



Association of Open University Graduates in the South West

Newsletter 10

Spring 2015

Hello from Janet Savin Executive Representative for the South West.



I am married with two grown up sons - both still at home. I have been a Civil Servant for nearly forty years but felt it was too early to take retirement, so I am semi-retired working three days a week. I started my OU studies in 1985, took a few years off in the nineties, graduating in 2000. I started with a Social Sciences Foundation Course, and my last module was 'Cinema and Society: Britain in the 1950s and 1960s'. In between those two, I studied a fairly eclectic mix of subjects, including one of three modules for a Diploma in Europe Humanities entitled 'What is Europe?' Despite successfully completing this and being awarded the Diploma, I still don't know the answer! I am a member of my Catholic Church council; my main role is leading a group of eight year olds learning about their faith. To relax, I like to listen uninterrupted to choral classical music, or at the other end of the spectrum - Bruce Springsteen.

Bristol Group

The first event of the year was a talk and presentation from Lucienne Boyce entitled 'Suffragettes in Bristol', and you can read more from me about this in the Spring edition of OMEGA. Since January I have passed a number of the buildings and places that featured in Lucienne's talk and I look at them in a different light now, aware of the courage and commitment the Suffragettes showed in their campaign for women's right to vote. Lucienne is an OU graduate; she gained her MA in Literature through the OU in 2006 and would be delighted to see fellow graduates at any of her other talks and presentations. Details are on Lucienne's diary page of her site www.lucienneboyce.com



Lucienne Boyce
(courtesy of Lucienne)

There still seem to be plenty of exhibitions and events related to the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. In February some of the Bristol group went along to the M Shed for 'Moved by Conflict'. The stories of how individuals in Bristol were affected by the War were told through a series of short videos voiced by Bristol Old Vic actors. These and plenty of photographs and original items lent to the museum gave the exhibition a really local atmosphere. In March, we enjoyed a pub lunch and then visited the Frenchay Village Museum which is on the perimeter of the recently closed Frenchay Hospital. Although the museum is not much bigger than a house, it is packed with information and memorabilia about the role the hospital played (in both the First and Second World War) and the local Fry Chocolate Family. In the Second World War, a number of American injured servicemen were sent to Frenchay and on display were notes of advice for the servicemen about British ways and customs.

I had to have a second look at one photograph though - it was a picture of Frank Sinatra visiting the hospital in 1953. And a member of our group also had a closer look at a photograph taken in 1918 - she thinks her Grandfather is in the picture, so she will be going back to the museum with information to see if she can verify this.

Janet Savin

Exeter Group

The Exeter AOUG Group meet for a pub lunch every two months, but in between, we hold a 'Revivalist' meeting. The concept of these meetings is that a volunteer from the group chooses a topic outside of their area of expertise/knowledge to research and prepare a presentation for the next group meeting. This is an excellent way of putting to use or refreshing the skills developed in undergraduate days. If you want to come to the meetings, you don't need to or be expected to volunteer as the group invites external speakers to the meetings and in the warmer months visit local places of interest; see the diary dates for details. Here is a report of our February Revivalist Meeting.

History and Life on the British Overseas Territory of the Pitcairn Islands and St. Helena

The group enjoyed a talk and slideshow from a member of our group – Gwen Davis and her husband Gerry; the topic stemming from Gwen and Gerry's cruise from Chile to Australia, which included the four isolated Pitcairn islands; the largest is a mere four square miles in area. A significant part of its history relates to Lt. Bligh and the mutiny on the Bounty; we were glad to learn that the Hollywood version, which portrays Bligh as a dreadful man, was a bad misrepresentation (it seems the mutiny was because many of the crew didn't want to leave the warm weather)! We also heard that the islands are British Dependencies, it is the smallest democracy in the world and although the islands have satellite TV and local broadcasting stations, there are no international radio stations, no airport and no medical facilities - so it's not the place to be ill! The next leg of their cruise took Gwen and Gerry to visit the island of St. Helena, the second oldest British island. Like the Pitcairn islands, it is a British dependency; it's a bigger island, around forty-seven square miles and has a population of four thousand, two hundred. The island has a long and chequered history; of Oliver Cromwell's connection and Napoleon's exile there. Napoleon's original tomb (unmarked) is still there, but his remains were later returned to France. Interestingly, a giant tortoise, thought to be at least two hundred and eighty-two years old, still lives there. Apart from being the oldest inhabitant, it is quite likely that Napoleon was his neighbour at one time. Whereas the title was initially uninteresting to some of us - and we attended more in the spirit of keeping these meetings alive, we all thoroughly enjoyed the talk and presentation. It is clearly good for us as graduates, to delve into other topics and try to broaden our interests.

Raymond Prescott – Local Contact

Association News

AGM and Social weekend in Caernarfon, North Wales

There is still time to book for the Association's annual get together which this year will be held at the Celtic Royal Hotel, right in the heart of Caernarfon, just five minutes' walk from the famous castle. Full board package from after Friday lunch until after Sunday lunch is £270 and this includes all the evening entertainment on both Friday and Saturday evening.

The Gala Dinner on Saturday is a real chance to dust off your finery and enjoy a relaxing evening with a pre-dinner drink, a three course dinner, an after dinner speaker and then musical entertainment. For more information go to the AOUG website www.aoug.org.uk

Executive Committee Meeting at Milton Keynes - 7 February 2015

The budget for the coming year is set at the Spring EC Meeting. Executive Representatives' budgets have increased over the last two years to enable the production of the Local Newsletters but this has now been reduced. For most Regions this is £100, however in our Region as there are a significant number of members that do not have an e-mail address the budget was agreed at £150. If you have received this newsletter in the post and now have an e-mail address, please send me an e-mail and include your full name, PI number and telephone number.

Janet Savin

Roger and Pauline Galea

I was sorry to hear from Roger that Pauline had been unwell. As a result, the Bath lunches will no longer take place. Roger and Pauline held the lunches at a beautiful venue – the Royal Pavilion Restaurant in Victoria Park, Bath, and they were always very welcoming to the AOUG members who attended. I'd like to thank them both very much for organising the lunches over many years and send them our good wishes.

Pam Pearce – AOUG Publicity Officer

Diary Dates

Exeter Group - Local Contact: Raymond Prescott 01823 652848 jascha231@msn.com

Friday 24th April 1.45pm

Meet at the entrance of the RSPB Dart's Farm Village, Topsham EX3 0QH for a talk at 2pm 'Waders and Waterfowl' by Chris Les of the RSPB. Afterwards, there is an optional walk to a hide on the nearby River Clyst. The cost is £12 or £10 for RSPB members and although you 'pay on the day' please let me know in advance if you are coming.

Friday 29th May. 12noon

Meet at the main entrance of the Countess Wear Beefeater restaurant, Topsham Road, Exeter EX2 6HE for lunch. No pre-booking necessary.

Friday 31st July. 12noon

Meet at the main entrance of the Countess Wear Beefeater restaurant, Topsham Road, Exeter EX2 6HE for lunch. No pre-booking necessary.

Bristol Group - Local Contact: Janet Savin 07930 111 612 janetasavin@hotmail.com

Tuesday 21st April. 2.30pm

Meet at the entrance to Kingswood Heritage Museum, Tower Lane, Warmley BS30 8XT. The museum has displays and exhibitions of the 18th Century Zinc and Brass works on the site and there is plenty to see in the surrounding gardens. Entrance fee to museum is £3. Please let me know in advance if you are coming.

Wednesday 24th June. 11.30am

Meet at the entrance to the Red Lodge Museum, Park Row, Bristol BS1 5LJ. The Lodge has three of the oldest rooms in Bristol - admission is free. After looking around the museum, have lunch at the Bristol Guild Café, which is a five minute walk from the museum. If you have visited the Red Lodge before, you are welcome to join us for lunch. Please let me know in advance.

Tuesday 15th July 12.30pm

Meet outside the 'Moon and Sixpence' The Beach, Clevedon BS21 7QU for lunch and then visit Clevedon Pier, a few yards away. A visitor and educational centre is being built by the pier but as this will not be completed until September, this is an opportunity to visit the pier before it becomes too busy. Admission to the pier is £1.80 or £1.30 for 'concessions'. Please let me know in advance so I can book a table.

Saturday 1st August. 12noon

Meet outside the café next to the car park at Blaise Castle House Museum, Henbury Rd, Bristol BS10 7QS. As well as the house which was built in the late 18th Century there is a collection of toys, including British lead soldiers and dolls houses. Admission is free. Blaise Hamlet is a few minutes' walk away from the museum and although the nine cottages are occupied, on Saturdays and Sundays it is possible to walk around the small green. Please let me know in advance so I know who to expect.

Cornwall Group - Local contact: Liz Ashcroft 01872 862425 taitailizash@gmail.com

Saturday 28th March at 12.30

Lanhydrock House, Bodmin PL30 5AD. Meet at the entrance to the restaurant. As well as a tour of the gardens and grounds of this National Trust property, hopefully we will be able to view one of their recent discoveries (before it is moved to a permanent home in London); the original document setting out the reasons that Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon should be annulled. Please let me know in advance if you are coming.

Saturday 11th April

Tregothnan, The Woodyard, Tregothnan, St Michael Penkivel, Truro TR2 4AJ This private garden is opened for charity one weekend of the year. Tickets purchased in advance are £10 each and a very limited number will be available on the day for £12 so pre-booking is essential so I do need to know the number as soon as possible. This is the largest historic garden in Cornwall and, apart from its' camellias and magnolias, it boasts the biggest rhododendrons at 40 ft high, which should be covered in blooms at this time of the year.

Saturday 18th April at 12.30pm

Lunch at the Carbis Bay Hotel, St Ives TR6 2NP, a chance to enjoy the sea views whilst eating lunch in a great location before the annual influx of tourists makes visiting one of Cornwall's most popular attractions a less desirable destination. Please let me know in advance so I can book a table.

Thursday 30th April at 8pm

We are always looking for members to join our book club so please get in touch for a list of the titles. The next meeting is at the Victoria Inn, Roche, St Austell, PL26 8LQ. The book for April is *Stoner by John Williams*. Written at the same time as Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, this was largely overlooked at the time. Waterstones made it their book of the year last year and it is well worth a read.

Finally - it's over to you.

With this newsletter there is a short survey. I would like to know what sort of AOUG events you would like to see that interest you. And, as you can see from the Diary dates we don't have a geographical spread of events across the Region. So if you are interested in organising something in your locality, especially Gloucester, Cheltenham, Bath or Salisbury then please let me know.

Janet Savin – Executive Representative