



Newsletter for the West Midlands.

Edition 7

Spring 2014

Welcome.

Welcome all members, including new members with New Year's greetings – "Happy New Year." We had a good New Year's dinner on 15th January 2014. Our New Year always starts with a New Year's dinner which gives an opportunity to meet and greet members from various parts of West Midlands. I'm sure that everyone enjoyed the AGM 2013 in the West Midlands and jubilantly celebrated the Silver Anniversary. Region 06 is hosting this year's AGM at St. Albans. I hope members from our Region will be able to visit St. Albans and participate in the AGM. Our events last year were well supported by members. We have a number of events booked for this year. Please make note of them in your diaries.

New Year's Dinner.

I had tried to get our usual booking for the New Year's dinner at the Britannia Hotel, but there were changes in management at the Britannia Hotel. Many members suggested to me to try alternative venues - something different and enjoyable. Hence, I decided to go ahead with Indian Restaurants. I had worked in Indian Restaurants in the past. Therefore, I had decided to choose a good restaurant nearby within Wolverhampton which could be accessible to most of our members. Johnny Spice Indian Restaurant is an excellent example of the majestic Indian Palace.

The history of spice is amazing and its origin will take you back to those days of Stone Age civilization. The word spice means any plant substance which adds flavour to foods and beverages. However, there are differences in spice and herb definitions. Herbs are associated with leafy parts of plant and spices can be derived from any plant substances including barks and roots.

Indian foods are cooked with herbs and spices. No one knows the discovery of curries. It is believed that early Stone Age men used to wrap meat with leaves and noticed that the taste of the meat was good. Later, prehistoric men learnt to make fire and developed better cooking methods with the possible use of herbs and spices to add flavours. The progress in the East led to the Western World creating links between these two empires. This is just as complex as it is fascinating. With changing times, most of ancient records had been destroyed, but the spice trade had continued its history because of its essential properties for good health.

The spice trade was first introduced to Europe by the Arabs. There were many secrets kept about supply of spices because they were rare and precious. Greeks developed a spice trade followed by Romans. When the Roman Empire broke down in the Middle Ages with commencement of the Renaissance and the Age of Discovery, the spice trade became weak with constant wars taking place. Licensed trade routes were created in ancient times for

land and sea routes around the Mediterranean World with the East. Spice was the dominant trade in North Africa and along East coast of Africa including the Red Sea. The lost spice trade was brought back to Europe, and later, into Britain, by Crusaders. During the Age of Discovery which took place from 15th Century to 17th Century, Europeans discovered Africa, America and Asia. The Industrial Revolution followed after the Age of Discovery developed international trade. No doubt, World Wars of 20th Century damaged many industries and spice manufactures would have experienced difficulties, but the spice trade remained popular. Today, with the advance of science, spices are popular in agriculture.

Our event started with the Johnny Spice Restaurant doors opening at 12.30 pm. I must apologise to all our members who came early at 12.00 pm. This year, the weather was good compared to last year, when we had immense snow. I welcomed our members and gave my introduction on Indian foods with the spice trade history. It was time to start eating food. After listening to my introduction, the spicy curries were most delicious and the taste of food was of the highest quality. We were treated like Maharajahs. The time went quickly. After, coming to our two hours limit, I gave my end of dinner speech and requested members to participate in future events. We showed our appreciations to the Johnny Spice Restaurant in the usual manner.

‘Members only’ AOUG Forum on the AOUG Website

The AOUG website is continuing to develop and last year we introduced a new-style Home Page, an on-line Membership facility and an on-line Trading section. Now we have taken it one step further with a Members Only AOUG Forum. AOUG does not endorse the use of Facebook or Twitter or other similar social media sites, in the name of AOUG, as they are impossible for a volunteer organisation to monitor and thus too greater risk to the reputation of AOUG. Obviously what individuals, who also are AOUG members, decide to do, is their own responsibility. However a Members Only Forum is within the Association`s control and this can more easily be monitored and improper items can be removed or prevented. Since we want all members to have the confidence to take part, we are now including a step by step guide to registering and being authorised. We apologise to all of you who are very familiar with these things already. Once authorised the site will give you guidance on using the various features and if you have any problems at all you are very welcome to ask the Officers for help.

Step one: Ensure you have internet access on your computer, or equivalent, and log on in the usual way.

Step two: Type www.aoug.org.uk into the address line at the top of the page. The AOUG website should now appear with our logo clearly at the top left handside.

Step three: Click on the word Forum along the bottom of your screen. This will open a new window which you will need to enlarge to fill your screen

Step four: You will now be asked for your **Username** and a **Password**. Your user name can be your own name or a shortened version or nickname. Your password can be anything you like but we advise a mixture of numbers and letters about 12- 15 characters in length. Now click on the word **Register**

Step five: The screen will now show you the **Terms and Conditions**. Take as long as you like to read these but in order to progress you need to click on **Accept** at the bottom of the screen.

Step six: You will now be asked to complete a form with Username, e-mail address, password, (these must be the same as you used on the first page) first name and surname (These must be your names as used as a member of AOUG) PI Number (the number you

used at the top of all those OU assignments!) your preferred Region or Nation, your gender and your birthday (day, month and year). Finally click on the word **Save**

Step seven: You will need to confirm your **password** yet again and copy a **Registration code** (to prove you are human!!!)

Step eight: Then you will need to come out of the website and go to your **own e-mail account** where you will see an **e-mail acknowledging** your application for the Forum.

Step nine: Wait until you receive a **second e-mail** which will acknowledge you as authorised – (this may be within a few minutes or a few days, depending on if an Officer is currently on line to see your request) and then go back onto the **AOUG website** – click on **Forum** at the bottom of the **Home Page** and the forum will open and allow you to sign in with your **User name** and **Password** and then you can start exploring the instant communications possibilities.

Step ten: If you need more help just ask! **Have Fun !!!!**

Jean Hertzog – Association Treasurer

AOUG Executive Committee.

Elections for Executive Representatives and Officers take place when there are vacancies. Both Executive Representatives and Officers serve three years and nomination forms are sent with the Winter OMEGA magazine. There are co-options taking place throughout the year when either Executive Representatives or Officers decide to leave their post before end of their term. The work of Executive Representatives and Officers is interesting and demanding. These are classed as voluntary work. Ballot papers will be in the Spring OMEGA and then votes are counted prior to the AGM, when election results are announced.

Executive Representatives, elected for either a Region or Nation, have a challenging role to play in keeping contact with their members. The best way to make members come together is by organising events. In our Region, I had organised regular events to enable members come together, meet old friends and make new friends. Events and activities bring the AOUG membership benefits, making members feel valued, and giving the opportunity to learn about AOUG and The Open University.

The Executive Committee meeting usually starts on Friday afternoon with a workshop, which finishes by 5.00 pm but AOUG Officers start their meetings the previous day. We return to our hotel and prepare for Executive Committee meeting which takes place on Saturday morning at 9.30 am. We finish the Executive Committee meeting at 1.30 pm with lunch break followed by our last Workshop. We finish by 3.30 pm and the Executive Committee usually prepare to go home immediately after the Workshop is over because of long distances needed to travel. Sometimes, these meetings and workshop take longer depending on issues discussed. In general, we manage to keep up with the time limits.

I am sure that our Region has got talented members with excellent leaderships. We have a lot to offer to The OU graduates. We need to recruit new members as well as make members participate in events. There are many things our members can generally do without standing for elections. The Spring OMEGA magazine and AOUG website have copies of the candidates' statements. This is the time for you to consider shaping AOUG

for the future. I take this opportunity to wish all candidates standing for elections, good luck.

I had found my work in West Midlands very interesting. It was very good to see members regularly supporting events and meetings. We had worked very hard and were very fortunate to get the opportunity to host AGM and celebrate Silver Anniversary in our Region. We managed to get an excellent venue at Walsall. We needed good volunteers and we succeeded in getting them. AOUG Officers did a good work to get many things researched for both the AGM and Silver Anniversary Celebrations. Our events and activities brought together members at different places in West Midlands Region. Our weather brought challenges, but we succeeded in getting many good events. The new Welfare Reform Act had weakened economy and brought austerity so membership fees had to go up and AOUG had to make cuts. Nonetheless, we had generated a strong support for AOUG. When the time comes for me to retire at the next AGM in St. Albans, I take this opportunity to thank all members, Executive Representatives and AOUG Officers as well as our Regional Study Centre for their strong support. Special thanks to everyone who supported AOUG AGM in Walsall and the Silver Anniversary. I thank you all and we will meet again at events.

Mohammad Motawalla - Executive Representative.

The Officers of AOUG would like to advise 04 members that Philip Evans, from Worcester, is standing for election as your next Executive Representative and we hope that you will use your vote on the Ballot form in the Spring OMEGA and give him all your support for the future of the West Midlands Region.

Jean Hertzog – AOUG Treasurer

Diary Dates.

Saturday 22nd March 2014. 1.00pm

Meet at the main entrance of Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum and Bookshop, Lichfield, WS13 6LG (www.samueljohnsonbirthplace.org.uk). Admission is free. Museum closes at 3.30pm

Sunday 20th April 2014. 2.00pm

Meet at the main entrance of Oak House Museum, Oak Road, West Bromwich, B70 8HJ (www.sandwell.gov.uk/oakhouse). This museum is close to Lodge Road Metro station. Admission free.

Contact Details.

If you have changed your contact details, then please inform the AOUG office as soon as possible. If you have an email address, then please let us have it for AOUG membership.

AOUG Membership Renewals.

Please check you membership details regularly. Renew your memberships when it is due. There is Direct Debit facility available for AOUG members.

AOUG Merchandise. There are many different items with AOUG logo on sale. Please visit AOUG website [www.aoug.org.uk]

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