



ASSOCIATION OF OPEN UNIVERSITY GRADUATES in WALES

EDITION 9

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Greetings to our members in Wales

2015 - A Busy Year in Wales

It has been quite a year for the Association in Wales, from the AGM, through a Degree Ceremony, events and Awards in the Regions and Nations. Considering that Wales does not have an Executive Representative at the moment, there has been a lot going on – thanks to the Chairman, the Treasurer and the Publicity Officer, as well as the Executive Representatives for the West Midlands and the East Midlands.

The AGM in Caernarfon was a very enjoyable time with some brilliant visits to Mount Snowdon, the Slate Museum and the Electric Mountain. The hotel was ideal and a great time was had by all. We had a stand at the Cardiff Degree Ceremony and, with the help and support of staff at the Welsh Office of The Open University in Cardiff, most of our publicity material was made available in Welsh and English. Visits have been made to Rhyl, Bodnant Gardens, Castell Coch, Cardiff Bay, Tredegar House, Newport, Errdig House and Conwy and further events are being arranged.

There were three Award winners from Wales – one presentation was made in London, one in Cardiff and one in Birmingham. The stories of these Award winners are inspirational and we congratulate them all.

AOUG Foundation for Education Awards in the Regions and Nations

These Awards are offered to new OU graduates who have overcome adversity to obtain their degrees. Lisa Symons, from Swansea, received her Award at her graduation ceremony at the Barbican on 19th September. Nominated by her sister, also an OU student, Lisa experienced a cancer scare and had to deal with the serious illness of close family members. In spite of this, she passed her Social Work degree with a 2:1 and is now working in a post she loves.



Cath Wyatt, from Cardiff, an AOUG member, received her Award at The Open University in Wales' Cardiff office on 8th October. Cath graduated in June with a degree in Health and Social Care. Cath's daughter has autism and her husband passed away while she was studying for her degree. She is continuing to study with The Open University, having just started E807 'Children and young people's worlds: frameworks for integrated practice.'



On Saturday 31st October Lauren Guttridge, from Welshpool, joined Region 04 members on a backstage tour of Birmingham Repertory Theatre. Following the tour Philip Evans, Executive Representative for Region 04, presented Lauren with her certificate. After the presentation Philip said, “It is a great privilege for us that Lauren has joined us in Birmingham thus enabling us to share in celebrating her achievement.”

AGM and Social Weekend in Buxton

The 2016 AGM will be held from 13th -15th May in Buxton, Derbyshire. The Buxton venue of the Palace Hotel is very close to the station and 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. This venue should be of special interest to anyone who likes walking as the surrounding countryside of the Peak District has excellent walking opportunities. So please think about coming to meet fellow members at the AGM.

Summary of July Executive Committee Meeting:

At the July meeting, after all the official reports, one of the main items of information was relating to the AOUG Foundation for Education Awards. It was reported that five of the nine Research Awards had been approved for this year and that there had been twenty two nominations for the Awards for the Regions and Nations. These latter Awards are given to new graduates who have managed to gain their OU degree whilst overcoming adversity, over and above that of the average student, and seventeen of these nominations were accepted as having passed the criteria and worthy of recognition. Information was also given relating to a meeting that the Officers had held with Lucian Hudson, Director of Communications, and Becca Mills, also from the OU Communications Department.

Social Media:

AOUG have resisted the use of social media for a long time, due to concerns over the possible content and the time involved for monitoring. However now there are more opportunities for pre-setting controls and especially with ‘Corporate’ sites rather than personal sites, the safeguards are much greater. Thus since Social Media is the favoured method of communication for the majority of people in today’s world, AOUG must move with the times.

So a few months ago, our Treasurer set up a Corporate Facebook page and then our Chairman launched a Corporate Twitter account. Both of these are open to members and non-members and are monitored by the Officers. The intention is to raise the profile of AOUG amongst people who might otherwise not have heard of us. Then it is hoped that after a period of interaction through these media, any OU graduates that we have reached may decide to view our website. The ultimate goal is to encourage them to join our organisation. In order for this to happen, the social media interactions must firstly be pitched appropriately but even more important is that our own website must be completely up to date at all times and be interesting enough to inspire them to join up.

Then once these people have joined us, we need to ensure that all communications inspire them to keep involved with AOUG for the future.

Thus you now have several electronic opportunities to engage directly with AOUG:

- the AOUG website aoug.org.uk managed by our Publicity Officer.
- the special 'Members Only' Forum (with an additional Executive Committee section) which can be found by clicking on the word Forum at the bottom of the AOUG website Home Page and creating your own password for future access.
- Corporate Facebook – You can find this through your own Facebook account if you have one and typing in [Association of Open University Graduates](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Association-of-Open-University-Graduates/710287149081499) or if you do not as yet have a Facebook account, your direct link is using <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Association-of-Open-University-Graduates/710287149081499>
- Corporate Twitter - Once you have your own Twitter account you can find us on [@TheAOUG](https://twitter.com/TheAOUG)

We would like as many as possible to get involved with these electronic communications but you can of course continue to write to us by 'snail mail' or phone the AOUG Office 01908 653316.

OMEGA

As I am sure you will have noticed, our magazine, OMEGA, has undergone some changes and we would love to hear what members think about them. Our aim was to make OMEGA brighter, more colourful and interesting. Only you, our members, can decide if we have succeeded, and we will only know your opinions if you let us know. We have already had some positive feedback, but everyone's views are important. Please send yours to the AOUG Office, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA or aoug@open.ac.uk.

Local symbol or motif:

We are looking for ways to develop a more local feel for each of the AOUG areas. Some Executive Representatives are considering more local content for their Newsletters and some are experimenting with different layouts or fonts.

However what would really make each area's Local Newsletter distinctive would be to have a unique symbol or motif that was representative of the area for that particular Newsletter, in addition to the AOUG logo. Yorkshire has always had a Yorkshire Rose in addition to the AOUG logo and that was an easy choice for those members as there is only Yorkshire within Region 07. However what about Regions or Nations with many counties, or even many countries?

I am therefore asking you to put on your thinking caps and send in suggestions or images to me of any simple design that you think would be suitable to represent Wales. In the Winter OMEGA, there will be a dragon flag, but if I get several good ideas, they could be rotated.

Your chance to have your say!

The Winter OMEGA will have 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. However on the back of this latter form, there will also be 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. However if you wish to propose a more immediate change, you can also put forward a Resolution to change our regulations or a Procedural Motion as to how things should progress for consideration by the rest of the membership.

Lesley Sleight – Vice-Chairman

AOUG Foundation for Education:



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 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.

Diary Dates

Saturday 23rd January. 11am

Meet outside Chester Cathedral, St Werburgh St, CH1 2DY to join the Chairman to see its wonders and then go for coffee or light lunch in the Refectory. Admission is free but a donation of £3 per person is recommended. Then explore other areas of this fascinating city.

Saturday 26th March. 11am

Meet in the café of Powys Castle Welshpool, Powys SY21 8RF for coffee prior to exploring Powis Castle and Garden. This National Trust property’s gardens show both Italian and French styles. The castle, high on a rock, was originally built around 1200 as a medieval Fortress. Please note, due to there being deer in the park, that **dogs** are not allowed.

Thursday 7th April. 11.15am

Meet in Carluccio’s, Mermaid Quay, Cardiff CF10 5BZ prior to walking to Stuart Place, off Stuart Street, Cardiff CF10 5BW to ride the 12noon Cardiff Bay Road Train for a fifty minute tour with live commentary through an area of history, passing the Wales Millennium Centre, the National Assembly, Scott Harbour, the Norwegian Church and Helwick Lightship. The train then enters the normally restricted areas of the Port of Cardiff, then over the Cardiff Barrage round Cardiff Bay. 2015 prices were £4 adults (£3 concessions). Then share lunch together in one of the many restaurants along the front of Cardiff Bay. (This is a new date for the postponed event from last July, when the Cardiff Bay Road Train was not working.)

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