

**SIDCUP & DISTRICT UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE
NEWSLETTER**

September 2009



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

NOTICES

Alzheimers Society Memory Walk 2009

Have Fun, raise money and fight dementia every step of the way.
Join us for a Sunday stroll across the bridges of London.
Choose between a 2, 5, or 10 mile walk on Sunday 20th September.
Call Bexley Branch on 01322 334245 or e-mail bexleybranch@alzheimers.org.uk
By taking part you can raise money to help people affected by dementia.
The walks start at 11 am from Mary Harmsworth Park (The Imperial War Museum).

George Murrell

(i) Anyone who is interested in other activities of the Alzheimer's Society can learn more from their website: <http://alzheimers.org.uk/site/index.php>

Editor

The Resource Centre

The Resource Centre at the National Office in Bromley has a collection of non-book material available to all U3A groups to borrow free of charge except for the cost of return postage. Slides, videos, cassettes, DVDs and CDs are available for a wide range of subjects. Individual subject lists can be obtained from the Resource Centre on request, and the whole catalogue is available on the website with an ordering facility. Please note that you first have to register with the Resource Centre as a user either by telephoning between 9.30 am and 4.00 pm on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, or by going into the online resource centre catalogue and clicking on 'sign up'. Bookings can be made nine months ahead and loans are for an initial period of 3 weeks. Over 75% of U3As make regular use of the Resource Centre to support and enhance their study groups and, if you would like more detail about a particular item, do not hesitate to contact the Resource Centre.

Third Age Trust Website Website <http://www.u3a.org.uk/> 020 8315 0199

Photography Competition

Please ensure that you have picked up your voting slip for today's competition.

GROUP NEWS

Classical Music : Leader Derick Johnson



We heard a selection from David Wallis in August which started with Wagner's Overture to The Mastersingers played by West-Eastern Divan Orchestra conducted by its founder, Daniel Barenboim. This orchestra is made up of young musicians from Jewish and Arab backgrounds with the hope that it may help the peace process in some way in the middle east. This was followed by Telemann's Concerto in F major for recorder, bassoon, strings and continuo by Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields conducted by Kenneth Sillito with Michala Petri on the recorder and Klaus Thunemann on the bassoon. These two are outstanding exponents of their instruments, both of which are underused, the recorder especially so. Joseph Suk followed with his serenade for strings by the London Chamber Orchestra conducted by Christopher Warren-Green. We heard that Suk studied with Dvořák, eventually married his daughter, and one could see how he was influenced by his father-in-law's music. Next was César Franck's Symphonic Variations played by the Orchestre du Capitole de Toulouse and conducted by Michael Plesson with Jean-Phillippe Collard on the piano. This was followed by Johann Baptist Vanhal (of whom few of us had heard) with two pieces from his Missa Pastorale in C major, "Kyrie" and "Gloria", by the Tower Voices of New Zealand Arcadia Ensemble. After the interval we had an unusual short choral interlude made by a group from Jewish churches in Johannesburg. The afternoon ended with Mozart's Symphony № 9 in B flat major played by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. We all felt better for the afternoon of enjoyable music – as we always do!

Derick Johnson

Freedom Pass Explorers : Leader Val Gosden



On a pleasant sunny day in July we travelled to New Ash Green by train and bus. We enjoyed coffee in a pub which opened about 10 minutes early especially for us, and, after purchasing sandwiches, etc, locally we walked through a small park and into woods. We then went round a cornfield while admiring the poppies at the edges of the field. We then returned to the wood and found a fallen tree where we enjoyed our lunch. We then took a leisurely stroll back to the village itself and looked at the more modern style of houses there.

Val Gosden

Ramblers 2 : Leaders Pat & Alf Cracknell



To start our August ramble we caught the train from Sidcup to Abbey Wood. From there we walked through Lesnes Abbey Woods where we came upon a very tranquil pond which had many goldfish in it and a family of coots. We carried on but had to take shelter when we were caught in an unexpected heavy shower of rain; this did not last for very long, however, so we continued across Bostall Heath to Bostall Woods and then on to East Wickham Open Space. We intended to carry on to Shooters Hill but, unfortunately, came to a locked metal gate across our path upon which a sign said that haymaking was in progress so we terminated our walk. Despite the early rain, the weather turned out sunny and warm and it was a lovely day.

Barbara Olney

Ramblers 2 : Leaders Pat & Alf Cracknell



This year for our bi-annual rambling holiday, sixteen of us went to Cooden Beach Hotel near Bexhill-on-Sea. The hotel, which was adjacent to the beach, was very comfortable and the meals were good. We were also blessed with good weather. A coach was provided each morning to drop us off at our starting point and to pick us up at the end of the day. Our guide was excellent and very knowledgeable on the history of the area.

On our first walk, we dropped off four non-walkers in Hastings and carried on to Iklesham where our walk started. We passed Paul McCartney's windmill, beneath which lies his recording studio. The hotel provided a packed lunch every day, and today we ate it in a churchyard in Winchelsea. Spike Milligan is buried in this churchyard and a Celtic Cross bears his now famous quote, albeit in Gaelic, "I told you I was ill". We carried on to the historic town of Rye, covering about seven miles in all, where we met the non-walkers who had taken advantage of their bus passes from Hastings.

Our second day started at Guestling Green, from where we walked to the village of Pett and the coast at Cliff End. We then climbed up the Fire Hills, supposedly named after the gorse covered hills when they are in full bloom, to Fairlight and then on through the Country Park until we arrived at Hastings far below us. Descending into town, we all headed for the nearest tearooms. We had covered about seven and a half miles.

Our third walk, which was circular, started at the delightful village of Alfriston. We began climbing the Downs going up past the Long Man of Wilmington on the steep slopes of Windover Hill. This is the tallest chalk hill figure in England. Thought originally to be Neolithic, archaeologists now date it as 16th century. Looking across we saw a white horse of unknown origin carved out on another hillside. Reaching the top of the South Downs, we were now 570 feet above sea level. The views were breathtaking; we could see way across to the North Downs. Having made good progress, we arrived back at Alfriston with time to spare and joined up with our friends who had not walked. We had covered eight miles; the walks were getting longer each day. After liquid refreshments, we took advantage of our time to explore the village. We discovered The Old Clergy House, a Medieval Hall that dates back to the 14th century and which was the National Trust's first acquisition in 1896.

On our last walk, we were dropped off at the top of Beachy Head with the Seven Sisters ahead of us – or the seven blisters, as one wag remarked. The views across the Downs, as on all of our walks, were spectacular. These hills were very strenuous and we were pleased to drop down finally into Seaford and follow the river Cuckmere to Exceat. Our efforts were acknowledge by a flypast, identified by the men as a Hurricane, a Spitfire, and a Lancaster. We thought we had done well but a flypast in our honour was a bit over the top. It turned out they were from the Eastbourne air show.

Our last day was free and we paired off and did our own thing. We all had a very enjoyable time.

Oops, we nearly forgot the cranberry sauce, but that's another story!

Pat & Alf Cracknell

 A group photograph taken during this holiday is available to view on the "Gallery" page of our website.

Editor

Freedom Pass Explorers : Leader Val Gosden



Having accepted the challenge to lead the August F.P.E. group, and armed with Val's excellently prepared journey plan, Richard and I made our way to Sidcup station for the 9.58 train, where we met up with the other members who were to join us on the 'mystery journey' – which this month was to Elstree and Borehamwood.

On arrival our first task was to find a café (or should I say two cafés) for coffee and a comfort stop. We studied a local map and we all decided to meet up at the bus stop and take the 107 bus to the nearby Aldenham Country Park. Here we began a pleasant walk along country lanes to the entrance of the park; here we found families enjoying fun and games and picnicking in lovely fields surrounded by beautiful trees. Having referred to the map, we then headed for the dam and reservoir, where we all managed to perch on the wall and enjoy our picnic lunch. We found the waters to be frequented by Canada geese, coots and mallards and one lonely windsurfer. After lunch, we continued our walk towards the small rare breed farm, where the most popular sight was a couple of sows feeding their piglets with, needless to say, lots of 'oohs and aahs' from the ladies in the group. After taking photos of the group – a sight to behold – we commenced our journey homewards on a public footpath through a field of what looked like broad beans. At the bus stop a count was taken and everybody was present; thank goodness I hadn't lost anybody on the way.

Thank you, Val, for giving me the opportunity of leading such a fun group of U3A members, it was a day of great teamwork, laughter and relaxation in beautiful surroundings.

Christine Spencer

English Heritage & National Trust : Leaders John & Olive Mercer



Visit to Lullingstone Roman Villa 26th August 2009

In 1939 a storm blew down a tree leading to the rediscovery of a Roman villa the existence of which had previously been noted at least two hundred years before. When war loomed the site was covered and no further action was taken for ten years until a group of local enthusiasts started excavations. Their findings were carefully recorded by Colonel G. W. Meates, whose records lead to the site being taken over by the Ministry of Works. When excavations were complete, and the site protected by a shell building, it was opened to the public in 1963.

Now under the care of English Heritage, the original shell covering has been replaced and many of the artefacts found by earlier archaeologists returned to the site. Exceptions include the wonderful Roman heads that were found; these are now in the British Museum and only replicas remain on site. Nevertheless, the highlight is the wonderful mosaic flooring which is still in situ, and this indicates that a person of some wealth or stature must have lived there. Jane Ray, an award-winning illustrator of children's books, has cleverly illustrated the story of the villa and its occupants with drawings. Visitors may, as they tour the exhibition, play a Roman board game or dress up in a Roman costume. The visit gave a good idea of life in the Darent Valley and the decline of Roman administration in Britain. I do have one criticism, however: the programmed lighting system has a habit of switching off while you are halfway through reading one of the excellent display boards. Most of our group had visited the villa before and agreed that, as the site had since been upgraded, a visit could be recommended.

Eric Percival

Bird Watching : Leaders Gay Braybrook & José Steward



We stayed local for our September outing by visiting Footscray Meadows. We set off in a light shower, which lasted only a few minutes, and then the remainder of the morning was dry and bright. The birds came out in abundance! A large flock of hungry starlings moved back and forth across the meadows, and mixed with them was a small flock of fieldfare moving about with the thrush's typical upright stance. Two goldfinches then joined the fieldfares. The next bird to catch our attention was a green woodpecker, which was busily feeding on the ground, and it was soon joined by another woodpecker. Also enjoying the meadow were lots of black crows, pigeons, magpies, and green parakeets. Up to this point we had only walked a few yards! We slowly made our way to the overgrown banks of the lake; perhaps they are left this way on purpose either to leave a habitat for the birds, or to prevent fishing. Overhead we spotted two kestrels apparently playing with each other on the wing, before stopping for a short "hover" then going off again. On the lake, five cygnets were as large as their parents and were looking very healthy. There was a huge number of mallards (many of them juveniles), but we didn't see any other species of duck. However, there were moorhens and coots, all with juveniles, and several black headed gulls. The water in the lake was very clear, fast flowing, and with much vegetation growing below the surface and we chanced to see a very large carp. But our last big treat was to see a female kestrel landing on a post in front of us, and we were able to watch her hunting from her perch.

Our next outing on 7th October is to Sevenoaks Wildfowl Reserve.

Everyone is welcome!

José Steward

Local History Group 3 : Leader Pam Kirk



Visit to the Royal Institute 2nd September 2009

Twelve members of the group met at Charing Cross Station from where we proceeded by bus to the Ritz Hotel – but avoided the temptation to go inside for morning coffee. The Royal Institute is located nearby, and we managed to have a coffee break there before our guide, Professor Frank James, arrived to lead us on a tour of the building and exhibits. The Institute was founded in 1799 for the purpose of scientific research and also to deepen the public's understanding of science. We started our tour in a room where a television screen in a gilded frame was showing highlights from previous Christmas lectures; it was here that Professor James outlined the history of the Institute. We then walked a short way into the lecture hall – familiar to many from television broadcasts at Christmas time – and it was here that the first lecture for children was given by Michael Faraday in 1826. From here we went down to the main exhibition area where our guide switched on a game for children that showed the ten chemical elements discovered at the R.I. He explained the contents of the showcases, three of which are familiar to everyone; the Dewar (or Thermos) flask, the miners safety lamp, and the experiments by Faraday which affect all our lives. Research work is still conducted here with some 40 scientists and students beavering away to improve life for everyone. We left there feeling out of our depths on some of the comments made, but very much within it on others.

Eric Percival

Ramblers 1 : Leader Annette Jansen



For our August ramble ten of us met at Eastbourne Pier where we boarded a bus for East Dean. After walking up a steep hill, we reached the South Downs. We then walked to Birling Gap for lunch and then onwards and upwards to Beachy Head for a very welcome tea stop. After Beachy Head it was downhill almost all the way back to Eastbourne. The weather was ideal, with sunshine and a nice breeze to keep us cool. Most of us stopped in Eastbourne for a meal which finished off a very nice day.

Gloria Exeter

ENTERTAINMENT

The Love Song of J. Alfred Spatchcock

or

My Goose Is Cooked

They say I've got a complex,
But cannot tell me whose.
I only know one thing my dear,
It isn't Oedipus.

They say I'm schizophrenic;
I know that can't be true –
I couldn't love you twice as much
As I already do.

I fear we shall not meet again.
They've locked me up. Adieu!
And just because I told them, dear,
I'm mad with love for you.

Ian Brydon

GROUP VACANCIES

GROUP NAME	LEADER	VACANCIES
Amblers (Group 1) 3 rd Wednesday (10.30 am)	John Harbert 020 8300 5361	Yes
Amblers (Group 3) 3 rd Wednesday (10.30 am)	Norma Balfour/José Steward 020 8303 7693/07957 181808	Yes
Antiques Appreciation (Group 3) 2 nd Wednesday (10 am)	Martin Baker 020 8300 1752	2
Bird Watching 1 st Wednesday (morning)	Gay Braybrook/José Steward 020 8309 6372/07957 181808	Yes. Notice on board at meetings
Boules (Danson Park – seasonal) 2 nd & 4 th Thursday (10 am)	Bart Jansen 01322 522252	5
Bridge Monday	Fred Till 01322 528605	4
Darts (at The Alma pub) 2 nd Monday (midday)	Fred Green	Yes
Local History (Group 1) 2 nd Wednesday	John Harlow 020 8300 3865	2
Local History (Group 2) 2 nd Wednesday	José Steward 020 8302 1627	3
National Trust/English Heritage Various dates & times	John & Olive Mercer 020 8300 3136	Yes
Parks & Gardens Appreciation 4 th Thursday (Feb to Oct)	Jill Bryant/Barbara Olney 01322 524008/020 8302 4289	2
Ramblers (Group 1) (6-7 miles) 4 th Tuesday (10.30 am)	Annette Jansen 01322 522252	Yes
Ramblers (Group 2) (4-5 miles) 4 th Tuesday	Pat & Alf Cracknell 020 8302 0823	Yes
Recorder Playing Day to be arranged	Mary Hawes 020 8300 0521	6
Saturday Ramble (4-5 miles) 1 st Saturday (morning)	Gay Braybrook 020 8309 6372	Yes
10-Pin Bowling (Bexleyheath) Mondays (10 am)	Gay Braybrook 020 8309 6372	Yes
Theatre (Group 2) Various matinées	Joan & John Somerset 020 8300 0890	Yes. Notice on board at meetings

The above lists, 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 the Group Co-ordinator.

Christine Spencer, Group Co-ordinator ☎ 020 8300 4291

Why not start a new group?

If you are on the waiting list to join a full group why not create a new one and then advertise it in this Newsletter and on our website? It is not difficult to run a group and the leader of a full one can advise you how it is done.

PROGRAMME

2009

September		Photo competition & quiz
October	Mr. M. Parkin	Women in Print
November	Mr. R. Smith	Village Signs in Kent
December	Mrs. P. Mortlock	Ightham Mote

2010

January	Katherine Eames	Climate Change
February	Dr. P. Brandham	Kew in Close-Up
March		A.G.M.
April	Mrs. B. Sadler	The Great Flood of 1953
May	Mr. S. Robinson	The City
June	Mr. M. Harrison	Midsummer Madness

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairman	John Mercer	020 8300 3136
Vice-Chairman	Annette Jansen	01322 522252
Minutes Secretary	George Murrell	020 8850 2046
Treasurer	Dennis Brittain	
Membership Secretary	John Harlow	020 8300 3865
Speakers Secretary	Valerie Gosden	020 8300 0664
Group Co-ordinator	Christine Spencer	020 8300 4291
Welfare Officer	Gay Braybrook	020 8309 6372
Social Secretary	Anne Evans	020 8302 2261

USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

Travel Group Leader	Margaret Platt	020 8309 6395
Raffle Organiser	Pat Garwood	020 8306 0013
Newsletter Editor & Webmaster	David Smith	020 8304 2305

Please either e-mail contributions to me at editor.u3a@ukonline.co.uk or post them to me at 56 Crofton Avenue, Bexley DA5 3AR – typed if possible.

Please submit contributions by 3rd of the month.

WEBSITE

www.sidcup-u3a.org.uk

Afterthought

No-one gets too old to learn a new way of being stupid.