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**Association of Open University Graduates
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Hello,

As I write this, Spring is just a few weeks away and the snowdrops and primroses are already in full bloom here in northern Europe. Once again I am very grateful to Geoffrey Mitchell for another article, this time about the U3A which we can all relate to.

When 'strolling' through The Open University web site the other day I had a look at the OpenLearn site which offers over one thousand courses, from eight different subject areas, which are free! The beauty of these courses for those of us who have other things to do in our lives, is that there are no start or finish dates, you can work at your own pace. Do have a look on www.open.edu/openlearn/free I am sure that you will find it interesting.

The committee for AOUG in England are preparing for the next AGM and Annual Social Weekend which will be held at Darlington, in the north of England. I know that two of us from Europe are booked in but will there be any more? I hope so. The dates are Friday 19th to Sunday 21st May.

Patricia Cowling

The U3A (University of the Third Age)

Having 'retired' to Spain some seventeen years ago it was a chance chat to friends in 2009 that we discovered the U3A and have become involved both in its local organisation and as members of various groups and activities. Currently, my wife Elaine is President of the Marina Baixa Branch.

What is the U3A? It is an educational and social organisation designed for those who have given up full-time employment and who are usually around retirement age. Its first objective is to provide ongoing education through the knowledge and expertise of members who run groups or workshops on their specific subjects. Here the world is your oyster - social and Spanish history, Spanish culture, classical music appreciation, calligraphy, singing, craft,

sugar craft, flower arranging, golf, bridge, Spanish language courses, watercolour painting, writers’

groups. As a member if you have an interest that appeals to others then you can find yourself running a group!

Its second objective is to provide social activities for members and this takes the form of things to do i.e. walking, petanca, tenpin bowling, picnics, coffee mornings etc. and dining out, trips to places of interest and even short holiday breaks or longer holiday arrangements such as cruises. There is also a group for those who are now on their own called Solo amigos who arrange activities to suit their situation.

The U3A is an international movement and here in Spain there are branches in a number of towns up and down the Costas. They vary from branch to branch but there is a basic administrative formal organised pattern. They are run by elected committees and there is usually an annual membership fee of around €10.

To see what we do in the Marina Baixa go to www.u3amarinabaixa.com. You never know - it might just be what you are looking for locally.

Geoffrey Mitchell

Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, Then, Now and in the Future

The original list for the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World was compiled by ancient Hellenic travellers in the 1st and 2nd century BC but the list did not stabilise until the Renaissance. How they came to make the list, long before the days of easy communication between people and nations is a mystery but the list has become an item of importance to historians of antiquity. The word ‘wonders’ is from the Greek ‘theamata’ which translates as ‘sights’, as in, to be seen. The construction of each site was considered to be remarkable and that appears to be the qualification for the following sites to be included in the list.

The Colossus of Rhodes

The Lighthouse of Alexandria, Egypt

The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus

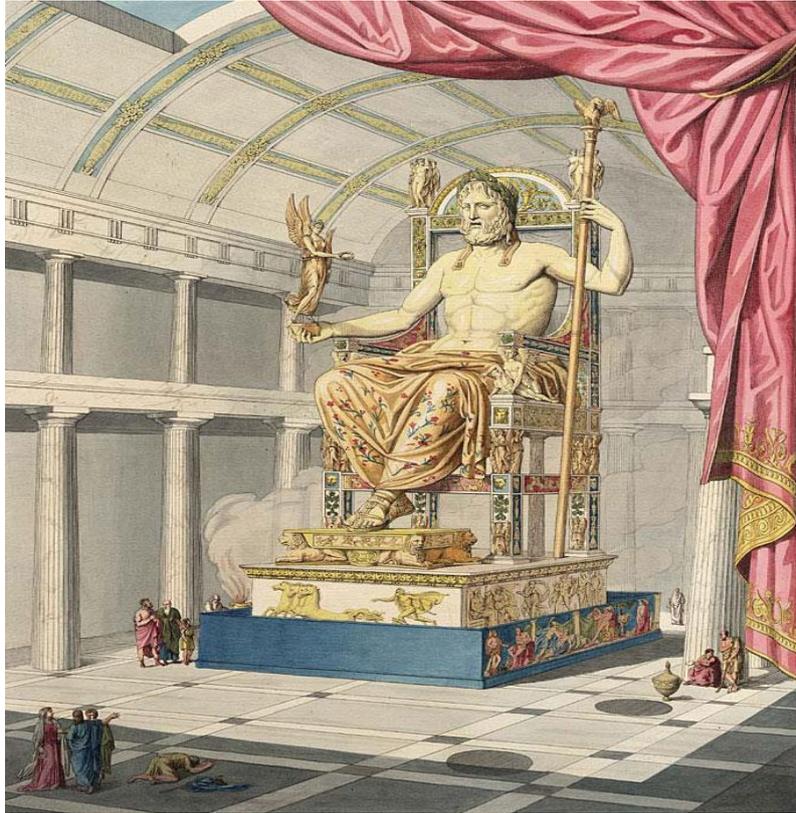
The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus

The Statue of Zeus at Olympia, Greece

The Hanging Gardens of Babylon

The Great Pyramid of Giza, Egypt

Unfortunately, only the Great Pyramid at Giza remains so we need to rely on ancient drawings or writings to visualize their construction and beauty. There is also debate over whether the Hanging Gardens of Babylon ever existed. The exact location is unknown but if it did exist, it is thought to be in Iraq, south of Baghdad.



The Statue of Zeus

Moving on many centuries to the year 2000 there was a global poll to decide a new list and from the worldwide contributions, a new list was created in 2007 from a selection of two hundred monuments. The final list consisted of the following:

Christ the Redeemer Statue at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The Colosseum in Rome

The Taj Mahal in Agra, India

The Great Wall of China

The City of Petra, Jordan

Inca Ruins of Machu Picchu, Peru

The Ancient Mayo City of Chichen Itza, Mexico

It is interesting to note that Petra is the only monument on the list which comes from the same part of the world as all the other monuments on the original Ancient list. The new list is drawn from three continents highlighting the ability to communicate throughout the world today at the click of a key!

The new list was collated by a Swiss organisation but has not been recognised by UNESCO who are responsible for the world heritage sites of which there are now many sites, not restricted to the number seven. It would be interesting to wind forward two centuries and see what a new list would be honouring. Stretching my imagination, I wonder if the Shard in

London would be included and like the original Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, would it still be standing? I doubt it. And what about the Hoover Dam in the United States, the Sydney Opera House, some of the amazing bridges constructed in the last one hundred years to enable faster travel, the underground railway systems, and so on? I am struggling to find a site that I think would stand the wrath of time and also, would the monuments on the list of 2007 still be standing?

Which brings me to another thought. It would be very interesting to see what the list of seven would consist of, if collated by AOUG members in Europe. So, how about it? Do send me your selections, one, two or more, all having been constructed in the past two hundred years and I shall compile a list for us all to be able to vote for the final seven. It would help if you can give me some details of your choice/choices, and if possible a photograph but that is not vital, it is your selection which is most needed.



The Great Wall of China

Patricia Cowling