



Association of Open University Graduates Region 02 – The South

Newsletter 16

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. As we did not have any suggestions for a motif to represent the region I will be trying to include the flags for the counties and islands that make up this region. In this edition I have included the flag of the Isle of Wight. I am not stating that these are the definitive flags for the areas as often these have changed over time. However, I have used the flag that appears as the first choice in the internet search engine. We have returned to mainly coffee mornings over the winter as less clement weather is more likely. However our local contacts have been working hard to produce a varied programme for 2016 with many visits to places of interest once the weather becomes a little more reliable. 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.

Budget Report

In 2015 I had a budget of £100 allocated for the development of the region. This budget was spent on issuing the last Newsletter in hardcopy by post to those people who I did not have an e-mail address for. This year I am again able to send only one hardcopy Newsletter due to these budget restrictions. By personally adding a note to every Newsletter I obtained a supply of stamps from one member (three members have now provided stamps) and fifteen new e-mail addresses were obtained to allow members to receive three electronic Newsletters per year. Moving forward, although I would like to be able to continue to provide one hardcopy newsletter per year to those people without e-mail, I cannot guarantee to have the funds to do this and so if you can provide me with your e-mail details or can provide a small supply of stamps it will ensure you receive the Newsletter more regularly.

AOUG's Foundation for Education

On the Friday of the Executive Committee Weekend in October, the Association traditionally hosts a special Award Ceremony for research students who have been nominated by their Faculties or Research Centres as worthy of recognition. In 2015 five of the nine available Awards were presented and each of these students was introduced by their Supervisors or Head of Departments with glowing praise for their dedication in their particular field of study. Each student receives a framed certificate and a cheque from AOUG Foundation for Education but none of this would be possible without the kind donations of AOUG members.

AOUG Foundation for Education is a registered charity and needs a total of £4,200 a year in order to be able to fund the maximum number of Awards we offer to both these research students and for the new graduates adversity Awards. The Association would therefore like you to consider making a small donation to 'AOUG Foundation for Education'. You can give as much or as little as you wish as just £1 from each member would be a tremendous support and if you are a tax payer, remember to offer to Gift Aid your donation to increase the benefit even further.

AOUG Foundation for Education Awards in the Regions and Nations

Recently I travelled to the Guildford area to make a presentation to Kelly Furlonger who had been nominated for the award by her wife, Rhiann. Kelly graduated in 2014 with a BSc Hons in Sport, Fitness and Coaching which she is now using to good effect in her role as a personal trainer. She has used the knowledge to work more effectively in training and has also used the management skills gained through the degree to aid her in running her own business. Kelly began her studies whilst recovering from rehabilitation for drugs and alcohol addiction. She continued studying through additional health problems that included hospitalisation as she found that studying provided her with a focus away from her ill health and made her think about her future. Kelly allocated many hours to her studying to ensure that she reached her goal and achieved her degree. She managed to study the materials despite also suffering from dyslexia and found ways to ensure her ideas could be communicated in her assignments. She wants to continue to learn as she moves forward and would also like to help others studying with the OU by offering her services as a mentor. I joined Kelly and her family at their home for the presentation. Many members of Kelly's family attended including her parents. I made the presentation and we all then enjoyed tea and cake as part of the celebration before I left the family to continue their celebrations together.

AGM and Social Weekend in Buxton

The 2016 AGM will be held from 13th - 15th May in Buxton, Derbyshire. Public transport links are excellent as the railway station is literally just across the road from the hotel. No need for taxis or bus rides. The Buxton venue of the Palace Hotel also sits within easy walking distance of the Opera House, Buxton Pavilion and the surrounding gardens and the town. It is ideally placed for the arranged optional excursions to Poole Cavern, Chatsworth House and Gardens and the plague village of Eyam but there are so many beautiful areas to see and places to visit that it is well worth booking a few extra nights to really explore. Although the official cut-off date for balance payments for bookings is 12th March 2016, if you contact the AOUG Office 01908 653316, they may still be able to accommodate you up until 19th March.

Your chance to have your say!

The Winter OMEGA had three double sided inserts this time – the usual AGM Booking form (with the excursion booking on the reverse this time), a volunteering form to either process at a Degree Ceremony in 2016 or to be part of the AOUG 'Meet and Greet' team helping at the AOUG stand to welcome new graduates and their families, and then the Nomination form to stand for election to the Executive Committee (the deadline was 12th January 2016). However on the back of this latter form, there was also a survey to express your opinions about the Association itself and an opportunity to add additional information about your ideas for the future direction of the Association. We'd still be pleased to receive your response if you haven't sent it back yet.

Recent events

Portsmouth & South Downs Area

Gilbert White's House at Selborne was recently visited by the Portsmouth group.

Gilbert White is known as the father of bird watching and the 'first ecologist'. He was a Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, and was ordained in 1749, becoming vicar of Farringdon and then curate of Selborne. From an early age, White was a keen gardener, and took a close interest in everything horticultural – being the first person to grow potatoes in the neighbourhood. He recorded everything not merely on what grew, but also the weather. .

The house provided an interesting venue to visit and look around to find out more about White and his life. His major book, "*The Natural History of Selborne*", was published in 1789, just four years before White's death, since when it has never been out of print. The great parlour in the house contains what is probably a complete collection of all print editions of the book, as well as the original manuscript. Ebooks are also available. White had some odd theories, some of which have been discredited (such as swallows hibernating rather than migrating, as we know today).

Elsewhere in the House, is a collection devoted to Captain Lawrence Oates, who famously sacrificed himself to the Antarctic weather in the hope of saving the other members of Captain Scott's expedition in 1912. There is also a display of the items necessary to survive in the Antarctic in 1912 and today which the group found very interesting to compare and contrast.

The garden, looking out onto the Hangar of the North Downs, has been carefully restored to the original layout as worked on by White and we enjoyed a short visit to the garden as the weather was a little inclement for our visit!



Gilbert White's Organic Garden – Photo courtesy of Mike Bechley

Oxford and Area

The annual autumn lunch was well attended at The Mitre, in Oxford, in October. We welcomed visitors from Region 01 who joined us for good food and conversation. Apart from this we have had small numbers joining our regular coffee mornings and we spent both November and December's meetings organising the social calendar for 2016.

Future events

Portsmouth & South Downs Area

Wednesday 13th April 2016 at 11.00 am:

Visit Chichester Cathedral for the 11.15am tour of the building and cloisters. Parking is available, but it may be advisable to travel by train (station 10 minutes' walk away) or by bus. The tour and admission to the cathedral are free. Meet by the main entrance. This is intended to be a "handshake event" with Region 13.

Wednesday 11th May 2016 at 11.00am:

Meet for coffee at the Toby Carvery, Copnor Road, Portsmouth, PO3 5HS. A carvery Lunch will be available for those who wish to stay.

Wednesday 13th July 2016 at 10.30am:

Visit to Jane Austen's House, Chawton, Alton GU34 1SD. Meet at the entrance. Admission is £6.50 admission (with concession). This was Jane Austen's last home, where she lived from 1807 to 1817. The home is beautifully restored, (with a well-tuned piano) and retains all the charm of a middle-class early 19th century home. The nearby St Nicholas' church has the graves of her mother and sister (although she herself is buried in Winchester Cathedral). The visit will be followed by lunch at the Grey Friar pub opposite.

Wednesday 7th September 2016 at 11.00 am:

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

Saturday 17th September 2016 at 10.30am:

Visit the Mid-Hants Railway Open day (free to members, otherwise £16). Meet at Ropley station (SO24 OBL). Access is by service bus 64 from Winchester otherwise. We should be able to see freight, steam and diesel trains, visit the engine shed and works and see other restoration work.

Wednesday 12th October 2016 at 10.30am:

Visit to Sir Harold Hillier Arboretum, Jermyns Lane, Ampfield, Romsey SO51 0QA. Admission is £9.60/£8.60. The gardens hold fourteen national collections, plus the Gurkha Memorial, Brentry Memorial and Hydrangea Walk. Public transport is by bus service 66 (Winchester to Romsey).

Wednesday 9th November 2016 at 11.00am:

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

Oxford and Area

Thursday 21st April 2016 at 11.00am:

Meet at Bodleian Library, Weston Entrance, Broad Street (OX1 3BG). Either visit the Bodleian Library's current exhibition, 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.

Saturday 21st May 2016 at 11.00am:

Visit to Child Beale Wildlife Park, Lower Basildon. Meet at the ticket office adjacent to the car park. The park is located 6 miles from Reading on the A324 between Pangbourne and Streatley (the post code does not direct you to the car park area). If travelling by car, leave M4 at J12 and follow brown tourist signs. Pangbourne station is 1½ - 2 miles from the park. There is a pavement along this part of the A329 to the park. Admission prices for 2016 are £10 for adults, £8.50 for senior citizens and £8 for children. Family tickets are £31 (2 adults and 2 children) and £29 (1 adult and 3 children). At 3pm we will then be visiting the Racing and Riverboat Museum at The Old Tithe Barn, Lower Basildon. RG8 9NH. (Adjacent to the exit of Beale Park). Suggested donations are £2 per person. For those who just wish to join us for this please meet us at the entrance to the museum at 3pm. Exhibits include vintage racing dinghies,

historic canoes and kayaks and river and rowing boats. The nearest bus service for these attractions is the Thames Travel 143 this leaves Reading and goes to Pangbourne (then 2 mile walk to the park, 3½ mile walk to the museum (no pavement to the museum)).

Thursday 16th June 2016 at noon:

Visit to Cogges Manor Farm, Church Lane, Witney (OX28 3LA) – meet at noon by the entrance. Cogges Manor Farm is a well preserved collection of Cotswold stone farm buildings which had been farmed since before the Domesday Book. It is also a popular location for filming with shows including Downton Abbey and Countryfile having used the manor house or grounds for filming. There is a café area where refreshments can be purchased. Free car parking is available at Cogges Hill Road car park (OX28 3FR) and it is then a short walk to the entrance of the farm. The S1 and S2 buses from Oxford stop at the top of Church Lane. Admission prices are £6 for adults and £4.50 for children

Thursday 28th July 2016 at 11.00am:

Walk around Virginia Water Lake, near Egham. Meet at the café near the car park. (GU25 4QF) A walk around Virginia Water Lake is about 4 miles but shorter routes can be taken by those who prefer a shorter distance and there is a café/refreshment area where we can meet after our walks if different routes are taken. Virginia Water Lake lies on the southern edge of Windsor Great Park and was first dammed and flooded in 1753. Until the creation of the reservoirs it was the largest man-made body of water in the British Isles. The car park is chargeable (£7 for 4 hours+) and is located just off the A30 after the junction with the A329 to Ascot. There is no charge for entrance to the lake area. The nearest train station is Virginia Water on the Reading to Waterloo line which is a 20 minute walk from the car park area.

Saturday 27 August, at 1.30pm:

Oxford in the History of the Nation Tour, with Official Blue or Green Badge Guide. Hear about the role Oxford played in the history of the nation: as a site of councils, Empress Matilda's prison, the birthplace of King John, the first meeting of De Montfort's Oxford Parliament, the capital of the country during the reign of Charles I and a place of education for 26 British Prime Ministers. Meet outside the Visitor Information Centre, 15-16 Broad Street (OX1 3AS). The tour, which starts at 1.45 pm, costs £10.00 (concessions £9.50), covers between 1 and 2 miles and lasts about 2 hours. Although it is possible to buy your ticket on the day, these tours are very popular, so it is advisable to book in advance on www.visitoxfordandoxfordshire.com/official-tours or in person, but note that fees are non-refundable.

Sunday 18th September 2016 at 1.30pm for 2.00pm cruise departure:

River Cruise and visit to Mapledurham House & Watermill. Meet at the embarkation jetty (adjacent to Reading Rowing Club Boat House - RG1 8BD) at 1.30pm to catch the 2pm departure. There are a number of public car parks within 10 minutes' walk from the embarkation jetty. Bus links; travelling from Oxford and Wallingford there is the Thames Travel X40 which stops in Caversham Precinct. From Reading town centre choose Reading buses no. 22. Both services run once an hour. Travelling by rail leave Reading station by the north exit turning left into Vastern Road then right into Caversham Road. The jetty is behind The Crowne Plaza hotel. 10 -15 minutes' walk from the station. The cruise departs from Thames side Promenade, Caversham at 2.00pm and collects from Mapledurham at 5.00pm arriving back at Caversham at about 5.40pm. 2016 prices for the cruise are £9 for adults, £8.50 senior citizens and £6.50 for children. There is a £2 landing fee for adults that can be redeemed against the admission tickets for the house and watermill. 2016 admission prices for the house and watermill (combined ticket) are £9.50 for adults (under 16's go free) and £8 for seniors not taking into account the reduction. Mapledurham House is Elizabethan and surrounded by its own farming estate dating back to medieval times and is tucked away in a small English village. The estate looks to combine tradition with sustainable commerce to try to ensure its long term viability. It offers Cream Teas and many other refreshments. The watermill is the only working watermill on the Thames and is mentioned in the Domesday Book. Working in the traditional

method the mill also sells its own produce. Adjacent is a modern working Archimedes screw. The area has also been used for location filming for *The Eagle has Landed*, *Miss Marple*, *Midsomer Murders*, *Sharpe* and *The Big Allotment Challenge*.

Saturday 15th October 2016 at noon for 12.15pm:

The Autumn Lunch is to be held at The Mitre, corner of Turl Street with the High Street, Oxford (OX1 4AG). Members and friends from any Region or Nation will be welcome to join us. **If you would like to attend, please contact Colin Reed on 01235 815548, or by e-mail, as he will need to reserve a table.**

Thursday 17th November 2016 at 11.00am:

Coffee morning at the Ashmolean rooftop cafe, Beaumont Street, Oxford (OX1 2PH)

Thursday 15th December 2016 at 11.00am:

Coffee morning in the Ashmolean Museum's rooftop café. It is anticipated that the annual Oxford Christmas Market will be taking place in nearby Broad Street. (Beaumont Street, Oxford OX1 2PH)

Local Contact - Oxford and Area:

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For further information about the visit to Child Beale Wildlife Park and the River Cruise and visit to Mapledurham House please contact David Cox on david.cox72@btinternet.com

For further information about the Virginia Water lake walk please contact Malcolm Harris on malcolmharris148@btinternet.com