



Flag of Buckinghamshire

Association of Open University Graduates Region 02 – The South

Newsletter 19

February 2017

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 have returned to mainly coffee mornings over the winter but will be getting out and about more as the weather improves. 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. This will be my last newsletter as I come to the end of my term as Executive Committee Representative for Region 02 at this year's Annual General Meeting. I have enjoyed meeting some of you at our social events and wish all the best to whoever takes on the role after me.

Recent events

Portsmouth & South Downs Area

In October, a small group from Portsmouth visited the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens and Arboretum, near Romsey. The gardens were established in 1953 by the distinguished horticulturalist Harold Hillier, who laid out the present form. Right up until his death, in 1985, he continued to work on the site, and it is now the largest collection of hardy trees and shrubs in the world – about 42,000 – and notably oaks, camellias, acers and rhododendrons. The gardens were left to the trusteeship of Hampshire County Council in 1977 and are now run as a charity, following the founder's philosophy of 'horticulture, education, conservation and recreation'. Sir Harold was knighted in 1983 for his work, which was acknowledged by English Heritage on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in 1997. The Garden is famous for its collection of rare plants, holding fourteen National Plant Collections, and perhaps less so for some of the architecture and sculptures - perhaps more Tate Modern than conventional - scattered through the site. There is also a moving memorial to the thirteen Gurkha Regiments.



Gurkha Memorial – photo courtesy of Mike Bechley

There have been coffee mornings over the remaining winter months in Portsmouth, and early January saw the annual New Year lunch at which members had the opportunity to catch up.

At the end of January I journeyed down to Portsmouth to present two Region and Nation Awards to winners from the local area. Both winners brought a guest with them (one her father, the other her husband), and I was joined by both Mike, the local contact for Portsmouth, and David Cox, who has been nominated to take over as Executive Representative for Region 02 when my term of office comes to an end in May 2017. Mike had encouraged his local members to join us so we made a good gathering to recognise the ladies and make a proper event of the occasion. We chatted together over light refreshments and hopefully both award winners felt the day went well for them. A more detailed write up will appear in the next OMEGA.

Oxford and Area

Over the winter months we have enjoyed our annual autumn lunch in October which was well attended, followed by monthly coffee mornings. We were joined in November by Sarah Jones from the OU who I had met at a supporter's event at campus in the summer. Sarah wanted to get out to meet alumni and provided us with information about events that the OU will be holding in 2017 that may be of interest to us. Sarah will also hopefully join us again for coffee in January.

Future events

Portsmouth & South Downs Area

Sunday 12th February at 2.00pm.

Our annual walk through the snowdrop woods at the Church of Our Lady of Warnford, weather permitting. There is no charge, but donations towards the church would be appreciated. The church was built in 1190 and is part of the Warnford Estate, on the A32 between Fareham and Alton. There are approximately thirty varieties of snowdrops in the grounds surrounding the church. Meet at the entrance to the church.

Saturday 18th February at 12noon.

Visit and tour of Ringwood Brewery, 138 Christchurch Road, Ringwood, BH24 3AP. The tour takes about ninety minutes, and includes a complimentary drink in the Pin Room, a tour of the brewery, to taste the barley, smell the hops and see the fermentation bubbling away in the Tun Room. Sensible shoes are to be worn. Names to the Portsmouth local contact by 15 January. There is (at present) no public transport from Bournemouth railway station. Meet at the entrance.

Wednesday 15th March at 11.00am.

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

Wednesday 5th April at 11.00am.

A return visit (by popular demand) to the Bombay Sapphire Gin Distillery, Laverstoke Mill, Laverstoke Road, Whitchurch, RG28 7NR. The admission charge is now £22, but does include a hosted tour of the distillery, and a complimentary drink (or one to take home for drivers). The tour lasts about two hours. Please wear sensible shoes. Names to the Portsmouth Local Contact by 20 February. Meet by the main entrance.

Wednesday 10th May at 11.00am.

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

Wednesday 14th June at 11.00am.

Visit to Whitchurch Silk Mill, 28 Winchester Street, Whitchurch, RG28 7AL. Meet by the main entrance. The Silk Mill is the oldest of its type in the United Kingdom, with the original water wheel, Victorian machinery and looms. The Mill is 15 minutes' walk from Whitchurch

Railway Station, and buses 76 and 86 (somewhat irregular) pass nearby. Admission is £4.50. Lunch at the Bell Inn nearby after the visit.

Wednesday 5th July at 11.00am.

Meet for coffee at the Toby Carvery, Copnor Road, Portsmouth, PO3 5HS, to discuss the agenda for the rest of 2017.

Oxford and Area

Thursday 16th February at 11.15am.

Coffee morning in the Bodleian Library café, Weston Entrance, Broad Street (OX1 3BG), opposite the old Bodleian. Either visit the Bodleian Library's current exhibition, details of which are not yet available, or visit the Museum of the History of Science, just across the road. Both events are free. Afterwards, adjourn to *The Mitre*, corner of Turl Street with the High Street, OX1 4AG, for lunch.

Thursday 16th March at 2.00pm.

The now traditional Spring Equinox stroll and cream tea. Actually, four days before the Equinox! Meet at the gate to Christchurch Meadow, in St Aldates, Oxford, for a leisurely walk. (OX1 1DP) The intention is to finish up at the Mitre at about 2.45 pm, there to enjoy a cream tea. If the weather is too bad, please go directly to the Mitre, which is at the corner of Turl Street with the High Street, OX1 4AG

Saturday 22nd April at 11.00am.

Meet for a coffee and light lunch in the Lounge at the Three Swans Hotel, 117 High Street, Hungerford RG17 0LZ. (www.threeswans.net). Then have a look around the antique shops or a stroll along the canal and visit to St Lawrence's Church. Hungerford is a small town grown up alongside the coaching route of the A4 Bath to London Road. It also has the Kennet and Avon Canal and the rivers Dun and Kennet. Hungerford's main claim to fame is that at the Bear Hotel in December 1688 William of Orange negotiated with the commissioners of King James II, the future of the monarchy. This led to the subsequent invitation by Parliament for William to take the throne. Trains: Hungerford is well served by trains from GWR arriving at least every hour. Buses; from Newbury take the Kennections 3 or 3A, from Swindon take the Thamesdown Transport 46.

Saturday 10th June at 11.00am.

Meet for a walk around The Savill Garden in Windsor Great Park. Meet at the entrance. Free car park when visiting the Garden. Entry is £9.75 with a £1 reduction for seniors. Enjoy the spring flowers in the royal garden with plants from all over the world. Admire the stunning displays before visiting the restaurant for a light lunch. Located off the A30, 15 minutes' drive from Windsor town centre TW20 0UJ. Brown tourist signs aid direction.

Thursday 22nd June at 1.00pm.

Meet at the main entrance to Bletchley Park to find out more about the home to British codebreaking and the first computers. Visit what is often regarded as the best kept secret from World War II. Meet by the entrance. Entry is £17.25 with a £2 discount for seniors. Advance tickets are £16 and available at <http://www.bletchleypark.org.uk/>. Located on Sherwood Drive, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK3 6EB. This event may be preceded with a meeting at OU campus to take part in a focus group discussion with the Legacy Department.

July (contact Local Contact for more information)

We hope to take part in one of the Blackwell's guided walks but their 2017 calendar of events was unavailable at the time this was due in. If you are interested please contact either Colin Reed or Jayne Littlejohn.

Sunday 20th August at 12:30pm.

Enjoy a 'Vintage Themed Afternoon Tea Cruise' with Hobbs of Henley (<http://www.hobbsofhenley.com/vintage-afternoon-tea-cruise>). Meet between pier 2 and pier 3 on the River Thames near the Hobbs of Henley office on Station Road / Thameside RG9 1AZ at 12.30hrs to take the cruise that lasts 3 hours embarking at 13:00hrs. Cost £26.00 for

adults, £17.50 for children. Please book and pay online. When booking please ensure you state that you are with AOUG so Hobbs know how many there are of us so that we can be seated together. Also let me know. This will be an ideal time to celebrate if you have passed your exams. Please allow plenty of time to get into Henley and find parking. Trains to Henley only come from Twyford and run every hour. Buses; From High Wycombe and Reading take the Arriva 800, Wallingford take the Thames Travel 139B.

Saturday 16th September at 11.00am.

A visit to The Vyne National Trust property, Vyne Road, Sherborne St John, lying between the A33 and A340 just a few miles north of Basingstoke. Meet at the entrance to the whole property adjacent to Visitor Reception. This mansion was home to Lord William Sandys, Lord Chamberlain to Henry VIII. Now only a third of its size it is still an impressive site. There will be the opportunity to view the major restoration of the roof via the scaffolding, walkway and lift. Though the first floor will be closed, many items of furniture and ceramics will be on display on the ground floor. The property boasts woodlands wetlands and an 18th century walled garden. Standard admission £11.75 for adults, £5.90 for children. Trains; these run every half an hour in both directions from Reading and Basingstoke to Bramley station that is 2 miles away. Buses: from Basingstoke take the Stagecoach 2, 22 or 14 their nearest stop being about 1 mile from The Vyne.

Saturday 14th October at 12noon.

Meet for our annual autumn lunch at The Mitre, High Street, Oxford OX1 4AG. A chance to catch up with old and new friends over lunch. Please let Local Contact know if you are planning to attend.

Local Contact - Oxford and Area:

Colin Reed 01235 815548, Mobile 0775 2932 182 (Event days only)

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Local Contact - Portsmouth & Area:

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Contact for Hungerford, Henley and The Vyne visit:

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