

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

April 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

U3A Holiday to Bridlington, 17th February 2009

February in Yorkshire could have been a disaster weather wise, but we actually had no need for umbrellas and the temperatures were good. After a traffic-free journey to Bridlington we arrived at the Balmoral Hotel which, as promised, was 25 yards from the promenade. It is easy to imagine Victorians enjoying the facilities of this attractive spa town with its two fine beaches, "North" and "South", fanning out from the large and most interesting deep water harbour which houses the fish market. We enjoyed several walks right to the end of the two large harbour walls where we were entertained by dozens of turnstones darting in and out of the water and running along the walls. Rod fishermen informed us that lots of "disabled" turnstones survive on scraps scavenged in the harbour. It was also a joy to walk out of the hotel and straight on to the very wide and smart promenade for a stroll by the sea before breakfast. There was a placard on the promenade informing us that the whole seafront area had been restored to its former glory in 1990's.

Day 2 and we awoke to thick fog rolling in from the sea and poor visibility. This was not good as we were due for a scenic coach ride to Ripon via the Yorkshire moors. However, our luck was in and the visibility improved enough to appreciate the lovely villages and some of the scenery. There were abundant drifts of snowdrops under trees close to the road and many pheasant families grazing in the fields. We saw a huge free range pig farm covering many acres of land and, of course, lots of sheep. Ripon is a most attractive city with its surprisingly large cathedral and Market Square. We spent a lot of time in the cathedral which contains a Saxon crypt from the original church built by St Wilfrid in the 600's. Particularly special parts of the cathedral for me were the beautifully carved choir stalls completed in 1494, Chapel of the Holy Spirit with its very modern decorative silver coloured metalwork, and the new lovingly carved light oak altar suite – which was specially commissioned to mark the deaths of soldiers in a local battalion who were carrying out a tour of duty in Afghanistan until the end of last year, and which is a place where relatives and friends can come to remember their loved ones. There was just enough time for lunch and a walk into the town centre to absorb the local atmosphere; Ripon is a fine old town with lovely ancient buildings.

Day 3 was our day to go to Whitby and we had a pleasant journey along the coastal road. On arrival we parked centrally and took in the busy scene all around the harbour. Our first stop was St Hilda's Abbey ruins on the East Cliff which is reached by 199 steps! The wonderful views from the top were worth the climb, and we overlooked the entrance to the busy port

from which Captain Cook learned seamanship. We also visited St Mary's Parish church; this is situated just below the Abbey high on the East Cliff and is a most interesting old building dating, I believe, from the 1400's. It has rows and rows of high sided pews completely filling the floor space, and a high pulpit so that everyone can see the speaker. There was a great atmosphere in the church and one could imagine congregations down the centuries climbing the 199 steps to worship there. We returned to the harbour via small lanes where shops sell jewellery made using the local attractive black "jet" stone, and then over the bridge to the West Cliff. West Cliff is the area for the famous fish and chip restaurants with long queues and the hubbub of day trippers. We then came across an old steam driven bus offering rides, so we climbed aboard. The noise from the steam engine was great fun and, once we had full head of steam, the bus climbed at a good pace up the West Cliff, along the top road, and then down the steep road back to the harbour. After a quick ice cream it was time to return to our coach. Whitby is definitely a place for a return visit because there is so much to see.

Day 4 was scheduled for Harrogate, but many decided to stay local to Bridlington. We chose to use a local bus and went to Flamborough Head. It was a beautiful sunny day with no wind. The bus dropped us at the North Landing, 1¾ miles from the lighthouse, and we picked up the coast path along the edge of the cliffs. We saw stunning scenery, and, while some areas of the cliffs were sheer, others had suffered huge land slides. We saw hundreds of guillemots and seagulls, but we were too early in the season for puffins which arrive around the beginning of April. After a good lunch stop in the gardens of the lighthouse pub, we walked another couple of miles to Flamborough village for the bus to Sewerby House, which, unfortunately, had closed for the day. However, we had a whistle stop tour around its grounds and after admiring their herd of llamas, took a pathway which led us to the coast and on to the promenade back to our hotel. It was a lovely day's outing.

We spent our last evening in much the same way that we had spent previous evenings – a walk by the sea, followed by a complimentary sherry at 5.30pm, 5-course meal of excellent food with complimentary wine, followed by a different entertainer and complimentary drinks, together with games of Rummikub and Uno. Nobody got drunk and I hope everyone enjoyed the holiday as much as I did. A big "thank you" goes to Margaret Platt!

José Steward

Summer Schools 2009

The summer schools that are to be held at Harper Adams University College, Newport and the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester – which were announced in the December Newsletter – are now fully booked.

May Newsletter contributions

Please note that, owing to holidays, I will be unable to acknowledge contributions received between 24th April and 7th May – the latter of which is the deadline for this particular issue.

Contributions for the Newsletter are invited from groups with vacancies which do not already submit reports; this is a way of attracting the members you seek. Members who wish to pick up a copy of the current Newsletter from Sidcup Library should look in the newspaper rack to the right of the entrance. Those with internet access may download it in PDF format from the "Home" or "Meetings" page of our website. Back issues are also still available.

Editor

Staying sharp – Wisdom, Ageing and Cognitive Fitness

An afternoon at The Royal Society

A joint project by Third Age Trust and The European Dana Alliance for the Brain

The title sounded formidable and, likewise, the listed speakers – a Professor of Biological Gerontology, a Professor of Neuroscience, and the Director of Cambridge Interdisciplinary Research Centre with Vivienne Parry, broadcaster for Radio 4 and newspaper columnist, as Moderator for an afternoon of discussion and followed by a Question and Answer session.

The reality was a fascinating, and, at times, humorous afternoon of facts backed by scientific evidence and information. Can our brain remain healthy, busy and useful as we age? The answer is, given good health, it can. With the passage of time there is some degeneration – but this is exaggerated. There is evidence that the brain can “re-map” itself and there have been studies to show how part of the brain of a newly-blind person can literally grow in the areas of smell and touch to compensate for loss of sight.

Learning trains, shapes and reshapes the brain and it is never too late. A positive attitude to life improves well-being and a negative one suppresses it; a variety of mental activity and social mixing are also important. Physical exercise and good nutrition have been proved to be necessary but real stress is very negative and can affect memory in cases where you have no control over it.

Judging by the buzz of pleasure from everyone as we set off for home, it was an excellent afternoon and it echoed what we should all be finding at our U3As.

Annette Jansen

Trip to Canterbury – Thursday 30th April

This day out was announced in the December Newsletter. I still have vacancies on this trip which costs £15 and anyone interested in coming should note that I require full payment immediately.

Anne Evans

Group Holiday to Crown Hotel, Weymouth, Dorset

Saturday 26th September – Saturday 3rd October 2009

The hotel is close to the harbour, beach, theatre, bowling and bird sanctuary. You can relax on the beach, Esplanade or in one of the parks and gardens. You may also visit the model village or watch the wildlife on Radipole Lake. The lift serves all floors.

Bed, breakfast and evening meal for one week (7 nights) costs £437.00 per person. The price covers coach travel to Weymouth and return and there are some excursions included. Cover against cancellation costs £8.00 per person.

Rooms available – 5 single rooms and 6 twin rooms.

I will be collecting the deposit of £25.00 at the April general meeting.

Margaret Platt ☎ 0208 309 6395

‡ I have placed three pictures of the hotel on our website’s “Holidays & Outings” page.

Webmaster

GROUP NEWS

Classical Music : Leader Derick Johnson

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Our March programme was led by Michael Jordan whose intention was to trace the history of the Symphony through the centuries; this, according to the Collins Dictionary, was started by Haydn and Mozart. Firstly, we heard the 1st movement of Haydn's Symphony № 32 played by the Austro-Hungarian Haydn Orchestra conducted by *Ádám Fischer*. The second choice was the 3rd movement of Muzio Clementi's Symphony № 3 "The Great National" played by The Hanover Band conducted by Roy Goodman; this contained the familiar theme of the UK National Anthem which is used by other countries in patriotic vein. The 1st movement of Beethoven's Symphony № 1 by the Staatskapelle Dresden conducted by Herbert Blomstedt was followed by the 3rd movement of Schubert's Symphony № 9 "The Great" played by The Hanover Band conducted by Roy Goodman. We then heard the 2nd movement of Schumann's Symphony № 3 by the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields Chamber Orchestra conducted by Sir Neville Marriner, followed by the 2nd movement of Brahms' Symphony № 1 played by the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Jaap van Zweden. We ended the first half with the 2nd movement of Mahler's Symphony № 1 "The Titan" by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Yuri Simonov. After the break we had the whole of Beethoven's 5th Symphony played by the Staatskapelle Dresden conducted by Herbert Blomstedt; this was composed between 1804 and 1808 and was described by a contemporary critic as "one of the most important works of the time". As Michael commented with the benefit of hindsight, it was one of the most important works "of *all* time". This was a wonderful afternoon of music and a brave effort given the magnitude of the task.

Derick Johnson

Local History 3 : Leader Pam Kirk

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Our March 2009 visit was to Sands Films Studio, an Independent Film Company that runs its own studio, workshops, costumes, sets, cutting rooms, cinema and all the various services needed to make films.

Our group was taken into a large room where we were all seated round a long table and served with tea or coffee and biscuits. Our guide gave us an amusing talk about the studio and the building's history before introducing us to Harry, an elderly man, who, in spite of eye trouble, has created and sewn beautiful embroidery designs, many of which have been used in period films. We were then taken upstairs to see a film about the history of Peak Freans; the combination of old and more recent footage taken prior to the closure of the factory gave us an insight into the contrasting conditions of the work force.

After the film show, a three course lunch was served for staff and visitors – although some of our group had to depart for previous engagements. The remainder of our group was then taken on a tour of all the work rooms where we saw a large collection of period costumes, stage sets, carpenter's workshop, cutting rooms, sewing room, etc, and met many of the creative staff working there. Among the highlights we saw were the masks and heads worn in the film "The Tales of Beatrix Potter".

The visit took approximately five hours, was a rewarding experience and very worthwhile. By the way, if anyone has a twin-tub they need to dispose of Sands Studios will take it off your hands as they use these to dye materials!

Doreen Freeman & Gloria Stevens

Freedom Pass Explorers : Leader Val Gosden

For our January 2009 trip out we travelled to West London. We started our visit at Holland Park tube station and walked along past tall terraced buildings and Royal Crescent, which is reminiscent of a famous crescent in Bath. We then continued our journey on to the Westfield Centre in Shepherd's Bush – Britain's newest and largest shopping mall. This is interestingly designed and has plenty of seating, 'designer' shops, and many outlets providing refreshments throughout the mall, including specialities from eight different countries in the dining area.

In view of the cold weather we had been experiencing, and with a forecast of more inclement weather to come, we undertook a shorter than usual trip in February. We visited Peckham Rye, walking to Warwick Park, and returning to the main road via various side roads with houses which once, no doubt, were homes to those who could afford servants. As we often do, we found a good café where, the prices being so reasonable, many of us enjoyed an early lunch. Our walk back to the station was past shops, including some with grand displays of fish, meat, fruit & vegetables, the latter two being very colourful.

In March we went to Chessington South, where we were unable to find a café, so, on the advice of a local resident, we made a short trip back to Chessington North. Here we found a café where we could enjoy our usual hot drinks. We then walked along quiet suburban streets, enjoying the daffodils in the verges, until we reached a footpath going alongside Bonesdale Stream. The path eventually led us to Horton Country Park, which will be lovely at bluebell time. We ate our lunches seated on logs from trees which had been felled to provide space for coppicing, before making our way back to Chessington South and then home.

Val Gosden

Local History 1 : Leader John Harlow

On the 11th March, sixteen of us met up for a tour of St. Martin-in-the-Fields at Trafalgar Square. Our guide was the Head Verger – Ralph Smith – who, being an ex-teacher, was most lucid and his diction, naturally, was excellent. However, he was not helped by the work still going on at the church; sometimes he would have to pause momentarily before continuing.

SMITF is not so much a church as a community in its own right. There are so many factions to it that they could not be covered properly in this article. They do have their own website at www.smitf.org should anyone wish to learn more about them. Many of their events (of which there are around twenty each week) are broadcast on BBC Radio.

“Situated in a ‘world square’ St. Martin-in-the-Fields is an international church, and a parish church at the heart of cosmopolitan London. So it is not surprising that from this place of prayer Amnesty International was born, Shelter conceived, and the anti-apartheid movement supported and given space.”

During the renovations a lower crypt was excavated and this was designed to make as much use of natural light as possible. This was an eye-opening visit and well worth the £5 charge for a conducted tour.

Pam Green

! The earliest existing reference to the church is a dispute in 1222 between the Abbot of Westminster and the Bishop of London about who had control over it. Resolved in favour of the Abbot, it was used by the monks of Westminster Abbey. The church was rebuilt by Henry VIII in 1542 to prevent plague victims from the area passing through his Palace of Whitehall (then Europe's largest palace and the main London residence of English monarchs). At this time it was literally “in the fields” – isolated between the cities of Westminster and London.

Editor

Bird Watching : Leaders Gay Braybrook & José Steward

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After cancelling our bird watching at Sevenoaks on two consecutive months owing to snow and rain, we finally made it at the third try on 1st April. It was a beautiful day and a pleasure to be there. There were no large numbers of birds about, but we did see shovelers, gadwell, great crested grebe, teal, shellduck, tufted duck, mallard, coot, moorhen, cormorant, Canada goose, mute swan, black headed gull, wren, blackbird, robin, blue tit, great tit, and long-tailed tit.

The next bird watching meeting will be at Bough Beech Reservoir on Wednesday 6th May at 10.30 am.

Everyone is welcome!

José Steward



Our U3A

Hoorah and hooray for the U3A,
The haunt of the older élite.
The cream of Sidcup and Foots Cray –
Well, it keeps them off the street.
The polymaths of Bexley are there
With recondite knowledge
They're willing to share.
It's as good as a college
At a minimal fee,
And you also get tea
For a mere twenty pee!

Ten pin bowling, bridge, and darts
Really are important parts
Of our self-education.
Ambling, rambling, holidays,
Tasting wines or reading plays,
Or it's off to the station.
Stepping out for a day up in town,
Dodging traffic though feeling run down.
Hoppity, shoppity, see them go –
The train was late and ever so slow,
But it's Jazz Group tomorrow,
The Lunch Club at twelve.
The Discussion Group follows
To explore, probe, and delve
Into matters obscure and arcane:
Producing few answers,
And perplexing the brain.
In the evening they rally,
And go to the ballet.
And, being inspired,

Although they are tired,
They dance pas de vingt in the street.
They twirl in the train –
Late commuters complain,
And refuse to give them a seat.

The editor tells me "Enough is enough!
I've run out of space for such tedious stuff.
I hereby withdraw your poetic licence."
So, in Hamlet's last words: "The rest is silence."

Ian Brydon

An Ode to Forgetfulness

I've got used to my arthritis
To my dentures I'm resigned
I can cope with my bi-focals,
But, Ye Gods! I miss my mind!
Sometimes I can't remember
When I'm standing by the stairs
Am I going up for something
Or just coming down from there?
Before my fridge so often,
My mind is full of doubt
Now did I put some food away?
Or shall I take some out?
Now I stand before the post box
And my face is really red,
I meant to post this on to you,
But I've opened it instead!

Anon

GROUP VACANCIES

group name	leader	vacancies
Bird Watching 1 st Wednesday (morning)	Gay Braybrook/José Steward 020 8309 6372/020 8302 1627	Yes. Notice on board at meetings
Darts (at The Alma pub) 2 nd Monday (midday)	Fred Green	Yes
Freedom Pass Explorers 2 nd Monday	Val Gosden 020 8300 0664	Yes
Hand Crafted Cards (Group 2) 1 st Wednesday	Val Gosden 020 8300 0664	1
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
Luncheon Club (Group 2) 2 nd Friday	Joan Smith 020 8300 3566	2
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	3
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
Saturday Ramble (4-5 miles) 1 st Saturday (morning)	Gay Braybrook 020 8309 6372	3
10-Pin Bowling (Bexleyheath) Mondays (10 am) <i>except school holidays</i>	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 8302 1627

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's not difficult to run a group and leaders of a full one can advise you how it's done.

PROGRAMME

2009

April	Mr. M. Heard	The Gardens of Impressionism
May	Mr. T. Moorey	The Most Popular Indoor Activity
June	Mr. N. Arnold	Big Cats in Kent
July	Dr. Gill Stoker	Essentially Ethel
August	Mrs. J. Hay	Freelancing for the BBC
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

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	Judith Bishopp	020 8468 7342
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 7th of the month.

Website
www.sidcup-u3a.org.uk

Afterthought

When it comes to giving, some people stop at nothing.