



Association of Open University Graduates Region 02 – The South - Newsletter 7 - Spring 2013

I hope that you have received the latest issue of OMEGA – it was sent out rather later than anticipated due to late delivery from the printers, and then suffered distribution problems from the OU. If you haven't had your copy by 30 April, please let me know and I will arrange for one to be sent to you.

Events started off the year included a February visit to the Rowing and River Museum in Henley-on-Thames – a stunning museum depicting oarsmanship and boats from a Greek trireme to the boats used in the Olympics last year. Other galleries showed the history of Henley and the uses and development of the River Thames from Roman times to the present day, and how water use is becoming more important (my mind went back to U216 and U311, on the Environment). In February we also visited Warnford Church, deep in the Hampshire countryside – not only does the building date back to 693, but there are fields of snowdrops to admire and enjoy; the church is still in a gated estate and surrounded by farmland – albeit rather soggy when we walked through. The cultural side of life continued with visits to the Oxford University Museum of Natural History - which houses the University's scientific collections of zoological, entomological and geological specimens. The Museum itself is a Grade 1 listed building, renowned for its spectacular neo-Gothic architecture. Among its most famous features are the Oxfordshire dinosaurs, the dodo, and the swifts in the tower (with up to 90 new ones ringed in some years, but only 14 in 2012 – obviously casualties of the weather). We also visited the Great Hall in Winchester and Winchester cathedral. The Great Hall is one of the finest surviving aisled halls of the 13th century, and contains the greatest symbol of medieval mythology, King Arthur's Round Table, and is all that now remains of Winchester Castle. We then moved outside to Queen Eleanor's Garden - a re-creation, by Dr Sylvia Landsberg, of an enclosed medieval garden and named after Queen Eleanor of Provence and her daughter-in-law Queen Eleanor of Castile; they would have walked there and used it as their private retreat, with repose and refreshment to the senses as well as food and medicine. Queen Eleanor's Garden is an accurate example of such a garden and features turf seats, bay hedges, a fountain, tunnel arbour and many beautiful herbs and flowers of the time. Today's small peaceful garden oasis was opened by the Queen Mother as part of the Domesday 900 celebrations. Finally to the Cathedral, to see the 12<sup>th</sup> century bible, the grave of Jane Austen and to admire the longest nave in Europe.

Apart from our regular coffee meetings in Portsmouth and Oxford, with dates and times advertised in OMEGA, on 22 June at 11.00am, Colin has organised a walk from Oxford City Centre to Marston Village, with lunch at the Victoria Arms, Mill Lane. The walk is expected to take about 90 minutes. After lunch, either walk back into Oxford, or if you have enjoyed the lunch, take the 14A bus from Marston Village Church. Meet at Carfax, at the foot of Carfax Tower. On 15 August, at 11.00am the Southern group will be visiting the Wickham Vineyard, Botley Road, Shedfield, near Fareham (postcode SO32 2HL) to see how wine is produced from the vines first planted in 1984 and is now one of the most established and consistent vineyards in England. This will be followed by lunch in the restaurant. The audio tour costs £4.50. I can offer transport from Fareham railway station at 10.30 if necessary – please let me know.

My thanks to those who have volunteered to represent AOUG at the graduation ceremonies in Milton Keynes and Portsmouth later in the year. These are always enjoyable and a unique opportunity to see the preparation and people behind the award of degrees and diplomas.

The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary AGM and Social Weekend will be held from 17 to 19 May at the Holiday Inn in Walsall – I hope to see some of you there.

As you will know from OMEGA, this is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of AOUG and we are holding two celebratory dining events. These are on 15 June, at 6.30pm for 7.00pm at Jamie's Italian, in Gunwharf Quays in Portsmouth and on 17 August at the Mitre in Oxford. Both have good reviews on Trip Advisor... As both Colin Reed and I will have to make reservations for both venues, it is **essential** that you let us know (as appropriate) if you are intending to come, and with guests (if any); *the cut-off dates are 11 May (for the evening meal at Jamie's Italian, in Portsmouth on 15 June) and 7 August for the boat trip and/or the lunch at the Mitre in Oxford, on 17 August:*

With all good wishes

Mike Bechley

**Contacts for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary events:**

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