

# SIDCUP & DISTRICT UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE NEWSLETTER

October 2014



**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**

## NOTICES

### Events

#### **Cinderella Ballet by Dutch National Ballet**

Film performance for U3A members at Odeon Covent Garden Cinema from 1.40–4.10 pm on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> November. Tickets cost £14 each from the Third Age Trust.

#### **U3A Christmas Concert with choir and organ**

Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> December. Two performances – 2.00 pm and 5.30 pm at the Queen's Chapel of the Savoy, Savoy Hill, WC2. The concert includes traditional carols, and mince pies and mulled wine will be served. Tickets costing £18 each are obtainable from the Third Age Trust.

**George Murrell**

### **Group Leaders Meeting**

A coffee morning meeting for group leaders will be held at 10 am on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November at Ockley Court, Alder Road, Sidcup. This will provide group leaders with the opportunity to discuss common problems and exchange ideas. The main purpose of this particular meeting is to identify means of accommodating members (especially those newly joined) who wish to pursue the particular activity of a group that is oversubscribed. Possible solutions that come to mind, and which could be discussed, include:

- Group membership is for a set period (*eg* 1 year) following which members may re-enlist for a further year but priority to be given to members on a “waiting list”.
- Existing group splits into two separate groups with meetings either on the same day, or on separate days.
- Perhaps some groups could meet more often than once per month which could possibly enable additional members to be accommodated.

These are only vague ideas on my part and I am sure that some of you must have far better suggestions. Please invite any members of your group who might be prepared to volunteer to be a group leader to accompany you. Please contact Keith Alker, Group Co-ordinator on 020 8850 2853 beforehand and confirm your attendance. If you are unable to attend it would be appreciated if you could nominate a deputy.

It is anticipated that the meeting will close at approximately 11 am.

**George Murrell, Secretary**

## Petitions

Members may be interested to learn of the existence of two currently running online petitions. If you wish to learn more, or put your name to either of them, their website addresses are as follows:

### NHS Petition

<http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/68064>

### Bus Pass Petition

<https://submissions.epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/60355>

### Roy Morton

## More Events

**Publishing your own books:** A U3A seminar, 10.30 am–4.30 pm on 18<sup>th</sup> November at National Union of Journalists, 308/312 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. The cost is £35 pp including lunch. Further information is available from the Third Age Trust.

**U3A photography competition:** U3As are invited to submit photos of members engaging in activities that show the essence of U3A learning, laughing and living. The closing date is 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. Entries may be submitted by email to [photo@u3a.org.uk](mailto:photo@u3a.org.uk). All entries must be on behalf of a U3A and each U3A may submit an unlimited number of photographs. Entries must be accompanied by the name of the photographer, their U3A and a description of the subject. Entries must be supplied as high quality JPEG files with a minimum resolution of 1600 pixels on the shortest edge. Entering photographs constitutes your agreement to grant the Third Age Trust a non-exclusive, royalty-free licence to reproduce, distribute and publicly display the photographs submitted for use in any Trust publicity material, publication or web page. It is important that any member who intends to photograph U3A interest groups gives the people present the opportunity to absent themselves from the photographs.

**Institute of Advanced Motorists:** The IAM has over 200 volunteer groups around the country and is offering free half hour introductory driving assessments which could be arranged for a U3A. In addition, speakers on road safety and driving topics can also be provided. Visit the website [www.iam.org.uk/groupdirectory](http://www.iam.org.uk/groupdirectory) to find your nearest group, or contact Paul Woozley on 020 8996 9656 or email [paulwoozley@iam.org.uk](mailto:paulwoozley@iam.org.uk).

### George Murrell



In memory of our dear friend, Barbara Olney, who sadly lost her battle with cancer on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2014. Until her illness, Barbara enjoyed a number of years as a U3A member and was a good friend to many, including those in the Local History 2 and Parks & Gardens Groups. Barbara liked nothing more than a good trip out and lunch (with a glass of wine) with her U3A friends. She will be sadly missed by many, but especially by Joyce and me – our trips will never quite be the same again.

Rest In Peace, Our Dear Friend.

**Pauline Watling & Joyce Savinson**

### **Parks & Gardens Appreciation • Leader Jill Bryant**



On 28<sup>th</sup> August our group visited Valentines Mansion and Gardens. Unfortunately, we were unable to see inside the mansion because it was closed on the day of our visit. However, it is a lovely building which was originally built in about 1696 for Elizabeth Tillotson. Valentines has changed hands many times since then. City merchant and banker Robert Surman bought the estate in 1720, and in 1760 Sir Charles Raymond, the next owner, renovated it giving the house its Georgian appearance. The council acquired it when Sarah Ingleby, the last owner, died in 1906. Since then the mansion has been home to wartime refugees, a hospital, a public health centre and a council housing department. After being empty for 15 years, it is now restored and has been open to the public since 2009. It is used for events including wedding hire and “The Great British Bake Off”. At the front there is a wonderful magnolia grandiflora, and, all around, large trees.

The gardens are a short walk from Gants Hill tube station. The first thing we saw upon arrival was the Horse Pond and a moorhen was sitting on its nest in the middle. Leading on from this is the Long Water Grotto at each end. A new Dry Garden was created in March 2012 with large grasses and colourful perennials and sedums of different varieties. Our coffee stop was in the Gardener’s Cottage and its outside tables were amongst raised beds of the kitchen garden, with runner beans and tomatoes ready to pick. Luckily for us, the sun was shining. Beyond the opening in the wall was a lawn with a central bed containing a striking display of cannas. Further on, we came to the Rose Garden; a few roses were showing a second flowering, but the lavender was magnificent along the borders and gave off wonderful perfume. The arched entrances were of hawthorn. Beside this was the walled Old English Garden which contained shrubs and perennials in symmetrical beds. The sun shone all day which was a bonus.

#### **Jill Bryant**

 My pictures of Valentines Gardens appear on the Gallery page of our website. Valentines Park is the largest green space in the Borough of Redbridge; it occupies 130 acres which were acquired in various purchases and gifts of land. The estate had been privately owned since the 1690s when its present mansion was built. When a nearby estate was sold for housing in 1899, local officials realised that, unless an area of ‘relaxation and pleasure’ was retained for the growing urban population, all traces of an undeveloped rural Ilford would be lost.

#### ***Editor***

### **Book Reading • Leader June Reid**



The book for August was *Snow Falling on Cedars* by David Guterson, which was chosen by Christine. Published in 1995, this has become a cult classic. Mainly a courtroom drama, it has echoes of *To Kill A Mockingbird* and also *Romeo And Juliet* and is set in an island off north west America. The violent death of an esteemed inhabitant produces racial tensions between islanders of both Japanese and German ancestry. The tender love story of the two teenagers is told in flashbacks and highlights the differences in cultures and passions aroused by the Japanese-American war. The writing is very descriptive and the research extremely extensive. Once again, the reception was mixed and the writing style produced a “Marmite” reaction. Some of us really loved it!

#### **June Reid**

## Local History 2 • Leader Pauline Watling



For our August outing, we went to Sands Studios which is located in St. Mary Church Street, Rotherhithe. This film studio is set up in an early 19<sup>th</sup> century warehouse near the Thames. Sands Films is a film production company which runs its own studio, props and costume workshop, sets, cutting room and various other services required in the film industry. Two of their early productions were *Tales of Beatrix Potter* and *Little Dorrit*, but the studio is also used for TV interviews.

After our late arrival (due to huge chaos on the railways), we were warmly greeted by Neil who proceeded to entertain us over a very welcome coffee. He described the various changes that have taken place in the area over the years while answering humorously the questions put to him. We were then taken on a fascinating tour of the premises and saw many examples of period costume – which we were invited to try on. It was interesting also to see the staff performing intricate sewing to create period costumes for future productions. The phrase antique furniture made on the premises seemed apt.

Following this really extensive tour, we had a very nice three-course lunch, although our attention was slightly distracted by the presence of Benedict Cumberbatch who, despite the aura of stardom, was a pleasant and friendly person.

All in all it was an enjoyable day.

### Maureen Woplin & Amelia O'Brien

 My external picture of Sands Studio appears on the Gallery page of our website.

*Editor*

## Pot Pourri • Leader Val Gosden



On a lovely calm day in September we visited the RNLI Lifeboat station on the River Thames. Being set on a pontoon on the river, it is dependent upon the current state of the river for its stability. We were lucky and noticed hardly any movement at all. We were given a visual display about the work of the RNLI in general, and, in particular, that which is carried out on the River Thames by the Tower Station which is based on the busiest stretch of waterway in the UK and Republic of Ireland. The crews are called out to assist capsized rowers, sinking yachts, people ill or injured on board vessels, boat fires and people who have either fallen or jumped into the water. We saw their current lifeboat – a real beauty – which is powered by twin water jets, and a young crew member told us much about it and its accoutrements. We were also taken to the ‘uniforms’ room, and were able to handle – and even wear – some of the items. We were surprised by the weight of some of them, and, conversely, just how light their boots are. We were given information about the river itself and told of its hazards; I felt that we all learned something about the Thames that we had not known before. The work of the RNLI is funded by individual donations, and we were more than happy to make a donation towards the continuation of this valuable service.

If any other groups wish to visit the RNLI Lifeboat station, I shall be happy to give the group leader the relevant information regarding making contact.

### Val Gosden

 My picture of the RNLI Lifeboat station appears on the Gallery page of our website.

*Editor*

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



Our September visit was to Stoke Newington where we visited Clissold Park which was large and very interesting. There was a small animal enclosure where there were two very large black goats, deer, chickens and some small coloured birds. Unfortunately, the butterfly house was closed but we did see some from the outside. We also explored the spacious St Mary's Church beside the park. We then crossed the road to the 15<sup>th</sup> century St Mary's Old Church, but that was closed owing to its rather neglected state.

Clissold House has a restaurant and also dancing and other activities for small children. After lunch at the restaurant, we walked around the children's play area, which has been well thought out, and we were impressed by the many features it had. It was a lovely day out.

### Rosalie Woods

 My pictures of Clissold Park appear on the Gallery page of our website.

### Editor

## Classical Music 1 • Leader Alan Griffiths



John Mercer led our September meeting and started with Elgar's *Cockaigne Overture* which is a musical portrait of Edwardian London, and, if you listen carefully, you can hear the sounds of cockneys, church bells and brass and military bands. This was followed by Frederick Delius' *Summer Evening* which is one of three tone poems and is very soothing and relaxing. Both of these recordings were by the English Symphony Orchestra conducted by William Boughton. We next heard the organ piece, *Sortie in E Flat*, by Louis Lefébure-Wély who was a French organist and composer. This is recognised as one of the organ world's great fun pieces. Our next recording was *Quartettsatz* by Franz Schubert played by the Borodin String Quartet. This lively piece was followed by Mozart's beautiful *Clarinet Concerto* performed by Emma Johnson accompanied by the English Chamber Orchestra conducted by Sir Charles Groves. During our tea break, we listened to *You Are My Heart's Delight* by Franz Lehár, which was sung in German by José Carreras with the English Chamber Orchestra conducted by Robert Benzi. This was an international offering with an Austrian/Hungarian composer, a Spanish tenor singing in German, an English Orchestra and an Italian conductor born in France. Our final piece was Beethoven's *Violin Concerto in D Major* played by the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Kenneth Jean. The soloist was Takako Nishizaki who was the first student to complete the Suzuki Method course at the age of nine.

### Alan Griffiths

 The Suzuki Method is a way of teaching music conceived by Shin'ichi Suzuki in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. He was a Japanese violinist who desired to bring beauty to the lives of children in his country after the devastation of World War II. He said, "I want to make good citizens. If a child hears fine music from the day of his birth and learns to play it himself, he develops sensitivity, discipline and endurance. He gets a beautiful heart." Although Suzuki believed that every child, if properly taught, was capable of a high level of musical achievement, he made it clear that the goal of such musical education is to raise generations of children with 'noble hearts' rather than to create famous musical prodigies.

### Editor

## Ramblers' 2014 Holiday



### Strolls Through Constable Country

This year's annual holiday was blessed by extremely good weather; this may be associated with our numerous church visits. We were eighteen ramblers in total: nine from Sidcup U3A, one Australian, one American and the remainder from around the UK. It was organised by Ramblers Countrywide Holidays. Our base was the very comfortable Stoke by Nayland Golf Club which is just over the Suffolk border and is surrounded by apple orchards. We stayed on a half board basis and were treated to good food and excellent service. Dinner each day was preceded by a meeting with our leader who explained the following day's agenda. 9 am each morning saw us assemble ready for the ramble which varied from 5½ to nearly 10 miles.

On the first day, we were taken to Horkesley from where we walked to Colchester where we had time to visit the Norman castle and its beautiful gardens. This walled town, known for its architecture and vibrant history, has a huge array of independent and well-known shops nestled within quirky lanes. We returned to the hotel at our own pace via the local transport.

The second day was our introduction to Constable Country. We were taken by bus to Higham where we saw the first of many churches which were painted by John Constable. Our second church was in East Bergholt, Constable's birthplace, although his house no longer stands. The most interesting fact about this church concerns the bells. It is believed locally that, owing to Cardinal Wolsey going out of favour, the new bell tower was never completed; however, since the existing bells needed housing, they were put into cages upside down with a large weight attached to each base. Rather than pulling a rope, each bell is rung by hauling on the weight. You can see and hear the bells on this website: <http://www.eastbergholt-bells.org.uk/>. From East Bergholt we walked to Flatford Mill where we were treated to an interesting talk about the life of Constable, and where we saw some of his many well-known views. It was fascinating to look through the lens of the camera and see the scenes as Constable would have done. Our walk then took us to Dedham and our bus back to the hotel.

On day three we were all prepared for our longest walk which, fortunately, was the most cloudy; I am not sure that we saw the sun at all that day. We walked across the golf course to the pretty village of Stoke by Nayland and visited another church painted by Constable. We continued our walk across farmland to visit Langley Church where they have a resident cat called Jerry. Our final stop was in Dedham where we were able to visit St. Mary's Church, which was painted by Constable on at least 26 occasions. Inside the church is a large painting, *The Ascension*, painted by Constable in 1821, which is thought to be his best religious work. After visiting the next church, which had been converted into a craft shop, we caught the bus back to our hotel.

According to our leader, the final day was a Cock and Bull story. We were dropped off at the Cock public house on the Brent Eleigh road where we walked across the fields to Lavenham Church – also painted by Constable. This visit was somewhat emotional for our group. There were memorials to the American airmen based at Lavenham who were lost in battle during World War II, plus memorials to local servicemen, and a memorial to one young man killed in Afghanistan. We walked from the church into the quaint and colourful town centre in time for the opening of the NT Guildhall. After a picnic lunch, we continued our walk across the fields and arrived at the impressive buildings of Long Melford Church and alms-houses. We also visited Melford Hall before meeting at the Bull to board our bus back to the hotel.

On Friday morning we said our goodbyes to some lovely people, all of whom had contributed to making our week a holiday to remember.

**Sandra M. Applegate**

## Ramblers 2 • Leader Pending



### Scadbury Park

At 10.15 am on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> August 2014, 4 of us met outside the Sidney Arms Pub, Old Perry Street. Our numbers were low because on the Bank Holiday – the day before – the weather had been very wet and the weather forecast for the day was for much of the same. This was handy news as the ~~silly~~<sup>sturdy</sup> team that turned up was prepared with umbrellas and over trousers.

We did a loop around the Park but omitted plans for going on to Petts Wood. Scadbury is one of our local walks which is fairly well used by the public and is always worth a visit. Even in August it is a great place for seeing fungal growth, although it will be brilliant in a couple of months. The Sidney Arms is a good finishing point for an outing.

**David Wedderkop**

## Local History 1 • Leader Lesley South



On 12<sup>th</sup> September our Local History Group visited the Supreme Court Building in Parliament Square, London, opposite the Houses of Parliament. In 2007, the Middlesex Guildhall was chosen as the location of the new Supreme Court which replaced the House of Lords as a Supreme Court. The old Guildhall was built in 1913 and has many fine features which have been refurbished – superb wood panelling and carvings, fine paintings and plaster work, very modern carpeting, curtains and emblems. The Court deals with about 80 cases a year on the interpretation of existing law and is presided over by 3, 5 or 9 learned judges who research common law and statute law to make decisions. Their decisions are then fed back to law courts and are the end or omega of the matter. The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council also meet in the building to decide case law for Commonwealth and overseas territories, *eg.* the Falkland Islands, *etc.*, which do not have the infrastructure for their own high court of appeal for civil and criminal cases. The cases, which are discussed in open court, are filmed and broadcast on the Court website, and the court can be visited by members of the public. The court is normally open Monday to Thursday for hearings; Friday is reserved for guided tours.

**Alan Godfrey**

## ENTERTAINMENT

Why is it that when you call a psychic hot line they want to know your name? Shouldn't they know it already?

The Grim Reaper came for me last night, and I beat him off with a vacuum cleaner. Talk about Dyson with death.

A mate of mine recently admitted to being addicted to brake fluid. When I quizzed him on it, he reckoned that he could stop any time.

I went to the cemetery yesterday to lay some flowers on a grave. While I was standing there, I noticed four grave diggers walking about carrying a coffin. Three hours later they were still walking about with it. I thought to myself, they've lost the plot.

## 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	Vacancies
 <b>Bird Watching</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> Wednesday 	<b>Roy Black</b>  020 8302 9942	Vacancies
 <b>Book Reading</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> Thursday (2.00–4.00 pm)	<b>June Reid</b> 020 8302 7887	2
 <b>Classical Music (Group 1)</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Friday	<b>Alan Griffiths</b> 020 8303 6636	3
 <b>Concerts/Ballet/Opera</b> Various dates and times	<b>Norma Balfour</b> 020 8303 7693	Vacancies 
 <b>Darts (at the Alma pub)</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Monday (noon) 	<b>Leader pending</b>  needed, please	Vacancies
 <b>Family History</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday & 4 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	<b>Judith Swain</b> 020 8303 5759	Vacancies
 <b>Local History (Group 1)</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Wednesday morning	<b>Lesley South</b> 020 8300 8298	Vacancies
 <b>Ramblers (Group 2)</b> 4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday (4–5 miles)	<b>David Wedderkop</b>  020 8850 5042	Vacancies
 <b>Rummikub®</b> 4 <sup>th</sup> Monday (2.00–4.00 pm)	<b>Margaret Platt</b> 020 8309 6395	2
 <b>Ten-Pin Bowling (Bexleyheath)</b> Mondays (10.00 am)  £	<b>Gay Braybrook</b>  020 8309 6372	Vacancies
 <b>Theatre (Group 2)</b> Various matinées	<b>Joan &amp; John Somerset</b> 020 8300 0890	Vacancies 
 <b>Wine Appreciation</b> Last Thursday (7.30 pm) £	<b>Michael Jordan</b> 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.

**Keith Alker, Group Co-ordinator**  020 8850 2853 Email: alker@btinternet.com.

### 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 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

### 2014

October	Sue Spiel	Pam Ayres
November	Mr Halfors	The Spa Valley Railway
December	Alan Simmons	Entertainer

## 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
Group Co-ordinator	Keith Alker	020 8850 2853
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*

*Nothing is impossible for the man who doesn't have to do it himself.*