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**Association of Open University Graduates  
Europe**

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Welcome to the Spring edition of the AOUG in Europe Newsletter. I know that you enjoyed reading the last edition and about how two of our members retained their contact with The Open University after graduation.

As you know, I have a great enthusiasm for the Association's charity so was very pleased to receive from the Officers of the Association the following notice about a new Bursary to be awarded this year.

**Fund raising for the AOUG Foundation for Education charity.**

Every year the Association's own charity offers nine Awards to Research students, in their final year, who have been nominated by OU staff from their Faculty or Research Centre and they go forward for consideration to be selected to receive an Award. The successful recipients are then presented with their Awards at a prestigious Ceremony on the OU campus on the first Friday in October. Each Award comprises of a framed certificate and a cheque for £300. Occasionally a Bursary is also offered and although they can be nominated by their supervisors as with the Awards, research students also have the option to self-nominate. These Bursaries usually offer a monetary Award of £1,000 in addition to their framed certificate. This money is not to be used as a grant to complete their Research project but it can be used in any way the recipient wishes in order to develop their research further than originally planned, be it extending the area of research, attending a conference, or publishing papers.

AOUG Foundation for Education also funds Awards for new graduates in the Regions and Nations who have gained their first degree whilst overcoming adversity over and above that of the average student. There have been some amazing new graduates nominated for these Awards and during 2015 seventeen such Awards were approved. These new graduates received £100 along with their framed certificate.

However in order to continue presenting these Awards each year, AOUG has to ensure that there are sufficient funds to cover them and this is where you come in as these Awards rely on the generosity of you, the members, as it is mainly your donations (with a little help from bank interest) that enables us to continue with this

good work. You will see in the Spring OMEGA that we are offering an AOUG 2016 Ted Castle Bursary this year and you can therefore make a special donation of as much as you like, or as little as one pound, in the memory of Ted or any other deceased AOUG member that was dear to your heart. Or you might consider making an annual covenant to help ensure that this good work is able to continue for many more years.

If you look up the Spring 2013 edition of OMEGA, pages 12 and 13, there is an article about Ted Castle which supports the deserving reason for this Bursary in his name.

### **Home Thoughts from Abroad**

I know that many of us in Europe are originally from the UK and a couple of recent visits 'home' to Hereford in England, the town where I was born and raised made me realize how much places change over time, brought back memories of times past and a reflection on the present. When driving through the town I now have to think very carefully, some roads no longer exist, others are walkways only, two way streets are now one way, and so on, and I have to admit, all for the better!

Hereford is a town with a long and interesting history, being the last town in England before going over the border into Wales but I would like to share with you the changes that I have seen in my lifetime. The 20<sup>th</sup> century is said to have been a century of rapid change but I do not think that the word rapid relates to Hereford and Herefordshire in particular because its economy is based mainly on agriculture and this relies heavily on the elements, something which is difficult to cope with. There are within the city various industries such as Henry Wiggin, manufacturers of nickel alloys and Bulmer's Cider, who use locally grown apples to create its special flavour, but in my childhood days it was agriculture that ruled.

Up to the age of seven we lived in the last but one house on the city boundary. Behind the house was a large field which was wonderful for playing in. In the summer my friends and I would help with hay making, in the winter there was a wonderful bank for tobogganing, for Guy Fawkes' night all the fathers in the road took charge of a large bonfire and let off the fireworks, whilst my mother stayed indoors to keep my corgi dog company. But once a year the field was out of bounds, the bull had come to visit. The farm house was diagonally across the road and also across the road were two old black and white farm workers' cottages, all sadly now gone. A modern pub has replaced the farm, the cottages pulled down and as for the field, it is now a large housing estate. Is that progress? Well, the growing population does need somewhere to live but in an agricultural society why get rid of the farm and the cottages?

When I was seven we moved nearer to the town and initially I missed my friends and the field but soon got over that because I could now ride my bicycle to school, a thing which would today give any caring parent the worry of their life.

The city's Saxon name of 'army ford' suggests that it was not always peaceful, needing the River Wye to protect the town from the warmongers from over the border in Wales. The name Hereford has been attributed to the ford across the river, the Welsh for Hereford is Henffordd, meaning 'old road'.

The layout of the streets today are on the whole as they were in the Middle Ages and many old buildings still exist but many have disappeared over time due to modernization of the various times. What is now known as High Town was originally two streets with a row of large black and white buildings down the centre called Butchers' Row built in 1621. At the end of the row of buildings was the Town Hall built in 1602. The Town Hall and all but one of the houses was pulled down in Victorian times. The remaining house is affectionately called The Old House and is a gem of a well preserved building. The picture below is the High Town in the 18th century. The building in the foreground is the Town Hall which was the last of Butchers' Row to be demolished. In the distance you can see the Old House with the end wall, which was originally attached to the next building, boarded up. This was later replaced with windows as seen on the other sides of the building. In the distance the spire of St.Peter's, the civic church of the city, can be seen.



Another very important building in Hereford is the Cathedral. There has been a place of worship on this site since the 7th century but the beginning of the Cathedral as we know it today, was started in 1080. If you are ever in Hereford this is a place you must see in order to appreciate its beauty, no words can do it justice. It contains not one but two, rare, chained libraries. The original of the Cathedral's chained library has over one thousand five hundred books. At another church in the town, All Saints, there was another chained library with over three hundred books. Unfortunately, owing to the risk of this library being damaged or stolen and the cost of protecting it being too great, it was moved to the Cathedral for safe keeping and so that it could be seen by the general public. Also in the Cathedral there is one of the oldest maps in the world, the Mappa Mundi. Drawn on vellum it shows the world as it was understood to be in 1300, when it was created. Once again, because of the threat of it being damaged or stolen, a replica is now on view, the original in safe keeping. Now that has changed since I was a child. I was never tall enough to be able to touch it, but the original Mappa Mundi could easily be seen and touched.

Music has always played an important part in the life of the Cathedral and as a child every third year, in September, my father took me to the Three Choirs Festival. The other two years the Festival was either in Gloucester Cathedral or Worcester Cathedral. The three counties have always had strong links and on the agricultural side of the links to the counties, every June there is the Three Counties Show. This show was held in the three towns on a three year rota, but owing to the cost, a

permanent site was acquired in Malvern, Worcestershire, in the 1950s.

As a child I was very interested in drama and even acted for one week with the local repertory company (my five minutes of fame) at the Kemble Theatre which was in Broad Street. That is now gone which is a shame as it was named after John Kemble the actor. Other famous names from Hereford are David Garrick, Sarah Siddons, Edward Elgar and Nell Gwynne. Nell was born in 1650 and we Herefordians claim her as our own, but Oxford and London also want to claim her. Her name Gwynne is Welsh and there is a street in Hereford named after her. However, my favourite Herefordian is the Hereford Bull. It sounds a little bizarre I suppose but the breed goes back for three hundred years. Both the cows and the bulls have short strong legs, their coats are the colour of the Herefordshire rich red brown earth and their faces are white with an abundance of curls. Now the bull reminds me of my youth, not just because he visited the field once a year, but because Hereford has always held a cattle market and the animals going to market were often driven in to town on the hoof. It was not unusual to hear Welsh spoken in the streets as the farmers from neighbouring Welsh farms would come to the market. When there were special Hereford cattle sales, the Americans, usually from Texas would arrive. I well remember being fascinated by their large cowboy hats which they always wore. The Hereford cattle are still very popular throughout the world because they are very adaptable to different climates and land and produce excellent beef. Here are some of my 'home' memories.

'The book of Hereford' and 'Yesterday's Town' were special editions which my father was a financial contributor towards and are limited editions. The 'City of Hereford Guide' shows on its cover the city map of 1610. And that grand soft cuddly Hereford Bull is called Tupsley, after the parish I lived in!



I left Hereford in the late 1960s but my family remained so I have been visiting on and off ever since. So, how has time treated Hereford? The population when I left was approximately thirty thousand but has increased to over fifty three thousand today. As with many towns in the UK, vehicles have been banned from city centres and sent out on to ring roads. Owing to the position of the river and the lack of suitable bridges, Hereford does not have a ring road as such but many buildings have been demolished to make way for the necessary widening of roads in order to manage the flow of traffic. I do regret the demolition of some of the very old buildings with historical importance but what is left has been restored to show them at their best. This includes the town wall which has been restored at several points around the city. It is still a beautiful city with much to offer the inhabitants and the visitors.

Patricia Cowling