



## ASSOCIATION OF OPEN UNIVERSITY GRADUATES REGION 01 – LONDON & SOUTH EAST

NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2016

### Executive Representative's Report

As will be seen from the Summer edition of OMEGA, as a result of a motion passed at the AGM in May Region 13 has been merged with Region 01 and is now named "London and the South East". All members of Region 13 will by now have received a letter from Margaret Stobirski, AOUG Chairman, explaining the new arrangements and incorporating a form to confirm your personal details and inviting volunteers to act as Local Contacts. This applies to all (approximately) 600 members of the new Region 01 and I look forward to at least 100 applicants within the next few days!! In the meantime, many thanks to everyone who has already sent email details etc.

### People and places

It is good to learn that Marie Linwood, from the Eastbourne Group, is making a good recovery from a serious illness and I hope she will continue to make steady progress. If anyone has news of members to share with others, or details of particular hobbies or interests, it is always interesting to learn about other graduates.

Since my last letter, visits have been made to **Lambeth Palace**, a report of which appears in the Summer OMEGA, **Chelsea Physic Garden** and **Carlyle's House** in June, the Greenwich Peninsular via the Docklands Light Railway for a flight across the Thames on the **Cable Car** and, finally, in August, the **BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir** in Neasden.

June was a perfect month for the **Physic Garden** and we arrived just in time to join a guided tour led by a volunteer, Emma, who was a mine of information as well as having a delightful sense of humour. The section devoted to poisonous plants attracted particular attention (hopefully purely academic) and among these was a Mandrake plant which featured in one of the Harry Potter books. The garden delighted all the senses and it was with reluctance that we tore ourselves away to walk round the corner to **Carlyle's House**, home of the historian and philosopher Thomas Carlyle and his wife Jane Welsh Carlyle, herself a prominent woman of letters. They were an unusual and hospitable couple and this small house attracted visits from, among others, Robert Browning, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot, John Ruskin and Charles Dickens. A statue of Thomas Carlyle can be seen on Cheyne walk.

The Emirates **Cable Car**, in July, flying 90 metres above the Thames, provided spectacular views across the city, including St Paul's Cathedral, the Old Royal Naval College, the Thames Barrier and the Olympic Stadium. Some members of the group bought return tickets while others wandered along the embankment at North Greenwich to follow a (rather obscure and uninspiring) sculpture trail but which took

us to a delightful ecology centre and beautifully landscaped pathways beside streams. Those who had time to return to the north shore took the opportunity to explore **The Crystal**, a building devoted to the sustainability of life in the face of increasing urbanisation throughout the world and the problems arising from climate change. The emphasis was on the importance of recycling as much as possible to avoid depleting the earth's natural resources. The modest entrance fee entitled visitors to a book to take away with them to reinforce the message demonstrated throughout the exhibition.

August saw a visit to the **BAPS Shri Waminarayan Mandir Hindu Temple**, popularly known as the Neasden Temple. This exotic building almost within sight of the Wembley arena, itself an impressive structure, lived up to the first impression. The Mandir (literally a Hindu place of worship) is entered through the richly carved portico of the adjoining Haveli (cultural complex) and welcomed the visitor into a majestic wooden courtyard with soaring teak columns and oak panels. Carvings of elegant peacocks, delicate lotus flowers and royal elephants vie with a carpet designed to complement the motifs. Wood for the Haveli was sourced from sustainable forests and for each tree felled ten saplings were planted (bringing to mind the message proclaimed in The Crystal at Greenwich a few weeks earlier).

From there one advanced in silence to the Inner Sanctum, which is the heart of the Mandir and contains seven ornate shrines housing sacred images of deities. Again one could only marvel at the exquisite carvings of the pillars, ceilings and central dome. Music and chanting accompanied the opening of these shrines, followed by a pause to absorb the peaceful ambience before continuing to an exhibition entitled "Understanding Hinduism", providing a vividly illustrated journey into the beliefs, values and wisdom of the world's oldest living faith. Fortunately this was accompanied by an exhibition guidebook as it was impossible to remember all the facts contained.

A few of us decided to complete the experience with a delicious vegetarian buffet lunch in the Shayona Restaurant before leaving the peaceful site for the bustle of public transport.

In addition to organising the always popular lunches at Trattoria Verdi several times a year, Margaret Brett arranged with The Open University Development Office for a few representatives from Regions reasonably near to visit the campus in June for a guided tour of the **Legacy Garden**, a peaceful walled oasis full of the scent of roses and containing plaques to people who have left legacies to the Open University. This was preceded by a welcome from Karen Hart, Head of Alumni Fundraising, and Sophie Hoyle, Senior Fundraising Coordinator. There followed a tour of the campus, including the Betty Boothroyd Library, Walton Hall, the Jennie Lee Building and the Robert Hooke Building, then a short film and lunch, and a presentation about the Legacy Garden and how it started by Alan Marham, Grounds and HSW Manager, before finally inspecting the Garden with its rich tapestry of colours.

The **AGM at Buxton** in May has received comprehensive coverage in OMEGA and it only remains to say that it was as always a most enjoyable occasion and many thanks to the Officers who worked so hard to make it a success.

## **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 this Region, 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 by car or public transport. The dates booked are 19th-21<sup>st</sup> May 2017 so make a note to mark this down 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 October for you to complete to reserve your place. Remember, all family and friends are welcome to join you for any, or all, of the weekend. This includes children, provided they are supervised and you consider the activities are appropriate for their age.

## **AOUG Foundation for Education Research Awards**

A more imminent date for your diaries is Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> October 2016 for these Awards (at 12 noon in the Michael Young Building on the OU campus). They will be followed at 2pm by the **AOUG Foundation Lecture** entitled "An Astronomer's view of the Birth, the Life and the Death of the Stars". This will be given by Glenn White, Professor of Astronomy; more details of this can be found on page 3 of OMEGA. The cost of £10 for full or part day includes a buffet lunch. Admission is by ticket or invite only. Tickets are available from AOUG Office [aoug@open.ac.uk](mailto:aoug@open.ac.uk) or 01908-653316.

If you have never been to the OU campus before this is a perfect opportunity to explore the beautiful grounds and fascinating outdoor art collection.

## **DIARY DATES\*\***

**\*\* (Please check with organiser for last minute change of arrangements)**

### **Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> September, 11.30am**

Meet on the forecourt of Eastbourne Station, Sussex, BN21 3QJ for coffee in a local café, then walk or bus to the Ship Inn, 33-35 Meade Street, Eastbourne BN20 7RH to join the local Eastbourne Group for their monthly lunch. Following this, return to the centre of the town to visit the **Towner Art Gallery**, Devonshire Park, College Road, Eastbourne BN21 4JJ for the current exhibition and afternoon tea in the Gallery's delightful cafe. The Gallery is open until 5pm and admission is free.

### **Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October, 12noon**

Meet at The Mitre, corner of Turk Street with the High Street, Oxford OX1 4AG for the Autumn Lunch of the Oxford Group. This is a Handshake event with Region 02. Pre-booking with the Local Contact for Oxford is essential.

### **Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup> October, 12 noon**

Meet at the Trattoria Verdi Restaurant, 110 Southampton Row, Holborn, WC1B 4BL (020-7405 8001) for an excellent lunch (cost for two-course meal with wine remains at £13 per head). Bookings to Margaret Brett on 020-7387 4975.

**Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> November, 11am**

Meet at Victoria Railway Station, SW1V 1JU outside WH Smith's (main concourse) for coffee in local café and then a short walk to the Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace Road, SW1A 1AA to view their current exhibition. Admission is £10.30 (over 60s £9.40) for the Gallery only. Admission for a combined visit to the Queen's Gallery and Royal Mews costs £17.70 (over 60s £16.10). Tickets purchased directly from the Royal Collection Trust can be converted into a one-year pass, giving twelve months' complimentary admission to the site(s) visited.

**Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2017, 12noon**

(Not Wednesday, as published in OMEGA – apologies!)

Meet at Trattoria Verdi Restaurant (details as Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup> October).

Bookings to Margaret Brett on 020-7387 4975.

**Eastbourne Group**

**Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> September, 12.30pm**

**Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> October, 12.30pm**

**Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 12.30pm**

Meet at The Ship Inn, 33-35 Meads Street, Eastbourne, BN20 7RH for lunch with other OU graduates. Members from other Groups and friends and family are always welcome.

**Executive Representative - Rosemary Hammick**

T.020-8688 6629 / Mob.07908371529 [hammick.ros36@talktalk.net](mailto:hammick.ros36@talktalk.net)

**LOCAL CONTACTS**

**London Lunches**

Margaret Brett: 020-7387 4975

**Eastbourne Group**

Marie Linwood: 01323 722144

**Hastings Group**

Paul Emerson: 07789 564102

**Oxford and Area (for the Handshake event)**

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

[colin@crv-reed.demon.co.uk](mailto:colin@crv-reed.demon.co.uk)

**NOTE:** All those who participate in events are responsible for their own safety and join entirely at their own risk.