



Association of Open University Graduates Region 02 – The South Newsletter 10 –Spring 2014

Firstly, and apologies to those members who do not have or use internet access, the Association website has been under development and improvement for some time. The latest expansion has been the Members' Forum, with sections on AOUG News and Events, Degree Ceremonies, Memory Lane (for photographs and memories), feedback on OMEGA, and a larger area for Regions and Nations news, and finally a general forum area for input on news items, sport and so on.

As with all such forums, there has to be a protocol for its use and so below there are simple and easy to enter and set up, by following these guidelines, drawn up by Jean Hertzog, the Association Treasurer

AOUG Website Members Only Forum

The AOUG Website is continuing to develop and last year we introduced a new-style Home Page, an on-line Membership facility and an on-line Trading section. Now we have taken it one step further with a Members Only AOUG Forum. AOUG does not endorse the use of Facebook or Twitter or other similar social media sites, in the name of AOUG, as they are impossible for a volunteer organisation to monitor and thus too greater risk to the reputation of AOUG. Obviously what individuals, who also are AOUG members, decide to do, is their own responsibility. However a Members Only Forum is within the Association's control and this can more easily be monitored and improper items can be removed or prevented. Since we want all members to have the confidence to take part, we are now including a step by step guide to registering and being authorised. We apologise to all of you who are very familiar with these things already. Once you are authorised, the site will give you guidance on using the various features and if you have any problems at all you are very welcome to ask the Officers for help.

Step one: Ensure you have internet access on your computer, or equivalent, and log on in the usual way.

Step two: Type www.aoug.org.uk into the address line at the top of the page. The AOUG website should now appear with our logo clearly at the top left hand side.

Step three: Click on the word Forum along the taskbar near the top of your screen (between Shop and Contact). This will open a new window which you will need to enlarge to fill your screen.

Step four: You will now be asked for your **Username** and a **Password**. Your user name can be your own name or a shortened version or nickname. Your password can be anything you like but we advise a mixture of numbers and letters between 10 to 15 characters in length. Now click on the word **Register**

Step five: The screen will now show you the **Terms and Conditions**. Take as long as you like to read these but in order to progress you need to click on **Accept** at the bottom of the screen.

Step six: You will now be asked to complete a form with Username, e-mail address, password (these must be the same as you used on the first page), first name and surname (these must be your names as used as a member of AOUG), PI Number (the number you used at the top of all those OU assignments), your preferred Region or Nation, your gender and your birthday (day and month are essential but year is optional). Finally click on the word **Save**

Step seven: You will need to confirm your **password** yet again and copy a **Registration code** (to prove you are human!!!)

Step eight: Then you will need to come out of the website and go to your **own e-mail account** where you will see an **e-mail acknowledging** your application for the Forum.

Step nine: Wait until you receive a **second e-mail** which will acknowledge you as authorised – (this may be within a few minutes or a few days, depending on if an Officer is currently on line to see your request) and then go back onto the **AOUG website** – click on **Forum** at the top of the **AOUG Home Page** and the forum will open and allow you to sign in with your **User name** and **Password** and then you can start exploring the instant communications possibilities.

Step ten: If you need more help just ask! **Have Fun!!!!**

Jean Hertzog, Treasurer

As an example of the Forum's use, I have put some thoughts on MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses); and the weather – of which more anon – necessitated the cancellation of the walk through the snowdrop woods in Warnford on 16th February. It is not always possible to put event items such as cancellations or amended items/dates on the main part of the AOUG Website at short notice, but with the use of the Forum, such things can be promulgated swiftly and easily. This is not to say that the main part of the website has suddenly become redundant!

The Winter does not normally see many outdoor events, which is probably just as well after the last three months. Walks in any of the Region's counties have been out of the question, with much of the land waterlogged, most of the seashores destroyed by wave power and coastal paths made difficult because of shingle deposited by the sea.

It is with some trepidation, therefore, that we have organised the Spring equinox walk in Oxford on 20th March. There is the proviso that if the weather is bad, we merely meet at The Mitre (corner of Turl Street and High Street) at 2.45pm! More certain is the visit to the Sea City Museum in Southampton on 10th April, at 11.00am. This is the exact 102nd Anniversary of the sailing of ss Titanic on its only voyage, and to commemorate this, enactors will be dressed in the apparel of the period, along with other appropriate smaller exhibitions. There is also a special art exhibition entitled

‘Ship to Shore’, exploring the different ways in which artists in various media have portrayed the sea, ships and the people who go to sea (not including me as a subject, despite my working life!).

Other events for the Summer (should it occur – or should I say the months in the middle of the year) include two concerts – one in Bournemouth (at the BIC), which is part of the farewell tour of ‘The Seekers’ (the four-part harmony group formed in the 1960s), and the other in Portsmouth (at the Guildhall). The latter is rather more contemporary, featuring Gareth Malone (he of Military Wives and Sing While You Work fame) and his newly formed choir, ‘Voices’. Full details of times and venues can be found in the latest issue of OMEGA, and on the AOUG Website. Unfortunately I have found it impossible to obtain group tickets for either of the concerts, so I’m afraid it will have to be normal prices for admission.

Our coffee mornings are continuing in Oxford and Portsmouth – see the magazine and Website for details of times, dates and locations. These are occasions to put the world to rights, discuss agendas for the coming months, and generally swap OU experiences. Please come and join us – there will be a copy of the latest OMEGA on the table, or a very large AOUG logo on display.

Some of the dates and locations of the Degree Ceremonies have been changed by the OU (especially the substitution of Poole for Portsmouth) - I would like to thank all of you who have volunteered to process either in the Region, or elsewhere.



Myself and Jean Swetnam at the ceremony in Portsmouth, 2013

It is a chance to meet some of the Region's staff, as well as to see the conferment of degrees from the other side, as it were. Gowns and academic dress are provided, but if you wish to take part, please let the AOUG Office know; although the lists for 2014 have now closed, it is always useful to have reserves. Full details of the ceremonies are on the OU website (<http://css2.open.ac.uk/students/ceremonies/>), - at Milton Keynes on 10th and 11th September, and in Poole on 23rd October.

I referred above to MOOCs – these are a series of free on-line short courses, lasting between two and nine weeks. In the UK, they were launched by the OU in 2012, using the title of FutureLearn (www.futurelearn.com/courses) and cover a vast range, from Innovation and Enterprise, through Managing People: Engaging Your Workforce, to An Introduction to Ecosystems and England in the time of Richard III. I've completed two courses, and found unsurprisingly that the estimated time required each week is very similar to the OU's idea – in other words, if the stated need is six hours, then be prepared to do ten (if you do all the optional reading). There is no off-line content – although I did need some food colouring and salt for one of the experiments I did in Oceanography! – and all that you need is included, so there is no requirement to go to the Public Library to borrow books, as excellent links to other websites are always given, for further erudition.

On behalf of the Treasurer and Committee, I'd ask that if you are not already doing so, to transfer your subscription method to Direct Debit (as opposed to Standing Order), as it ensures that you keep in date and will receive your OMEGAs and Newsletters promptly as well as making sure that you do not need reminders. This can be arranged securely through the Milton Keynes Office, or the AOUG Website. Naturally, if you change your postal or e-mail addresses, please inform the AOUG Office. Current Association finances may mean that future Local Newsletters can only be sent out via e-mail so please make sure you don't miss out. If you have not advised the AOUG Office of your latest e-mail address, please would you do so, as this will help considerably or donations of stamps would help in reducing our postal costs and ensure you continue to receive your copy.

This is my valedictory Newsletter, as my Term of Office of three years comes to an end at the Association AGM in St Albans in May. As such, the Newsletter would normally be sent out between OMEGA issues, but I wanted to say thank you and a local farewell before the AGM, hence the early publication... Jayne Littlejohn, known to some of you from the North of the Region, has offered to stand as my successor, and I am sure that you will wish her well, and support her in the future. Ballot forms will be included in the next issue of OMEGA. However, I will be continuing as the Local Contact for the Portsmouth and South Downs Group, so please continue to contact me if you are in this area. It has been a busy, interesting and at times frustrating period, but I have met some wonderful people, been to some fascinating places and learnt many new things – very Open University!

Mike Bechley - Executive Representative

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