

# SIDCUP & DISTRICT UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE NEWSLETTER

September 2015



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

## NOTICES

### **Bi-Annual Bridge Afternoon**

You are invited to a relaxing afternoon of bridge organised by Dartford U3A at Christ Church Parish Hall, Cross Road, Dartford DA1 3ET on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> October.

Doors open at 1.30 pm and play starts at 2.00 pm sharp. All standards of players are welcome and, if you do not have a partner, we are sure we can find you one. The cost is £3.00 each player which includes tea, coffee and cakes.

Director: John White.

Enquiries: Sheila Arter ☎ 01322 286596 or email [arter@talktalk.net](mailto:arter@talktalk.net).

*N.B.* Swanley U3A, Bexley U3A and Sidcup U3A members please phone or email Sheila Arter to confirm that you are coming along to the Bridge Afternoon; this would give us some idea about how many chairs and tables to set out – otherwise, just come along. Any profit will be donated to the Ellenor Lions Hospice.

**Sheila Arter, Dartford U3A**

### **Reminder**

Members are reminded that the October monthly meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> October will take place at St. Lawrence's Church Hall, Hamilton Road, Sidcup. The New Community Church is not available to us on that date. Apologies for any inconvenience. Please arrive early as seating is limited. For this meeting we shall require two volunteers to do the teas – no volunteers means no tea will be available.

**Anne Evans**

### **U3A Events Mailing List**

To receive updates regarding U3A events direct to your email inbox, you can sign up to the events mailing list in the members' area of the Third Age Trust website. Your email address will only be used for this purpose, and never passed on to third parties.

**George Murrell**

① As always, various contact details are shown on the last page of the Newsletter.

**Editor**

## **Living History Event in Sidcup June 2016**

Lamorbey & Sidcup Local History Society, together with Rose Bruford College, and with the assistance of Bexley Local Studies and Archives, will be organising a Living History event in Sidcup next year. It will be held on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2016 and its purpose will be to commemorate life on the Home Front in Sidcup during the First World War. This will be an exciting opportunity for the whole community to get involved in different ways.

We anticipate that there will be a street theatre, poetry readings, stalls representing local organisations, songs, letter reading, guided walks and a display of vintage vehicles.

We are inviting as many people and groups as possible to participate in this including local businesses, schools, choirs and churches. This is a preliminary contact asking if Sidcup U3A would be interested in taking part in this event by manning a stall on that day advertising the work you do and how you contribute to life in and around Sidcup.

**Penny Duggan, Lamorbey & Sidcup Local History Society**

### **Events**

**U3A Christmas Concert** with the Brandenburg Singers and Organ at the Queen's Chapel of the Savoy on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> December. There are two performances: 2.00pm and 5.30pm. Tickets costing £18 each (which include mulled wine and mince pies) are available from Third Age Trust, 19 East Street, Bromley BR1 1QE.

**Shared Learning Project at King's College London** – Researching Victorian lives. The project seeks to add short biographies to the list of staff from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The team will meet weekly from 1.30–3.30 pm on Tuesdays from 6<sup>th</sup> October until 8<sup>th</sup> December. Further details are available from Linda Crook, email [linda.crook.slp@gmail.com](mailto:linda.crook.slp@gmail.com).

**George Murrell**

## **GROUP NEWS**

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



The Book Choice for August was *The Goldfinch* written by Donna Tartt and chosen by Liz. The size of this novel was quite intimidating, but, like real bookworms, we (mostly) read it to the end. This novel has been much discussed in the press with many different points of view. We could see the reason for this as our response was very divided, too. The story follows a thirteen year old boy in New York who, through various traumas and tragedies, sinks to the criminal world. We follow his erratic life until he sees the error of his ways and tries to make amends for all his mistakes. The beginning of the story centres on his much loved mother who educates him to appreciate art and beauty. Whilst visiting an art gallery in New York, a terrorist bomb changes his life forever. The narrative moves between New York, Las Vegas and Amsterdam. The various characters introduced are quite Dickensian in their portrayal. Personally, I loved this book but several of us didn't! It certainly gave us a very lively discussion. Thank you, Liz.

**June Reid**

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



In July we made a return visit to Amersham to which we travelled on the Chiltern Railways from Marylebone. After our coffee stop in Amersham town, we walked down through a lovely beech wood and out into a wheat field with the old village of Amersham down the hill beyond. We ate our sandwiches in little park full of summer flowers before taking a stroll through the old High Street. All the buildings still have the old coaching entrances and the shops are cute and classy. The visit was cut a bit short by the rain so we caught a bus back to the station. It was disappointing to learn there had been a platform collapse further down the line, so there were no trains! After a short wait for a taxi, a Metropolitan train suddenly appeared which took us part way; in fact, it took four trains to get back to Charing Cross!

In August we went in the opposite direction – south east to Knockholt Station where we stopped off at Broke Hill Golf Club for coffee, where we sat outside on a terrace overlooking the course and fountain. It was then a countryside walk across the golf course, past an old orchard and on to the Parish Church of St Margaret's, Halstead. After a few more ups and downs, we arrived at the Bull's Head, Pratts Bottom. We spent some time here and the food was excellent. We then had a short walk to the bus stop where we caught the R10 at 15.21. This was a bit of luck as the next bus was 17.55! It was another lovely day out.

### Christine Withams

## Walking in London • Leader Val Gosden



August marked the last TIME I would be leading this group, so I chose CLOCKS as the theme for the walk. We were a little disappointed not to see some of those mentioned in the book I was working from (which was published in 2013), but we did see quite a few unusual clocks as we walked in a roundabout way from Charing Cross to Cannon Street. Roy (Morton) took photos of those clocks we did see, and these can be seen on our U3A website. Our lunchtime break was at Covent Garden and we were able to enter St. Paul's Church there. This is The Actors Church, designed by Inigo Jones, and inside are plaques with the names of many famous actors on them, including one for Rose Bruford, whose name is well remembered in Sidcup today. Another church we visited was St. Clement Danes, the Central church of the Royal Air Force, which was designed by Inigo Jones. Inside were Books of Remembrance with the names of over 150,000 men and women who died whilst serving in the Royal Air Force. Walking further along Fleet Street we saw, across the road, St. Bride's Church – the Church for the Press. There has been a church on this site for centuries; the one built by Christopher Wren was bombed during the war but in 1953 it was rebuilt and is well-known for its wedding-cake spire.

I have enjoyed the many walks we have undertaken in London but it is now time for me to 'hang up my walking boots', and, unless someone is willing to lead the group in the future (not necessarily on the same day and week in the month), I am afraid those whose names are on the waiting list will be disappointed. Any offers?

### Val Gosden

**i** Naturally, this offer is extended to those on the waiting list, too, as Val's 'retirement' has created a vacancy. This is a chance to run an established group in whatever way you see fit. Look on the Gallery page of our website for Roy's photos.

### Editor

## Pot Pourri • Leader Val Gosden



The group's outing was to Trinity Buoy Wharf, Orchard Place, E14, which is situated on the north bank of the Thames on the River Lea. The site has London's only lighthouse which was built in 1864 on land owned by Trinity House. Experiments were carried out to test the light as observed from Shooters Hill and the site was a store for navigation buoys and chains. Lighthouse keepers were trained there and Michael Faraday, the scientist, worked on the site carrying out experiments on electricity and gas. There is a wooden hut that replicates a place he might have used and has the sounds of the river and sea played on speakers. The desk gave examples of Victorian writing and thoughts. The floor was strewn with sea worn pebbles. Nearby is a lunar clock powered by the tide; also a large bell with a pendulum that reached down into the water and the clapper sounds the bell on movement from the water. Most of the Victorian buildings are used by artists and their craftwork is displayed on the outside walls. The site is home to Container City – a series of refurbished shipping containers stacked on top of each other which serve as offices and which are painted in bright colours. Moored to the quay was a red light ship now out of service. Boards displayed the history of the area pointing out that at one time there was a school on the site and most of the children had the same surname of Lammins. The Thames Shipbuilding company once built large ships here which had to be launched sideways into the Thames. West Ham football team started here as The Hammers being employees of the company. Our walk to Orchard Place passed a memorial to the founding fathers of Virginia who set sail from the river in about 1607.

### Alan Godfrey

 My pictures of the experimental lighthouse, the lunar clock and the memorial appear on the Gallery page of our website. For those interested in visiting this place, the nearest station is East India on the DLR from which it is signposted on the south side.

### Editor

## Classical Music • Leader Olive Mercer



A somewhat depleted group of music lovers (probably due to holidays) met for an enjoyable afternoon of American music chosen by Barbara Carpenter. Starting with Sousa's rousing *Liberty Bell March* to get us in transatlantic mood, we heard music by Copland, Duke Ellington, Gershwin and Grofe. Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man* and his *Red Pony Suite* were followed by *David Danced Before the Lord* by Ellington, a most unusual piece, accompanied by the sound of tap dancing and the first half of the programme closed with an excellent rendition of Gershwin's celebrated *Rhapsody in Blue*. After the break, we heard part of Grofe's *Grand Canyon Suite*, including *Cloudburst*, most appropriate after the storm of the previous day! Finally, Simon Rattle and the Glyndebourne Chorus entertained us with excerpts from *Porgy and Bess* which included Willard White's rich tones singing *I've Got Plenty of Nothing*.

By coincidence, an evening of American music from the Proms programme was shown on BBC 4 that same day when we were entertained once more with *Rhapsody in Blue* played by the amazing 19 year old Martin James Bartlett, 2014's Young Musician of the Year. Barbara must have had a premonition.

### Olive Mercer

### **Local History 3 • Leader Christine Withams**



On 12<sup>th</sup> August, 11 members of the group went to visit the Cinema Museum at Kennington. We had a very interesting introduction covering the history of the museum and building. We then went around the museum which contains posters, projectors, books and uniforms and much memorabilia relating to Charlie Chaplin who spent time there with his mother and half-brother when it was a workhouse. After some welcome refreshment, we returned to the small cinema and saw five short films. It was an enjoyable visit.

### **Rosalie Woods & Jean Duhig**

### **Ramblers 1 • Leader Annette Holland**



#### **August 2015 Ramble Leaders Cynthia & Roy Morton**

11 of us started this month's ramble at Tea Pot Island Café, Yalding, on the River Medway, along a section of the 44.8 km long Medway Valley Path. We were hoping that history would not be on a twelve-month cycle when Cynthia and I led August's 2014 ramble in torrential rain. We had done our anti-rain dance before setting out in the hope that the weather forecast of "No rain until 1 o'clock" would be granted.

The plan was to walk upstream along the bank of the Medway for X number of hours or 3½ miles, whichever came soonest, have a short break then return to the Tea Pot Café for lunch. The previous day had seen torrential rain with flooding in parts of Kent and therefore some trepidation was experienced by the leaders as to the state of the riverbank. We were lucky – there were just a few puddles and two or three slippery sections. At a sluice gate, Canadian canoeists could be seen in the fast-flowing river. Apparently, one small lad had a look of dread on his face during a short burst of wild water paddling, then utter joy to come out the other end with only a soaking.

Along the riverbank were a couple of concrete pillboxes, a converted oast house and a disused lock. I did not see even one duck or a dragonfly. There was a complete lack of wildlife except for a few hidden, chirruping birds. It was slightly disappointing; maybe the muddy waters and rain kept them at home. We took our snacks in an adjacent field accompanied by an annoying wasp which caused an interesting jig to be performed. Sorry, it was not good enough for an audition to Strictly!

Our return was uneventful with not even a train travelling over the Medway to rattle our teeth when walking under the rail bridge. Needless to say, the anti-rain dance only nearly worked; rain started just before completion of our ramble. We all enjoyed some welcome refreshments at the Tea Pot Island Café, sitting at a table listening to the rain playing a tune on the canopy. Everybody enjoyed the flat walk of about 6⅓ miles which had no stiles.

The Medway divides people born in Kent between Kentish Men (or Maids), whereas those born in East Kent are Men (or Maids) of Kent.

Footnote. Car park currently costs £2 on weekdays. After very heavy rain and in winter, the footpath can be very wet or even flooded in places. The footpath had been extensively cleared of vegetation, as any walker knows, brambles and stinging nettles, *etc.* can be a problem; we were fortunate that this path had been cleared.

### **Roy Morton**

## Ten-Pin Bowling • Contact Gay Braybrook



Once again we must thank Pat Andrews for organising our trip to Cliftonville, and, in spite of the rain, it was a good day. The Ten-Pin bowling alley in Cliftonville – Bugsbys – treated us well by serving bread pudding at half time.

Afterwards, we all went our different ways for lunch. Some went to Faversham or Broadstairs and visited a very good pub en route.

## Gay Braybrook

## Local History 2 • Leader Pauline Watling



### British Fire Museum

On Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> August a group of 19 members met at Sidcup Station to take the 9.41 train to London Bridge. We then walked along Borough High Street and Union Street to the Island Café where we stopped for a welcome coffee. The weather was ideal for walking – not too hot and no wind. We then continued to the British Fire Museum, on Southwark Bridge Road, for our 11.00 am appointment. On arrival, we were greeted by David Rogers, a retired fireman, who was our guide for two very interesting hours.

We started by viewing and examining the various types of machinery used to fight fire. Our members were really interested in the various forms and a number asked questions which David answered in great detail. One of these firefighting machines was used in the Fire of London. It was a very primitive method compared to the one used today. There were also four fire engines in this building, all in pristine condition. They were used through the ages, including the modern one in service today. From there we proceeded to Winchester House, which was built in 1820 and is home to London's chief Fire Officers. Here we viewed some wonderful pictures, obviously many of fires, large and small. There was also an abundance of memorabilia including firefighting equipment used over a period of time. We saw the various uniforms worn in the past and also a selection of heavy helmets which we could try on. The modern firefighting clothing is now fire retardant whereas previously it was not. David told us that this house is haunted and the ghost has actually been seen!

We were lucky to have made this visit as in September as the whole museum is moving to Lambeth as the land has been sold to developers. It will be a few years until it reopens but, when it does, it is well worth a visit. Each of us paid £3 for our very comprehensive and enjoyable tour. *N.B.* Booking is essential.

## Maureen Woplin & Amelia O'Brien

**(i)** Following a multitude of ad-hoc firefighting arrangements and the Great Fire of London, various insurance companies established units to combat fires that occurred in buildings that those companies insured. As demands grew on the primitive firefighting units, they began co-operating with each other until, on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1833, the London Fire Engine Establishment was formed. With 80 firefighters and 13 fire stations, the unit was still a private enterprise funded by the insurance companies, and, as such, was responsible mainly for saving material goods from fire. Several large fires, most notably at the Palace of Westminster in 1834, spurred the insurance companies to lobby the British Government to provide the brigade at public expense and management, and, in 1865, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade Act was passed. In 1904, the brigade was renamed as the London Fire Brigade.

## Editor

### Ramblers 3 • Leader Trevor Ford



We had two excellent summer walks, both out of our usual territory, one circular, one linear. July's walk around Box Hill bloomed in brilliant sunshine. In fact, we were glad of the shade in the woodland for part of the trip. From the car park at Burford Bridge, we kept on the level, turning the corner past Juniper Hall, the field studies centre. We then attacked the steep ascent up Juniper Top. Ann wasn't sure if she could manage the hill, but tackled it easily in her sandals. Being chalk hills – so free-draining – even I found it difficult to locate any mud. We all agreed that coming down was tougher than going up. Indeed, it was me who went for a trip right at the top of Box Hill on the way back and ended up with more than my pride a little dented. Ann could remember rolling head-over-heels down it as a child. I remembered taking 6<sup>th</sup> formers on night hikes and joining them also in gambolling downwards, though more sideways, than forwards rolls. Between the ascent and descent there was some level walking through the woods and into Box Hill village for lunch in the garden at the Tree Pub. After lunch, we had some up-and-down on the Pilgrims' and North Downs Way, and out to the viewpoint with spectacular views – including Dorking sewage works – which eventually brought us to the information centre and café for much-needed ice-creams. It was also the site of a fort to defend against possible invasion by Napoleonic forces. Before our precipitous pitch down, we came across the headstone (or should it be footstone?) of an eccentric who had been buried head downwards.

August saw us on the South Downs Way, travelling over the famous Seven Sisters and on to Beachy Head. Because it was going to be a linear walk, we had to do some juggling around with cars at the start. I had a car full and we managed to meet up with Janette and Brian travelling separately at Cuckmere Haven. Brian and I then took two cars to Beachy Head, returning in one to join the others who had been enjoying the luxury of a cup of coffee while waiting for us. We meandered past the Ox-Bow lakes which are a striking feature of this last part of the River Cuckmere. I tried to take a short-cut across the shoulder of a hill (but, as regular readers will know, that's nearly always a mistake), so we had to come down again, thus turning the Seven Sisters into Eight Sisters (or rather 7 and 2 halves, since someone definitely slipped another small one in on the way to Birling Gap). The weather had been grey and misty in the morning, for which actually we were grateful, since the brilliant afternoon sun we received later proved challenging to our stamina on the hills. Most, that is, except Pat who yomped away at the front. Somewhere along the way, since my last visit (undertaken regularly on New Year's Days), Birling Gap Hotel had been taken over by the National Trust; this was all very twee with sandwiches and stuffed spuds, but Brian, for one, lamented the lack of real ale. I remembered, wrongly, that there is only one hill beyond Birling incorporating the Belle Tout lighthouse. To enable it to be moved away from the cliff edge during heavy erosion periods, the lighthouse has been reinstalled on tramlines. There was also a small stall selling ices, *etc.* but we practiced our delayed gratification until the end of the walk at Beachy Head. Unfortunately, that meant one more down and up. However, the views both inland and out to sea were staggeringly beautiful. It was also the start of the Eastbourne air show so we were able to see some of that. (Horrific news about the Shoreham air show).

Juggling with cars again at the end and with motorway journeys on a Friday afternoon (though not bad in reality), it was a long, but thoroughly enjoyable day.

#### Trevor Ford

**i** Peter Labilliere was buried upside down without religious ceremony at his own request in June 1800. His headstone does not mark the exact position of his grave and contains two errors: the spelling of his name and the month of burial. He was a major in the British army.

#### Editor

**FEEDBACK**

**Speakers Secretary**

We are relieved to report that there is now a small Speakers Team working to secure a programme of speakers for 2016. The success of the Team will be judged by you and must therefore be dependent largely on your input.

The Team has added below several categories of topics from which potential speakers could be drawn. However, the Team does not want to impose its choice of topics as there are over 250 of you and only a handful of them.

So take this opportunity to have your say. Many of you must have heard very good speakers at other clubs. The team is anxious to hear from you about them! Please visit them.

Tick as many categories as you wish or add your own. Tear off the slip below and take it to any of the Team seated at the side. Thank you.

**Janet Lambern**



LOCAL HISTORY	MILITARY EVENTS	COMEDY	ARCHITECTURE	HISTORIC HOUSES	
POETRY	AVIATION HISTORY	MUSIC	FAMOUS PEOPLE	GARDENS	
PHOTOGRAPHY	TRAVEL NEAR & FAR	THE LAW	PASTIMES/ HOBBIES	ART/ARTISTS	

OTHER SUGGESTIONS:

## GROUP VACANCIES

GROUP NAME	LEADER/CONTACT	VACANCIES
 <b>Bird Watching</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> Wednesday (10.00 am)  	<b>Roy Black</b>  020 8302 9942	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Book Reading</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> Thursday (2.00–4.00 pm)	<b>June Reid</b> 020 8302 7887	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Classical Music</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Friday (2.30–4.30 pm)	<b>Olive Mercer</b> 020 8300 3136	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Concerts/Ballet/Opera</b> Various dates and times £ 	<b>Norma Balfour</b> 020 8303 7693	<b>Vacancies</b> 
 <b>Darts (at the Alma pub)</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Monday (noon)  	<b>Leader pending</b>  needed, please	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Family History</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday & 4 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	<b>Judith Swain</b> 020 8303 5759	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Local History (Group 3)</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Wednesday morning	<b>Christine Withams</b> 020 8850 4144	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Ramblers (Group 2)</b> 4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday (4–5 miles)	<b>David Wedderkop</b> 020 8850 5042	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Ramblers (Group 3)</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> Friday (≈ 6 miles)	<b>Trevor Ford</b> 020 8302 7635	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Rummikub @</b> 4 <sup>th</sup> Monday (2.00–4.00 pm)	<b>Margaret Platt</b> 020 8309 6395	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Ten-Pin Bowling (Bexleyheath)</b> Mondays (10.00 am)  £	<b>Gay Braybrook</b>  020 8309 6372	<b>Vacancies</b>
 <b>Wine Appreciation</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday (7.30 pm) £	<b>Michael Jordan</b> 020 8302 3330	<b>Vacancies</b>

The above groups, unless I am told otherwise by Group Leaders, are the ones with vacancies. Please contact the Group Leader concerned in the first instance, and, if accepted, inform me.

**Trevor Ford**  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

### 2015

September	Colin Lomas	Leonardo Da Vinci – Was he really a genius?
October	Ian Keable	The Corked Conjurer
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](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)  
**London Region U3A:** [www.u3asites.org.uk/london-region](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/london-region)  
**World U3A:** [www.worldu3a.org](http://www.worldu3a.org)      **Virtual U3A:** [www.vu3a.org](http://www.vu3a.org)

## 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

*You know you're getting old when your grandfather's photo looks younger than yours.*