



Association of Open University Graduates in the West Midlands

Newsletter 6

Winter 2013

Welcome.

I take a great pleasure to welcome members to this edition of the Newsletter. It is the last Newsletter of this year before we proceed to another New Year of 2014. We had done a lot of work this year. Apart from the usual New Year's dinner which starts our New Year, I am very pleased to state that we had the opportunity to host the AOUG AGM 2013 in our Region. It was a success and generated immense interest to our members, inviting all Regions and Nations, as well as an extend invitation to Rest of the World to come to our Region and participate in AGM 2013, to shape memberships that are much needed at present. With the increase in membership fees, I know that our members have had a hard time finding extra cash to put into AOUG membership especially when there was pay freeze, cut in pensions and Welfare Reform which added extra hardships to Open University graduates. Nonetheless, our members had been active and worked extra hard to get engaged with AGM 2013 and they supported enthusiastically, the Silver Anniversary.

Our events at Dudley Museum and Art Gallery in February 2013 and the Museum of Cannock Chase in September 2013 were well supported by our members. Recently, on 16th November 2013, we visited Coventry Transport Museum in Coventry which brought our members from all parts of West Midlands to unite at this event. I am very pleased to see our members put a great deal of effort in events and volunteered skillfully to bring forward brilliant achievements. I thank everyone and I pray that we continue to grow from strength to strength in future.

Museum of Cannock Chase. We visited the Museum of Cannock Chase in Hednesford on 21st September 2013 when our members met, at the main entrance, at 2.00 pm. Hednesford is about ten miles from Wolverhampton and was not too difficult to get to by road and local buses. This museum is housed in the former Valley colliery and it depicts scenes of local history and a very important mining industry which supported the Industrial Revolution in the 19th Century. It generated immense wealth for the area. Unfortunately, the mining industry declined and eventually closed. There are many important exhibitions in the museum. The miner's cottage is an exhibition of typical housing of miners in the late 19th Century and at the beginning of 20th Century. It shows the lifestyle of miners at home and the few luxuries miners earned at the time. There is a coal miners' gallery with a frightening canal/tunnel through which coal was dug out, collected in carriages and then brought to surface. There are many showcases of local history and exploration of war time experiences in this area. There were two huge army camps built in Hednesford from 1914 to 1918. It is recorded that over a quarter million Commonwealth troops passed through this area, destined for Western Front. This mining

pit employed many people and provided a training school for thousands of young people who wanted to join mining industry. It was demolished and in its place, there are about thirty acres of green space. The Hednesford hills are the old part of Hendnesford. Lower Hednesford became a focal point for the development of mining industries during the early Industrial Revolution. There are several war memorials and health walks with defined pathways in the district. There is a good cafe in the museum and our members got together in this cafe towards the closing time for refreshments. I thanked our members for supporting this event, then we showed our appreciations to the Museum of Cannock Chase in the usual manner before departing home.

Coventry Transport Museum, Coventry. Our visit to Coventry Transport Museum took place on Saturday 16th November, 2013 from 11.00 am to closing time of the museum. This museum was formally called Museum of British Road Transport. Coventry was a birth place for British car industry. This museum houses motor vehicles and vehicles of British made road transport from the very earliest bicycles to the fastest car on this planet. There are outstanding showcases, immense collections of vehicles and an exploration of their histories. A fantastic museum! Our members enjoyed this event.

AOUG Website:

The AOUG Officers have started work on a mammoth task of both updating and of modernising the AOUG Website. In the first phase of this work they have introduced On-line Trading for AOUG products which now operate under Nochex, the same secure payment system as used for the On-line membership renewals, and so you no longer need to wait until you receive OMEGA to order your gifts.

However the AOUG Home Page is the one we are most proud of as thanks to all the creative work of Adam Jefferson, our Web Designer, we now have moving images that can be clicked on to take you straight through to the related item. This will need to be updated regularly so if you have any high quality photos that we might use please let the AOUG Office know.

Although monitoring issues make it impossible for AOUG to offer social media-like interaction, we can offer you many more opportunities to get personally involved with your site. We are asking members to send in their write-up or reviews on lectures, films, plays, visits etc or to contribute items on specialist interest subjects. Do you want to get involved in a science group to debate various theories, an arts group to discuss techniques used in sculpture or maybe the symbolism in paintings? Do you write poetry or short stories you want to share? Or maybe mathematical questions or puzzles inspire your thoughts... All of these opportunities are now available for you to submit your items for uploading.

If academic ideals do not currently inspire you, how about more down to earth aspects? If you go to the Memory Lane pages of the Regions and Nations you will find a selection of photos just waiting for you to contribute captions – something funny about the event maybe or a particular memory it provokes. Maybe you have some other suitable photos about people or places in our area to contribute. Please send your website contributions to the AOUG Office at aoug-website@open.ac.uk .

OU Degree Ceremonies 2014:

Every year The Open University holds Degree Ceremonies for new graduates and their families and friends to share and celebrate their success. I'm sure you will remember how special your Degree Ceremony was for you and how important some of those people looked sitting up there on the platform as you prepared to walk across the stage.

Everyone who is a member of AOUG has a chance to don an OU gown again and re-live all those very special feelings but as one of those very special people sitting up on the platform. AOUG are invited to send two AOUG members to represent our Association at every one of the Degree Ceremonies throughout the season and so we are inviting you to volunteer to undertake this honour. Names need to be submitted very early and so if you are interested please contact either the AOUG Office or your Executive Representative before 20th December 2013 stating your name, your PI number, your height and your OU degree level and your address, telephone number and e-mail address, plus of course the ceremony that you would like to be considered for.

In the West Midlands there are two ceremonies:

Saturday 14th June	11.00am 3.00pm	Symphony Hall, Birmingham Symphony Hall, Birmingham	04 04
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Our Regional ceremonies are listed but if you prefer to volunteer for another area then please consult the full list in your Winter OMEGA. I have included those on the periphery of the Region should you wish to go outside of the Region itself. Members will be advised in February 2014 if their name has been chosen and then the relevant gown will be ordered for you and details of your ceremony will be sent out to you shortly before the event.

Being a Local Contact

Often members ask what being a Local Contact for a small area within a Region or Nation involves and so we have decided to give you an idea of the role. A Local Contact is an AOUG member who volunteers to be a link between other local members within a small area of any Region or Nation. They need to sign a Data Protection form to give them permission to receive contact details of other local members and then agree to have their own contact details printed in OMEGA and on the AOUG website. Their one responsibility is to arrange at least one event within their small area, three times a year and to pass all the details to their Executive Representative (or the Development Officer) before the OMEGA submission date so that it can be advertised in OMEGA and on the website. They then need to ensure that they attend their event in time to welcome other members. During the event it would be helpful to take some photos and then after the event to send brief feedback and photo to the Executive Representative. Local Contacts do not have to stand for election or attend any formal meetings, nor do they need to write any formal reports or take on any additional responsibilities unless they wish to do so. The role of a Local Contact is simply to try to maintain links between other members who live close to them.

Diary Dates

Saturday 15th February 2014. 2.00pm

Meet at the main entrance of St. Chad's Parish [Church, Pattingham](http://www.pattingham-church.org), Wolverhampton, WV6 7DU. (www.pattingham-church.org) for a guided tour. Pattingham is a small village about seven miles from Wolverhampton city centre. There was a church in Pattingham since Saxons and Normans times. Most of Pattingham was destroyed during the Great Fire of 1677. Restoration of this Parish Church was carried out during the Victorian Era.

Saturday 22nd March 2014. 1.00pm

Meet at the main entrance of Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum and Bookshop, Lichfield, WS13 6LG (www.samueljohnsonbirthplace.org.uk). Samuel Johnson is regarded as Lichfield's greatest son. He was born in 1709. He became the greatest man of letters, a national celebrity and a very religious man. He was buried in Westminster Abbey. Admission is free. Museum closes at 3.30pm

Sunday 20th April 2014. 2.00pm

Meet at the main entrance of Oak House Museum, Oak Road, West Bromwich, B70 8HJ (www.sandwell.gov.uk/oakhouse). The Oak House is a beautiful half-timbered Yeoman farm house built in 17th Century, furnished with Jacobean furniture. This museum is close to Lodge Road Metro station. Admission is free.

Events in 2014:

Please check the AOUG website [www.aoug.org.uk] and OMEGA regularly for events in the West Midlands. Please give your support. Join events to meet old friends and make new friends. Also, learn about OU studies & AOUG news.

Contact Details.

Please check that the AOUG Office has your correct contact details. If you have made either changes or have an email, then please inform the AOUG Office at Walton Hall as soon as possible.

AOUG Membership:

Please make sure that your membership is up to date. If you want to renew by Direct Debit, then please visit AOUG website www.aoug.org.uk Otherwise, contact the AOUG Office at Walton Hall for assistance. aoug@open.ac.uk

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