

SIDCUP & DISTRICT UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE NEWSLETTER

July 2015



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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

Theatre Workshop

This is a unique opportunity for U3A members to attend a day of workshops and debate at the Piccadilly Theatre, Denman Street, London W1 on Wednesday 4th November 2015. The Ambassador Theatre Group's West End Creative Learning team have created this one-day bespoke event to bring together up to 100 U3A members from across the UK to enjoy the experience of working with a West End director, producer, critic and actor and take part in a workshop with each followed by a "Question and Answer" debate session involving all the professionals forming a panel to discuss what is required to make great theatre. The group will be divided into four smaller groups that will rotate between workshops with the West End professionals, each of whom will deliver an hour-long workshop about their aspect of the industry and how they strive to create great theatre. At the end, all the practitioners will form a panel to debate what makes great theatre with questions from the U3A members in the auditorium. The cost to attend is £35.00 per person. This price includes the workshops and all workshop materials, a sandwich lunch with tea or coffee and water during the break. The cut-off date for booking is Wednesday 30th September 2015.

Contact Philippa Bassett at U3A National Office with any queries on 020 8466 6139, or email philippa@u3a.org.uk or apply in writing with your full contact details to The Third Age Trust enclosing a stamped addressed envelope.

Edited extract from Third Age Trust website

Around the Country

Swindon U3A Choir, under the directorship of Sheila Harrod, entertained an audience in the courtyard of a local hotel with a repertoire ranging from Gershwin to war songs by way of folk and gospel. The event was held to raise money for the local hospice and the Choir were able to hand over a cheque for £1000.

Swanley & District U3A. Nine members of the U3A took a three-day break in Constable Country. They visited the John Constable Museum, engaged in rambling and birdwatching, and one member tried his hand at windsurfing.

Ashton-in-Makerfield & District U3A celebrated their fifth birthday in May, following which they spent a long weekend in Northern Ireland, visiting Mount Stewart, the Giant's Causeway, the Titanic exhibition and a tour of Belfast.

Extracts from Third Age Trust website

GROUP NEWS

Classical Music • Leader Olive Mercer



The Group was grieved to learn that Alan Griffiths, our Group Leader, died after a short illness. Before he went into hospital, he asked me to take over as Group Leader and I chose the music for our May meeting. The programme began with a Bach harpsichord concerto, and then a concerto by Albinoni for two oboes. I never like to leave out Haydn or Mozart, so we heard Haydn's 85th Symphony and Mozart's Adagio and fugue in C minor. The vocal music was the beginning of Tchaikovsky's *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, with the deep bass voice in the Russian tradition. There was the concerto in C by Hofmann who was a contemporary of Haydn. Four Liszt piano études, said to be unplayable when they were written, completed the afternoon.

John's choice for the June meeting opened with Gilbert and Sullivan's overture to *Yeomen of the Guard*, and he then gave us three fine arias from legendary singers, Pavarotti, Callas and Richard Tauber. Beethoven's 5th Symphony was followed by Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* {a little night music} and Schubert's 13th string quartet. The programme was then enlivened by Arthur Benjamin's *Jamaican Rumba*, and finished with Glenn Miller's *Chattanooga Choo Choo*.

Olive Mercer

Freedom Pass Explorers • Leaders Christine Withams & Joy O'Donnell



11th May 2015: A trip to Sevenoaks

We met at the R11 Bus stop in Sidcup High Street at 9.30 am from where we started our journey via Green Street Green where we caught the 402 to Sevenoaks Bus Station. The journey took approximately 75 minutes and went partly through residential streets and partly through countryside.

Once at Sevenoaks, we discovered a place to have coffee where some sat in the sunshine and others went inside. The weather was perfect, warm and sunny. After refreshments and a short discussion, we went on our way to explore Sevenoaks. Some members of the group located St. Nicholas Church which is over 800 years old and, from 1616 until 1631, the rector was the celebrated poet, John Donne. Meanwhile, other members of the group explored the local shops.

It was an exhilarating day.

8th June 2015: A visit to Kingston

Due to problems with the 286 bus, I (who should have been leading the group) missed the train to Waterloo. However, I was able to get in touch with Christine (thank goodness for mobile phones) and the group waited for me at Waterloo East where we caught the train to Kingston. The weather was perfect for walking and we went across a bridge and along the river. We didn't rush but took our time to take in the scenery. After lunch, some went home, but a small group of us explored the shops among which there were some quite quirky shops and also big department stores where a few purchases were made.

Joy O'Donnell

Pot Pourri • Leader Val Gosden



On the 9th June, 7 members of the Pot Pourri group went to see the *Cutty Sark* in Greenwich. After a 20-minute wait for the 286 bus on a very chilly morning and a stop/start crawl along the lower road to Greenwich, we stopped at the Naval College and walked a short distance to the magnificent old tea clipper, (which had been launched in 1869), now resplendent in her refurbished state.

Passing through a very imaginative entrance, one was immediately struck by the size of the magnificent metal-cased hull. A flight of steps, or a ride in the lift, lowered one to the area under the old ship, which houses toilets and a café, as well as the introduction to the whole experience, which was a very interactive one. At a quick glance, I thought there was a group of people at the far end waiting for a tour. It turned out to be 49 figureheads. (Should have gone to Spec Savers!) Nannie was in the centre, wearing her short shift and holding aloft the horse tail. As we toured the first level, we were met by the abundance of tea chests, as her original cargo was to bring back tea from China. When steam replaced sailing as a method of travel, she carried wool and coal, so there were displays of the huge bales of wool packed in hessian bales. The cargo eventually varied and there was even a piano; I jiggled to *The Drunken Sailor* which it played after I pressed a button!

As we climbed up into the top deck, we saw the more sumptuous Master's Quarters, as opposed to the cramped bunks of the ordinary seamen. Even higher up there were men working on the rigging. It was a windy day and I marvelled at how they hung on and worked with dexterity on all those ropes. It reminded me of the film on one deck showing sailors of a bygone age rigging the sails. The log book showed that some died while doing this work, or falling victim to disease in a foreign port.

This was certainly a most interesting visit and one which could easily be repeated without being boring, as there is so much to learn from this worthy old tea clipper.

June Storer

① “Cutty Sark” is Scottish for the short shift-like garment worn by Nannie which is the ship's figurehead. Nannie is the name of the witch in the poem *Tam o' Shanter* (by Robert Burns) who pulls off the tail of Tam o' Shanter's horse; this is why the figurehead holds one.

Editor

Walking in London • Leader Val Gosden



On our June walk fourteen of us met up at Charing Cross Station and made our way to Baker Street, not to visit Sherlock Holmes, but to go in the direction of Regent's Park. After admiring the various ducks and geese with their young ones, we made our way to Queen Mary's Gardens where we saw a wonderful display of every variety of rose you could imagine, some with lovely scents. After spotting a few animals around the perimeter of London Zoo, we made our way along Regent's Canal and ended our walk at Camden Lock, which, even during the week, was inundated with loads of people. Most of us settled for a Weatherspoon's lunch/snack while a couple of our group sampled the delights of the food stalls in the Market. It was a lovely sunny day and we enjoyed our lunch break just watching the activities on the canal, especially four youngsters in a punt being serenaded by a guitarist while the punter had the difficult task of not getting the pole stuck in the canal bed.

Patricia Rivett

Local History 3 • Leader Christine Withams



On 10th June, seven members of this group met at Charing Cross Station to travel to Archway Station and from there by bus to Highgate Ponds – a misnomer as there are none. We walked down Swain's Lane before entering Waterlow Park and walking alongside Swain's Lane until we reached the entrances to both Highgate East and Highgate West cemeteries. We spent the next hour or so following the main paths in Highgate East Cemetery, deviating occasionally along the less well maintained pathways, to find memorials of people mentioned in our map. We all had different interests, but all of us wanted to see the Karl Marx memorial, and the far less impressive site of his original grave. Other memorials of interest included Jeremy Beadle, George Eliot, Pat Kavanagh, Malcolm McLaren, Corin Redgrave and Max Wall. There was also a large memorial to The London Fire Brigade. On our way out of the cemetery, we saw a memorial to Reynolds. We had not noticed this on our way in and wondered, surely not Joshua Reynolds! It was, in fact, Bruce Reynolds, mastermind of The Great Train Robbery in 1963. We enjoyed light refreshments in Lauderdale House before going our separate ways home.

Ilena Harrington

Ramblers 2 • Leader David Wedderkop



We had a pleasant 4-mile walk in May starting at the foot of Shooters Hill. We soon entered Oxleas Woods and followed footpaths through to Oxleas Meadows. Crossing the meadow, we entered Jack Wood and then eventually into Castle Wood. We then approached Severndroog Castle, which we had hoped to explore, but unfortunately it doesn't open to the public on Tuesdays. The widow of Sir William James built this triangular monument to his memory in 1784. From the top of the tower you can see seven counties as far afield as Bedfordshire, but from the top of the hill, we could see only two – Kent and Surrey. We spent a few minutes picking out landmarks: Wrotham Hill and Croydon were just two of them. We then descended into the rose garden and on to the keeper's cottage. We walked through more woods and footpaths before we came to the very popular café on the hill. With our pub lunch hardly more than a mile away, we resisted stopping and carried on through more woodlands before arriving back at the foot of Shooters Hill and our destination of the We Anchor in Hope pub.

Pat & Alf Cracknell

(i) Commodore Sir William James (c.1721–1783) was a Welsh-born naval commander known for campaigns against Indian native navies. By 1738, he was commanding his own ship and serving in the West Indies. He joined the East India Company in 1747 and was later appointed commodore of its Bombay Marine naval forces. He is particularly associated with an action on 2 April 1755, when, commanding the Bombay Marine Ship *Protector*, he attacked and destroyed the fortress of Tulaji Angre (deemed by English revisionists to be a pirate, but by local revisionists as admiral of the Maratha Empire Navy). The fortress was located at Janjeera Soowumdroog (partly anglicised to Severndroog) on India's western coast between Mumbai and Goa. He had been instructed only to blockade the stronghold, but, through his intimate knowledge of the rocky coastline, was able to get close enough to blow it up. Although the East India Company had spent considerable sums providing protection from piracy, his reward was only £100.

At a height of 423 feet, Shooters Hill reputedly takes its name from the practice of archery there during the Middle Ages. According to Samuel Pepys, it also had a reputation as a haunt for highwaymen and was infamous for its gibbets of executed felons. During World War II, it held an array of anti-aircraft guns which defended London. Its water tower dates from 1910.

Editor

Explorers • Leader Val Gosden



Mary Kingsley was the subject of our March viewing. In 1893, at 30 years of age, after both her parents had died, Mary decided to explore part of West Africa, in the River Ogowé (now Ogooué) area, even though it was almost unheard of that a woman should travel on her own. Her trip lasted about a week and she explored only about 60 to 70 square miles, yet she managed to discover and bring back to Britain many species of beetles and other insects that were totally unknown to the ‘experts’ in Britain. She also travelled in uncharted territory with local Africans as her companions who were able to warn her of ‘bad’ villages where cannibalism was not unknown. It was not easy territory to traverse, with rivers, swamps and mangroves to deal with, and, at one point, she fell into an elephant trap. Another ‘first’ was to eat a snake which had been killed and cooked. Having completed her exploration, she went home, intending to return at some time, but the Boer War enforced a change of plan. She then travelled to Simonstown to act as a junior nurse in the hospital but unfortunately contracted a fever whilst there. She knew she was dying and asked to be left to die alone, as animals in the wild do. In accordance with her wishes, she was buried at sea, off the West Africa coast.

Due to the Bank Holiday Mondays occurring on the days when we normally meet, we had a two-month gap before watching our next video. This was about Jedediah Strong Smith, an American beaver trapper – beaver fur being the sought-after fashion accessory of the time. His initial intention in 1824 was to travel further than the areas where local beaver trappers were working, even though this meant travelling in uncharted territory west of Colorado. He left some of his party at Salt Lake whilst he and a few others continued to the west. Much of the terrain was desert and travelling under the blazing sun was most demanding, requiring an ever-increasing search for water and something to eat. Another challenge was finding a way to cross the Rocky Mountains, and relief was felt when they eventually reached a Spanish Franciscan Mission in the Californias, where they were fed and materials for new clothing were provided. It was here in San Diego that Jedediah was treated by the authorities as a possible spy, but eventually he was allowed to continue his journey. At this point, he travelled north, found streams and rivers where they could trap beavers, returning after several months to Salt Lake where they met up with the rest of the party. About four years later, Jedediah was again out in the desert, alone, searching for water, when he was attacked by local Indians and killed, and his body was never found. The Indians subsequently boasted of what they had done, and so news of his death was received by the American authorities.

Val Gosden

i Mary Kingsley was born in Islington and came from a family of writers; she was the niece of novelists Charles Kingsley and Henry Kingsley. Her family moved to Highgate less than a year after her birth, and by 1881 were living in Southwood House, Bexley. Her father was a doctor who worked for George Herbert, 13th Earl of Pembroke, and was regularly away from home on his excursions collecting information for his studies. During a trip to North America in 1870–1875, Dr. Kingsley was invited to accompany Custer’s US Army’s fateful expedition against the Sioux Indians. The reported massacre of Custer’s army terrified the Kingsley family until they learned that bad weather had prevented Dr. Kingsley from joining Custer. It is possible that her father’s views on injustices faced by the Native Americans influenced her later opinions on British cultural imperialism in West Africa. She wrote two books about her experiences: *Travels in West Africa* (1897), which was an immediate best-seller, and *West African Studies* (1899), both of which earned her respect and prestige within the scholarly community.

Editor

Ramblers 3 • Leader Trevor Ford



June Walk

For those ramblers starting and finishing at the White Cross pub in North Cray, this was a relatively short walk. However, I started from my house on Sidcup Hill and walked across Footscray Meadows to reach the official start. (Similarly, at the end I walked a different route over the Meadows to return home). The bulk of the group crossed the busy North Cray Road, ascended over a couple of fields and curved around towards Mount Mascal stables and the entrance to Joydens Wood. Again, we ascended up a kind of wide gorge to a 5-ways junction. Despite having walked it with a friend the week before (in torrential rain), I think at this juncture I managed to cut the corner. It did mean, though, that we were able to walk the whole length of the Faesten Dic, an ancient Saxon fortification (raised earthworks) built to keep Londoners out of Kent. Turning a bend at the end of the dyke, we came across a number of wildlife display boards depicting local plants. The bluebells had finished flowering by then, but there was still much to admire. A few ups and downs later, by following the curving perimeter path we came onto a bridle way. This was blessedly dry, unlike the winter months, when it is usually a quagmire. (Scouts used to run the Sidcup District Cross Country along here and were plastered with mud when they emerged). Back onto dry land, *i.e.* a metalled road, we passed some attractive cottages and more stables before descending to the North Cray road again. Taking the sensible option of using the pedestrian crossing, we went into the Meadows and crossed the Five Arches Bridge, walking along the north side of the river to the playground at Royal Park. Here we crossed the small footbridge back over the River Cray, following the footpath, then road, past Loring Hall with its blue plaque about Viscount Castlereagh to The White Cross for lunch.

Trevor Ford

 My editorial on Faesten Dic appeared in the May 2013 Newsletter.

Editor

ENTERTAINMENT

An expectant father rang the maternity hospital to see how his wife, who had gone into labour, was getting on. By mistake, he was connected to the county cricket ground.

"How's it going?" he asked.

"Fine," came the answer. "We've got three out and hope to have the rest out before lunch. The last one was a duck."

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Nota Bene for Musicians:

p = piano (soft) because the neighbours have complained

f = forte (loud) the neighbours are out

crescendo = getting louder as we are testing the neighbours' tolerance level

ff = fortissimo (VERY loud) - to hell with the neighbours

pp = pianissimo (VERY soft) - the neighbours are at the door

obbligato = being forced to practise a piece

GROUP VACANCIES

GROUP NAME	LEADER/CONTACT	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
 Concerts/Ballet/Opera Various dates and times £ 	Norma Balfour 020 8303 7693	Vacancies 
 Darts (at the Alma pub) 2 nd Monday (noon)  	Leader pending  needed, please	Vacancies
 Family History 2 nd Tuesday & 4 th Thursday	Judith Swain 020 8303 5759	Vacancies
 Local History (Group 1) 2 nd Wednesday morning	Lesley South 020 8300 8298	Vacancies
 Local History (Group 3) 2 nd Wednesday morning	Christine Withams 020 8850 4144	Vacancies
 Parks & Gardens Appreciation 4 th Thursday 	Jill Bryant 01322 524008	Vacancies
 Ramblers (Group 2) 4 th Tuesday (4–5 miles)	David Wedderkop 020 8850 5042	Vacancies
 Ramblers (Group 3) 1 st Friday (≈ 6 miles)	Trevor Ford 020 8302 7635	Vacancies
 Rummikub ® 4 th Monday (2.00–4.00 pm)	Margaret Platt 020 8309 6395	Vacancies
 Ten-Pin Bowling (Bexleyheath) Mondays (10.00 am)  £	Gay Braybrook  020 8309 6372	Vacancies
 Wine Appreciation Last Thursday (7.30 pm) £	Michael Jordan 020 8302 3330	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 holidays

 Notice on the board at meetings

£ A charge applies

 Open to all

 Certain seasons only

 Temporary point of contact

PROGRAMME

2015

July	Roy Ingleton	The Heartbeat Years
August	Cairis Hickey	The Wiggly Wild Show
September	Colin Lomas	Leonardo Da Vinci – Was he really a genius?
October	Ian Keable	The Corked Conjuror
November	Melanie Gibson-Barton	Bruges
December	Colin Hill	Raw Courage

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairman	Anne Evans	020 8302 2261
Vice-Chairman	Lesley South	020 8300 8298
Minutes Secretary	George Murrell	020 8850 2046
Treasurer	John Lapham	020 8854 6340
Membership Secretary	Patricia Rivett	020 3302 2887
Speakers Secretary	<i>Vacant</i>	
Group Co-ordinator	Trevor Ford	020 8302 7635
Welfare Officer	Kathy Cordell	020 8300 4573
General Member	Janet Lambern	020 8300 1786

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
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

You can always distinguish luck from ability by its duration.