

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

July 2012



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

NOTICES

Shared Learning Project London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre

This takes place on Wednesday afternoons for 10 weeks from 3rd October until 5th December. Weeks 1–7 will take place at the LAARC, Eagle Wharf Road, London N1 7ED. Weeks 8–10 will be at the Museum of London, London Wall, EC2Y 5HN. Volunteers are required to assist with repacking and reorganisation of archaeological collections from early 1960s and 1970s excavations. The closing date for applications is 30th July.

For further information and application form, email linda.crook.uk@gmail.com.



“Der Rosenkavalier” by Richard Strauss
(sung in German with English sub-titles)

Tuesday 6th November 12.30–4.40pm at the Odeon Cinema, Covent Garden, Shaftesbury Avenue, London. This film production is exclusive to U3A members. Tickets are limited to two per member and cost £13 per person; they are obtainable by written application enclosing contact details, cheque, and SAE to Third Age Trust, 19 East Street, Bromley, BR1 1QE.



U3A “Discovering Britain” Study Meeting at the Royal Geographical Society, London

This takes place on Friday 26th October 2012 1.30pm–4.45pm. It focuses on the British Landscape and is a chance to learn more about some memorable geographical features of Britain. Tickets cost £13 per person, including interval refreshments, and are available by written application to the Third Age Trust (see above). The ticket price includes a one-day complimentary user pass to enable a return visit to the Society’s Foyle Reading Room, the world’s largest collection of maps and atlases – normal admission price £10 per day.



U3A Calendar 2013

This is now available from the Third Age Trust (see above) for £3.50 including p&p.

George Murrell

More Scams

The BBC has warned computer users to be wary of emails claiming to come from the daytime television show, “Heir Hunters”, after it was discovered that scammers are using the disguise to obtain personal information. This programme focuses on the work of probate detectives who look for distant relatives of people who have died without making a will. The emails ask recipients to respond with their full name, date of birth, address and telephone number, so that their details may be checked on a database to see if they are eligible for a windfall. Delete any such email immediately; the TV programme does not contact people in this way. If, however, you are contacted by a genuine probate detective agency be sure to read carefully any contract before signing it; their fees are usually 20% of the total legacy, and some are known to charge you as much as £1000 regardless of your eventual entitlement to any money!

Responding to scam emails, letters and phone calls normally results in your being added to a “suckers” list; this is a list of people regarded as being susceptible to scams which is sold to other scammers. This will increase the number of scam attempts against you. The Scambuster document available from our own website (see back page) describes other scam types.

Editor



Freedom Pass Explorers • Leader Val Gosden



Despite the forecasters predicting rain during the day, it was a cheerful group that made its way to Streatham Hill Station in May. We eventually arrived at Tooting Bec Common after passing a variety of house styles on the way; these ranged from upper middle class Edwardian detached houses to more modern flats and apartments. Despite the rain, a pleasant walk round the common led us in due course to a pond with several ducks, close to which we found the fossilised remains of a tree trunk. We obtained lunch in a small café in the park, which we more or less commandeered. The service and food were excellent and very reasonably priced. In 2009 this café had been set on fire by vandals, but, with support from the local community, it had been completely renovated within nine days at a cost of £10,000.

Can anyone help us? At one point we thought we saw two cormorants on the further side of the pond – or were they shags? It was a bit of a puzzle since we did not expect to see either at a London pond. After moving nearer, we noted that they were ‘tall ducks’. Can anyone tell us what type of duck they were?

Val Gosden

① Cormorants and shags are medium-to-large seabirds between which there is no consistent distinction. Today, there are around forty species of cormorant and it appears to be an ancient group, with similar ancestors reaching all the way back to the time of the dinosaurs. They are coastal rather than oceanic birds, and some varieties have colonised inland waters; the original ancestor of cormorants seems to have been a freshwater bird. They are all fish eaters and dine on small eels, fish, and even water snakes. They are colonial nesters and use trees, rocky islets or cliffs. Cormorants have, indeed, been spotted on Tooting Bec Common, Finsbury Park, and Danson Park.

Editor

Freedom Pass Explorers • Leader Val Gosden



On Monday 11th June, in spite of the awful weather, 14 intrepid explorers met at London Bridge. However, as it was pouring with rain which was forecast to continue all day, we decided not to brave the elements and to abandon our original destination and look for somewhere local. While some did their own thing, eight of us went to the Courtauld Gallery at Somerset House – thank you, Christine, for suggesting it. The Courtauld Gallery is one of the finest small art museums in the world, and its collection ranges from early Renaissance into the 20th century with paintings by Picasso, Monet, Manet, Renoir, Rubens and many others. Entry is free on Mondays. We found it very interesting and were all impressed with the exhibition. After our visit, we went to St Martin's Crypt for lunch and we all agreed, in spite of the weather and having to change our plans, that we had had a very enjoyable day.

Pat & Bill Garwood

Ramblers 1 • Leader Annette Holland



We had been waiting for a good, dry spell of weather before going further afield and having a picnic lunch. We decided to risk June as being such a month, and, led by Gloria, 13 of us set out for the Weald of Kent and met at Penshurst. This part of Kent is entirely unspoilt with sweeping vistas of the gentle hills containing the occasional farm, and during our ramble we passed no-one all day. The one coffee stop took us to Chiddingstone where fresh drinks were available in the sole village store, and where all but one person resisted a huge slice from the gâteau that appeared! Gloria knew where the perfect lunch stop could be. It was here that we remembered Myra Comes, one of our members who sadly died recently, and the many happy occasions we had shared with her. Our return path took us through the meadows of Penshurst Place. It was a really lovely day – thank you Gloria.

Annette Holland

Local History 3 • Leaders Christine Withams & Barbara Savill



Our visit for June was to The Poppy Factory in Richmond. The factory was set up in 1922 when Major George Howson, MC, who served on the Western Front, founded the Disabled Society. With a grant from the Unity Relief Fund, he set up a small factory off the Old Kent Road to produce poppies in order to provide employment for disabled servicemen returning from the First World War. In 1925 the factory moved to Richmond and has been there ever since. We enjoyed a welcome cup of tea and biscuits before our guide, Charlie, introduced himself and showed us an informative film about the origins of the factory, and how they have expanded the services that they provide. We were shown around the factory and met some of the people who currently work there, and our seven members who went on the trip tried their hand at making poppies, and saw how they make some of the wreaths. Whilst they still make poppies and wreaths for the Royal British Legion, they now work with employers to source job opportunities and help remove barriers which might otherwise prevent wounded, injured or sick ex-servicemen and women from gaining employment. We all enjoyed the experience and found it a worthwhile visit.

Den Brittain

Ramblers 2 • Leaders Pat & Alf Cracknell



On 26th June fourteen of us met at Lower Upton, on the River Medway. It was sunny – in a very variable week – and, after a walk up through the woods, we reached the Saxon Shore Way. We crossed farmland to the large Norman church at Hoo, and turned down towards the river, passing by numerous boats and boatyards. We had checked the tide timetables before setting out because most of the way back we were on the beach, and this path is under water at high tide. We passed a Second World War ‘pillbox’, which had collapsed onto the beach, and the crumbling brick remains of Cookham Wood Fort, which had been built to protect the Chatham Dockyard after a serious Dutch raid in 1667. We finished with an excellent lunch at “The Ship” in Upnor. This is a lovely corner of Kent – with good walks – which we had not previously visited.

Olive & John Mercer

Local History 2 • Leaders Pauline Watling and Barbara Olney



In June, when we visited Gunnersbury Park and Museum, the weather was kind to us – warm, sunny and dry. How fortunate we were!

In the 18th century, Gunnersbury Estate became the summer residence of King George II’s favourite daughter, Princess Amelia. She refurbished an existing Palladian style house and re-landscaped the gardens and turned Gunnersbury into one of the finest estates in the area. She entertained famous people and royalty at her fashionable parties. The large mansion called Gunnersbury Park was bought by the Rothschild family in 1835 for use as a modest country home, and, during the ninety years that they lived there, the gardens and hothouses became famous for supplying pineapples to Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli and orchids for royal banqueting tables.

In 1925, Gunnersbury Park was sold to the local councils, and in 1926 Neville Chamberlain opened it to the public. The large mansion now houses a family friendly museum which has many interesting exhibits. There is also a Victorian kitchen which, unfortunately, was closed on the day we visited. Gunnersbury Park has a unique combination of historic buildings and landscape which has many different kinds of trees and, at this time of year, everything looks lush and very green, it is therefore recognised as a park of national significance. However, several of the park’s buildings are in poor condition and have been designated by English Heritage as ‘at risk’ so the Heritage Lottery has been approached for a grant.

It was a very enjoyable and interesting day and well worth visiting.

Barbara Olney

GROUP VACANCIES

	GROUP NAME	LEADER	VACANCIES
	Amblers (Group 3) 3 rd Wednesday (10.30 am)	Norma Balfour 020 8303 7693	Yes
	Bird Watching 1 st Wednesday (morning)	Gay Braybrook (co-ordinator only) 020 8309 6372	Yes
	Book Reading 1 st Thursday	See Group Co-ordinator 020 8300 4291	2
	Darts (at the Alma pub) 2 nd Monday (noon)	See Group Co-ordinator 020 8300 4291	Yes
	Local History (Group 1) 2 nd Wednesday	John Harlow 020 8300 3865	2
	Luncheon Club (Group 2) 2 nd Friday (noon)	Pam Kirk 020 8856 8372	4
	Philosophy (Group 2) 1 st & 3 rd Monday (2.00 pm)	Val Gosden 020 8300 0664	2
	Play Reading 1 st Tuesday (2.00–4.00pm)	See Group Co-ordinator 020 8300 4291	Yes
	Ramblers (Group 2) (4–5 miles) 4 th Tuesday	Pat & Alf Cracknell 020 8302 0823	Yes
	Ten-Pin Bowling (Bexleyheath) Mondays (10.00 am)	Gay Braybrook 020 8309 6372	Yes
	Theatre (Group 2) Various matinées	Joan & John Somerset 020 8300 0890	Yes. Notice on board at meetings
	Walking in London (3-6 miles) 3 rd Tuesday	Val Gosden 020 8300 0664	4

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.

Christine Spencer, Group Co-ordinator ☎ 020 8300 4291

Why not start a new group?

If you are on the waiting list to join a full group why not create a new one and then advertise it in this Newsletter and on our website? It is not difficult to run a group and leaders of a full one can advise you how it's done.

PROGRAMME

2012

July	Chris Hare	40 Years Without a Proper Job
August	Tony Farnham	Sailing Barges in their Heyday
September	Myriam Steadman	Guide Dogs for the Blind
October	John Halligan	The Lord Mayor of the City of London
November	Derek Fulford	Antique Clocks & Watches
December	Pat Mortlock	A Country House Christmas

2013

January	Bob Ogle	Biggin Hill
February	Mrs. Austin	Honey
March	John Beckham	Birds of Rye Harbour
April	Ann Knief	Lola Montez – a 19 th Century Adventuress
May	Mr. Guerdon	Chickens

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairman	Anne Evans	020 8302 2261
Vice-Chairman	Lesley South	020 8300 8298
Minutes Secretary	George Murrell	020 8850 2046
Treasurer	Christine Smith	020 8304 2305
Membership Secretary	Margaret Scambler	020 8315 0108
Speakers Secretary	Sue Brooks	020 8298 1117
Group Co-ordinator	Christine Spencer	020 8300 4291
Welfare Officer	Kathy Cordell	020 8300 4573
Social Secretary	Vacant	

USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

Travel Group Leader	Margaret Platt	020 8309 6395
Raffle Organiser	Jackie Burke	
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.

Please submit Newsletter contributions by 3rd of the month – but at any time for the Website.

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

Today's trying times will become tomorrow's good old days.