

**SIDCUP & DISTRICT UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE
NEWSLETTER**

August 2007



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

NOTICES

Happiness

A 92-year-old, petite, well-poised and proud man, who is fully dressed each morning by eight o'clock, with his hair fashionably coifed and shaved perfectly, even though he is legally blind, moved to a nursing home today. The recent death of his wife of 70 years had made the move necessary. After many hours of waiting patiently in the lobby of the nursing home, he smiled sweetly when told his room was ready.

As he manoeuvred his walker to the elevator, I provided a visual description of his tiny room, even including the curtains that had been hung by his window.

"I love it," he stated with the enthusiasm of an eight-year-old having just been presented with a new puppy.

"Mr. Jones, you haven't seen the room; just wait."

"That doesn't have anything to do with it," he replied. "Happiness is something you decide on ahead of time. Whether I like my room or not doesn't depend on how the furniture is arranged - it's how I arrange my mind. I've already decided to love it. It's a decision I make every morning when I wake up. I have a choice; I can spend the day in bed recounting the difficulty I have with the parts of my body that no longer work, or get out of bed and be thankful for the ones that do.

Each day is a gift, and as long as my eyes open, I'll focus on the new day and all the happy memories I've stored away just for this time in my life.

Old age is like a bank account. You withdraw from what you've put in.

So, my advice to you would be to deposit a lot of happiness in the bank account of memories! Thank you for your part in filling my Memory Bank. I am still depositing."

Remember, be happy.

Margaret Platt

Newsletter

Those members who wish to pick up a copy of the monthly Newsletter from Sidcup Library should look in the newspaper rack to the right of the entrance.

The Raffle

As you know, the U3A in Britain is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. In recognition of this I am planning to include one item which is silver in colour in the next few raffles. We are most grateful to all who support the raffle each month, and quality goods to be included in future raffles are most welcome. As most members know, the proceeds from the raffle are given to the chosen charity for the year, which this year is Hearing Dogs for Deaf People.

Val Gosden



Zara, a mongrel, and Pauline (*Extract of item taken from the Hearing Dogs website*)

Zara was three months old when a member of the public donated her to Hearing Dogs for Deaf People for training. She was placed with profoundly deaf Pauline Paxton from Pembroke in April 1997.

In the ten years that Zara has been with Pauline, she has shown herself to be an exceptional hearing dog and wonderful companion. She has also helped make people aware of the fact that Pauline is deaf, something that Pauline has found invaluable as she has epilepsy and often has seizures. Pauline explained, "Shortly after I had Zara, we were out walking and whilst crossing a road on a blind bend I had a seizure and collapsed unconscious in the middle of the road. When I came round, I was told that Zara had sat beside me with her paws on my chest barking at oncoming traffic to raise the alarm. Thankfully it worked and passers-by said that, if Zara had not been with me, I would undoubtedly have been run over and killed."

One of the reasons that Pauline applied for a hearing dog was the fact that she was missing visitors who called at her house as she could not hear the doorbell. This, in turn, meant she became quite lonely and isolated, but all this changed with Zara's arrival. However, Pauline has found that the benefits of having a hearing dog extend way beyond being told about household sounds. "I was recently waiting at a pelican crossing to cross a very busy road," she explains. "When the green man sign flashed I began to step out into the road, but Zara pulled back and sat firmly on the pavement. I was a bit surprised and asked her what was wrong. At the same time an ambulance raced round the corner with its blue lights flashing, and I realised that it would have hit me if Zara had not pulled me back. I couldn't hear the sirens at all, but Zara knew it wasn't safe to cross and she saved my life."

Although Zara is the grand old age of ten, she continues to work tirelessly for Pauline, and Pauline cannot imagine life without her beloved hearing dog. "I know Zara is totally devoted to me. She has given me back my life and my independence. Zara is such a loyal friend, and I absolutely trust her with my life."

Val, Annette & Gay

Trip to Brighton on Wednesday 19th September

The list for members to sign up for this trip will be on the notice board at the August meeting. The cost will be £15. Visits to places of interest will be paid for individually when we are there. For example, The Royal Pavilion entry fee is £5.95 at the concessionary rate. Those who pay at the August meeting will receive a leaflet about Brighton and its possibilities. Members who cannot attend this meeting, but who are interested in going, should contact me.

John Mercer ☎ 020 8300 3136

Visit to Bury St. Edmunds

On 16th July 39 members enjoyed a coach trip to Bury St. Edmunds. Upon arrival we were made welcome by the Refectory staff where refreshments were waiting for us. We were divided into three groups and were given a guided tour of Edmunsbury Cathedral, which was built in the 12th century, and which, before later building work carried out in the 16th century and the early 1960's, had been the last unfinished cathedral in Britain. Work has recently been completed to crown the cathedral with a 140ft Gothic-style tower. The Abbey Gardens with their beautiful flower beds were a pleasure to walk around.

Afterwards, some of the members had a tour of the Moyse's Hall Museum, which is one of England's few surviving Norman houses. This museum contains a selection of unsavory items such as man-traps and gibbet cages, etc.

We also visited St. Mary's Church which is the final resting place of Mary Tudor, sister of Henry VIII and the Queen of France.

Our thanks go to Annette Jansen for organising this very interesting trip.

Ann Harlow

U3A Website

Further to last month's article concerning the U3A Website, you may be interested to know that three times a year the Third Age Trust publishes an educational bulletin entitled "Sources". This could be of particular interest to group leaders because it can be downloaded from the U3A website. Those without computers may request a printed copy from the Third Age Trust. The current edition (24 pages) is mainly focused on various aspects of music.

Editor



Classical Music 2 : Leader Derick Johnson

Jean Wallis presented the music she enjoys for the July meeting of the Group. Her programme featured the great composers Brahms, Mozart, Schubert, Handel and Beethoven. There were, however, two exceptions; "Benedictus" from Karl Jenkins's mass "The Armed Man", and "Kol Nidre" by Max Bruch. The programme was enjoyed for its broad range and musicality of the performers, all of which appeared to be excellent recordings.

Sonny Hopkins

Local History 3 : Leader Pam Kirk

On 11th July a small group of us enjoyed seeing "Where History Comes to Life" at Benjamin Franklin House in Craven Street, London. The Grade 1-listed building, beautifully restored but empty, is the setting for this "museum as theatre" approach which sets a new standard for historical interpretation. Dr. Benjamin Franklin, scientist, diplomat, philosopher, inventor, US Founding Father and more besides, called 36 Craven Street his home for nearly 18 years between 1757 and 1775. The presentation lasted one hour and during this time we gained a sense of the complexity of the man and of the times in which he lived.

Ilena Harrington

① Franklin was sent to England in 1757 by the Pennsylvania Assembly as a colonial agent to protest against the political influence of the Penn family, the proprietors of the colony.

Editor

Freedom Pass Explorers : Leader Val Gosden

Our first three visits to hitherto unknown places within the Freedom Pass area proved to be of great interest. We first visited Feltham, south-west London, which can best be described as a suburban town with a new shopping mall. We obtained a coffee upon arrival there, and, later on, lunch in the new ASDA supermarket. Despite the rain we sallied forth to explore the local area, finding a lovely pond, complete with ducks and geese, off the High Street. After a while we found a large park before returning to Feltham High Street. We then walked along a river for a short way where we spotted a heron, which was just as interested in what we were doing as we were in watching it. Maybe there was a nest nearby.

Our second visit was to Amersham, in the north-west corner of our Freedom Pass map. Here we had a coffee in a traditional style town before walking down the hill and through the woods towards Old Amersham. The woods stopped halfway down the hill where a lovely vista was spread before us, down the hill to the Old Town nestling amongst trees, then up towards the Chilterns. We continued our walk in sunshine, down to Old Amersham with its picturesque shops and houses with roses growing alongside many of the shops, then alongside a stream before eating our sandwich lunch in pleasantly green surroundings. We then visited the memorial gardens before walking up the hill towards the station. Our return journey on the train provided a view of the new Wembley Stadium.

Our third visit was to Cockfosters, north London, where we found a pleasant coffee shop in a small parade of shops. Cockfosters itself is mainly a residential area, but by walking a little way along we came to Trent Country Park, which is quite extensive, with fields (some of which were un-mown), trees and lakes. Eating our sandwiches there in the sunshine was most pleasant. One thing we noticed was that everyone seemed most friendly, from the helpful people in the coffee shop, to complete strangers in the Country Park itself.

Whilst I cannot guarantee that everywhere we go will be wonderful, members are welcome to join our group on the 2nd Monday of each month; please phone me for details.

Val Gosden ☎ **020 8300 0664**

Bird Watching : Leaders Gay Braybrook/José Steward

Rainham Marshes was our destination for our July “twitching”. It is a really exciting and newly opened reserve. We took the train from Sidcup to Lewisham, then the Docklands Light Railway to Limehouse, then the main line train to Purfleet. Next we walked about a mile along the Thames Path, which has superb views across to our side of the river, and which led us into the Reserve. Entrance to the Reserve is free for RSPB members and £3.50 for non-members. The main building provides wonderful facilities - a huge viewing area, classrooms, classy toilets (!) and a really good café and shop. The route around the perimeter is 2½ miles long, and passes through huge reed beds containing stretches of open water, woodland with an abundance of wild flowers and butterflies. It also passes well landscaped army paraphernalia abandoned when the site was no longer used for rifle practice, and which now provides wildlife habitats. We found a good hide from which we watched coots with their young and little grebes diving. One of the highlights was watching crows and large grey herons fighting - and then we saw the reason for this spectacle; a young heron with its very long fluffy neck was peeping out of the reed bed looking most endearing! There was a lack of variety of water birds at the site and a Ranger told us that, due to the heavy rain and storms, many young ducks had perished and the adults had moved on to calmer waters, hopefully to nest again. However, we still spotted 17 species of birds during the day, amongst them swans with cygnets, egrets, green finches, and gold finches. It was a really lovely day out and I can't wait to go again!

José Steward

National Trust/English Heritage : Leaders John & Olive Mercer

In July eleven of us visited Pitzhanger Manor House in Ealing. It was built during the 17th century and bought in 1800 by the architect John Soane who also had an office at Lincoln's Inn Fields. Pitzhanger Manor was intended to be the family's out-of-town residence and home for their eldest son - but it was sold in 1811. John Soane retained the original red brick of the south wing but made alterations replacing the main block with stone and yellow brick plus four Ionic columns which give it an impressive frontage. He also added a conservatory across much of the rear of the building. The rooms are sufficiently small to give it a homely feeling, except for those in the larger south wing which were used for entertaining artists, musicians and friends from London. Interesting features include decorative ceilings, which are domed or vaulted, and mirrors. A copy of Hogarth's set of eight pictures entitled “A Rake's Progress” is on display in the small dining room.

In 1901 the building was sold to Ealing District Council and extended to become the Public Library. Since 1985, when the Library was moved out, the rooms have been undergoing restoration to reveal their original splendour. Despite a brief shower en route, we were able to enjoy a walk in the colourful gardens in the sunshine before returning home.

Elsie Cole & Mary Webb

① “The Rake's Progress” is an opera in three acts and an epilogue by Igor Stravinsky. The libretto written by W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman is based loosely on the eight paintings and engravings “A Rake's Progress” of William Hogarth which Stravinsky had seen on 2 May 1947 in a Chicago exhibition.

Editor

GROUP VACANCIES

GROUP NAME	LEADER	VACANCIES
Amblers (Group 3) 3 rd Wednesday (10.30 am)	Norma Balfour 020 8303 7693	2
Beginners Bridge Acol Tuesdays (11 am - 1 pm) <i>Weekly for 6 weeks</i>	Barbara Shilling 01322 270814	Vacancies for courses starting later this year
Bird Watching 1 st Wednesday (morning)	Gay Braybrook/José Steward 020 8300 6372/020 8302 1627	Yes. Notice on board at meetings
Darts (at The Alma pub) 2 nd Monday (midday)	Fred Green	Yes
Freedom Pass Explorers 2 nd Monday	Val Gosden 020 8300 0664	Yes
Handcrafted Cards (Group 2) 1 st Wednesday (2 - 4 pm)	Val Gosden 020 8300 0664	3
Music (Group 1) 1 st Friday (2 - 4 pm)	Ian Brydon 020 8304 0231	1
Music (Group 2) 2 nd Friday (2.30 pm)	Derick Johnson 020 8850 1245	3
National Trust/English Heritage Various dates & times	John & Olive Mercer 020 8300 3136	Yes
Quilling (The craft of paper filigree) Occasional Saturdays (2 - 4 pm)	Val Gosden 020 8300 0664	Please phone leader
Ramblers (Group 1) (6-7 miles) 4 th Tuesday (10.30 am)	Annette Jansen 01322 522252	Yes
Saturday Ramble (4-5 miles) 1 st Saturday (morning)	Gay Braybrook 020 8300 6372	3
Sunday Ramble 2 nd Sunday (morning)	Pat Peeney 020 8302 5061	Yes
Tenpin Bowling (Bexleyheath) Mondays (10 am) <i>except school holidays</i>	Gay Braybrook 020 8300 6372	Yes
Theatre (Group 2) Various matinées	Joan & John Somerset 020 8300 0890	Yes. Notice on board at meetings

The above lists, 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 the Group Co-ordinator.

José Steward, Group Co-ordinator ☎ 020 8302 1627

Why not start a new group?

If you want to join a group that is full, why not start a new one? It's not difficult to run a group, and leaders of a full group should be willing to advise you how it's done.

PROGRAMME

2007

August	Mr A. Burnett	Liquid history: a trip up the Thames
September	Mr P. Harris	The history of pantomime
October	Mrs J. Hungerford	Caveman orchestra
November	Mr J. Kennett	An aspect of local history
December	to be announced	

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairman	John Mercer	020 8300 3136
Vice-Chairman	Annette Jansen	01322 522252
Minutes Secretary	George Murrell	020 8850 2046
Treasurer	Dennis Brittain	
Membership Secretary	John Harlow	020 8300 3865
Speakers Secretary	Valerie Gosden	020 8300 0664
Group Co-ordinator	José Steward	020 8302 1627
Raffle Organiser	Valerie Gosden	020 8300 0664
Welfare Officer	Gay Braybrook	020 8309 6372
Liaison Officer	Norman Slaughter	020 8300 9460

USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

Travel Group Leader Margaret Platt 020 8309 6395

Newsletter Editor David Smith 020 8304 2305

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Please email contributions if possible as this saves having to retype them, to:

editor.u3a@ukonline.co.uk *Please send contributions by 3rd of the month please.*

Afterthought

Nostalgia isn't what it used to be.



Manor House, Sidcup