copy of the Magna Carta and items from the women’s suffrage movement. One of the more interesting items was a book of drawings of insects made from viewing the insects under a

microscope. Apparently, to keep the insects still to allow time to draw them, the insects were provided with alcohol, so the drawings are actually of drunk insects! Apparently a tot keeps an insect still for about an hour!

The Harold Wilson display is to mark the centenary of his birth and comprises photos, documents and a couple of pipes! One of the most interesting documents from our point of view was a document referring to the possibility of starting a 'University of the Air' – the organisation that was to become The Open University.

After an interesting viewing we moved on to enjoy lunch at The Mitre. For those that are interested an exhibition that started the day after our visit and runs until mid-September is called 'Shakespeare's Dead' and marks four hundred years since the death of William Shakespeare by looking at the theme of death within his plays.



Child Beale Wildlife Park – photo courtesy of Jayne Littlejohn

Members visited Child Beale Wildlife Park near Pangbourne recently. Sitting on the banks of the Thames at the western end of the Chilterns the park was created sixty years ago for the benefit of the public by Gilbert Beale. Involved in conservation work the park is also a charitable trust.

Walking round the park we saw a variety of animals and birds from across the globe. Rheas and wallabies were among the larger of the non-native species however large species I found that are native to this country included Sika deer. Smaller mammals included meerkats who were living up to their usual billing by either acting as look outs for their family or playing with them. Prairie dogs similar in size to guinea pigs were keen on burrowing or digging holes while the various species of mongoose were just keen to see us. In the same area of the park were coatis keen to show their agility they made short work of the climbing frame only for them to sit down and groom and massage each other afterwards.

Before lunch the many aviaries were viewed. One sad fact I learned from here was that cranes in the wild are often deliberately poisoned by farmers due to them eating their crops. There was a good selection of birds of prey on display though one I had not seen before was the tawny frogmouth owl.

After lunch we had a stroll around the gardens looking at the large quantity of model boats on display in the pavilion. Before leaving we enjoyed a free trip on the model train.

Written by David Cox



Kitchen Garden at Cogges Farm – photo courtesy of Jayne Littlejohn

A small group of us returned to Oxfordshire in June to visit Cogges Manor Farm in Witney. The site has been occupied since Anglo-Saxon times but the current Manor House and farm buildings date from the 1600s. The house itself is built from Cotswold stone and includes a garden area with the equipment available for a game of croquet. Two members provided much amusement by taking part in a game!



Colin Reed playing croquet – photo Jayne L-john

There are many different types of chickens to see as well as a couple of pigs, a few sheep, goats and a Shetland pony and her foal. There is an extensive orchard and a beautiful walled garden which included fruit, vegetables and flowers. As our visit took place on a beautiful sunny day the walled garden looked particularly splendid.

More recently Cogges has been the location for Downton Abbey's Yew Tree Farm and has been used for filming on a number of occasions.

Future events

Portsmouth & South Downs Area

Wednesday 13th July 2016 at 10.30am:

Visit to Jane Austen's House, Chawton, Alton GU34 1SD. Meet at the entrance. Admission is £6.50 admission (with concession). This was Jane Austen's last home, where she lived from 1807 to 1817. The home is beautifully restored, (with a well-tuned piano) and retains all the charm of a middle-class early 19th century home. The nearby St Nicholas' church has the graves of her mother and sister (although she herself is buried in Winchester Cathedral). The visit will be followed by lunch at the Grey Friar pub opposite.

Wednesday 7th September 2016 at 11.00 am:

Meet for coffee at the Toby Carvery, Copnor Road, Portsmouth, PO3 5HS.

Saturday 17th September 2016 at 10.30am:

Visit the Mid-Hants Railway Open day (free to members, otherwise £16). Meet at Ropley station (SO24 OBL). Access is by service bus 64 from Winchester otherwise. We should be able to see freight, steam and diesel trains, visit the engine shed and works and see other restoration work.

Wednesday 12th October 2016 at 10.30am:

Visit to Sir Harold Hillier Arboretum, Jermyns Lane, Ampfield, Romsey SO51 0QA. Admission is £9.60/£8.60. The gardens hold 14 national collections, plus the Gurkha Memorial, Brentry Memorial and Hydrangea Walk. Public transport is by bus service 66 (Winchester to Romsey).

Wednesday 9th November 2016 at 11.00am:

Meet for coffee at the Toby Carvery, Copnor Road, Portsmouth, PO3 5HS.

Oxford and Area

Thursday 28th July 2016 at 11.00am:

Walk around Virginia Water Lake, near Egham. Meet at the café near the car park. (GU25 4QF) A walk around Virginia Water Lake is about 4 miles but shorter routes can be taken by those who prefer a shorter distance and there is a café/refreshment area where we can meet after our walks if different routes are taken. Virginia Water Lake lies on the southern edge of Windsor Great Park and was first dammed and flooded in 1753. Until the creation of the reservoirs it was the largest man-made body of water in the British Isles. The car park is chargeable (£7 for 4 hours+) and is located just off the A30 after the junction with the A329 to Ascot. There is no charge for entrance to the lake area. The nearest train station is Virginia Water on the Reading to Waterloo line which is a 20 minute walk from the car park area.

Saturday 27 August, at 1.30pm:

Oxford in the History of the Nation Tour, with Official Blue or Green Badge Guide. Hear about the role Oxford played in the history of the nation: as a site of councils, Empress Matilda's prison, the birthplace of King John, the first meeting of De Montfort's Oxford Parliament, the capital of the country during the reign of Charles I and a place of education for 26 British Prime Ministers. Meet outside the Visitor Information Centre, 15-16 Broad Street (OX1 3AS). The tour, which starts at 1.45 pm, costs £10.00 (concessions £9.50), covers between 1 and 2 miles and lasts about 2 hours. Although it is possible to buy your ticket on the day, these tours are very popular, so it is advisable to book in advance on www.visitoxfordandoxfordshire.com/official-tours or in person, but note that fees are non-refundable.

Sunday 18th September 2016 at 1.30pm for 2.00 cruise departure:

River Cruise and visit to Mapledurham House & Watermill. Meet at the embarkation jetty (adjacent to Reading Rowing Club Boat House - RG1 8BD) at 1.30pm to catch the 2pm departure. There are a number of public car parks within 10 minutes' walk from the

embarkation jetty. Bus links; travelling from Oxford and Wallingford there is the Thames Travel X40 which stops in Caversham Precinct. From Reading town centre choose Reading buses no. 22. Both services run once an hour. Travelling by rail leave Reading station by the north exit turning left into Vastern Road then right into Caversham Road. The jetty is behind The Crowne Plaza hotel. 10 -15 minutes' walk from the station. The cruise departs from Thames side Promenade, Caversham at 2.00pm and collects from Mapledurham at 5.00pm arriving back at Caversham at about 5.40pm. 2016 prices for the cruise are £9 for adults, £8.50 senior citizens and £6.50 for children. There is a £2 landing fee for adults that can be redeemed against the admission tickets for the house and watermill. 2016 admission prices for the house and watermill (combined ticket) are £9.50 for adults (under 16s go free) and £8 for seniors not taking into account the reduction. Mapledurham House is Elizabethan and surrounded by its own farming estate dating back to medieval times and is tucked away in a small English village. The estate looks to combine tradition with sustainable commerce to try to ensure its long term viability. It offers Cream Teas and many other refreshments. The watermill is the only working watermill on the Thames and is mentioned in the Domesday Book. Working in the traditional method the mill also sells its own produce. Adjacent is a modern working Archimedes screw. The area has also been used for location filming for *The Eagle has Landed*, *Miss Marple*, *Midsomer Murders*, *Sharpe* and *The Big Allotment Challenge*.

Saturday 15th October 2016 at noon for 12.15pm:

The Autumn Lunch is to be held at The Mitre, corner of Turl Street with the High Street, Oxford (OX1 4AG). Members and friends from any Region or Nation will be welcome to join us. **If you would like to attend, please contact Colin Reed on 01235 815548, or by e-mail, as he will need to reserve a table.**

Thursday 17th November 2016 at 11.00am:

Coffee morning at the Ashmolean rooftop cafe, Beaumont Street, Oxford (OX1 2PH)

Thursday 15th December 2016 at 11.00am:

Coffee morning in the Ashmolean Museum's rooftop café. It is anticipated that the annual Oxford Christmas Market will be taking place in nearby Broad Street. (Beaumont Street, Oxford OX1 2PH)

Local Contact - Oxford and Area:

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Local Contact - Portsmouth & Area:

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For further information about the River Cruise and visit to Mapledurham House please contact David Cox on david.cox72@btinternet.com

For further information about the Virginia Water lake walk please contact Malcolm Harris on malcolmharris148@btinternet.com