

Chairman's report Spring 2022

I see that my Autumn report last year illustrates the fallibility of predictions! I'd been hopeful that, with two summer events having taken place as planned, our winter programme might also be returning to a familiar pattern. However, Omicron arrived with a vengeance shortly before our planned Christmas carol service and lunch, so that, once again, our celebrations had to be cancelled. Ever optimistic, we've booked with Exeter College again for this year. We had a tantalising return to in-person talks in the Engineering department in November and December, and were beginning to master the technology to broadcast on Zoom at the same time, but by January were back to Zoom only. As I write this, we still have two more talks to come, in February and March, and we hope they'll both be in person again. By the time you read this, you'll know whether at least one of them has been held in the Engineering department. And because, for Social members, this Newsletter will include application forms for summer outings, you'll see that we hope to be back to our usual programme of outings by the summer. We've been very fortunate to have Zoom available but I'm very much looking forward to a return to our in-person meetings and outings.

Given the uncertainty of the last couple of years, the AOUP website (<http://www.aoup.ox.ac.uk>) and email have been valuable ways of keeping in touch with many of you and we'd like to make sure that we can reach as many of you as possible this way. If you haven't received email messages from us and would like to do so, please complete the form that you'll find in this Newsletter and return it to us. Please also complete the form if you'd like us to know that we shouldn't expect to reach you by email – it's helpful to know who and how many people there are in this category. You'll also find a box on this form to tick if you'd like to receive paper copies of the two Newsletters (Autumn 2020 and Spring 2021) that we could only print electronically because Covid restrictions prevented us meeting to label the envelopes.

I've been particularly aware during the last couple of years of the value of AOUP at many different levels. We are a broad community with a wide range of interests and the success of our activities is due to the work of many people. Recent months have seen the resurgence of two walking groups after the hiatus caused by Covid, and we have long established foreign language discussion groups – French, German and Spanish. And of course the committee has been very active, with members brilliant at reacting to the changing circumstances – including committee meetings by Zoom! They keep ideas coming for talks and for outings and there is a strong sense of a shared commitment. The maximum term of service is six years and David Bicknell has now reached that and, by the time you read this, he will have stepped down. He's been planner and organiser for many of the summer outings and also for the longer visits, sharing the lead for the Isle of Man and Glasgow trips. He's generously agreed to continue to assist in planning longer trips in future. I'm hugely grateful for everything he's done for AOUP and I'm going to miss him on a personal level too. I'm also very grateful to Carole Barr, who has done a splendid job managing the application forms for our outings, but is now having to step down. If any of you would be interested in joining the committee, do please let me know - we are always very pleased to welcome new members and it's a very rewarding activity.

Gilliane Sills