



**ASSOCIATION OF OPEN UNIVERSITY GRADUATES (AOUG)
in the SOUTH WEST (03)**

Newsletter 3

Spring 2012

Welcome to the return of the 03 Newsletter. It is designed to keep you in touch with the AOUG and your Executive Representative between issues of OMEGA, and I hope you find it an interesting read. Please send me your contributions to go alongside information about our events. Newsletters are being produced in all our Regions and are intended to be more informal than OMEGA. Thank you to Peter Horlock and Pam Day from the Bristol Group for their items.

Since the last Newsletter in February 2011, which was edited by Elizabeth Mount, the previous Executive Representative, there have been major changes at the Open University and this has had an effect on the AOUG. Many OU Campus departments are being “streamlined” and the OU now requires the AOUG to involve the Alumni staff in all our campus communications. This is discussed in more depth on an insert in the Spring issue of OMEGA. Please return the slip with your views.

Pam Pearce

LAUNCH OF BATH AND WILTSHIRE GROUP

On April 25th, four members of the AOUG and a friend enjoyed the pleasant surroundings and warm welcome received at the Royal Oak Inn, Hawkeridge near Westbury. We were celebrating the rebirth of the Bath and Wiltshire group. Over a lunch brought promptly, with both the ‘roast’ and ‘vegetarian’ options served to our complete satisfaction, the conversation ranged wide and far.....ideas flowed: a discussion on future events, courses we’d taken, journeys we’d made. It was then quite a shock to discover it was 2.30pm and to hear the landlord calling ‘Time!’

Margaret Venn

ASSOCIATION AGM IN LIVERPOOL

The AGM/Social Weekend will be held this year at the Britannia Adelphi Hotel, from 18th – 20th May, with the AGM at 10am on the Saturday and a Gala Dinner that evening. There will also be optional excursions on the Yellow Duckmarine, to Speke Hall and to “The Beatles Story”. I hope those of you travelling up from this Region will enjoy the weekend – see you there!

BRISTOL GROUP VISIT TO LEONARDO DA VINCI DRAWINGS

On Wednesday, 18th April, the Bristol Group went to see ten drawings by Leonardo da Vinci at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery. However, one of us, Peter Horlock, had also been to the Leonardo Exhibition at the National Gallery earlier in the year, see his interesting review below.

LEONARDO DA VINCI, PAINTER AT THE COURT OF MILAN:

A short and personal review by Peter Horlock

I was lucky enough to attend the Leonardo exhibition at the National Gallery in January 2012. On show were nine of Leonardo’s paintings, a copy of his Last Supper, probably by a pupil, a large number of Leonardo’s drawings, including the Burlington House Cartoon, and a

few paintings by his contemporaries and pupils. The main strand of the exhibition traced Leonardo's career at the court of Ludovico Sforza ('Il moro') in Milan and stressed the impact of his innovative techniques.

There is no doubting the genius of Leonardo. The paintings are, at the very least, striking and many of the sketches, often seeming little more than doodles, are stunning. Many of the sketches are assumed to show Leonardo's early design ideas for elements of his paintings, and are positioned to reflect the connections. Similarly, the works of contemporaries and pupils are placed to illustrate both Leonardo's innovation and the impact he had on artistic styles.

There were a few aspects of this exhibiting that left me somewhat dissatisfied. Many of the sketches were small and needed to be examined closely in order fully appreciate them. I found this close observation clashed with the more distant perspective needed to fully appreciate the paintings; this discordance I found unsettling. Equally, there was something unfulfilling about the use of the works of pupils and contemporaries. Whilst they did help to illustrate Leonardo's innovation, I still failed to get a true sense of what a shock Leonardo caused. Perhaps a small gallery of the type of work at Milan before his arrival would have brought his startling new approach into sharper focus. Of course I, like everyone else, also felt 'cheated' by the fact that Leonardo left unfinished most of the works he started. If only 'completer/finisher' had been one of the characteristics of his genius!

Nevertheless, the exhibition contained some stand-out highlights. The juxtaposition of the two versions of the Virgin of the Rocks at either ends of the same room enables one to see how the preoccupations and intentions of an artist can change over time. Strikingly similar in composition, they are equally strikingly different in execution and in the effect they have on the viewer. Similarly the contrast between Portrait of Cecilia Gallerani ('The Lady with an Ermine') and Portrait of a Woman ('The Belle Ferronière'), both now thought to be of mistresses of Ludovico Sforza, could not be stronger: one might think it impossible that they are by the same artist. Whilst they might reflect the differing needs of Leonardo's patron, they also reflect Leonardo's shifting preoccupations with trying to capture the innermost thoughts and spirit of his subjects.

It is perhaps this 'spirituality' that best conveys the essence of Leonardo's works, and differentiates them from the works of others. Leonardo's contemporaries clearly felt this effect: when The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne and the infant Saint John the Baptist ('The Burlington House Cartoon') was displayed in Florence, it was treated as though it was a sacred relic. It certainly engages one at a deeply emotional level. I feel, too, that 'spirituality' oozes from the newly rediscovered Christ as Salvator Mundi, but is simply absent from the copy of The Last Supper.

If I have to pick one favourite, it has to be The Lady with an Ermine. It is simply mesmerising and it is only with great difficulty that one can tear oneself away from her. My wife, Vivien, and I had hoped to see this work at its home in Krakow when we visited last year; now at least I have seen her 'in the flesh'!

Peter Horlock

CHOOSING A SHORT COURSE

Having worked all through a degree profile possibly the last thing on your mind might be more study. But if this is not the case for you, why not choose a short course from the OU? As the Short Course prospectus says ".....Courses will broaden your thinking, widen your horizons and stretch your imagination". Alternatively they could be a great way to keep up to date with your career theme and may help maintain continuing professional development. Another consideration, if you studied for an arts degree, perhaps mathematics would be a pleasant change.

Most are level 1 courses worth either 10 or 15 credits and they take either a few weeks or up to 5 months to complete. There is some form of assessment for satisfactory completion. A cost is involved but there is no price to put on knowledge. So go on, check out the webpages, and hopefully you will find something to interest you. (www.open.ac.uk/study)

Pam Day

SEVENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FALL OF SINGAPORE

This may be considered as one of the greatest defeats in the history of the British Army, but I found it interesting, first looking at it from the Australian angle at an exhibition at the Shrine in Melbourne, and then at the Changi Museum in Singapore. (I've just returned from a belated retirement holiday in New Zealand, Australia and Singapore). Does anyone else have an interest or family involvement in this area, which they could share with us in the Newsletter? I know that those people who were actually involved found it very difficult to talk about.

Pam Pearce

CORNWALL GROUP BOOK CLUB

If you live in Cornwall and enjoy reading, why not join Liz Ashcroft's Book Club. She's recently issued the new list of books for the next twelve months – the choices for the next three months are:

MAY – The Time Traveller's Wife – Audrey Niffenegger

JUNE – Dissolution – C J Sansom

JULY – Dear Fatty – Dawn French

AOUG WEBSITE – www.aoug.org.uk

The AOUG website has a large selection of pages to view including Association and OU news and many archive sections for those interested in our history, but more importantly for local members it has several pages dedicated to your own Region. Each Region or Nation has a Welcome page, a Newsletter page and a Diary Dates page with recently added Memory Lane photos and the facility to add Booking forms as required.

However the Association's website now has a new on-line membership facility so that you are able to renew your membership on-line and prevent any risk of lapsing and thus missing out on receiving your OMEGA and all the other communications being you information about your Association. If you are not sure when your renewal is due, how much to pay or what method you normally pay by, then the on-line facility allows you to contact AOUG to find out. Alternatively you can always give Cheryl Cowley a ring on 01908 653316 to check directly.

Jean Hertzog AOUG Publicity Officer

DIARY DATES

Bath and Wiltshire Group:

Friday 15th June. 11am:

The Holburne Museum, Great Pulteney Street, Bath, BA2 4DB. Meet at main entrance. Free entry, guided tour available £6.50, charge for temporary exhibitions. Afterwards, eat at the Garden Café. <http://www.holburne.org/>

Saturday 28th July. 12 noon:

Lunch at the Royal Pavilion Restaurant, Victoria Park, Bath BA1 2NR. (Roger and Pauline Galea)

Wednesday 19th September. 11.30am:

Guided tour of Swindon and Wiltshire History Centre, Cocklebury Road, Chippenham SN15 3QN. Lunch at the Brasserie or bring your own picnic lunch to eat in the Foyer (drinks machine available).

Wednesday 24th October. 11.00am:

Meet in the Museum Restaurant, Salisbury & South Wiltshire Museum, The King's House, 65 The Close, Salisbury SP1 2EN for a led walk around Salisbury - then lunch (optional)

Saturday, 27th October. 12 noon:

Lunch at the Royal Pavilion Restaurant, Victoria Park, Bath BA1 2NR. (Roger and Pauline Galea)

Saturday, 17th November. From 11.00am:

Keynsham Day

You are invited to join the day at any point. In the morning local resident and historian Alan Byrom leads a walk around historic Keynsham. Gather in the Baptist Church Coffee shop on the High Street at 11am. We have our walk, then lunch in the Talbot Inn, Bath Road with its wide menu. In the afternoon we take in another area of this old market town.

Bristol Group:

Wednesday 4th July. 11am:

Tyntesfield (National Trust property), Wraxall, Bristol BS48 1NX. Meet at Visitor Reception. Come and see the progress that has been made on this groundbreaking restoration project. The house now has a new roof, is free of scaffolding and the new Home Farm Visitor Centre is open.

Cornwall Group:

A Garden Visit, Book Club and Lunch take place every month. For details of events, please contact Liz Ashcroft 01872 862425.

Exeter Group:

Friday 25th May. Meet at 12 noon:

Bi-monthly lunch at 12.30pm at the Countess Wear Beefeater Restaurant, 398 Topsham Road, Exeter, EX2 6HE.

Friday, 29th June. 2.30pm:

Revivalist Meeting. Meet in Lympstone for a talk and discussion, (topic to be confirmed).

Friday, 27th July. Meet at 12 noon:

Bi-monthly lunch at 12.30pm at the Countess Wear Beefeater Restaurant, 398 Topsham Road, Exeter, EX2 6HE.

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Did you receive this Newsletter by post? If so, do you have an e-mail address we may use? Please contact me with your details. Thank you for your cooperation with this. Alternatively if you prefer a postal version, then please consider donating stamps to reduce our costs.

Pam Pearce
Executive Representative