

SIDCUP & DISTRICT UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE NEWSLETTER

March 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

**In March 2016 only, the meeting will be held at
The United Services Club, 108 Main Road, Sidcup**

NOTICES

Discover the Beautiful World of Orchids

There is a special day for U3A Branches interested in gardening and the world of orchids at the Royal Horticultural Society, London, SW1P 2PE, on Friday 1st April 2016, with timed talks at 11.00 am, 12.15 pm and 2.00 pm.

Following two years of working together to promote our RHS Flower Shows and Gardens to U3A members, the RHS are proud to invite U3A Branches to attend a special talk given at our upcoming RHS London Spring Plant and RHS London Orchid Show. The RHS is working in collaboration with the British Orchid Committee to deliver an audio visual talk, around the subject of these stunning plants and offer advice on their care, as well as delve into the history of their well-established committee.

Tickets cost £19.00 per person which includes access to both shows, a £5.00 voucher to redeem on refreshments, plus a goody bag. To book the event online, visit the RHS website at www.rhs.org.uk/ which allows you to book a group to our special event. You may also call 0800 358 0058 to book and quote U3AOrchid16. The booking deadline is 18th March 2016. This event has limited capacity and is open to U3A groups of 5 – 10 people maximum. Each talk has 50 spaces, and tickets will be issued on a first come first served basis. Talks will last between 20–25 minutes, followed by a Q&A session. Guests can then go on a self-guided tour around the show. They can also browse stunning plant displays and have the opportunity to buy from specialist nurseries. The shows are open until 5 pm.

The nearest train station is London Victoria; the nearest tube station is St James's Park.

George Murrell

New Members

The Committee welcomes the following new members: Yvonne Aird, Margaret Angeli, Valerie Davis, Patricia Farncombe, Barbara Fosberry, Marina Ghiglieri, Ray Harvey, Kathleen Haythorpe, Kathleen Holman, Margaret Hutchings, Areti Lambert, Jean Lee, Leslie Linley, Hilary Lumb, Eve Ralphs, Jean Reynolds, Zena Robinson, Peter Thornton and Carol Whiting.

Patricia Rivett & Kate Berry

Sidcup's Great War

Here is an update on "Sidcup's Great War", a Living Pageant event taking place on 18th June, which was announced in last month's Newsletter, and in which Sidcup & District U3A has been invited to take part.

The planning of the event is really coming along now. The event will take place along the whole High Street and lots of organisations, churches, shops, schools, colleges, pubs and music groups are involved. There will be street theatre by Rose Bruford College, live music by Belvedere Concert Band, a guided town walk, poetry readings, local school choirs, history talks, displays, a lecture by Dr. Andrew Bamji on the Queen's Hospital, and the Royal British Legion's Last Post service at the war memorial. Urban Food will serve food as it was 100 years ago, and Uden, the funeral director, is even bringing out its horses!

We have several spots where stalls can go, both outside and inside. The inside stalls will be mainly at the Sidcup Learning Centre in the High Street, where there will also be poppy-making activities, and also at Emmanuel Church.

Penny Duggan, Committee Member, Lamorbey & Sidcup Local History Society



Jose Steward 1938–2016

It was with great sadness that I heard of the passing of Jose on the 21st February. Many U3A members today will remember her enthusiastic membership of various groups. These included Ramblers, Bird Watching, Wine Appreciation, Local History and many more during her time as a member. She was liked by everyone and was always willing to lend a hand in times of need. She was one of the kindest and most likeable people I ever met and she actually introduced me to the U3A when I retired. Thank you, Jose, for being a good friend.

Her funeral took place on the 16th March, but, if anyone would like to make a donation in her memory, please contact Dementiauk.org. Thank you.

Gloria Exeter

Tribute to Alf Cracknell

Alf Cracknell died on 23rd January 2016, after a short illness bravely borne.

Alf was a hydroelectric design engineer. He was very much a family man, enjoying home life and playing with his three children, and later his grandchildren: football kick-about were popular. His Christian faith was important to him, and he worked tirelessly for his church.

Alf and Pat led Ramblers Group 2 for seven years. They also organised highly enjoyable, certainly energetic, group holidays during that time. He was very good company, with a ready smile and a joke as we strode (sometimes strolled) along, and his many interests made for good conversation. He had been a good cricketer and footballer when he was a little younger, and his more recent interests had mellowed into DIY and gardening; he specialised in growing excellent vegetables and fruit to feed his family and friends.

Pat has particularly asked me to thank everyone for their kind thoughts, letters, cards and calls. We'll all miss you, Alf.

Olive Mercer

Pot Pourri • Leader Val Gosden



In February we visited the British Optical Association Museum and were given a very informed and interesting talk about the museum which was founded in 1901 and which had a plethora of items on view. We started in the Print Room, which housed prints made mainly in the 1800s, all of which included an item relating to visual aids of some sort. Other rooms contained paintings, and again these included visual aids that were available at the time of painting. There were also cabinets of items relating to the works of optometrists, but perhaps the most interesting room was the one which exhibited many different styles of spectacles, together with the ‘tools’ which were used by optometrists in the past, and which are the forerunners of today’s equipment. Our curator guide pointed out many things that we might otherwise have overlooked, and he imparted much of the history and development which led to the service we can expect today.

Val Gosden

Ramblers 3 • Leader Trevor Ford



For the 2nd month in a row, we took to the suburban highways rather than the mud-strewn rural footpaths. In fact, we took up in Greenwich where we had left off in January. From the Cutty Sark, we walked into Greenwich Park and scaled the North Face, sticking to the West perimeter and then out through the side gate on Croom’s Hill. After passing McCartney House, (which was Wolfe’s home after his father bought it in 1751) and the Rangers House, built on the edge of the park, the home of the 4th Earl of Chesterfield. From here, we crossed the Black Heath, following directions from the “Walking Village London” book by Andrew Duncan. We hit the “Hare & Billet” pub by the pond before it opened at 12! However, when the landlord opened up, we were able to have a drink even before lunch. After lunch, we curved around the handsome semicircle of houses of Lloyd’s Place, Grottes’ Buildings and Grote’s Place. The land belonged to Morden College (see later). Further handsome houses were admired towards Eliot Place, many of which had had interesting previous residents, *eg* polar explorer, Sir James Clark Ross. We travelled around a little square joining the original route by coming up Pagoda Gardens, named after the house with the curly roof, which was a kind of summer house for Montagu House on the other side of the heath. George IV’s wife, Caroline, was a regular user of Pagoda House. We then plunged down a footpath into the former valley of the Kid Brook and crossed the railway line. We followed Lee Terrace back to the top end of the village and crossed by the Blackheath Conservatoire to enter the Cator Estate, which contains some very impressive dwellings, including № 17 Morden Road where a blue plaque commemorates the stay of the French Composer, Gounod. A small detour takes you round the outside of the grounds of Morden College, which looks very secretive about its role. In reality, as Google (courtesy of David) and the local postman were able to confirm, it is a residential home for the wealthy retired. Arriving back at the heath, you can look over the river to see the ever-changing skyline around Canary Wharf. To our left was the immodestly named The Paragon, a group of 7 blocks linked by a colonnades to form a crescent. Past the Princess of Wales pub, our group began to break up, some going to the pub, some to the coffee house, and those more abstemious going straight home.

Trevor Ford

Classical Music • Leader Olive Mercer



There were twelve music lovers, including three new members, who gathered at Olive's for our monthly fix of classical music – an impressive number considering the cold weather. We listened to Ruth's selection of favourite pieces which proved to be mainly orchestral and choral. Starting with *Mors and Vitae* from Gounod's oratorio, *Judex*, we moved on to the scherzo from Bruckner's 7th symphony played by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra conducted by Georg Tintner. This gave rise to a discussion on the exact meaning of 'scherzo', after which we heard Sir Colin Davis and the LSO's rendering of Elgar's glorious *Praise to the Holiest* from the *Dream of Gerontius*. This was followed by Mahler's funereal parody of *Frère Jacques* from his 1st symphony, played by the Ljubljana Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Anton Nanut. The first half concluded with Wagner's rousing overture to *Tannhäuser*, played by the LSO conducted by Alfred Scholz. After the tea interval, we listened to the 3rd and 4th movements of Saint-Saens' organ symphony (3rd) and finally heard his fun piece, *Carnival of the Animals*, which kept us all guessing as the CD offered no commentary. It was a most enjoyable afternoon and we thank Olive for her hospitality.

Ruth Nugent

Ramblers 1 • Leader Annette Holland



For our February ramble we decided on a 4 mile walk around the London parks. Sixteen of us set off from Charing Cross Station at 10.30 am, and, after leaving the station, we passed the Big Issue seller who stands on one leg with the other stretched out behind him and his arm outstretched holding a Big Issue. To my knowledge, he has been doing this for the last 13 years – hopefully he has changed legs occasionally. As we walked through St James's Park the sun came out showing off the bright yellow of the daffodils, and we walked along by the lake with the squirrels all around us posing for the tourists to take photos of them as only the St James's Park squirrels can. We crossed over the Mall, entered Green Park and walked through it to Wellington Arch; after manipulating the traffic crossings, we entered Hyde Park and headed for the Serpentine Café and a welcome drink. On the tables outside the café, we noticed a friendly heron hopping about on a table occupied by a couple trying to have a snack. As we were about to resume our walk, four soldiers on horseback came past; they appeared to be training the horses, one of which was very frisky indeed kicking and bucking and going in all directions. I could hear the soldier on this horse singing quietly, but whether this was to calm the horse or himself I'm not sure. We went across Hyde Park passing the Reformers' Tree; this is the site where, in 1866, an oak tree stood which was the focus of protests, but which was set alight during one of the protests. Today, a mosaic circle stands in its place. We turned back down to the lake, went under the Serpentine Bridge and followed the path along by The Long Water where we stopped to take a look at the Henry Moore sculpture. We then continued on to the Italian Gardens and into Kensington Gardens. From there we set tracks for Kensington High Street passing the Physical Energy statue on the way. Upon reaching our destination, we split up – some opting for a sandwich in the park, while others headed for the Goat Inn Tavern and a huge plate of fish and chips which was delicious!

Avril Wallace

 The Physical Energy Statue was installed in 1907. Designed by George Frederick Watts, it is based on a memorial to Cecil Rhodes in Cape Town. Rhodes was a diamond miner and founder of Rhodesia – now Zimbabwe. He made his fortune before he was 30, and in 1880 established the De Beers mining company.

Editor

Book Reading • Leader June Reid



Our book for discussion at the February meeting was *The Book Thief* written by Markus Zusak. This book has won several awards and was listed in The New York Times Best Sellers list for over 230 weeks! It was also produced as a film. *The Book Thief* centres around a nine-year-old girl living in Germany during the Second World War. Her experiences are narrated by Death who describes both the beauty and destruction of life in this era. After her brother's death, Liesel arrives in a distraught state at the home of her foster parents living in a small village in Germany. Unable to read, Liesel is taught by her foster father – although almost illiterate himself. Together they discover the power of language. As Germany deteriorates, her foster parents shelter a Jewish man in the basement of their house putting the whole family at risk. Without disclosing more of this gripping story, an air of innocence shines through as the children grow up despite the horrors of war surrounding them. There are many characters involved in this story and the wonder of their survival and strength of spirit is amazing. Although Death is the narrator, he is presented in a manner that is distant and non-threatening, giving a sense of care rather than fear. Throughout the story, the theme of the book is Love – in all its forms – and also survival of the human spirit. It has an unusual style of presentation but is a really good read.

June Reid

Local History 3 • Leader Christine Withams



In February, a small group of us stepped into “the curious and chaotic world of history’s greatest witness” at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. The exhibition relates to the period between the execution of Charles I in 1649 and the Glorious Revolution of 1688. There are 200 paintings and objects from international museums and galleries and private collections. It explores this period of English history through the perspective of one man’s life. Samuel Pepys witnessed many of the great events of the 17th century that shaped Stuart Britain. He lived through a time of turmoil which saw kings fighting for their crowns and saw medieval London transformed into a world city following the devastation of the plague and destruction of the Great Fire. His diaries cover the years 1660–1669, are in 6 volumes and made up of 1.25 million words. In the early 19th century, John Smith, a Cambridge undergraduate, was set the task of transcribing the entire early diary. Smith assumed it was written in code and eventually managed to crack it by comparing an account of the escape of Charles II from the battle of Worcester with a text published from Pepys’ later longhand version. A year later, Smith learned that Pepys had actually written in a shorthand system devised by Thomas Skelton and his text book was on a shelf nearby all the time. C’est la Vie!

Ilena Harrington

Ramblers 2 • Leader David Wedderkop



On a bright Tuesday morning, 9 members met at Slade Green Station for a 4½ mile ramble across Crayford Marshes, the Darent Estuary, Thames Link Path and beyond Erith, and the Green Chain Walk to Upper Belvedere. The Green Chain path through Franks Park was quite muddy but the remaining 6 members’ eventual reward was at a pub in Nuxley Road which provided good food and service, and a direct bus to Bexleyheath and home.

Helga Fastenbauer

① The Green Chain Walk is a linked series of 300 open spaces in south London between the River Thames and Crystal Palace Park. It was created in 1977 by 4 London boroughs (Bexley, Bromley, Lewisham and Greenwich) and the Greater London Council to protect the spaces from building activity. The system begins at three places on the Thames: the Thames Barrier, Thamesmead, and the riverside at Erith. There are various circular walks along the route, and there is an offshoot from the main route to Chislehurst. The final section reaches Crystal Palace via Bromley. The whole system of paths covers about 40 miles.

Editor

Meditation • Leader Keith Alker



The meditation group has been meeting for two years. It is amazing how time passes. During that time we have explored a wide range of meditation principles and techniques from a number of different traditions. Mindfulness Meditation is a subject that seems to be attracting wider and wider public attention, particularly from those interested in health and wellbeing. Our Monday group numbers have crept up so that we can't squeeze another person into the room. We also have a list of people patiently waiting to join. As so few people drop out of the group, I've agreed to start a new morning session that will meet on the first and third Thursdays each month from 10:00 to 11:30.

The waiting list is almost sufficient to fill the new group, but we could accommodate one or two more. If you are interested, then please let me know – it will start very soon. We usually collect a nominal 50p per session for handouts, etc, and occasionally there are optional DVD/Audio CDs at £3 each (at current rates).

Keith Alker

① See the Notice Board for details.

Editor



Outlandish Projects: Covent Garden Redevelopment

'Covent Garden Is Moving' was the name of the 1968 GLC report that outlined the proposed redevelopment of the area around the old fruit and vegetable market. The area had become utterly dysfunctional; the market was too small and the streets were unable to cope with the traffic. Something had to be done. The GLC's repertoire of modernist redevelopment included sunken roads, raised pedestrian areas, residential and office towers.

Locals rebelled. They set up a campaign group that attracted disgruntled planners, disgusted local politicians and angry young architects. Eventually, they got their way and the project was cancelled, saving the area's Victorian buildings and turning the tide against comprehensive redevelopment in general. What they didn't save, however, was the market, which decamped anyway, or the local spirit of the place, which was washed away by commerce.

GROUP VACANCIES

GROUP NAME	LEADER/CONTACT	VACANCIES
 Amblers (Group 1) 3 rd Wednesday (10.30am)	John Harbert 020 8300 5361	Vacancies
 Bird Watching 1 st Wednesday (10.00am)  	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)  	<i>Leader pending</i>  needed, please	Vacancies
 Family History 2 nd Tuesday & 4 th Thursday	Judith Swain 020 8303 5759	Vacancies
 Meditation (Thursday Group) 1 st & 3 rd Thurs (10.00–11.30am) £	Keith Alker 020 8850 2853	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 3 rd Wednesday (7.30pm) £	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 holidays

↳ Notice on the board at meetings

£ A charge applies

 Open to all

 Certain seasons only

 Temporary point of contact

PROGRAMME

2016		
March		Annual General Meeting
April	Penny Duggan Dennis Chambers	History of Blackfen Some Kent Ghosts – Their haunts and their stories
May	Anna Austin	Motorina to Racing Driver
June	Vicky Fry	Murder, Myths and Misconceptions – Working with the Magistrates' Courts
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

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
Asst. Membership Secretary	Kate Berry	020 8309 7429
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

Logic is a systematic way of coming to the wrong conclusion with confidence.