

SIDCUP & DISTRICT UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE NEWSLETTER

November 2015



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

Rotas for 2016

Volunteers are needed to sign up for rotas for Registration (2 needed), Greeters for Speaker (1), Greeters for New Members (2) and Tea (2). The forms to sign up will be on display at the October and November meetings. It would be good to have new faces involved as well.

Trevor Ford

John Mercer (1.7.1923–8.9.2015)

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of one of our most notable and well-loved members and former Chairman, John Mercer. We remember John as an outstanding Chairman of Sidcup U3A and for which he worked prodigiously in the roles of Secretary and Meetings Secretary before becoming Chairman. He was ever ready to help and advise on all matters to do with the U3A in Sidcup, but the U3A was only a small part of his life's work.

We all knew him as a researcher and author of books and articles about Sidcup and this was only one facet of the mountainous amount of work he achieved. His work in the community was vast, ranging from acting as Secretary to a Coronation Committee through work in the Bexley Civic Society, Planning sub-Committee, Sidcup Probus, Founder member of Friends of Red House, Sidcup Local History Society in addition to his considerable work as a Reader at St. John's Church, Sidcup.

The question has often been asked, how did he do it all? The answer is the old adage that if you want anything done then ask a busy man. He was so inextricably involved in Sidcup life that it is difficult to think that he ever had a life elsewhere. He was born in Teddington, left school in 1939, served in the Royal Artillery from 1942 to 1947 and indeed was a Normandy veteran. After leaving the R.A. he trained as a teacher and, after some years of teaching, studied and obtained his Ph.D. in 1971. He was a lecturer at North London Polytechnic from 1968 until his retirement in 1985 and whilst there did an enormous amount of work developing M.A. courses and work with the Professions Supplementary to Medicine. His first wife, Joan, whom he married in 1953, but who died in 1990, and in 2000 he married Olive Annis.

This is but a fleeting glimpse of the man and his life which hardly does honour to a man loved, admired and listened to with such pleasure by all who had the good fortune to come into contact with him. Our sympathies go to Olive, his children and grandchildren and all his extended family. Thank you, John, for your life of service.

Michael Jordan

Membership Renewal

Membership renewal forms for 2016 were handed out at the October meeting. Anyone who missed the meeting, or misplaced the form, will find a spare one on the back of this Newsletter. Further copies can be obtained by downloading the Newsletter from our website.

Editor

Sidcup & District U3A Booklet for 2016

Attention Group Leaders: Trevor Ford, Group Co-ordinator, will be shortly sending out the current copy of the booklet. Please check details, including the monthly “calendar” of groups on page 12 and notify him of any amendments. If anyone else would like to start a new group, either for existing topics or new areas, they would be welcomed. Help, advice and support is available if required.

Trevor Ford



Explorers • Leader Val Gosden



The Spanish Conquistador, Francisco Pizarro, was the subject of our October viewing. Like many others in the 1500s, it was the lure of gold that took him and his team to Peru, the home of the Incas, in 1532. A priest was part of the expedition as they also intended to convert the Incas to Christianity. As they ventured further up the Andes, they suffered from altitude sickness, but eventually came upon an abandoned village. Fearing an ambush, they cautiously entered the village, but it was on the next day that the Incas came, in great procession with their king, who the Incas considered to be a descendant of their God, the sun, and who was therefore sacred and untouchable. The priest approached the king and demanded that the Incas become Christians; this was refused and a battle broke out which resulted in the death of 5,000 Incas and the capture of their king. Gold and silver was demanded as ransom for the Inca king, which was duly received by the Spaniards, but nonetheless the Inca king was killed by strangulation. This latter was a privilege granted him (rather than being burned) on his becoming a Christian.

Eight months later, with a prominent Incan as a hostage, the Conquistadors continued further into Peru, but were attacked in an ambush during which five of them were killed and several wounded. They escaped, however, and again took control of the Incas, allowing a prince to be crowned king – but he was to be a puppet king only with Pizarro in control of him and the Incas. Eventually, the Incas rebelled and Pizarro returned to Spain, where the supporters of a rival of his killed him in 1541.

All the gold that had been seized was melted down into ingots, some of which were given to the king of Spain while the remainder was distributed amongst the remaining Conquistadors. The result of these events was that both the Inca gold and its civilization is now lost.

Val Gosden

P.S. When the Conquistadors arrived in Peru, they found that both the horse and the wheel were unknown to the Incas.

Local History 2 • Leader Pauline Watling



Visit to BBC Broadcasting House on Wednesday 14th October 2015

Broadcasting House is the headquarters of the BBC, in Portland Place and Langham Place, London. The first radio broadcast was made on the 15th March 1932 and the building was officially opened two months later on the 15th May. The BBC is the world's oldest national broadcasting organisation and the second largest broadcaster in the world by number of employees, with over 20,000 staff in total, of which 16,672 are in public sector broadcasting.

Twenty-two of us visited BBC Broadcasting House. Our tour lasted 90 minutes and our guides were two delightful young men, Rich and Simon, whose proper job is acting, but at quiet times they are guides with the BBC. They were extremely good at it and the tour was very informative and very entertaining.

We started off by having lunch in the BBC restaurant – and excellent it was, too. Good value, choice of hot meals costing about £4, or snacks. A cuppa was only £1 – Well Done BBC. We saw the very busy and large news room in action into which all the news arrives from all over the world. This space also contains the weather forecast area; if you time it right, you can see the usual BBC weather forecasters, such as Carol Kirkwood, doing their jobs live. Part of the tour also included the very beautiful Art Deco radio theatre dating back to the 1930s which is still in use today and seats around 300. The fun part of the day was when our U3A team recorded a short “radio play.” Five of our group were chosen to play the parts and tears of laughter were running down their faces. I don't think they got the job! One of the team had to do the sound effects: horses' hoofs, doors shutting, doors knocking and tea cups chinking, while the rest of us clapped and cheered. It was very enjoyable. We had a really pleasing visit to the “One Show” studio and sat on the actual sofas where the presenters sit and where all the hundreds of guests' bums have sat, too. Mmmmm!!

We also went to the news studio where members of our group had to read the news. Pauline acquired the job of doing the weather forecast but didn't know what part of Britain Scotland was in – she thought it was on the south coast. Well, for Pauline, on this day, everything was on the south coast; more training is needed as she never got the job.

All in all, everyone thoroughly enjoyed the day, and, as organiser of this trip, I was thrilled.

Rita Kibble

Concerts/Ballet/Opera • Leader Norma Balfour



Royal Festival Hall

3.00 pm Sunday 24th January 2016

Conductor John Wilson

The Wasps by Ralph Vaughan Williams

Clarinet Concerto by Gerald Finzi

A Sea Symphony (Symphony № 1) by Ralph Vaughan Williams

Tickets cost £20 but are selling fast. Please contact me as soon as possible.

Royal Festival Hall

2.30 pm Saturday 13th February 2016

Gala, Radetzky March, Blue Danube Waltz & Tik-Tak Polka from *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss (and many more). Programme includes dancers

Tickets cost £19.50–£24.50 but again will sell fast. Please contact me as soon as possible.

Norma Balfour ☎ 020 8303 7693

Ramblers 3 • Leader Trevor Ford



October walk

A goodly turn out in October swelled our recent numbers from 6 to 14. We parked at the Henry VIII pub in Hever and set off past the school along a footpath leading to a road. Crossing stiles and traversing a couple of fields, we hit a B-road, and then a C-road past Wilderness Farm. We were able to take a breather while we watched an environmental workman installing a new gate replacing the damaged stile. A long straight trek through woodland, occasionally opening into broad, sunny vistas, enabled us to appreciate the fact that we were on a ridgeway. At Hill Hoath Farm, we crossed fields into Chiddingstone and stopped for a photo opportunity at the village sign. Round the corner, we took more photos at the Stone itself so that I could be chiding them if necessary. In practice, though, they were a very welcoming bunch as usual. The Castle Inn was very accommodating as we had previously rung ahead with our lunch orders. As we turned up early, we were able to enjoy drinks in the garden before our meal. We returned via Hill Hoath Farm again and then turned off via Park Wood and the periphery of Hever Castle grounds. Trudging through the church yard, we emerged again opposite the Henry VIII. It was still such a glorious afternoon that most of us took the opportunity to extend our meeting by taking additional refreshments outside.

Trevor Ford

Book Reading • Leader June Reid



At our September meeting we discussed two books, each very different. The first one was *The Sunrise* by Victoria Hislop. Set in Cyprus, the story concerns the fate of two families left to exist in war-torn Famagusta during the hostilities between Greek and Turkish factions. Although the two families support opposite sides of the conflict, Hislop depicts the growing love, respect and trust which helps them to survive. Famagusta was a thriving tourist spot during the early 1970s, but was left derelict and surrounded by barbed wire which is still there today; it is a ghost town. This was an interesting piece of history spiced with a torrid romance for full measure.

Clay, written by Melissa Harrison, is a very slim volume but nevertheless a good read. It is a lyrical novel about innocence, experience, class and consumerism. Set in a London suburb, it portrays a delicate balance between nature and development, recklessness and caution. There is also a sense of loneliness and decay. The author writes beautifully and her descriptions of nature are touching. The characters are a young black boy, a middle class white girl, her grandmother and an immigrant trying to start a new life. Their lives become entwined and we follow the outcome with hope and trepidation. Both of these books gave us much to discuss and we all enjoyed both of them.

June Reid

(i) Famagusta was founded in around 274 BC by Ptolemy II and named Arsinoe after his sister. It was described as a fishing town by Strabo in his *Geographica* in the first century BC. It remained a small fishing village for a long time but later developed into a small port. Located to the east of Nicosia, it possesses Cyprus's deepest harbour. During the medieval period (especially under the maritime republics of Genoa and Venice), Famagusta was the island's most important port city, and a gateway to trade with the ports of the Levant, from where the Silk Road merchants carried their goods to Western Europe.

Editor

Wine Appreciation • Leader Michael Jordan



WAGS Meeting 22nd October

The monthly meeting of WAGS (Wine Appreciation Group) was held at the Wellbeing Centre (old Pop-in-Parlour) Hadlow Road on 22nd October. There were 18 present. Before the tasting began, there was a discussion about the future location of the group and it was unanimously agreed that we should accept the kind and generous offer made to us to meet at Ockley Court, Alder Road, starting in January. We all wish to express our gratitude to everyone concerned for this offer of help. The group also agreed that, with effect from January, there should be an annual fee of £12 and monthly charges reduced to £3, so that, if a member was absent in any month, account would be taken.

Roger Brown presented the evening's wines which were, as usual, divided into two groups, three white and three red. We started with an old favourite, Touraine Les Hauts Lieux 2014 (sauvignon blanc), which remained a popular choice. This was followed by a chardonnay from South Africa and bought at the Co-op for £4.99, and a Rully Grand Vin de Bourgogne 2014 from Lidl which cost £9.99.

The red wines were an Argentine blend of Bonarda and Shiraz, an unusual Alsace Pinot Noir, also from Lidl, and finally a Burgundy Marsannay 2012 from the Wine Society – probably the favourite of the evening, as it should, costing £17. It was a very good evening from several points of view.

Michael Jordan

Ramblers 1 • Leader Annette Holland



A circular walk of 6 miles from Ightham Mote on Tuesday 27th October 2015

Seventeen members took part in this walk on a lovely warm, sunny morning; we calibrated our watches, zeroed our pedometers and left Ightham Mote car park at 10.30 am. We walked round the back of the house and up to Mote Road where, after about 100 yards, we climbed a stile into a field and up to a wood comprised of pines and deciduous trees. Emerging from the other side, we crossed farmland towards the rear of Shipbourne Church, went through the churchyard and across the main road. We then went along by Shipbourne Common and passed between some pleasant cottages using a footpath that led to fields which sloped down and then up to Fairlawne Home Farm. The view across these fields took in the wonderful autumn colours of nearby woods. We crossed School Lane towards a wood in which there was a nasty little muddy ditch; it was about three feet across but, luckily, we all got over it without losing anyone. On the other side, we walked by the edge of Dunk's Green, and there before us stretched a ploughed field, and about a quarter of a mile away across this field we could see a hedgerow in colours of yellow and gold. We set off determined to reach the other side. By this time it was about 12 o'clock and the sun was beating down forcing some of us to take off coats and jumpers. Doggedly, we trudged our way on, not seeming to get any closer to the far side, but we kept on going and eventually reached our goal. Here we called for a short break while we regrouped and saw more fine views across the Kent countryside towards Plaxtol. After traversing another field and quiet lane, we reached Fairlawne Park, and a short walk down past Fairlawne House brought us up again to the Ightham Road; going over this we reached the path back to Ightham Mote where much needed sustenance was obtained at the More Restaurant.

Eddie Wallace

Pot Pourri • Leader Val Gosden



Our October outing was a visit to the British Museum to see the Waddesdon Collection. This collection of nearly 300 items, mostly from the European Renaissance period (but which also includes some 19th century fakes), was bequeathed to the British Museum by Baron Ferdinand Rothschild. So what sort of things did a wealthy baron collect? The many materials used included silver-gilt, wood, ceramics, eggs, glass, nuts, and these and others were used to create items such as dishes, cups and tankards, door-knockers, reliquaries, rings and pendants, altar-pieces and swords. On entering the exhibition room one is greeted with a fantastic display of silver-gilt items, preparing us for the other wonders of the exhibition, which merited close inspection, too. The work on some of them was fantastic, leaving us wondering how on earth the craftsmen of old did such fine work.

Val Gosden

Local History 3 • Leader Christine Withams



On Wednesday 14th October, 14 members of the group travelled to London to visit All Hallows by the Tower, the oldest church in the City of London.

The Saxon Abbey of Barking founded the church in 675AD and an arch from the original church remains. Beneath the arch is a Roman pavement which was discovered in 1926 – evidence of city life on the site for nearly two thousand years. Located next to the Tower of London, the church has dealt with numerous beheaded bodies, including Thomas More, John Fisher and Archbishop Laud. In 1666, the Great Fire of London started nearby but All Hallows survived through the efforts of Admiral Penn (William Penn's father), who, along with his friend Samuel Pepys, watched London burn from the tower of the church. William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania, was baptised in the church and educated in the schoolroom. John Quincy Adams, 6th President of the United States, was married in the church in 1797.

In 1940, the church was bombed and only the Tower and walls remained, but the late Queen Mother laid a new foundation stone in 1948 and she attended the rededication service nine years later. The vicar at the time was “Tubby” Clayton, founder of Toc H. The movement's lamp of maintenance still burns in the Lady Chapel and the founder's effigy and body rest in the church.

Dorothy Connelly

i Toc H members ease the burdens of others through acts of service. They also promote reconciliation and work to bring disparate sections of society together. Branches organise localised activities such as hospital visits, entertainment for the residents of care homes and residential holidays for special groups. It was founded at Poperinge, Belgium, in December 1915, as an international Christian movement. The name is an abbreviation for Talbot House; ‘Toc’ signifies the letter T in the signals spelling alphabet used by the British Army during World War I. It was named in memory of Gilbert Talbot, son of Edward Talbot, then Bishop of Winchester, who had been killed at Hooge in July 1915. The founders were Gilbert's elder brother Neville Talbot, then a senior army chaplain, and the Reverend Philip Thomas Byard (Tubby) Clayton. Talbot House was styled as an “Every Man's Club”, where all soldiers were welcome, regardless of rank. It was “an alternative for the ‘debauched’ recreational life of the town.” Poperinge (or “Pops”, as the soldiers called it) was a busy transfer station where troops on their way to and from the Flanders battlefields were billeted. The original building at Poperinge has been maintained and redeveloped as a museum and tourist venue.

Editor

Ramblers 2 • Leader David Wedderkop



On the website's Gallery page are photographs taken during our walk on 25th August 2015 from South Darenth to Farningham. Please see the October Newsletter for details.

Helen Salmon

Classical Music 1 • Leader Olive Mercer



The Music Group met at Olive Mercer's house on 9th October. Before the programme began, a few words of appreciation and condolences were given to Olive following the death of John. Michael Jordan presented the programme and started with a lively Concerto for oboe, strings and basso continuo in F major by Albinoni, following with Beethoven's String Trio, opus 9/1. We then had one of Mozart's well-loved Horn concertos, *No* 3 in E flat major. After our break for tea, we continued with *Reverie et Caprice* by Hector Berlioz, and then an old favourite, the "Clock" Symphony *No* 101 in D major by Haydn. The afternoon ended with the Mazurka in A minor, opus 68, by Chopin played beautifully by Dubravka Tomšič – a rather more stately composition than one usually associates with a mazurka.

Michael Jordan

Corrigendum to report on visit to BBC Broadcasting House – page 3

According to the BBC website, daily radio broadcasting began in Marconi's London studio in the Strand on 14th November 1922. A regularly scheduled TV service began in 1936.



Outlandish Projects: Watkin's Tower

Although London was home to the Crystal and Alexandra Palaces, it has been overshadowed in the modern architecture stakes since 1889 by the Eiffel Tower. Double the height of the next tallest structure in the world, the Eiffel Tower was a true engineering marvel that London couldn't match.

Sir Edward Watkin, a politician and railway entrepreneur, wanted to put this right. He was laying out a park on land he had bought in the north-west London hamlet of Wembley, and decided the showpiece would be a brand-new iron tower that, crucially, would be taller than the one across the Channel. After one of the maddest design competitions ever held generated 68 ludicrous flights of Victorian whimsy, the chosen design was, in the end, pretty similar to Eiffel's, but 46 meters taller. Construction began in the early 1890s.

Unfortunately, the tower was only built up to the first level before it was abandoned and then demolished a few years later. The site of the tower – which would have been 52 meters taller than the Shard – is now occupied by Wembley Stadium.

What became known as Watkin's Folly, had it been built, could have set off an early race to the sky. As it was, the Eiffel Tower's height was only exceeded 40 years later by the Chrysler Building in New York.

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/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
 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) £	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

£ A charge applies

 Certain seasons only

 Notice on the board at meetings

 Open to all

 Temporary point of contact

PROGRAMME

2015

November	Melanie Gibson-Barton	Bruges
December	Colin Hill & friends	Comedy Cabaret

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

The quickest way to double your money is to fold it in half and put it back in your pocket.

SIDCUP & DISTRICT U3A
RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP
FOR 2016

This is to remind you that your membership to the Sidcup & District U3A is renewable on 31 December 2015.

The renewal notice at the bottom of this reminder, duly completed, with a cheque for £15.00 per person, being the annual subscription for 2016, should be paid in one of the following two ways. (1) At the November or December General Meeting or (2) If you are unable to attend a General Meeting then it should be sent to our TREASURER, MR JOHN LAPHAM, 20 TIDFORD ROAD, WELLING, KENT DA16 3JS.

IF RENEWALS ARE NOT RECEIVED BY THE ABOVE DATE THIS WILL BE TAKEN THAT YOU DO NOT WISH TO CONTINUE YOUR MEMBERSHIP AND NO FURTHER REMINDER WILL BE SENT.

At the January General Meeting you will be issued a new Membership Card for the year 2016. The card will not only act as a receipt for your renewal of membership but also acknowledge that you are a bona fide member and that it should be shown to Group Leaders when attending a Group.

Yours sincerely
Patricia Rivett/Kate Berry
Membership Secretaries

Membership No
RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP 2016

Please tick box if you wish to continue receiving the magazine **THIS AGE MATTERS**

To renew your membership, please complete this form and present it with your cheque for £15.00 (made payable to SIDCUP & DISTRICT U3A and POST DATED 1 JANUARY 2016)

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms Surname

First Names

Address

.....Post Code

Telephone Number

Signature Date

IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND THE JANUARY GENERAL MEETING PLEASE ATTACH A SAE NO SMALLER THAN 8¼" x 4½" WITH YOUR RENEWAL FOR RETURN OF YOUR MEMBERSHIP CARD AND PROGRAMME FOR THE COMING YEAR.

DATA PROTECTION ACT. Members are reminded that details they give are kept on a computer data-base. These details are kept in the strictest confidence. Anyone objecting to their details being kept in this way should inform the Membership Secretary.