



Association of Open University Graduates Region 02 – The South

Newsletter 15

September 2015

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. We will be returning to mainly coffee mornings as the year progresses and less clement weather is more likely. 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. We look forward to welcoming you at one of our events over the next few months.

Future plans

In 2016 we hope to expand our social programme to include a couple of events in the Reading area which a local member is helping me to organise. The intention is to include these within the Oxford area planning but we hope that by expanding the geographical area within which we organise events it may be possible for more members to join us. If you would like to help to organise an event within your own geographical area then please do contact me, preferably by e-mail.

I am also hoping to set up a local group within the Aylesbury area where we can meet, possibly every other month for coffee and conversation. If you would be interested in joining me please let me know.

Recent events

Portsmouth & South Downs Area

A small group visited Mottisfont House and Gardens in mid-June. The house is situated near Romsey and reflects the life of the affluent Russell family in the 1930s. Maud Russell was a socialite and brought her friends of the literary and artistic world, including, notably, Rex Whistler, to enjoy life away from London.

The gardens are at their best in June - especially the National Collection of old roses, some of which date back to the 1800s. The property is bisected by the River Test, and is one of the finest chalk streams in the country, and trout are often seen from some of the bridges that cross it. The riverside walk is quite likely to produce sightings of kingfishers, foxes, and water voles (for example) from the unique collection of majestic plane trees; two of the oak trees in grounds date back three hundred years and the main driveway is flanked by sweet chestnut trees over two hundred and sixty years old.



Mottisfont House photo courtesy of Mike Bechley

A small group visited the large site at the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum at Singleton consisting of fifty buildings which have been restored over many years. These are scattered over a forty acre site and show the development of the buildings, which range from simple domestic homes to a Tudor kitchen, a working watermill, a Victorian smithy and a toll house. Some of the artefacts, in the Gridshell building, are unique to West Sussex but others relate more generally to Southern England. A new Anglo-Saxon hall house is under construction using traditional methods of axes, wattle and daub and wood frames. Many of the demonstrations are displayed all year round, but the more interesting ones tend to focus on the summer months – threshing, using a traction engine, heavy horse ploughing and flax harvesting.

A number of members attended an open air concert recently. There are six Royal Marines Bands, with the central school (and its band) being situated in Portsmouth since 1996. As well as military parades bands, the hugely versatile musicians provide orchestral, woodwind, quartets and dance music to a wide variety of audiences world-wide. The Bands are the only section of the Royal Marines that is open to women. Bandsmen are fully trained military personnel and provide support services such as logistics, medical support and drivers in the field. Each parade event is led by drummers (giving a thrilling spectacle) but it should be remembered that each musician is highly talented on at least two instruments and that many have degrees in music as well. There is arguably the best backdrop to the Bands in HMS Victory, where they performed only three times in 2015.

Oxford and Area

In June a small group of us undertook our annual walk in the Oxford area. We followed the canal, leaving the busy, residential gardens of Oxford to the much quieter countryside of Wolvercote. We walked alongside the barges, many of which are used as full-time residences, which provided an opportunity to observe how different people live, compared with the extensive gardens of the large houses of central Oxford which also back onto the canal. Once in Wolvercote, we enjoyed a pub lunch before following an alternative route, along the River Thames, back into Oxford. The weather was beautiful and we enjoyed seeing wildlife on the water as well as many boats on the River.



Canal Walk photo courtesy of Dana Littlejohn

Recently a group of us visited Blenheim Palace on a beautiful sunny day. We walked around the gardens and enjoyed the terraces with a fountain and views of the formal Italian style garden which included copies of a number of statues. The Italian garden remains private for the present Duke of Marlborough's use. We enjoyed views of the extensive parklands and lake. We walked down to the Rose Garden which included many roses in bloom with some beautiful scented roses. As we walked to the Rose Garden we passed the Temple of Diana where Winston Churchill proposed to his future wife Clementine in 1908. Apparently he had intended to propose in the Rose Garden but it was raining on the planned day! Next to the Temple is a newly opened Memorial Garden dedicated to the life of Churchill with markers on the path mapping out significant moments in his life. There is also a large bust of Churchill and a winding path of wild flowers. We did not go inside the house but there is much inside the house to mark the life of Winston Churchill and an additional exhibition running this year to mark the fiftieth anniversary of his death. We enjoyed tea and cake in the sunshine from a well-stocked café before perusing the extensive shop.

In August a group of local members joined a larger group taking part in one of Oxford's themed walking tours. The tours are conducted by Blue Badge Guides who come with lots of information about the city that you probably would not be aware of. The walks are taken at a steady pace for approximately two hours. We had chosen to participate in the Medieval Tour. In medieval times, Oxford was a walled town, smaller than the modern town centre with small colleges within the city walls and larger colleges established outside the city walls. Most of the population engaged in trading and markets but it was also an emerging centre of learning where bloody confrontations between Town and Gown took place on more than one occasion, as the local citizens and the scholars disagreed on many things. Most colleges had a religious connection having been originally established by the Church, and the changing state religion, depending on the ruling monarch, did mean that a number of well-known characters of their

time were executed within the city walls of Oxford.

The guide was excellent and we were all provided with new knowledge about medieval Oxford. We were fortunate that the weather remained dry for our walk, although we lost two of our group towards the end of the walk – I think they were distracted with admiring the magnificent architecture and did not notice the group make a turn down a side street! Those of us who made it to the end of the walk went our separate ways towards different coffee shops for well-earned light refreshments.

Future events

Portsmouth & South Downs Area

Wednesday 14th October 2015. 10.30am.

Visit to Gilbert White's House & the Oates Collections, High Street, Selborne GU34 3JH. Admission is £8.50. Gilbert White was 'the man who got us all bird watching', while the Oates collections show extensive works of the life of Captain Oates and the Scott Antarctic expedition of 1911-1912. Meet at the entrance.

Wednesday 11th November 2015. 11.00am.

Meet for coffee at the Toby Carvery, Copnor Road, Portsmouth PO3 5HS. Lunch will be available afterwards for those who can stay.

Wednesday 6th January 2016. 11.45 am for 12.00 noon.

Our annual (very) local AGM and New Year lunch at the Toby Carvery, Copnor Road, Portsmouth PO3 5HS.

Local Contact - Portsmouth & Area:

Mike Bechley 023 92552087, Mobile 0781 915458 m.bechley@ntlworld.com

Oxford and Area

Saturday 10th October 2015. 12.00 for 12.30pm.

The Autumn Lunch is to be held at *The Mitre*, corner of Turl Street with the High Street. 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. Meet in the entrance area.

Thursday 19th November 2015. 11.00am.

Coffee morning in the Ashmolean Museum's rooftop café, Beaumont Street, Oxford OX1 2PH.

Thursday 17th December 2015. 11.00am.

Coffee morning in the Ashmolean Museum's rooftop café, Beaumont Street, Oxford OX1 2PH. It is anticipated that the annual Oxford Christmas Market will be taking place in nearby Broad Street. We hope to start to plan our 2016 diary of events at this meeting.

Local Contact - Oxford and Area:

Colin Reed 01235 815548, Mobile 0775 2932 182 (Event days only)
colin@crv-reed.demon.co.uk

Jayne Littlejohn - Executive Representative

Home telephone: 01296 424152

Email: jayne.littlejohn@tesco.net