

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

July 2014



**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

Forthcoming Special Events

Forthcoming special events of interest to U3A members include:-

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre: The Elizabethan Experience £19.00 pp on Weds/Thurs/Fridays mid-October 2014 until mid-February 2015. (Groups to have a minimum of 15).

Ironbridge, Shropshire: Two-day study break 8th-9th October £70.00 pp. Explore Britain's industrial heritage.

Elgar: Exploring Elgar study day 15th October £17.00 pp at the Elgar Birthplace Museum, Worcester.

Cheltenham Literary Festival: 3rd-12th October. Special discounts for U3A members.

Royal Opera House, Thurrock: Inspiration Day 8th October £18.00 pp. "Hands on" Workshops finding out how opera and ballet productions are put together.

West End Sing Out: 22nd October – Playhouse Theatre, London WC1 £35.00 pp. This is a chance to sing with West End professionals and receive a CD of the U3A choir.

George Murrell

(i) Events booking forms can be downloaded from the Third Age website – provided that you are a registered member. You will otherwise need to contact the National Office directly.

Also available for registered members to order from their website are items like 2015 diaries (for £2.00), stationery, notebooks, and other U3A merchandise.

Editor

New Members

The Committee welcomes the following new members during 2014:

Linda Ashwood, Elizabeth Harket, Linda Harris, Mary Hawes, Peter Holman, Dorothy Holmans, Sybil Laing, Christine Morley, Betty Petyt, Carole Philpot, Joan Reeves, Margaret Sharp, Susan Stuart, Edwin Wallace, and Pam Wargent.

Pat Rivett, Assistant Membership Secretary

Communication

Email addresses – Group Leaders: To improve communications, it would be appreciated if group leaders with access to email could forward their email address (provided that they have no objection) to the Group Co-ordinator, Keith Alker, at alker@btinternet.com.

“Open Day” 2pm on Thursday 21st August 2014: The August monthly meeting will take the form of an “Open Day” when, instead of a speaker, groups are invited to publicise their activities with a display stand. Family History, WAGS, Card Making, Walking in London, Freedom Pass Explorers, Local History, Meditation and Philosophy groups have already indicated that they will be participating. Any other groups intending to take part are requested to inform any member of the Committee beforehand. Any individual member with an interesting hobby is also invited to exhibit. Who knows? – it could result in additional groups of fellow enthusiasts being formed. Several other local associations whose activities may be of interest to members have also been invited to provide displays. Tea and biscuits will be available as usual.

As indicated by the title, the meeting is open to all and members are requested to publicise the event amongst their friends and contacts and invite them to “drop in”.

George Murrell



Local History 1 • Leader Lesley South



On 3rd June 2014, seventeen members of Local History Group 1 paid a visit to Bentley Priory, Stanmore, Middlesex which in WWII was the coordinating centre of RAF Fighter Command. On our arrival we were met by Michael for a private guided tour of this new museum. The main building was constructed by architect John Soane. In the entrance hall there is a lovely ceiling in tip-top condition which Soane designed. The original entrance was at the back of the house overlooking the Italian-style gardens which replicated those at Osborne House, Isle of Wight. Vast stone columns soar up the front of the building and the view across the estate is towards Harrow-on-the-Hill. In 1925, the RAF acquired the building, and in 1936 Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding moved into his office. Dowding came from an army background, but during WWI learnt to fly and joined the RAF in 1918. He had a great knowledge of complex technical subjects, especially in the new field of radar and aircraft detection. He masterminded a control centre to monitor attacking aircraft and the RAF response. He insisted that RAF fighter planes be fitted with radio communication so that the pilots could talk to each other and to Command and control. This was put to the test on 15th September 1940 during the Battle of Britain. The Observer Corps also fed information to the Plotting Room. Dowding had insisted that fighter aircraft at the fall of France should be withdrawn to UK bases as he realised that they would all be needed to protect Britain against invasion and Churchill agreed with his request. Stuffy Dowding was retired by the RAF after the Battle of Britain, but his Plotting Room system remained working well in the Cold War. Dowding died in 1970. We then gathered round the piano and sang *Coming Home on a Wing and a Prayer* which had been composed in 1943 and made popular by Anne Shelton and Vera Lynne. By the way, the toilets at the museum must be some of the best in the UK.

Alan Godfrey

Ramblers 2 • Leader pending



Thames Path Walk – North Bank Tuesday 27th May 2014

The Bank Holiday weather did not bode well for our Thameside Walk so I was not surprised when only five of us turned up at the meeting point – but all of us were determined to complete the walk. The purpose of the walk was to cover as much of the Thames Path as possible (given that parts are blocked due to private developments) and to end at Canary Wharf for our lunch.

The rain eased slightly as we passed the ‘City’ across the river which gave us a good view of the Gherkin and the infamous “magnifying glass” building (nicknamed the “Walkie-Talkie” because of its shape) which had melted parts of cars parked in front of and below it. Continuing onwards, we passed the Queen’s Row Barge ‘Gloriana’, which was used during the Queen’s Jubilee celebrations; it was moored at St. Catherine’s Dock in all its gilded beauty. At this point the rain recommenced and persisted for the rest of the walk – but we continued in good spirits.

Passing along Wapping High Street, we came across the ‘Prospect of Whitby’ pub (circa 1520) and famous in the 60’s for its celebrity visiting clientele and for its view of the Thames from the balcony at the rear. However, the view would have been somewhat dampened by the rain so we passed by as it was not lunchtime and the pub was not open anyway. Our stroll continued along the riverside, passing Gordon Ramsey’s ‘The Narrow’ gastropub which is normally crowded – especially the outdoor section skirting the river – but on this day was almost empty so we decided not to go in. In fact, at this point the rain proved too much for one of our party who beat a swift retreat to the nearby station. Continuing along the now ‘gentrified’ Narrow Street, at one time a strip of ship chandlers, ropemakers, lime makers and notorious pubs, etc, we came across the popular ‘Grapes’ pub (circa 1583) which numbered Charles Dickens as a frequent patron when he stayed in the area. The lime making establishments have long since disappeared, but the memory lives on in the name of nearby Limehouse. It was at this point that another of our party decided that he was wet enough and also made for the nearest station leaving three of us to end up at Canary Wharf; here we could get out of the rain and we enjoyed hot drinks and crusty, tasty baguettes.

The walk was not a washout despite the rain; I am sure that we all felt satisfaction in completing it in good spirits despite the circumstances.

Wing

Ramblers 2 • Leader Pending



Footscray Meadows Tuesday 24th June 2014

7 of us met at 10.15 am in the White Cross Pub car park; it was an ideal sunny day as we set off north to the River Cray. After reaching the river, we continued upstream to Five Arches Bridge. We spent some time watching fish before crossing the river to carry on north for another ¼ mile along a paved path. We turned left and right on major paths, and, after a short distance, we took a small path through woods on our left. Back in the open again, we looked to our right at an ancient sweet chestnut tree encircled by low metal fence. We then passed an old tree (in great condition) and continued upwards bearing left to the stables. We turned left at the stables and then downhill on a worn track across a meadow with the spire of All Saints Church visible in the distance. We took the path left of the church to Halfpenny Bridge we had brilliant views of water and canopy as we stopped to admire dragonflies. We crossed the bridge and followed the river downstream, taking time to pass the many ponds. Eventually, we reached a playing field where we turned right along Water Lane back to the White Cross Pub.

David Wedderkop

Local History 3 • Leader Christine Withams



When we met in December to agree our schedule for the forthcoming year, Kenwood House in Hampstead was chosen as our destination for June. Most of our group were already familiar with Kenwood House but were interested to see the renovations that had been widely publicised last year.

A baker's dozen of us set off on Wednesday the 11th and, after meeting at London Bridge, we took the Northern Line to Archway. From there a 210 bus took us to the entrance to the park – a three minute walk from the house. It was a gloriously sunny day and perfect weather for a visit to Hampstead's parkland with its panoramic view of London. Once at the house, we viewed the Robert Adam rooms including the Great Library which has been transformed and is now presented as the great man intended. We took a leisurely stroll round the rest of the house to admire the famous paintings which can now be seen to their best advantage in their proper settings.

At the time we had agreed the visit, we were not aware of the film "Belle" or that it would be released in cinemas only two days after our visit. This film depicts the life of Dido Belle, the illegitimate, mixed race niece of William Murray, 1st Earl of Mansfield and Lord Chief Justice. She lived at Kenwood House as a free young gentlewoman during the time that her uncle was called upon to rule on cases of the legitimacy of the slave trade. This provided added interest to our visit – especially as four of the costumes used in the film were on display in the orangery.

This venue is well worth a second visit.

Kath Nye

Pot Pourri • Leader Val Gosden



There were so many items on display that it took us nearly two hours to see all the artefacts in the Viking Exhibition at the Museum of London in May. Some items were basic, such as axes and oars, but there were many decorative items in silver and gold, and many with fine detail. A steel frame representing the warship, Roskilde 6, is over 37 metres long, and contains the surviving timber from the original ship; this is most impressive. Along with the items on display, a lot of information was provided which made us realise just how far the Vikings' influence reached – from Canada in the west to the Ukraine in the east. Once they had settled, however, there was a merger of cultural ideas between the Viking traditions and those of the 'conquered' lands.

On a beautifully sunny day in June, we travelled to Hall Place, Bexley, to see an exhibition of some of Quentin Blake's work – 'As Large as Life'.* Quentin Blake was Britain's first Children's Laureate. As well as illustrating books – notably those by Roald Dahl – some of his work was done specifically for hospitals, and these were designed to have a therapeutic effect on both residents and visitors. Quentin Blake has his own distinctive style which captures the essence of people in their daily lives and in their imaginations. We followed this exhibition by having a most enjoyable, relaxing break in the café before we visited the Butterfly Jungle with its many varieties of tropical butterflies. There were so many flitting around that it was difficult to know where to look to see them all, and the variety of colours was impressive.

Val Gosden

*This exhibition is open until 31st August.

① In 1997, during the construction of the new Museum Island at the Viking Ship Museum in the ancient city of Roskilde, Denmark, 9 ships from the late Viking Age and early Middle Ages were discovered. One of them was a very long warship which was found when the canal which surrounds the Museum Island was dug. The ship later turned out to be the longest Viking ship yet found and could have had a crew of around 100 men. Both timbers and craftsmanship are of the highest quality. The Roskilde museum was originally built to house 5 Viking ships excavated in 1962; these became known as the Skuldelev Ships which appear to have been sunk deliberately circa 1070 in order to block the most important fairway and protect Roskilde from seaborne enemy attack.

Editor

Book Reading • Leader June Reid



Our book for May was Wesley – the story of a remarkable owl. This was an amazing account of a baby owl with a damaged wing being reared by the author. The owl lived for 19 years and completely changed her life. There were many lovely illustrations. Set in America, this was a very moving tale. The reactions of the group were mixed, and some of us loved it. The topic was quite different to our recent readings, but we all agreed that we had learned a lot about barn owls.

June Reid

Walking in London • Leader Val Gosden



Our May walk on a lovely sunny day was part of the Jubilee Walkway – ‘The Camden Loop’. Our route took us past Coram’s Fields which commemorate Captain Thomas Coram who set up the Foundling Hospital in the 18th century; adults are only permitted entry to the park if they come with a child. We saw the St. Pancras Station and hotel gothic edifice, passed the British Library, the Friends House (Quakers), and walked through the British Museum. En route we saw many 18th and 19th century houses with interesting wrought iron balconies and railings, many houses with lovely displays of plants, several blue plaques on houses where notable people had lived, and some of London’s many parks. Our lunch break was taken ‘continental-style’ sitting outside at tables in a pedestrianised area. Finally, we visited the London Silver Vaults where we saw items ranging in size from cuff links right up to a huge chess set which was fashioned as a castle.

We were again fortunate with the weather in June, for the sun shone on us as we walked in St. James’s Park and Green Park – the former being part of the Jubilee Walkway. Walking along The Mall, we saw the statue of ‘The Grand Old Duke of York’, and further along we looked at the memorial to the Queen Mother. This featured a statue of her, with sculptures on either side which depicted four of her interests in life. Standing higher than these was a statue of King George VI. At one point along The Mall we saw several horse-mounted soldiers, in full dress uniform, riding towards Buckingham Palace where the Changing of the Guard was due to take place. We continued by walking in Green Park where, at the further end, is the sculptural tribute to the Bomber Command. Nearby is an edifice with the names of many who gained the George and Victoria Crosses, notably those from India and the Indian sub-continent. After completing the walk around Green Park, we returned to St. James’s Park and walked round the lake where we saw many ducks, swans, and other water fowl, including some fluffy young ones, and also pelicans. All in all, it was a most pleasant walk on a lovely June day.

Val Gosden

Classical Music 1 • Leader Alan Griffiths



Michael Jordan led our June meeting at which we were very happy to welcome new members. We first heard the overture to *The Tale of the Tsar Sultan* by Rimsky-Korsakov played by the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Yondani Butt. This was followed by Mozart's Symphony No 1 in E flat major performed by the Mozart Akademie, Amsterdam, conducted by Jaap ter Linden. This was written in 1764 when Mozart was eight years old – quite astounding but he was a child prodigy. We next heard Haydn's Symphony No 53 in D major, *L'Imperiale*, with the Austro-Hungarian Orchestra conducted by Ádám Fischer. There are four versions of the fourth movement of 53 and we heard the second version. The last piece before our refreshments was the third and fourth movements of Brahms' Symphony No 3 in F major performed by the Radio Filharmonisch Orkest Holland conducted by Jaap van Zweden. After the interval we heard two pieces: the first was Muzio Clementi's Piano Concerto in C major performed by the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Francesco D'Avalos and the soloist was Pietro Spada. Clementi, who was born in 1752, was a prolific composer but only one of his piano concertos survives. Finally, we heard the fourth movement of Mahler's Symphony No 5 in C sharp minor played by the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig – claimed to be the world's oldest symphony orchestra – which was conducted by Václav Neumann.

Alan Griffiths

 The Gewandhausorchester Leipzig is a symphony orchestra based in Leipzig, Germany, and is named after the venue in which it is based – the Gewandhaus (cloth or textile hall). The orchestra came into being when a society called the Grosses Concert started performing in private homes in 1743. In 1744, the Grosses Concert moved its performances to the 'Three Swans' Tavern where their concerts continued for 36 years until 1781. Because of complaints about concert conditions and audience behaviour in the tavern, in 1780 Leipzig City Council offered to renovate for the orchestra's use one story of a building formerly occupied by textile merchants. The motto *Res severa est verum gaudium* (loosely meaning "true pleasure is a serious business" – from the Roman author Seneca) was painted in the hall; this suggests the priorities of the sponsors. The orchestra gave its first concert in the Gewandhaus in 1781. The orchestra thus has a good claim to being the oldest continuing orchestra in Germany founded by the bourgeoisie, while older orchestras were part of royal suites. Felix Mendelssohn, the composer, became the orchestra's music director in 1835.

Editor

GROUP VACANCIES

| GROUP NAME | LEADER/CONTACT | VACANCIES |
|---|---|--|
|  Amblers (Group 1) 3 rd Wednesday | John Harbert 020 8300 5361 | 2 |
|  Amblers (Group 2) 3 rd Wednesday (10.30am) | Norma Balfour 020 8303 7693 | Vacancies |
|  Art (Group 2) Alternate 1 st Tuesday | Sue Moore 020 8301 1952 | 1 |
|  Bird Watching 1 st Wednesday  | Roy Black  | Yes |
|  Book Reading 1 st Thursday (2.00–4.00pm) | June Reid 020 8302 7887 | 2 |
|  Classical Music (Group 1) 2 nd Friday | Alan Griffiths 020 8303 6636 | Vacancies |
|  Concerts/Ballet/Opera Various dates and times | Norma Balfour 020 8303 7693 | Yes  |
|  Darts (at the Alma pub) 2 nd Monday (noon)  | Leader pending  needed, please | Yes |
|  Family History 2 nd Tuesday & 4 th Thursday | Judith Swain 020 8303 5759 | Yes |
|  Handcrafted Cards (Group 1) 1 st Thursday (2.00pm) | Val Gosden 020 8300 0664 | 1 |
|  Local History (Group 1) 2 nd Wednesday morning | Lesley South 020 8300 8298 | Vacancies |
|  Ramblers (Group 2) 4 th Tuesday (4–5 miles) | Alfred Cracknell  | Vacancies |
|  Rummikub® 4 th Monday (2.00–4.00pm) | Margaret Platt 020 8309 6395 | 2 |
|  Ten-Pin Bowling (Bexleyheath) Mondays (10.00am)  | Gay Braybrook  | Yes |
|  Theatre (Group 2) Various matinées | Joan & John Somerset 020 8300 0890 | Yes  |

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.

Keith Alker, Group Co-ordinator  020 8850 2853 Email: alker@btinternet.com.

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 last page. It is easy to run a group and any current leader can advise you how it's done.

 Not during school holidays

 Notice on the board at meetings

 Certain seasons only

 Temporary Point of Contact

PROGRAMME

2014

| | | |
|-----------|--------------|------------------------|
| July | Mary Moore | Hidden London |
| August | Open Day | |
| September | Romy McCabe | I Married the Vicar |
| October | Sue Spiel | Pam Ayres |
| November | Mr Halfors | The Spa Valley Railway |
| December | Alan Simmons | Entertainer |

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Acting 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 | Carole Owens | 020 3663 6028 |
| Asst. Membership Secretary | Patricia Rivett | 020 3302 2887 |
| Speakers Secretary | Sue Brooks | 020 8298 1117 |
| Group Co-ordinator | Keith Alker | 020 8850 2853 |
| Welfare Officer | Kathy Cordell | 020 8300 4573 |
| General Member | Trevor Ford | 020 8302 7635 |

USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

| | | |
|--|--------------|---------------|
| 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.

Third Age Trust, 19 East Street, Bromley, Kent BR1 1QE (020 8466 6139) www.u3a.org.uk

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

Live within your income, even if you have to borrow to do it.