



Association of Open University Graduates in the South West

Newsletter 11

Summer 2015

Welcome to the Summer edition of the Local Newsletter

If you are a new member, these Newsletters are circulated three times a year in Spring, Summer and Winter. I hope that you will enjoy reading about what some of the members have been up to in the last few months.

As you can see from OMEGA there was a lot packed into the AGM Weekend - business and pleasure. Keith Ward's report about the Snowdon Mountain Railway on page 13 mentioned the small cinema that some of us decided to take shelter in. I and my husband Vince spent a nostalgic fifteen minutes or so wallowing in the pre 'politically correct' times, when there was nothing wrong with having a character such as an elephant keeper from India with a very odd accent in the Ivor the Engine cartoons. We came out slightly drier and knowing a bit more about the railway; however I would certainly give a prize (if I had a budget for prizes) to anyone who can *spell* the noise made by Ivor the Engine. **Janet Savin** - Executive Representative

Dartmoor Surprises

Some of those at the AGM weekend visited the 'Electric Mountain' a hydroelectric power station. Coincidentally, the topic of a recent Exeter AOUG talk from Kate Macve's husband Andrew was the industrial history of Mary Tavy - where there is also a hydroelectric power station. Andrew's interest and research in this subject began with a walk on Dartmoor - finding a leat which is a man-made water channel with a path alongside it. The leat led from the river Tavy to the Mary Tavy power station, which started in 1932 on what is believed to be the site of an old mill, and it expanded as demand grew in 1936.



The Wheal Jewell Reservoir - taken by Andrew

The leat Andrew chanced on is not the only one used; another leat leaves the Tavy further upstream and travels several miles around the land to a

reservoir from where a tunnel takes the water to the turbines. This reservoir has been created in a disused mine, Wheal Jewell, which was one of the mines the leat was originally built for. The Morwellham power plant is also fed from the Tavy; there is a canal with a slight gradient from Tavistock which goes through a one and a half mile tunnel under Morwell Down, which has been resurrected for this purpose.

At one time the Mary Tavy was the oldest hydroelectric power station in daily use in England; but still with the station at Morwellham, they produce nine million kWh of electricity each year, enough for nearly two thousand and eighty homes. After the talk, conversation over tea and Hazel's delicious cakes centred on why this form of electricity generation is not encouraged more. The water is certainly there and many leats still exist, so why is it not used instead of nuclear power which on so many occasions has been shown to be dangerous? All members enjoyed the meeting, we are very grateful for John and Hazel Eaton Terry's hospitality, and for John's encouragement in continuing our meetings which always prove to be rewarding, informative and fattening!

Kate Macve - Devon AOUG member

Bird watching and more in Devon

Do you know your grebes from your godwits, your phalaropes from your pheasants? Until our visit to Darts Farm in Topsham, I suspect not many of the members of our group would have. Our outing started at the Darts Farm shopping village. What an amazing place this is! You can buy anything from an AGA to posh food; get your legs waxed, go fishing in the lake, or just watch the birds from the RSPB hide. We met Dr Chris Lee, an ornithologist, who shared with us his joy of bird watching. Birds don't like humans (can't think why), so binoculars help, and Dr Lee had some tips on what to spend our money on in the RSPB shop in the complex, such as a small pop-in-your-pocket pair. He gave us various strategies to identify birds: for example, you can narrow down the identification procedure by being aware of what is common in the chosen habitat, and concentrate on a small patch at a time. However, his main message was to enjoy watching the birds fly, swim, search for food, scrap with other birds, or sometimes they just sit in the mud of the nearby river Clyst.

And when we walked along the path beside the Clyst, we saw the godwits that seem to like nothing better than looking for the juicy food buried in the mud. Then we went on to Bowling Green Marsh and its bird hide. Dr Lee has a good collection of binoculars, and we spent an enjoyable time using some of these. We saw shelducks (which are large pretty ducks), herons and oystercatchers - primarily a Devon bird, whizzing round at what could have been ten knots! I learnt that teal is the name of another beautiful duck rather than a fashionable winter clothing colour; that long tailed tits are not tits at all, that lapwings are making a comeback and that when I can't keep up with filling the peanut feeder, this is *hyperphagia*, and the birds are eating to lay down fat. But not as much is known about birds as you might think, for example why do wagtails wag their tails? Our thanks go AOUG member Alizon Ling for her hard work in arranging this enjoyable afternoon for us. **Kate Macve** - Devon AOUG member



Clevedon Pier

The Bristol group met for lunch at the Moon and Sixpence. Some members hadn't seen each other for a while and it was the first time I had met some of them, so the conversation was quite lively! The restaurant is opposite Clevedon Pier - a typical Victorian Pier, which since 2001 has been a Grade 1 Listed structure. In 1970, during routine testing for insurance purposes, part of the pier collapsed and raising sufficient funds for the restoration has been

slow. A grant from the Heritage Lottery fund has helped, as well as the 'sponsored plank or plaque' initiative.

After lunch, the sun came out and some of us walked along the pier looking at the names and messages on the planks and plaques. We were bemused by the ones that had marriage proposals on them - what if the answer was 'no'? Averil, a group member, has sponsored a plank and she shares this privilege with some celebrities such as Griff Rhys Jones and (depending on your opinion) the group One Direction who were on the pier making a music video earlier this year. Clevedon is well worth a visit - the restaurant serves good home cooked food and a walk along the pier 'plank spotting' will burn off some the calories from their delicious cheesecakes.

Janet Savin - Executive Representative



Photographs taken by Mike Pearce

Diary Dates

Exeter Group - Local Contact: Raymond Prescott 01823 652848 jascha231@msn.com
Prior booking with the Local Contact for all the events is essential.

Thursday 27 August 12 noon

Visit to Cothay Manor House and Gardens Greenham Wellington TA21 0JR. This is a fine 15th Century medieval manor. The cost is £13.50 for a guided tour around the house and £7.50 for the gardens. If we can get a group of twenty, the cost will be £13.50 for both. There is also a discount for National Trust members. Please get in touch with Raymond as soon as possible if you are interested - friends and family of members are welcome.

Friday 25 September 12 noon

Lunch at the Countess Wear Beefeater restaurant, Topsham Rd Exeter EX2 6HE; meet at the main entrance - please get in touch with Raymond to book your place.

Friday 30 October 12 noon

Visit to the Mechanical Music Museum Aeolian Court Station Hill Chudleigh TQ13 0EE. This is a collection of mechanical music players displayed in a spectacular music room. Cost for a group of fifteen plus is £10 each and for a cream tea £5. Please get in touch with Raymond if you are interested - friends and family of members are welcome.

Friday 27 November 12 noon- for lunch at 12.30

I (Janet) am sorry that in the OMEGA diary dates, this lunch was incorrectly shown as being at Countess Wear Beefeater. The group's Christmas lunch will again be at the Puffing Billy Exton, EX3 0PR. Raymond needs to know by Friday 13 November at the latest if you are interested as he needs to let the restaurant have the menu choices fourteen days before the lunch. Raymond has the menu already and he can e-mail this to you, or if you don't use e-mail, please call him.

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

Book Club Please get in touch with Liz for the dates and venues of Book Club. The book list for the rest of 2015 is:

September *Midas* by Russell Andrews; October *H is for Hawk* by Helen Macdonald;

November *The Miniaturist* by Jessie Burton and December *Grey Mountain* by John Grisham

Saturday 22 August 12.30

Garden visit - Lost Gardens of Heligan, Pentewan, St Austell PL26 6EN. Hopefully the remembrance field of poppies will still be in bloom. Please let Liz know in advance if you are interested in this visit.

Wednesday 26 August 12.30

Lunch at the New Inn Newquay Road Goonhavern TR4 9QD - please let Liz know as soon as possible if you are interested as she may need to book a table.

Bristoland Bath Group –

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

Tuesday 25 August 12 noon

Bristol Temple Meads Station, BS1 6QF - Shaun the Sheep Arts Trail. Meet outside the station for a gentle walk around the area to see some of the seventy 'ewe-nique' Aardman sculptures around Bristol. Please let me know if you are interested, so I know who to expect. Friends and family of members are welcome - don't forget your camera.

Tuesday 29 September 12 noon

'Jane Austen's Bath' at the Victoria Art Gallery, Bridge St, Bath BA2 4AT, meet outside the gallery, this is an exhibition of watercolours and prints that illustrate the story of where Austen's characters met, flirted and fell in love - an insight into life and culture in Austen's day. There is an admission fee of £3.50 (concessions apply). Please get in touch with me if you are interested.

Monday 19 October 7pm

The Old Farmhouse, Trendlewood Way, Nailsea BS48 2PF, meet in the bar for dinner. This is a traditional 17th Century pub serving very reasonably priced food. Please let me know in advance if you are interested as I will need to book a table.

Other Areas in the Region

As you can see we still don't have any diary dates for Gloucestershire or Wiltshire. You don't have to be a 'Local Contact' but if you are organising something for yourself and friends that you feel may be of interest to AOUG members, for example a trip to a theatre, a local exhibition, or a lecture, then please let me know and I will pass on the details to members in the area.

Over to you

We are looking for ways to develop a more local feel for each of the AOUG areas to use on the Local Newsletter, and or in OMEGA. One idea is to have a unique symbol or motif that is representative of the Region. For example the Yorkshire Region uses the Yorkshire Rose in addition to the AOUG logo. However, as there is only the county of Yorkshire in that Region - it is easily recognised as symbol for Yorkshire. So what would be representative for the South West which covers Gloucestershire, Bristol, Bath, Devon, Cornwall, Somerset and Wiltshire? Please send suggestions or images to me of any simple design that you think would be suitable. If you can only think of one for your area, then please send it to me anyway, as I may be able to choose ones to make up a composite symbol, or a different one for the next few Newsletters.

There were more pages, colour and pictures in the Summer edition of OMEGA. What did you think of the 'new' look? We would like your feedback, for example, what did you like/dislike (and your reasons please) about the use of more photographs and new layout. Please send an e-mail to AOUG-OMEGA@open.ac.uk or write to the AOUG Office Walton Hall Milton Keynes MK7 6AA. Please also let us know if you have any ideas for us to consider for future editions.

Finally, on page 17 of OMEGA there is an article from Trevor Taylor about the Exeter Degree Ceremony. I am looking forward to going to Exeter again for another Degree Ceremony next month. If you are interested in representing the AOUG at ceremonies in 2016, the details will be in the Winter edition of OMEGA.

Janet Savin – Executive Representative