

SIDCUP & DISTRICT UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE NEWSLETTER

March 2014



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

NOTICES

Agenda

Apologies for absence
Matters arising
Minutes of 2013 AGM
Approval of accounts
Annual reports
Election of officers
Appointment of inspector of accounts
Any other business

Hall Place Needs You!

Appeal for stories & memorabilia: American GIs at Hall Place, Bexley in WWII (1943–45)

Kirsty Macklen, Collections Manager for Bexley Heritage Trust at Hall Place in Bexley, Kent curates a 6 month exhibition each year at Hall Place for the public using the Bexley Museum collection. In an exhibition starting in September 2014, she will be focusing on GIs who were stationed in Bexley as part of the joint Anglo-American code-breaking exercise known as Operation Ultra, which was centred at Bletchley Park, but incorporated a traffic intercept station at Hall Place housing some 200 U.S. GIs.

A U3A Shared Learning Project is currently underway at Hall Place to help Kirsty gather material for this exhibition. We are so excited to be able to tell the hidden story of the GIs and their life here. But, we need your help! Sadly, there is very little physical evidence left of their time there. Kirsty would love to personalise the exhibition and tell the stories of the men behind the uniform, so we are on the hunt for any photographs, uniforms, letters, keepsakes from the GIs or their families, telling us what they did when they were based here.

We are also looking to explore in the exhibition how the GIs integrated with the local community that lived in the borough. So now we are now appealing to local U3As to ask whether anyone remembers, or knows anyone who remembers the period 1943-45 when the GIs were stationed here at Hall Place. Perhaps you played softball with the GIs, or attended local dances? If so, we would love to hear from you.

If you have any information or memorabilia that you'd like to share with the Museum for this exhibition, please contact Kirsty Macklen on the following email/telephone:–
curator@bexleyheritagetrust.org.uk. Tel: 01322 621241

Lesley A Platt, Newsletter Editor, Bexley U3A

Médecins Sans Frontières

U3A Sidcup – support for the Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors without Borders. This is a leading independent humanitarian organisation for emergency aid. In more than 60 countries worldwide, Médecins Sans Frontières provides relief to the victims of war, natural disasters and epidemics irrespective of race, religion or political affiliation. MSF was awarded the 1999 Nobel Peace Prize. We have a personal link with MSF because Annette Holland, who is one of our members, has a son, Niall Holland, who is a Logistician (he makes things work) and is working for MSF in Pakistan. When you see the box for donations, please give generously.

Alan Godfrey

Queen Mary's Hospital Update

There is a meeting on Thursday, 20th March 2014 at 7–9 pm in the Council Chambers, Bexley Civic Centre, Broadway, Bexleyheath regarding Queen Mary's Hospital. You are invited to come and put your questions to The Bexley Clinical Commissioning Group and Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust.

GROUP NEWS

Pot Pourri • Leader Val Gosden



Our first trip out on a clear, sunny day in January was to see the Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2013 Exhibition at the Natural History Museum.

What wonderful pictures there were to see. Some were in dramatic black and white, but most were in glorious colour – thousands of pelicans at a fish farm (soon to be chased away by the farm owners); a glorious sunset (in The Enchantment, USA); a seagrass sweeper (a dugong nicknamed Dyson); a stoat in full flight (caught with all four legs off the ground); a harvest mouse on an ear of corn; a polar bear peering up from under the ice; a fogbow (a whitish arch like a rainbow, formed in fog) – were just a few of the 100 photographs chosen from the 43,000 entries submitted. Although many of the photographs were caught at just the 'right moment', this had quite often meant a long wait – and not always in the most comfortable surroundings! The photographs were taken by people from all over the world, with a category especially for youngsters of 17 years or under, where, in my opinion, the standard was just as high. We all enjoyed seeing these photographs and felt it was an interesting first outing for our new group.

We set out in the rain for our trip in February, but returned home in welcome sunshine after visiting the Cheapside Hoard in the Museum of London. And 'Hoard' is really the only word for it, I feel. There were display cases showing many necklaces, pendants, buttons, rings and other items of jewellery; all, despite having been hidden for about 400 years, showed the skill and craftsmanship of their creators. Many were made by goldsmiths, and a variety of stones was used. Also on display were caskets for safe storage of precious items, and there was much additional material in the form of maps, paintings and general information. Many portraits of notable people – some wearing items of jewellery – took us back to Elizabethan times. It is not known why the Hoard was left hidden for so many years, but a film suggested that maybe the owner had hidden the hoard whilst he went abroad but never returned; having told no-one where he had left these precious items, they had remained hidden for many years.

Val Gosden

PS The Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition runs until 23rd March, and the Cheapside Hoard exhibition closes on 27th April.

Local History 1 • Leader Lesley South



On 12th February 2014 we visited Handel House Museum in Brook Street, London SW1. George Frideric Handel was born in Halle, Germany, in 1685; by the age of seven, he had shown musical talent and gained the sponsorship of the Elector of Hanover who later became George I of England. He studied in Italy as a young man but rented a new house in 1723 in Brook Street, London, to be near the Royal Court and to make money from his music. Handel associated with the Earl of Burlington, a patron of the arts; Alexander Pope, the poet; John Gay, who pioneered English popular opera; Dr. Arne, the composer; and Arne's sister, who was a great singer. He collaborated with Charles Jennens who wrote the libretto for the *Messiah* which was composed in 24 days and first performed in Dublin. The *Messiah* was used by Handel and friends to help raise funds for the Foundling Hospital. Handel would often conduct rehearsals in a room at Brook Street. He was very demanding musically and had the ability to speak and swear fluently in five languages. Handel never married, and, when he died in London in 1759, the Brook Street house contents were sent to relatives in Germany. At one time – I think in the 1960s – Jimi Hendrix, the rock and roll musician, lived in the house with his girlfriend. Our conducted tour was given by Luke whose knowledge of Handel was brilliant. This was followed by a harpsichord recital by Nathaniel Nander with works by Handel and a French composer. We also saw a small exhibition of musical timepieces by Charles Clay who had invited Handel to compose tunes for the clocks; Handel did not write new tunes but used material that had been previously composed. It was a remarkable visit to a small museum. Round the corner, we visited St. George's Church which was attended by Handel who would have seen the glorious Last Supper, painted by William Kent in 1724, surrounded by a reredos carved by Grinling Gibbons.

Alan Godfrey

 Dr. Thomas Augustine Arne (12th March 1710 – 5th March 1778) was a British composer, best known for the patriotic song *Rule, Britannia!* He also wrote a version of *God Save The King*, which became our national anthem. Arne was a Freemason and active in the organisation which has long been centred around Covent Garden where he lived. His sister, Susannah Maria Arne, was a famous contralto who performed in some of his works, including his first opera, *Rosamund*. They and their brother, Richard, often performed his works together. Between 1733 and 1776 he wrote the music for about 90 stage works, including plays, masques, pantomimes and opera.

Editor

Classical Music 1 • Leader Alan Griffiths



We were very pleased that John Mercer was able to lead our February meeting. John's first choice was Rossini's overture to *The Barber of Seville* performed by the Plovdiv Symphony Orchestra conducted by Rouslan Raychev. This was followed by Liszt's *Piano Concerto No 1 in E flat* played by Seiji Ozawa with the Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Krystan Zimmerman. The first half of the programme concluded with two arias – *O Sole Mio* (which was composed in 1898) sung by José Carreras, and *Tu che la vanità* from the 4th act of *Don Carlos* sung by the incomparable Maria Callas. After a tea and shortbread break, we heard Tchaikovsky's Serenade for strings in E played by the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields conducted by Neville Marriner. The final piece of a very entertaining afternoon was the first movement of Alexander Borodin's String quartet No 2 in D played by the Chilingirian Quartet.

Alan Griffiths

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



On 13th January we met at Sidcup Station to catch the 9.55 am train to Dartford; unfortunately the train was delayed so we had a bit of a wait. The weather was dry and sunny, though, so we didn't mind. From Dartford we took a bus to Bluewater shopping centre where we used the facilities before continuing on our journey by bus to Rochester arriving there at approximately 11.30 am. Our first stop was the cafeteria at the Cathedral for a nice warming and refreshing drink. Feeling completely refreshed, we ambled slowly along the High Street (which is full of small independent shops and historical landmarks) where some of us supported the local trade by making a few purchases before having lunch at the local Wetherspoon. It was a very enjoyable and relaxing day and the weather was cold but dry. The journey home by two buses finished at Bexleyheath where we went our separate ways.

On 10th February the group caught the 9.46 am train to London Bridge, then bus and tube to Bethnal Green. We hadn't known what to expect, but were amazed by the V&A Museum of Childhood which we visited. Starting at the cafeteria over a coffee, etc, we planned our strategy for the visit, trying to avoid the school parties. The exhibition was excellent and jolted many memories of past toys we had either used ourselves, or bought for our children. Also, there were many 'hands on' activities to try out. One member of our group entertained us with an unrecognisable rendition of *Baa Baa Black Sheep* on one of the machines; others made pictures of bearded people with iron filings and magnets. We had our lunch at the café, after which we walked round the museum gardens before making our way home. We all had a really fun day – and we didn't get wet.

Joy O'Donnell

 The Victoria and Albert Museum's origins are in the Great Exhibition of 1851 which Henry Cole, the museum's first director, was involved in planning. Initially known as the Museum of Manufactures, it first opened in May 1852 at Marlborough House, but by September it had been transferred to Somerset House, and its collections covered both applied art and science. It was renamed as the South Kensington Museum, and in 1855 the German architect Gottfried Semper, at the request of Cole, produced a design for the museum which was rejected by the Board of Trade as too expensive. The existing building, Brompton Park House, was extended, and, at the time of its official opening and renaming to the V&A by Queen Victoria on 22nd June 1857, it was the world's first museum to include a refreshment room. A non-departmental body governed by a board of Trustees appointed by the Prime Minister, it is now the world's largest museum of decorative arts and design and its permanent collection exceeds 4½ million objects.

Editor

Local History 3 • Leader Christine Withams



On 12th February, 12 of the group visited the Museum of London to see "The Cheapside Hoard" – London's Lost Jewels. Over a century after it was discovered under a cellar floor in London's Cheapside, the Hoard is now on display in its entirety for the first time since 1912, having lain hidden for 300 years.

The Hoard has early Elizabethan and Stuart jewellery which offer an insight into this period of London, its craftsmanship and importance as a centre for international gem trading. Who owned the Hoard, and when and why it was hidden, remain a mystery.

Jean Duhig & Rosalie Woods

Ramblers 2 • Leader Pending



Cobham, Sole Street and Jeskyns Community Woodland, Tues 25th Feb 2014. Ten of us met at 11.00am in the car park at Cobham for this walk. There was a light rain and a brisk wind as we set off to Sole Street, and we took the path behind the church going south. After 1 mile we reached Gold St; here we went right, and, shortly after, left down Henley St. By this time the rain had stopped and the sun had come out and we took a path on the right that gave us access to a large open field via a stile that could be walked around. Having crossed the field along rather under-used tracks, we arrived at the Railway Inn at Sole Street. It was too bright and warm outside fully to enjoy the log fire, and, after a short coffee break, we set off along the main road to Cobham. We passed the Round St. turn, took a footpath on the left, and, after ¼ of a mile, spotted a massive stack of wooden crates waiting to be filled with apples later in the year. We passed to the right of the stack and took a path that went diagonally across an orchard at the end of which was a new metal gate with access to an open grassed area. We were then in Jeskyns Community Woodland. We went forward onto a wide paved path that veered off to the right and then crossed a road into the main park grounds. Here we had a straw poll as to whether or not we would travel for 1 hour and visit the George Inn at Singlewell. Since the weather was not reliable, it was agreed to travel straight back to the Leather Bottle for lunch. We walked towards a small lake and then right to the two carved tree trunks which are the main navigation aids in Jeskyns Park. Jeskyns is a new and – at present – very open area that provides good views of Dartford, Gravesend and Eurostar trains. Continuing up the slope, we reached Cobham, and, on entering the Leather Bottle, we were escorted into a restaurant room of our own for an excellent lunch. The trip was a success as wind and rain was avoided during a period of very unsettled weather. Is there a lucky charm in our group?

David Wedderkop

Walking in London • Leader Val Gosden



Our February walk was north of the river visiting a long-established part of East London, an area which included some new buildings, but also some older buildings in need of TLC. We travelled through Mark Brunel's (father of Isambard Kingdom Brunel) first underwater tunnel, which was built in 1825 to transport manufactured goods from Rotherhithe to the docks and markets of north London, and which is now part of the Overground system. Wapping marks its northern end – which is where we started our walk – and soon we passed the Prospect of Whitby pub and the tall tower of the London Hydraulic Power Company; this is a private company which, from the 1800s until the 1970s, supplied pressurised water to hotels and theatres around the capital. The pipes now carry fibre optics around London.

Continuing our walk, we eventually reached the Whitechapel Bell Foundry and we were able to walk around their small museum. Inside the doorway of the Bell Foundry is a replica of the bell frame for Big Ben. We had our lunch at the Toynbee Hall café. Toynbee Hall is a community organisation which pioneers ways to reduce poverty and disadvantage in the East End, one of the poorest areas of our capital city. After lunch we walked along a road of Weavers Houses, which had large windows for maximum light. (In 1685 Huguenots brought over their skills in using silks). We later saw the 'Dirty House', a modern square-shaped building painted with black anti-graffiti paint – it is considered to be possibly the ugliest house in London! We also saw a house with two names – The Blue House (as it is painted a sky-blue colour), or the FAT house, FAT standing for Fashion, Architecture, Taste. The house has an interesting design – quite different from most houses, refreshingly different from the 'norm'.

Having been fortunate with the weather until now, the heavens suddenly opened and delivered a deluge of heavy rain, so a quick walk to Hoxton Station's Overground trains seemed desirable.

Val Gosden

① The Thames Tunnel is the first tunnel known to have been constructed successfully under a navigable river. Attempts to build tunnels beneath the Thames had been made before, but it had always proved difficult enough to lead engineers to conclude that it was impracticable. Marc Brunel refused to accept this, and, using his and Thomas Cochrane's newly-invented tunnelling shield technology, it was built between 1825 and 1843 – sponsored, in part, by the Duke of Wellington. During construction, filthy sewage-laden water seeping through from the river above gave off methane gas which was ignited by the miners' oil lamps, and when the resident engineer fell ill in April 1826 Marc's son, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, took over at the age of 20. Although built for horse-drawn traffic, it was never actually used for this.

A tunnelling shield is a protective structure used in the excavation of tunnels through soil that is too soft or fluid to remain stable during the time it takes to line the tunnel with a support structure of concrete, cast iron or steel. It serves as a temporary support structure for the tunnel during excavation. The first successful tunnelling shield was developed by Sir Marc Isambard Brunel, and patented by him and Lord Cochrane in January 1818. In early shield tunnelling, the shield functioned as a way to protect labourers who performed the digging, and who moved the shield forward, progressively replacing it with pre-built sections of tunnel wall. The early deep tunnels for the London Underground were built in this way and its principles are still effective today.

Editor

Help Desk Enquiries

CALLER: "I would like to borrow £2,000."

BANK OPERATOR: "Certainly, sir. Over how long?"

CALLER: "Three years, please."

BANK OPERATOR: "That will be £75 per month for 36 months. Is that OK?"

CALLER: "No, not at all. I want it all at once."



CALLER TO ROOM SERVICE: "On what days is your Sunday brunch available?"



CALLER: "I bought a phone last week, and I didn't receive the car charger for the lighter until today. I'm trying to use it, and it's not working. How do you use it?"

OPERATOR: "First, you remove the lighter and then you plug it into the adaptor."

CALLER: "But I don't have a car."

OPERATOR: "Why do you need the car charger?"

CALLER: "To light my cigarettes."



GROUP VACANCIES

GROUP NAME	LEADER/CONTACT	VACANCIES
 Amblers (Group 2) 3 rd Wednesday (10.30 am)	Norma Balfour 020 8303 7693	Vacancies
 Art (Group 2) Alternate 1 st Tuesday	Sue Moore 020 8301 1952	1
 Bird Watching 1 st Wednesday 	Margaret Scambler 020 8315 0108	Yes
 Book Reading 1 st Thursday (2.00–4.00 pm)	June Reid 020 8302 7887	2
 Classical Music (Group 1) 2 nd Friday	Alan Griffiths 020 8303 6636	Vacancies
 Concerts/Ballet/Opera Various dates & times	Norma Balfour 020 8303 7693	Yes 
 Darts (at the Alma pub) 2 nd Monday (noon) 	See Group Co-ordinator 020 8300 4291	Yes
 Family History 2 nd Tuesday & 4 th Thursday	Judith Swain 020 8303 5759	Yes
 Handcrafted Cards (Group 1) 1 st Thursday (2.00 pm)	Val Gosden 020 8300 0664	1
 Handcrafted Cards (Group 2) 1 st Wednesday (2.00 pm)	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)	Leader pending	Vacancies
 Rummikub ® 4 th Monday (2.00–4.00 pm)	Margaret Platt 020 8309 6395	2
 Ten-Pin Bowling (Bexleyheath) Mondays (10.00 am) 	Various	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.

Christine Spencer, Group Co-ordinator  020 8300 4291; email rjcmspncr@gmail.com.

Why not start a new group?

If you are on the waiting list to join a full group, or no group that deals with your interest exists yet, why not create a new one and advertise it in this Newsletter? It is not difficult to run a group and any current leader can advise you how it's done.

 Not during school holidays

 Certain seasons only

 Notice on the board at meetings

PROGRAMME

2014

March	Peter Maggs	Henry's Trials
April	Don Dray	Down Memory Lane
May	Robert Vidler	The War Years (1914–1918)
June	Brian Williamson	Chislehurst Caves
July	Julia Burnett	Entertainer
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

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

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.

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

Jury: Twelve people who determine which client has the better lawyer.