

SIDCUP & DISTRICT UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE NEWSLETTER

April 2017



**SIDCUP & DISTRICT U3A meets at 2.00 pm on the 3rd Thursday of every month in the
New Community Church Centre, 24 Station Road, Sidcup**

NOTICES

New Members

We would like to extend a very warm welcome to all new members: Christine Kendall, Linda Thomas, Brian Wallace, Jean Gulliford, Andy Mills, Katherine Byrne, Joyce Kyte, Noemi Hassad, Monica Harvey, Patricia Nevin, Tania and George Knights, Margaret Scambler, and Angela Green. We hope you will be able to participate in the various groups that interest you and that you enjoy your time with Sidcup U3A.

Pat Andrews

Sidcup U3A Questionnaire Results

Thanks to those who responded to the questionnaire. There were just over 50 replies from a membership of about 250, with an attendance at monthly meetings of about 100. Therefore, it is necessary to treat the results with a degree of caution. (The raw data is available upon request). As regards reasons for joining Sidcup U3A, a significant majority stated that they wished to add to their social life; a large number wanted to go on walks and outings. There were very mixed priorities for the provision of particular interest groups or speakers or to continue with ongoing learning. For the next few questions, the conclusions are that (i) existing members are the best way to attract new members; (ii) most members are reasonably happy; (iii) we do, though, need more groups and more subjects. Disappointingly, however, there were few offers to start or run new groups. (Existing leaders frequently run several). There is some interest in supporting new events. Anecdotal evidence regarding the benefits of having befrienders does not seem to be borne out by the questionnaire results which showed no strong feelings in favour of them, but a few members would be prepared to help in that capacity. The Committee has discussed these findings and is trying to think of ways to move forwards. Any suggestions will be welcomed.

Trevor Ford

Getting Involved in Research

The Third Age Trust has recently published a booklet, *Getting Involved in Research*, copies of which can be ordered direct from National Office. It can also be downloaded from the members section of their website under National Research Sub-Committee.

George Murrell

RNLI Donation

Alan Ashby, a representative of the Welling, Eltham and Sidcup Branch of the RNLI, attended our Annual General Meeting where he was presented with a cheque for £888.84. This was the sum raised for our sponsored charity for 2016. In addition to expressing his thanks at the time, Alan has also sent a letter of appreciation with details of the work carried out by the RNLI.

George Murrell

Group Leaders' Meeting

Just a reminder that this will take place at 11 am on Thursday 4th May at Ockley Court. If you are unable to attend it would be appreciated if arrangements could be made for a deputy to attend and represent your group. The main purpose of the meeting is to discuss arrangements for the August "Summer Showcase Meeting." Agenda for the meeting: (1) Summer Showcase; (2) Vacancies and New Membership opportunities; (3) Leadership of Groups.

George Murrell

GROUP NEWS

Local History 3 • Leader Christine Withams



On Wednesday 8th March, 10 members of this group met at the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square where we joined a larger group for an hour-long free guided tour. The Gallery was very busy, the group was large and I was doubting whether we would all be able to hear our guide and whether we would all be able to see the paintings that he would be describing. We were led to our first painting, *The Battle of San Romano* by Paolo Uccello, 1397–1475. A group of school children were politely moved so that we could all see the painting in question. It would seem that this painting was too large to fit the room of the person who commissioned it and so the top of it was cut off leaving incomplete parts of flags flying high. We were then directed to *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* by Nicolas Poussin, 1594–1695; *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump* by Joseph Wright of Derby, 1768; and finally *Hélène Rouart in Her Father's Study* by Degas painted in about 1886.

We were privileged to have had an enthusiastic, knowledgeable and amusing guide who spoke loudly and clearly throughout. We all agreed – art enthusiasts and those who are not lovers of art – that this had been an interesting and informative occasion. It was an hour well spent.



Ilena Harrington

(i) The Battle of San Romano took place on 1st June 1432 about 30 miles from Florence and lasted for some six or seven hours. It consisted of a series of heavy cavalry fights between the soldiers of Florence and Siena after Florence had found itself in conflict with the rival city state of Lucca and her allies, Siena and Milan. The outcome is generally considered to have favoured the Florentines, but the Siennese recorded it as a victory. The painting, which was commissioned by a Florentine family, appears to depict the war as a theatrical ceremony.

Editor

Book Reading • Leader June Reid



Our book for February was *Storm Sister* by Lucinda Riley. This was the second in a series of three epic novels about a family of seven adopted girls, the father being a rich entrepreneur based in Switzerland. This particular book was the story of Ally who is both a musician and a skilled sailor – indeed, she is an Olympic hopeful. She receives the shocking news of the unexpected death of her father whilst sailing in the Mediterranean. A short while later, she is devastated when she learns of the accidental death of her lover and soul mate. Turning her back on the water and following the clues left by her father, she decides to explore her origins. This takes her to Norway where she stumbles upon the centuries old story of a talented young singer with a remarkable link to Edvard Grieg, the composer of *Peer Gynt*. Thus, the story of two resilient women gives us a gripping tale of family, love and identity. We all really enjoyed this book. The changing background was interesting and the historical core of the story was especially enjoyable. Thank you Janet.

June Reid

World's Greatest Churches • Leader Val Gosden



Our 7th lecture was about churches in Armenia, a country which, over the centuries, has been invaded by many other cultures: Arabs, Mongolians, Turks and Russians which all brought destruction to churches there. However, those churches that remain contain extraordinary detail in their decorations, and some of them have domes reminiscent of shepherds' tents. We next heard about churches in Georgia, including some dating from the 11th to the 13th centuries. The cathedral in Nikortsminda has a dome supported by six pillars and contains beautiful frescoes throughout. The church in Gelati is a World Heritage site, and retains the only surviving mosaic in Georgia – a depiction of the Madonna and Child and an angel. Ethiopia was the subject of our next lecture during which we saw pictures of the rock-hewn churches there. These churches, therefore, stand in a sort of pit surrounded by rock walls.

Lecture number 10 was about the Mosque-Cathedral of Cordoba, in Spain. The site where it now stands was originally a pagan temple, but in the 7th century the Christian Visigoths built a church there. Later the area came under Muslim rule so a mosque was built over the top of the church. Then in 1236 the Christians conquered Cordoba and the mosque was converted into a church again. This mosque-church, therefore, contains both Christian and Muslim features.

Val Gosden

Pot Pourri • Leader Val Gosden



There were 11 of us for this visit to the Musical Museum at Brentford. We travelled by train to Waterloo and then on to Kew Bridge Station. The museum contains one of the world's foremost collections of self-playing instruments, from the tiniest clockwork music boxes to the mighty Wurlitzer. Our volunteer tour guide, Roy, was originally a watchmaker and he took us back over the years with the exhibits starting from the 1880s up to recent times. Regular servicing and renovation is done to keep the instruments in working order. We ended up in the tea room which offered light refreshments and excellent river views. This was one of the best visits that we have done.

Pam & Barbara

Ramblers 2 • Leader Roy Black



We enjoyed a warm, sunny day for our March ramble. We started from Eltham High Street, and within 10 minutes we were enjoying the beauty of the gardens of Eltham Palace (from the gate) before continuing down King John's Walk and across the A20. The walk continued through Marvels Wood into Elmstead Woods which were originally part of the Bishop of Rochester's estate which was centred on Bromley and which provided timber for shipbuilding. We continued mainly through woodland until we reached Chislehurst recreation ground and finally made our way into the High Street to the Queen's Head for lunch.

Mary Webb

Local History 2 • Leaders Pauline Watling & Joyce Savinson



After a very acceptable cuppa in a nearby café, we walked through the gardens to 13 Lincoln's Inn, the home of Sir John Soanes, a neo-classical architect (1753–1837) who, among many other projects, designed and built the Bank of England and Dulwich Picture Gallery. This amazing man bought no 13 in order to house his growing personal collection which he demolished and re-designed into the building we see today to his exacting specification. Later, when his collection outgrew no 13, he purchased the stables at the back of 12 and 14 and rebuilt the area. By the time he had purchased the houses at 12 and 14, his eclectic collection had grown to include ammonites, sculptures, statues, Roman marbles, plaster casts, stained glass, and paintings by Hogarth, Constable and Canaletto. One of the latter's paintings is considered by those who know to be one of his finest.

At the height of his collecting, he had accumulated about 45,000 objects and about 30,000 architectural drawings including those of Sir Christopher Wren. So what does a man who seems to have everything decide to buy as soon as it comes on the market? A new painting? A statue? Oh, of course, the sarcophagus of Pharaoh Seti II! This enormous and wondrous rose-coloured alabaster item was brought into the house by way of demolishing the back wall and then re-designing the area.

Four years before his death, Sir John negotiated an Act of Parliament to preserve his house and collection as it would be at the time of his death and to keep it open and free to the public to inspire and educate them. Well, it worked for me!! It's hard to describe this place and I thoroughly recommend a visit. This visit was led by Jill Bryant and me.

Rinka Halliday

i Sir Christopher Wren, 1632–1723, is one of the most highly acclaimed English architects in history. He was accorded responsibility for rebuilding 52 churches in the City of London after the Great Fire in 1666, including what is regarded as his masterpiece, St. Paul's Cathedral, which was completed in 1710. Other memorable buildings by Wren include the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, and the south front of Hampton Court Palace. Educated in Latin and Aristotelian physics at the University of Oxford, Wren was a notable anatomist, astronomer, geometer, and mathematician-physicist, as well as an architect. He was a founder of the Royal Society – of which he was president from 1680–82 – and his scientific work was highly regarded by Isaac Newton and Blaise Pascal. He was also returned as a Member of Parliament on four occasions.

Editor

GROUP VACANCIES

GROUP NAME	LEADER/CONTACT	VACANCIES
 Amblers (Group 3) 3 rd Wednesday (10.30 am)	Norma Balfour 020 8303 7693	Vacancies
 Bird Watching 1 st Wednesday (10.00 am)  	Roy Black  020 8302 9942	Vacancies
 Book Reading 1 st Thursday (2.00–4.00 pm)	June Reid 020 8302 7887	Vacancies
 Classical Music 2 nd Friday (2.30–4.30 pm)	Olive Mercer 020 8300 3136	Vacancies
 Darts (at the Alma pub) 2 nd Monday (noon)  	Leader pending  needed, please	Vacancies
 Family History 2 nd Tues  & 4 th Thurs 	Judith Swain & Kate Berry 020 8303 5759	Vacancies
 Ramblers (Group 2) 4 th Tuesday (4–5 miles)	Roy Black 020 8302 9942	Vacancies
 Rummikub® (Group 1) 4 th Monday (2.00–4.00 pm)	Margaret Platt 020 8309 6395	Vacancies
 Scrabble® <i>Timings to be advised</i>	Norma Balfour 020 8303 7693	Vacancies
 Ten-Pin Bowling (Bexleyheath) Mondays (10.00 am)   £	Gay Braybrook  020 8309 6372	Vacancies
 Wine Appreciation 3 rd Wednesday (7.30 pm) £	Roger Brown 020 8850 5362	Vacancies

The above groups, unless I am told otherwise by Group Leaders, are the ones with vacancies. Please contact the Group Leader concerned in the first instance, and, if accepted, inform me.

Trevor Ford  020 8302 7635 email: trevor.ford@talktalk.net

Why not start a new group?

If your name is on the waiting list to join a full group, or no group that specialises in your interest exists yet, you can create a new one and advertise it in this Newsletter – see the last page. It is easy to run a group and any current leader can advise you how it's done. Members of groups are reminded that they should always let the group leader know if they cannot attend a meeting, particularly if they wish to withdraw from a group.

 Not during school/bank holidays

£ A charge applies

 Certain seasons only

 Notice on the board at meetings

 Open to all

 Temporary point of contact

PROGRAMME

2017

April	Peter Jones	National Trust Properties of the South East
May	Nicky Brooks	Exercise in Retirement – Pilates
June	Russell Bowes	Dig for Victory
July	Project Representative	Ageing Immunity Research Project
August	Groups & Members	Showcase: Sharing of Sidcup U3A Activities
September	Ian Bevan	The History of the Crystal Palace
October	Nigel Dawson	Comedy Heroes
November	Heather Woodward	Churchill & Chartwell
December	Joe Mendell	Bob Newhart Rides Again!

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairman	<i>Vacant</i>	
Vice-Chairman	<i>Vacant</i>	
Minutes Secretary	George Murrell	020 8850 2046
Treasurer	John Lapham	020 8854 6340
Membership Secretary	Patricia Andrews	020 8300 2064
Asst. Membership Secretary	Lynn Plumer	07714 234398
Speakers Secretary	Janet Lambern	020 8300 1786
Group Co-ordinator	Trevor Ford	020 8302 7635
Welfare Officer	Kathy Cordell	020 8300 4573
General Member	Sue Brooks	020 8298 1117

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS

Raffle Organiser Jackie Burke 020 8302 7395
Newsletter Editor & Webmaster David Smith 020 8304 2305
 Please either email contributions to me at: editor@sidcup-u3a.org.uk or post them to me at 56 Crofton Avenue, Bexley, Kent DA5 3AR – typed if possible since this facilitates scanning. Please submit Newsletter contributions by 3rd of the month – but at any time for the website. Photos taken during group outings and events may be shared on the website’s “Gallery” page.
Third Age Trust: 19 East Street, Bromley, Kent BR1 1QE ☎ 020 8466 6139 www.u3a.org.uk
Greater London South East Network: www.u3asites.org.uk/glondonsenetwork
London Region U3A: www.u3asites.org.uk/london-region
World U3A: www.worldu3a.org **Virtual U3A:** www.vu3a.org

WEBSITE

www.sidcup-u3a.org.uk

This Newsletter (including previous editions) may be read or downloaded from our website; our annual booklet, Scambuster, and help with computer problems may also be downloaded. Also available is an index of Newsletter ‘Notices’ covering the period April 2007 to this issue.

Afterthought

The trouble with doing something right the first time is that nobody appreciates how difficult it was.