

SIDCUP & DISTRICT UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE NEWSLETTER

July 2016



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

Sidcup Pageant

Well, all that hard work paid off! Sidcup's Great War Pageant was a great success and we have received lots of lovely comments and messages from people who very much enjoyed the day. This was all thanks to the wide range of people who took part and made it the hugely varied event that it became. I don't think I've ever seen so many people in the High Street!

We would like to thank you very much for having a stall at the Pageant. We hope you got lots of interest and that you enjoyed the day, even if you didn't get to see everything else that was going on.

Our 'Sidcup's Home Front in the Great War' project doesn't stop now! We have a Heritage Lottery Fund grant to produce material that will record the event for future generations, including a souvenir booklet. If you have any photographs or video to share of the event, please do so. We did have a dedicated photographer but he couldn't be everywhere all the time so you may have recorded a different aspect. (Thanks to those of you who have already shared some photos). We will start work on the booklet very soon (once we've had a short rest!) and I may well get back to you about possibly including some information about your organisation. We will also be planning some sort of end-of-project event to commemorate the centenary of the opening of the Queen's Hospital around mid-2017.

Penny Duggan, Lamorbey & Sidcup Local History Society



"Sidcup's Great War Living Pageant" was held on Saturday 18th June, and proved to be a great success. Congratulations are due to Lamorbey and Sidcup Local History Society who were the instigators and main organisers of the Pageant, and very successfully were able to co-ordinate a varied programme of events and displays arranged by many local organisations including ourselves. Our contribution was a stall with exhibits which illustrated the various activities which we are able to offer. It was quite colourful and attracted visitors. This was as the result of considerable hard work and planning put in by Trevor, Anne, group leaders and other volunteers to whom our thanks are due.

George Murrell

(i) George is too modest – his name should appear above as well. Also, photos taken by him at the Pageant can be viewed on our website's Gallery page.

Editor

New Members

The Committee welcomes the following new members: Denise & Colin Rudd, Jane McCarthy, Linda Pitman, Alan Lloyd, Grace Purdell-Smith, Jean Winch, Toni & Stewart Norman, Carol Ravenscroft, Jill & Peter Rose and Mary Farrier.

Pat Andrews

Events

Vivaldi: The Four Seasons – The Contrast between Harmony and Invention. Talks, Lunch and Concert at St John's Smith Square, London SW1 11.00 am–2.30 pm on Wednesday 14th September. Tickets cost £25.00 pp. and include sandwich lunch. Maximum 40 places available on a first come, first served basis from the Third Age Trust Office.

A Talk on the Wild Side

This is a programme of illustrated talks at the four World Wildlife Trust Wetland Centres, including bespoke tours and individual exploration that will take place throughout the year to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the WWT. Dates for the Barnes (London) Centre are 13th and 20th September. The cost for groups of 12 or more is £17.50 pp.

“Write on Kew”

22nd–25th September – Special literary events at Kew Gardens with exclusive offers for U3A members. See www.kew.org/writeonkew or phone 0871 2305536 for further information.

The Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich – WRNS Centenary Exhibition.

U3A volunteers are sought to work collaboratively with ORNC staff to develop this exhibition as a shared learning project. Meetings will take place fortnightly at the ORNC starting at 11 am on Wednesday 28th September. Further information from linda.crook.slp@gmail.com.

George Murrell

GROUP NEWS

Parks & Gardens Appreciation • Leader Jill Bryant



June's outing took place on June 30th when Pat Laughton led the group on a visit to Morden Hall Park which is just a 5 minute walk from Morden Tube Station. The park is administered by The National Trust but owned by Merton Council who purchased the property and park from the last private owner.

The park is very restful and has the River Wandle running through it and the remains of an old snuff mill can be seen in the grounds alongside the water wheel that drove the grinding gear. There is also a rose garden, garden centre and a café, but, unfortunately, the manor house is used as Council offices so not open to the public. The park stretches right over towards Colliers Wood and Merton Abbey where William Morris's Merton Factory once stood so there is plenty for the visitor to see. We were too tired to explore the wetlands and other areas of the park so maybe the group will pay a return visit in the future.

Pat Laughton

Local History 3 • Leader Christine Withams



For our June outing we made a backstage tour of the National Theatre, arriving at the South Bank on the 'hydrogen' bus from London. Our guide took us first to the Dorfman Theatre; the name was changed from the Cottesloe in appreciation of the gift of £10 million from the head of Travelex towards the recent refurbishment of the theatre complex. The smallest of the three theatres, it can have low or high raked seating or no seating at all with a level floor for theatre in the round, all of which is computer operated.

In the vast new backstage areas we watched carpenters, metal workers, upholsterers and costume makers working on forthcoming productions. It was all wonderfully organised. We were told there are 1000 full-time employees at the NT. As all three theatres work in 'rep', with at least two productions alternating in each theatre at any one time, all the scenery and props have to be easily changed, so they are strong but as light as possible. We saw apartment blocks, substantial houses, rocks and greenery all made of plywood and polystyrene, and we were allowed to handle foodstuffs and a decapitated head from one production.

We were shown the Olivier Theatre, with its computerised, multi-level stage area (of which we were told there is only one other in the world). The original productions of plays such as *War Horse* and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* were staged here. The seating forms a 118 degrees arc of a circle and every seat in the theatre has a good view of the stage. The Lyttleton is the third theatre, with a conventional proscenium stage, stalls and a large circle.

The whole complex is used all day by people using the cafés, the comfortable seating, the free Wi-Fi and the garden terrace on first floor level.

Mary Hawes

Book Reading • Leader June Reid



The book for June was *The Soldiers Wife* by Joanna Trollope who is known for her many novels about family life. This one explores the trials and tribulations of a family that is re-united after being apart for six months while the husband, an army major, has been serving in Afghanistan. Alexis, the wife, finds great difficulty in adjusting after such a long period of deployment while all her dreams and realisations are put on hold. Her husband puts the welfare of his men above his family and is still suffering from the horrors of war. There is a complete lack of communication. We are also introduced to their parents: Dan's father and his grandfather are both ex-army and very supportive. Alexis's parents are middle-class and are enjoying a comfortable retirement. There are many problems with the children – three year old twins and wilful teenager. This was a very readable novel with a great insight into the conflicts that arise when an army family are once more re-united.

June Reid

Amblers 1 • Leader John Harbert



Due to contracting arthritis in the hip, after leading this group since 1999 and enjoying it, I will now, regrettably, have to give up its leadership.

John Harbert

Ramblers 3 • Leader Trevor Ford



After a break of a couple of months following an ankle injury to the leader (luckily, not a fracture), the walk postponed from March around the Crays took place in May. Setting off from Ruxley Garden Centre, we walked along a narrow footpath to one side of the centre past their outbuildings and paddock where we encountered 3 reindeer! To our right was a glorious bluebell wood, though privately owned. Crossing the A20 was a narrow footbridge which brought us out to Orpington Golf course – actually 2 courses backing onto each other. During a preliminary expedition, the 3 of us had tried to chart a way that avoided getting a golf ball in the back of our heads. Further on in our original exploit, we had cut across to Chapmans Lane, to honour one of our number. However, that involved a tricky drop through brambles, so we found a much easier path on a 2nd visit that brought us out to Sandy Lane. Emerging by the Bull in St. Paul's Cray, we crossed the river between a series of pools. From there we used a collection of roads to get to the more interesting Scadbury Park and had lunch at the Sydney Arms. After a bit more road walking along Perry Street, we went over The Green to pick up the footpath behind the houses on Sidcup Hill down to Footscray. All of this latter section was part of the London Loop, but several members of the group were unaware of its existence. It continued left at the traffic lights then into Footscray Meadows just past Hope School. We crossed back over the Cray on the Penny-Farthing Bridge and through the estate using the PANDA for the North Cray Road, and emerged onto a footpath between fields and back to the Swanley Road just opposite Ruxley Garden Centre. Overall, it was a really local walk and all the more surprising because of that.

June involved another local walk along the River Cray and part of the London Loop. Since it was a linear walk, we had arranged to travel by bus and meet at Erith Riverside. A reduced number, 7 of us, set off along the Thames Path, but it quickly turned inland past an industrial heartland of breakers' yards, *etc.* After this rather insalubrious start, we were able to re-join the Thames by Erith Yacht Club to walk along the embankment lining the salt marshes. There are several very informative display boards along the route which describe the history and wildlife of the area. Wide open skies enable one to see across the river to Essex and along the river to the Dartford Bridge. The river does one of its many broad sweeps here so that looking across at the wind turbine near the Yacht Club made it seem to keep changing its orientation to us while not getting much farther away. Here we left the Thames and went along the Dartford Creek section of the River Darent. This has an outlying structure of the Thames Flood Barrier which is designed to protect the Crayford marshes and surroundings. Navigation, as with our January walk along the London section of the Thames Path, was easy: keep the river on your left! Actually, further on there was a branch in the path without a signpost, despite the plethora of signs elsewhere along the route. The right path led to Slade Green and this is a useful tributary to the London Loop enabling a different access point which we might use on a future walk. Keeping left along the river, though, brings one to the Crayford Creek and the third Bexley river, *ie* the Cray. Before we reached the more picturesque stretches, though, we had to hold our noses as we went past Thames Road waste-dump. Being good pedestrians, we avoided the temptation to risk our lives running across the Thames Road and used the crossings by the roundabout where the "Jolly Miller" pub stood until recently serving as a landmark; it is confusing if you now refer to it when giving directions. Also, it was the only potential pub on our route. We then had a packed lunch by the side of the river. From there it was just a pleasant, shaded stroll into the centre of Crayford to catch return buses. There was the opportunity to sample some good beer in the "Bear & Ragged Staff" or afternoon tea at the "Jenny Lind" (?), but book in advance if you want to eat inside!

Trevor Ford

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



In May, we travelled out from Waterloo Mainline Station to Cheam. There was a bit of confusion when we had to change platforms at Clapham Junction as we were sent in the wrong direction. I did not realise how many platforms there could be! We made for Cheam Park which is linked to Nonsuch Park, a deer hunting park established by Henry VIII that surrounded the former Nonsuch Palace, of which nothing now remains. There is a Grade II listed mansion house which is now managed by Epsom & Sutton Council. We just had a pleasant walk around the gardens, admiring the enormous wisteria growing on the walled garden.

As we like to travel in all directions around London, in June we went on the Jubilee Line to Canons Park underground. We made for King George V Memorial Garden, a lovely walled garden with a rectangular pond. The whole of the two foot wide edge was covered in tiny frogs no bigger than flies! I can only imagine they were looking for cover, but, alas, we could not help! Coming out of the park into Canons Drive was most impressive: there was a wide fir tree lined drive with grassed edges and houses worth many millions each! I don’t know where they all go to dine out as we found cafés only when we walked back to Edgware Station!

Christine Withams



Outlandish Projects: The Fun Palace

In the late 1950s, the pioneering theatre director Joan Littlewood hired architect Cedric Price to create a new kind of theatre – one in which the users would have direct input into the activities within, where no performance would be the same twice. Price, in thrall to cybernetics and the new “network cultures” of the age, designed what was essentially a factory shed – a giant frame with all the internal spaces able to be moved around and reconfigured at will.

The Fun Palaces, as these creations were called, would have sat in various locations in London, including Camden and the Lea Valley, where the Olympic site is now. But the effort to get planning permission foundered against opposition from bewildered churches, community groups and city councils, and funding vanished when the scheme was almost through planning. Since then, its themes of indeterminacy and of architecture that responds to users have become massively influential, not only with architects, but also within the art world. In a way, however, the fact that it wasn’t built meant that it can never fail to live up to its revolutionary concept.

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
 Concerts/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 Tues  & 4 th Thurs 	Judith Swain & Kate Berry 020 8303 5759	Vacancies
 Ramblers (Group 2) 4 th Tuesday (4–5 miles)	David Wedderkop 020 8850 5042	Vacancies
 Rummikub® (Group 1) 4 th Monday (2.00–4.00 pm)	Margaret Platt 020 8309 6395	Vacancies
 Rummikub® (Group 2) 1 st Tuesday (2.00–4.00 pm)	Mary Hawes 020 8300 0521	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

2016

July	Maurice Tripp	“Why the show must go on!”
August	Barbara Stevens	Charles and Emma Darwin/Downe
September	Alan Ashby	Life-Saving Work of the Lifeboat Service
October	Kevin Reynolds	Walking in Kent and Sussex
November	Steve Roberts	Tales of a Scotland Yard Detective
December	Roy Bilham	Christmas Music (on trumpet)

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 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
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

Love is blind but marriage is a real eye-opener.