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**Association of Open University Graduates  
Europe  
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Hello to you all,

The annual AOUG Foundation for Education Awards and the AOUG Foundation Lecture, held at the beginning of October, was a very enjoyable day. I particularly enjoyed the Lecture, "An Astronomer's View of the Birth, the Life and the Death of the Stars", given by Glenn White, Professor of Astronomy. He opened by saying, 'be prepared for the unexpected' an apt remark. You can read all about this in the next edition of OMEGA.

The article below, from Rose Flammant, reminded me of my study days with The Open University, as I am sure it will with you. Travelling distances to attend a Saturday school, the constant demands of cut off dates for TMAs plus fitting in family life and work, were all par for the course. Living in Luxembourg, Rose had to go to Belgium for tutorial and ended up in Paris for her degree ceremony. Does it ring any bells with you? I am sure that it does.

Now that the clocks across Europe have done their annual 'fall' back and the nights have drawn in, winter is not far off. I hope that you and yours have a very happy festive time and that the New Year brings all that you hope for.

Patricia Cowling

### **Life and The Open University in Luxembourg**

Although trained as a steno-secretary, it had always been my dream to obtain a degree in my adulthood. Yet having a full-time job and a household to run, it was just impossible to drop everything and become a full-time university student. Until one day, I came across an Open University advertisement in a local paper in Luxembourg. Out of curiosity I went to The Open University open day where I received all necessary information from the area representative. I was thrilled with the possibility that I could study for a degree via distance learning!

Having left school since donkey years, it was very hard to pick up school books again in the beginning. Luckily, the foundation course I chose had tutorials in Luxembourg. Throughout the academic year, I met up with fellow students to exchange ideas and was also well-supported by the tutor. The academic year went through smoothly and I got a reasonable grade for my first year.

As I was working as PA to one of the judges at the Court of Justice of the European Communities at the time, it was quite natural for me to choose law studies after the foundation course. The tutorials were held monthly in Brussels on Saturdays. This didn't suit me very well as weekends were the time I did most of my preparations for the TMA's. What I found really hard was the fact that we had no summer break at all. I had to spend long hours reading and writing my TMAs while my family and children were enjoying their summer holidays.

Thinking back, I don't know how I survived those six years. The end result however was very rewarding. I got a distinction in my final year and graduated with an upper second class honour. Despite having to go through tough times, I have no hesitation to recommend to my friends the OU's distance learning studies. I can't describe in words the joy I had when I received my law diploma on stage. Many thanks to The Open University for making it possible to achieve my goal.

Rose Flammant

Kay Nielsen



Kay Nielsen was an illustrator in the first half of the 20th century, whose works were published in England and America but, as with many an artist, he died in poverty.

Kay Nielsen was born in Copenhagen in 1886. His parents were actors but Kay showed early ability to drawing so in 1904 he moved to Paris and studied art at the Académie Julian and the Académie Colarossi. From there he moved to London in 1911. Work of any significance did not come his way until in 1913 he was commissioned by Hodder and Stoughton to illustrate a collection of fairy tales, "In Powder and Crinoline", by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch. This consisted of 24 colour prints and 15 monotone. "In Powder and Crinoline" was printed using the four colour printing technique whereas other illustrators were using the three colour printing technique. The advantage, at the time, of four colour over three colour, was that the process and the four colours used, cyan, magenta, yellow and black, reproduced the original colour image more accurately. Other commissions followed including, "East of the Sun and West of the Moon", a collection of 15 Nordic tales put together by Peter Christen Ashjornsen and Jorgen Moe. The illustrations in "East of the Sun and West of the Moon" are considered by some to be the best by Kay Nielsen.

Whilst living in England Kay Nielsen visited Dover where he came across the Society of Tempera Painters who showed him new skills in painting. This Society was founded in 1901 by Christiana Herringham and a group of British painters who wanted to revive the art of tempera painting. Tempera, also known as egg tempera, is a permanent, fast drying and long lasting paint medium. It is usually made by hand grinding dry pigments into a binding agent using such items as egg, glue, honey, water, milk and a variety of plant gums.

In 1917 Kay Nielsen moved to New York where an exhibition of his work was displayed but very little has been written about this exhibition. He then returned to Denmark where he worked with Johannes Poulsen creating stage scenery for the Royal Danish Theatre. In 1926 he married Ulla Pleis-Schmidt, the daughter of a wealthy physician and they enjoyed a comfortable life, with a servant to look after them and money at that time was no problem.

Kay Nielsen continued to do illustrations for books, including "Hansel and Gretel and other stories by the Brothers Grimm", "Fairy Tales" by Hans Andersen and "Red Magic". He also worked on illustrations to accompany the translations of "The Arabian Nights", by Professor Arthur Christensen. Unfortunately this work was never published and the illustrations were only found many years later.

In 1936 Kay moved to California with the hope of finding work. He was taken on by Walt Disney and produced the base pictures for "Ave Maria" and "Night on Bald Mountain", a sequel to "Fantasia". He found the work very difficult, the demand for speed was alien to Kay's way of working and in 1941 he was laid off, so he returned to Denmark, but by then his style of art was no longer appreciated and he and Ulla found life very hard.

Returning to Los Angeles he received some commissions to paint murals for schools and churches, including "The First Spring" for the Central Junior High School in Los Angeles and "Illustrations of the 23rd Psalm" for the First Congregational Church also at Los Angeles. However, that was all the work he was able to find and he and Ulla relied on the help of

friends to keep them from complete poverty. Kay died in 1957 and is buried below his mural at the First Congregational Church. Ulla gave the illustrations that she had to Frederick Monhoff who tried to donate them to museums in both Denmark and the United States but they were rejected. They are now in a collection of the University of Pittsburgh's Information Sciences Library and many others are in private collections.

As is the way with art and painters, so often their work becomes popular again many years after their death. Kay Nielsen's works are now demanding high prices at auction. I first came across Kay's work in the 1970s when I purchased some cards of his illustrations, published by Gallery Five and Hodder and Stoughton. The colours and imagination of a situation within each picture captured my imagination. I remain to this day a great admirer of his work but unfortunately have to make do with the cards I bought some 40 years ago, the auction prices are beyond my means.

The picture at the head of this article is an embroidery from a selection of illustrations, "In Powder and Crinoline", and "The Czarina's Violet".

Patricia Cowling

### **Gathering in the North for 2017**

The AGM/Social Weekend for 2017 has already been booked with the Blackwell Grange Hotel in Darlington. This means that it is to be in Region 09, the North. It is a long time since the Association weekend was held in Region 09, the last time being situated in Ambleside, in the Lake District. Transport links were limited into the Lake District but this time there will be no such issues as we are to visit the East of the area, just off the A1 and with its own railway station, Darlington offers easy access either by car or public transport.

The dates booked are 19<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> May 2017, so mark this down to note in next year's diary. Then look out for the article and advert in the Winter OMEGA which will give you more details. The booking form will be an insert and also available on line from November for you to complete to reserve your place. Remember that all family and friends are welcome to join you for any, or all, of the weekend, including children, provided they are supervised and you consider the activities age appropriate for them.