

# SIDCUP & DISTRICT UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE NEWSLETTER

March 2015



**SIDCUP & DISTRICT U3A meets at 2.00 pm on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month in the  
New Community Church Centre, 24 Station Road, Sidcup**

**In March 2015 only, the meeting will be held at  
St. Lawrence's Church Hall, Hamilton Road, Sidcup**

## NOTICES

### **Agenda for AGM**

Apologies for absence  
Matters arising  
Minutes of 2014 AGM  
Approval of accounts  
Annual reports  
Election of officers  
Appointment of inspector of accounts  
Any other business

### **History of Blackfen**

Penny Duggan, a committee member of Lamorbey and Sidcup Local History Society, has recently published a book entitled "Woodmen and Fenmen – Blackfen's Story" which may well be of interest to members of our Local History Groups. Copies can be purchased at local libraries. It is well illustrated and contains a wealth of information. Many of the articles can be found also on the website [www.blackfenpastandpresent.com](http://www.blackfenpastandpresent.com). The website also contains an "Armchair guided walk of Blackfen" which could provide inspiration for our Amblers Groups.

**George Murrell**

### **New Members**

The Committee welcomes the following new members: Julia Badham, Barbara Buckland, Bob Chapman, Avril Chick, Chris Cutler, Sandra Goulding, Anne Hart, Kathy Healey, Judy Howard, Joan Lyons, Monica Moore, Terry Moseley, Lynn Plumer, Marie Reeves, Patricia Sabine, Linda Saint, Ruby Weedon, Anne and Timothy Wright.

**Patricia Rivett & Kate Berry**

### Local History 3 • Leader Christine Withams



On Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> February, 10 of us visited Pollock's Toy Museum located at 1 Scala Street, W1, where we found a fascinating collection of toy theatres, teddy bears, wax and china dolls, board games, optical toys, folk toys, nursery furniture, mechanical toys and dolls houses. The museum takes its name from Benjamin Pollock (1856–1937) who was the last of the Victorian Toy Theatre printers. Pollock, a simple modest man, became a legend in his own lifetime but chose to remain at his birthplace of Hoxton (Hackney) where he devoted his life to his pokey little shop which he kept going for 60 years.

The Toy Museum was established by Marguerite Fawdry who, in 1954, wanted some wire slides for her son's toy theatre, but found the business closed after the owner went bankrupt. Following enquiries, she contacted an accountant who suggested she buy the whole lot; this she did and a museum was born. The Toy Museum was established in 1956 in a single attic room at 44 Monmouth Street near Covent Garden, and, as it grew, other rooms were annexed. By 1969 it had outgrown its premises and had moved to Scala Street where it occupies two adjacent 18<sup>th</sup> century residential houses with original period fireplaces, windows and doors and rooms connected with winding staircases. The whole place exudes a slightly dusty and chaotic atmosphere and evokes those special times of childhood with every corner filled with magical delights. But be warned – there is a toy shop on the way out and you are unlikely to leave empty handed. Also, the custodian's very friendly dog accompanied us throughout our visit.

**Lynn Welch & Sue Upton**

### Pot Pourri • Leader Val Gosden



Our first trip out this year was to the London Transport Museum where we were able to see a special exhibition 'Goodbye Piccadilly – From Home Front to Western Front', which presented a unique perspective on the First World War, both at home and on the battlefield. Many of the pictures of the battlefields showed London Transport buses, either top-heavy with soldiers, or bogged down in the mud. And some were used to transport wounded soldiers to a medical centre – can you imagine how tricky it would be getting on to a bus when badly wounded? At home were pictures of the women who worked on the buses and who took over the role of the men who were at war; these were of interest, too, and there were strict rules for their dress and behaviour (no flesh should be on view and they should never be alone with a man on a bus!) Appalling numbers of human war casualties were given, and also just how many of the buses never returned to Britain, which led to transport problems until new ones could be acquired after the war.

Following a visit to this special exhibition, we were able to view the wide range of vehicles – especially buses – housed in the museum.

**Val Gosden**

 Two of my pictures of the London Transport Museum appear on the 'Gallery' page of our website.

**Editor**

## Pot Pourri • Leader Val Gosden



In February we went to the IMAX cinema at the Science Museum. From Charing Cross we walked to Embankment and took the Circle Line to South Kensington arriving at the museum in time for lunch at the Museum's cafeteria. From there we walked through a large area filled with aeroplanes of all sizes and from all ages. After ascending an escalator, we arrived at the cinema. We were given a pair of glasses, settled into our seats, and in no time there we were "Underneath The Sea." It was amazing; it seemed that we were amongst the coral and could put out a hand to touch it. We saw brightly-coloured fish, shoals of tiny fish disappearing into the sea bed, a shark, cuttlefish and much more. The final touch was a seal pup coming towards us and seeming to touch us on the nose! The whole film was a wonderful experience and highly recommended.

## Margaret Murphy

## Explorers • Leader Val Gosden



Henry Morton Stanley was the subject of our January viewing when his journey from Zanzibar (now Tanzania) to... where? was traced. He had a great regard for Livingstone and wanted to carry on where Livingstone had stopped which was to see if the River Lualaba led to the source of the Nile. He chose Frank Pocock for his boating skills to accompany him, and hired over 300 locals to act as porters and canoeists. His own boat, the Lady Alice, was used for carrying supplies, but its size made it necessary for it to be constructed in three sections, fitting it together whenever boating was possible and carrying it across land at other times. The party experienced many difficulties, ranging from hostile tribes to health problems, malaria, smallpox, dysentery, ulcers, and fevers. The river itself produced cataracts and rapids to challenge them, resulting in the loss of Pocock and several of their native helpers. In 1877, after 999 days, the remaining party of 115 souls was tired and weak and starvation was facing them when relief in the form of white traders reached them. Of the party of 356 who set out only 115 returned – a heavy price to pay.

In February we watched the re-enactment of crossing Australia from south to north in the early 1860s, a time when the interior of Australia was entirely unknown to the white settlers. A party of 19 men set out from Melbourne in Victoria, with the intention of being the first to reach northern Australia across land. The chosen leader for this was Robert O'Hara Burke, who was not an explorer, nor was he cognisant with bush-craft, but he was a man of Victoria, a state that wanted to be known as the first to cross Australia. William John Wills, a surveyor, became his second-in-command, and knowledge of the exploration is due to his diary and notes. The party travelled using camels from Afghanistan and horses, eventually setting up camp near the Darling River. From here four men, Burke and Wills, together with Charlie Gray and John King, pressed on northwards, through almost endless desert until they reached deep swamps. They eventually reached tidal water, indicating their nearness to the ocean, at which point they decided to return to base camp and Melbourne. The return journey was extremely demanding, with food and water running low, weakness and illness setting in. Gray died and was buried, and when the remaining three men reached base camp they found it deserted, but a message had been left indicating their plan to return to Melbourne. Burke, Wills and King then set out again to reach Melbourne, but so weak were they that Burke and Wills died, leaving King to wander alone. A search party discovered him, but he never recovered from the experience, dying two years later.

## Val Gosden

## Walking in London • Leader Val Gosden



We met on a cold and frosty morning for our January walk, but soon the almost-too-bright sun was shining, resulting in a lovely day for a winter's walk. London Bridge Station was the starting point in London from where we walked along the river, past The Tower of London, and on to the City where we found several items in an outdoor exhibition entitled 'Sculpture in the City'. There was an interesting mix of styles on display occasioning various comments from group members. We continued our walk to reach Liverpool Street Station where we saw statues of a different kind. These were depicting the children who came to our country from Prague just before WWII began. In 1939, Sir Nicholas Winton was based in that country and rumours of the horrors to come were in the air, and Sir Nicholas managed to arrange for several hundred mainly Jewish children to be taken to safety in various countries, including Britain. These children experienced the separation from their parents and a long journey to an unknown country and future, which must have been frightening for them. We completed our walk by going along the other side of the Thames and then on to Charing Cross Station and home.

For our February walk we went 'on safari', looking for lions\*, both as statues and as reliefs on buildings. We crossed Westminster Bridge, and then continued on to Westminster Hall and Westminster Abbey, eventually reaching the Buckingham Palace area, seeing several lions en route. We also passed the Blewcoat School which was founded for the education of the poor. It now houses bridal gowns and special occasion wear inside, and outside there is an attractive display of flowers and vegetables, which are for sale. The pavements near Buckingham Palace were crowded with tourists and families waiting to see horse-drawn state coaches passing by, so we stopped to watch, too. We then continued as far as Hyde Park Corner before returning home via The Mall and, of course, Trafalgar Square with its lions.

### Val Gosden

\* Lions are regarded as icons of power. King Richard The Lionheart chose three lions to represent England in 1189, and today the Royal Coat of Arms bears a double image of three lions.

## Concerts/Ballet/Opera • Leader Norma Balfour



### Concerts

Royal Festival Hall – 3.00 pm Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April – Conductor Vladimir Ashkenazy

Haydn: Symphony № 88

Beethoven: Piano Concerto № 5, *Emperor*

Nielsen: Symphony № 4, *The Inextinguishable*

Royal Festival Hall – Sunday 3.00 pm 17<sup>th</sup> May – Conductor Paavo Järvi

Sibelius: *Night Ride and Sunrise*

Rachmaninov: Piano Concerto № 3

Sibelius: Symphony № 5

Please can you pay as soon as possible for the April concert? I will accept money for the May concert at the April meeting.

Tickets should cost around £14.00.

**Norma Balfour, 020 8303 7693**

## Book Reading • Leader June Reid



The book for February was *The Blood Doctor* by Barbara Vine, chosen by Pat. It was published in 2002, when she had first read and enjoyed it. Barbara Vine is the alter ego of crime writer Ruth Rendell, author of the *Inspector Lynley* mysteries. With this in mind – and looking at the title – I half expected to read a *Dracula* type story. I could not have been more wrong. The story revolved around the fictional Lord Nanther, a favourite doctor who attended Queen Victoria and who specialised in haemophilia. There was a “whodunnit” of sorts as the narrator, Martin, the present Lord Nanther, traced his roots for the purpose of writing his latest book. He discovered a history of this disease running through his family tree which had been hushed up at the time. His research even took him as far as a remote village in Switzerland. There are also some interesting descriptions of his attendances at the Houses of Parliament. Another facet to this story are the issues raised as the author’s wife struggles to conceive a child. All in all, it was quite a gripping read and very well written.

### June Reid

## Local History 2 • Leaders Pauline Watling & Joyce Savinson



On 11<sup>th</sup> February, 17 members of our group went to visit the Cinema Museum at Kennington. Our pre-booked tour did not begin until 2 pm, and, as our journey was very straightforward, we stopped for an early lunch and chat at *Prêt à Manger*. Although we subsequently reached the museum 30 minutes before our designated arrival time, one of the curators allowed us into the cinema itself where he organised some very interesting stills for us to watch. Before our guided tour around the building, we were given a short talk on its history and the origins of the museum. It was originally a workhouse where, very interestingly, Charlie Chaplin and his brother Sidney spent some of their early years. A corridor, which houses posters, artefacts and a host of other memorabilia, is dedicated to his memory.

The museum is a veritable treasure trove of signage, posters, books, projectors, uniforms, *etc.* with so much memorabilia and equipment that has been collected from all over the country, and which records the history and grandeur of over a century of cinema.

The museum is a work in progress and the two gentlemen who were our guides (and the founders) clearly regard this as a labour of love. It is a registered charity and does not receive any funding. Much of the work is accomplished by volunteers and through donations. There are moves to revitalise the surrounding area and, maybe in the months and years to come, funding will become available. Meanwhile, the museum runs a variety of events to help boost funds.

Our visit ended after we returned to the cinema (which accommodates about 35 people) to watch 5 short films. The advertisement for the museum reads: “It is dedicated to keeping alive the spirit of cinema from the days before the multiplex.” It certainly does that! It was a visit enjoyed by us all.

### Margaret Bayjou

① The museum has had different homes. The first was Raleigh Hall in Brixton, a tumbledown council-owned building; next was a former council rent office which had been built as a fire station. In 1998, it moved only yards away into part of the former Lambeth Workhouse near Elephant & Castle.

### Editor

## Classical Music • Leader Alan Griffiths



Mary Haines provided the programme for our February meeting.

Mary's first choices were three songs by an early composer, Josquin Des Prez (1440–1521), and a version of one of the songs for two lutes. The music was provided by the Early Music Consort of London directed by David Munrow. These were followed by *Sonata in G* composed by Georg Philipp Telemann and played by Frans Bruggen on alto recorder. We next heard Amsterdam Loeki Stardust Quartet playing *Allegro* by Johann Christian Bach, and *Nocturne* by Rimsky-Korsakov. These were followed by the overture *Candide* by Leonard Bernstein played by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Bernstein. Our final items before the break were Aaron Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man* and *El Salon Mexico* played by the Mexico City Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Enrique Batiz.

During the break, we were treated to a cake baked by Olive Mercer to celebrate, and be sad, that this was the last meeting that Jean Wallis would attend. Jean was a founder member of this group and is moving away to live with her daughter and we wish her well.

We heard the Mexico City Philharmonic Orchestra next, playing the third movement of the Harp Concerto by Alberto Ginastera with Nancy Allen on the harp. This was followed by three pieces of Spanish classical guitar music by Francisco Tárrega, Isaac Albéniz and Manuel de Falla performed by Narciso Yepes. Cristina Ortiz, piano, was next playing the rondo and allegro from Beethoven's Piano Concerto *No 5 (Emperor)* with the City of London Sinfonia conducted by Richard Hickox. Mary's final choice was items from Gabriel Fauré's *Requiem* with the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields.

It was a well-chosen programme and an enjoyable afternoon.

**Alan Griffiths**

## Ramblers 2 • Leader David Wedderkop



Eleven of us met at Lewisham Station for our February ramble. We travelled on the DLR to Pudding Mill Lane Station, once a small, insignificant station, named after Pudding Mill River, a minor tributary of the River Lea. The new station is now the largest on the DLR network. All around it is still a building site through which we made our way into the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

We walked past the Olympic Stadium – still in the process of conversion – alongside a canal and into the Aquatic Centre. Entry to the small café inside is free, but for the cost of £1 we could enter the swimming and diving spectators' area. We continued our walk to the Copper Box Arena, where we could just have a glimpse through the doors to see how large and light the playing area is. From here we walked to the Velodrome, had coffee and watched a group of cyclists having a practice session on the track. Two of the men in the group were tempted to sample the adventure playground on the way to our final destination. Victory Park is a small area close to Stratford Station; we stopped there to see a "glass-like" maze before we went our separate ways home. Some returned to Pudding Mill Lane Station via the park and others entered, or quickly passed through, the Westfield Shopping Mall on our way back to Stratford DLR station.

This was a more leisurely ramble than usual. We look forward to a more traditional and longer country ramble in March.

**Ilena Harrington**

## Ramblers 3 • Leader Trevor Ford



### February Ramble

It was another cracking day, weather-wise, for our February ramble. The group is starting to think I've got some kind of hot-line to the weather-maker. It was very much a local affair, the meeting-place being the car park in Foots Cray Meadows. We set off across the Meadows and then crossed the Five Arches Bridge (photo on website) to join a section of the London Loop. I was able to point out some of the river enhancement projects, including marginal-planting undertaken by Friends of Foots Cray Meadows and Thames 21, in collaboration with the North West Kent Countryside Partnership. We crossed back over the Cray at the end of the sports ground associated with Loring Hall, then over some open ground to the back of Bexley village where we curved around, crossing the Cray again at the Old Mill, and back along North Cray Road. (A detour along the edge of Joyden's Wood would have been more attractive, but I'm saving it now for another trip). The White Cross pub supplied us with both lunch and drinks. We returned back along the other side of the river which we crossed for the 4<sup>th</sup> time at the Penny-Farthing Bridge; it was an early finish, but a satisfying trip. Next month we shall be around Chartwell – new members are welcome.

### Trevor Ford

**(i)** Five Arches Bridge is a Grade II Listed Structure in Foots Cray Meadows. Originally built in about 1781, it now incorporates a weir on its north side. Now largely of yellow brick, but with red brick on each side, it contains courses of flint below stone bands, and its stone parapet has been much replaced by cement. The bridge linked the two former estates of North Cray Place and Foots Cray Place as part of Lancelot Brown's landscaping of both parks. North Cray Place – damaged during World War II – was demolished in 1961, and Foots Cray Place burnt down in 1949. Foots Cray Meadows now occupies part of what were once the grounds of both. Foots Cray Meadows is the largest and least formal open space in the Borough of Bexley, and its 97 hectares (240 acres) of rolling landscape and ancient woodland lends itself to the variety of wildlife habitats present.

### *Editor*



"I wish I had been born in the Dark Ages."

"So do I. You look terrible in the light."

"How old are you?"

"Make a guess - then duck."

With air-conditioning you don't have to wait for winter to catch a cold. You can have it all summer.

They have an up-to-date air-conditioner in the restaurant. The waiter waves the menu in front of your face.

It's a nice little apartment - overlooking the rent.

High-rise apartments are so called because the rent rises sky-high.

## GROUP VACANCIES

GROUP NAME	LEADER/CONTACT	VACANCIES
 <b>Amblers (Group 2)</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday (10.30 am)	<b>Norma Balfour</b> 020 8303 7693	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Bird Watching</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> Wednesday (10.00 am) 	<b>Roy Black</b>  020 8302 9942	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Book Reading</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> Thursday (2.00–4.00 pm)	<b>June Reid</b> 020 8302 7887	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Classical Music</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Friday (2.30–4.30 pm)	<b>Alan Griffiths</b> 020 8303 6636	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Concerts/Ballet/Opera</b> Various dates and times	<b>Norma Balfour</b> 020 8303 7693	<b>Vacancies</b> 
 <b>Darts (at the Alma pub)</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Monday (noon) 	<b>Leader pending</b>  needed, please	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Family History</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday & 4 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	<b>Judith Swain</b> 020 8303 5759	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Local History (Group 1)</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Wednesday morning	<b>Lesley South</b> 020 8300 8298	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Local History (Group 3)</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Wednesday morning	<b>Christine Withams</b> 020 8850 4144	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Ramblers (Group 2)</b> 4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday (4–5 miles)	<b>David Wedderkop</b> 020 8850 5042	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Ramblers (Group 3)</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> Friday (≈ 6 miles)	<b>Trevor Ford</b> 020 8302 7635	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Rummikub®</b> 4 <sup>th</sup> Monday (2.00–4.00 pm)	<b>Margaret Platt</b> 020 8309 6395	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Ten-Pin Bowling (Bexleyheath)</b> Mondays (10.00 am)  £	<b>Gay Braybrook</b>  020 8309 6372	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Wine Appreciation</b> Last Thursday (7.30 pm) £	<b>Michael Jordan</b> 020 8302 3330	<b>Vacancies</b>

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, Interim Group Co-ordinator**  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.

 Not during school holidays

£ A charge applies

 Certain seasons only

 Notice on the board at meetings

 Temporary point of contact

## PROGRAMME

### 2015

March		<b>Annual General Meeting</b>
	Andy Thomas	The Crop Circle Mystery
April	Roy Bilham	Blowing my own trumpet
May	Ian Keable	The Corked Conjurer
June	Peter Hartley	The Royals
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	Will Cooban	The Good, The Bad and The Bexley
November	Melanie Gibson-Barton	Bruges
December	<i>To be advised</i>	

## 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	Patricia Rivett	020 3302 2887
Speakers Secretary	Sue Brooks	020 8298 1117
Interim Group Co-ordinator	Trevor Ford	020 8302 7635
Welfare Officer	Kathy Cordell	020 8300 4573
General Member	Trevor Ford	020 8302 7635

## 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](mailto: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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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](http://www.u3a.org.uk)

## WEBSITE

[www.sidcup-u3a.org.uk](http://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*

*virtue is its own reward - but then so is sin.*