

SIDCUP & DISTRICT UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE NEWSLETTER

June 2008



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

NOTICES

Study Groups

Through the U3A Head Office, we are able to access videos and DVD's on many subjects which can be shown in members' homes. Many are suitable to use as a short course of study sessions, from as few as 4 sessions (eg. the four seasons at Wisley) to as many as 12 sessions (eg. "Living Planet") and any number of music, opera and ballet sessions (including music items from jazz to classic which are also on cassettes and CD's). The group could finish each session with a short discussion about what they had watched.

If you have an interest about which you would like to learn more in the company of others then please contact me. All that is required is a host with a video recorder or DVD player who is willing to provide a cuppa and seating for as many or as few as he/she can manage. (Hosts may charge group members 20p for a cuppa which may either be retained to cover costs, or donated to the charity currently being supported by our U3A branch).

The loan of the video, DVD or CD is free of charge, but group members must pay the return postage of the item loaned – this should not prove too expensive when shared amongst group members. A certificate of posting should be obtained for the item being returned.

Once you have researched the material available for your chosen subject, and you feel that you could host a few sessions, please think about when you would be willing to do so; which day and time, and which week of the month would suit you. To find others who may be interested you could then pin a notice on the Notice Board at the monthly meeting and place an article in the Newsletter to announce that you intend to start a new group.

Here is a list of the main subjects. There is a lot of material available within each category.

ARCHITECTURE

ART

BIOGRAPHY

ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT

GARDENING

GEOGRAPHY & TRAVEL

HEALTH & EXERCISE

HISTORY, FAMILY HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

LANGUAGES & FOREIGN FILMS

LITERATURE AND POETRY

MUSIC: CLASSICAL, OPERA, BALLET & JAZZ

PHILOSOPHY & PSYCHOLOGY

RECREATION

RELIGION

PURE SCIENCE

NATURAL SCIENCE

José Steward, Group Co-ordinator ☎ 020 8302 1627

August Newsletter contributions and July meeting

Please note that I shall be away on holiday from 13th to 26th July and will be unable to acknowledge contributions received during this time. Also because of this we need one or two extra members to help lay out the hall before the July meeting.

Editor

Bird Watchers and Others

On August 20th Ebdons is running a trip to the Wetlands Centre in Slimbridge – some of us have booked already, but it should make a good day out even if you are not a bird watcher. The cost is £19.75 plus entrance to Slimbridge. Book with Ebdons in Sidcup High St.

Gay Braybrook

Coach Trip to Arundel

Anne Evans, our Social Secretary, arranged a very successful visit to Arundel on Thursday 22nd May. Everyone turned up on time, the sun shone, and upon arrival the visitors went off in several directions. Some viewed the castle with its vast rooms, collections of paintings and history of the Norfolk family; others admired the newly developed garden in memory of the 14th Earl of Arundel, known as the Collector, who died in exile in Padua in 1646. This garden had just been opened and has attracted a good deal of media attention. Arundel Cathedral was visited by many of our party who joined the throng that had travelled from far and wide to see flowers laid out for the festival of Corpus Christi, which was being celebrated that very day. The riverside proved another attraction and the town had many cafés and interesting shops. Arundel is dominated by the castle and the influence of the Dukes of Norfolk in the area is apparent. The present Duke and Duchess live in the castle and those of us who paid a little extra to tour the bedrooms were told that guests would be using some of them that night.

John Mercer

London Borough of Bexley News 27th May 2008 - Bridge Plans are Scrapped

The London Borough of Bexley has welcomed the Mayor of London's announcement that he is to scrap the current plans for the Thames Gateway Bridge. The road bridge was planned to stretch across the Thames between Thamesmead and Beckton. At his first Mayoral Question Time, Mayor Boris Johnson said he recognised the need for better crossings of the river east of Tower Bridge. However, the current proposal was not right and one he could not support against such significant local opposition. Many Bexley residents campaigned against the bridge throughout the previous Mayor's term in office and it was a key issue in the 2006 local elections in the borough.

The Council's Cabinet Member for Transport, Cllr. Peter Craske said:

"I am delighted that the Mayor of London has listened to, and acted on, the concerns of our residents. Bexley desperately needs better public transport options. We are really looking forward to working with the Mayor and James Cleverly, the London Assembly Member for Bexley and Bromley, to deliver genuine transport improvements for the residents of Bexley and south east London over the coming months."

On Reaching 76

Throughout my long brief life I've been terminally well,
Surviving war and work and accident, and loss of love's sweet spell.

I think I think my brain still works (I'm not sure Descartes was right);
I'm able still to drive, and I dribble through the night.

My hip now gives me gyp, and I trip on paving stones,
I'm a decrepit geriatric – I can feel it in my bones.

My stomach has expanded, bulging through my shirt, and weighty,
Goodness knows what I'll be like – if I ever get to eighty.

Ian Brydon

2009 AGM

At the May general meeting it was agreed very largely that there will not be a presentation by groups at the AGM in 2009, nor should the Mayor be invited. It may be agreed to hold such an event again in 2010.

John Mercer



Wine Appreciation Group : Leader Michael Jordan

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WAG's in Italy

Twelve members and partners of the Wine Appreciation Group returned to Diano Marina in Liguria, Italy, from the 8th to the 15th May 2008.

It was a restful holiday, as was the intention, but WAG's members are always prepared to devote time and effort into research of their chosen subject. One of the highlights of the week was a visit to a local vineyard where we were given a full explanation and demonstration of the bottling procedure. This was followed by a superb tasting – well, not so much a tasting, more an imbibing – of five wines accompanied by very simple, but absolutely marvellous, refreshments of salami, olives, cheese, tapenade, and sun-dried tomatoes with locally made bread. It was just delicious!

But that was at the end of the week. Before that we enjoyed the simple pleasures of life on holiday which included a stroll along the promenade with a stop at a local café for coffee and brandy, and a trip on a local bus to nearby Imperia to examine the goods available in the street market. Two days later we were re-examining the same goods at the same stalls in the street market in Diano Marina. In between these heady excitements we enjoyed a wonderful meal at a local fish restaurant set in the cliffs and which has breathtaking views out to sea.

As you might imagine, everyone had a really enjoyable holiday with congenial friends.

Michael Jordan

National Trust & English Heritage Group : Leaders John & Olive Mercer

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Our May visit was to Hatchlands Park in East Clandon, near Guildford. The weather was fine – almost like a summer’s day – which was fortunate as it allowed us to stroll around just some of the 430 acres of the park in warm sunshine while we waited for the house to open to visitors.

The house was built in 1756 for Admiral Boscawen, hero of the Battle of Louisberg, and contains the earliest recorded decorations by Robert Adam in an English country house. Accompanying an impressive display of paintings is the Cobbe Collection, the world’s largest group of keyboard instruments associated with famous composers; these include Purcell, J. C. Bach, Chopin, Mahler and Elgar. We had lunch in the restaurant, which is located in the house kitchen, and were amused by a notice listing the prescribed penalties for servants (in the form of fines from one penny to sixpence) imposed for various examples of misbehaviour!

Christine & Richard Spencer

Bird Watching : Leaders Gay Braybrook & José Steward

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We enjoyed the most perfect day for our visit to the Sevenoaks Wildfowl Reserve on 7th May where the birds sang continuously; unfortunately, owing to the thick foliage, it was difficult to identify the singers – but one was clearly a warbler. We watched the birds on the feeders from a hide next to the information centre; these included several goldfinches, blue tits, great tits, a dunnock and a lone green parakeet.

On the shores and islands of the large lake there were families of Canada geese with up to seven goslings each. Soaking up the sun on another island was a greylag goose family, but they were too far away for us to count the goslings. Spotting a single, fine specimen of an Egyptian goose was a rare treat for us. Great crested grebes were there in numbers, including one family swimming and another adult sitting on its nest. Pied wagtails bobbed along the water’s edge, too.

For me the highlight of the morning was seeing a nesting pair of long-tailed tits. Their nest was beautifully camouflaged in the branches of a tree, only three feet above the water’s edge. We were able to get very close without disturbing them to observe their flitting back and forth with food and we found this very exciting! [Bird watching is open to all.](#)

José Steward

On-line Computer Group

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It is disheartening to me that, since setting up a forum for this group last November, so few people have actually registered themselves. I had hoped that the instructions for registering, which were fully described in the March Newsletter, would have attracted all those who had initially expressed an interest in it – but this has not happened. These registration instructions are still available from our website and may be accessed by clicking the “On-Line Computer Group” link on the right hand side of the home page.

Although computerised, this forum is *not* maintenance-free for me; I repeatedly have to eject idiots who seek to disrupt it with advertisements and even less desirable rubbish. I don’t mind doing this but my effort is wasted while the forum remains inactive.

Webmaster

Local History 3 : Leader Pam Kirk

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On Wednesday 14th May fourteen of the group visited the Guards Museum in Birdcage Walk. This museum was opened in 1988 when the Wellington Barracks was redeveloped. It tells the history of five regiments – the Grenadiers, Coldstream, Scottish, Irish and Welsh Guards, and we now know how to distinguish one regiment from another! There are displays of weapons, paintings, uniforms and memorabilia include personal items of the Dukes of Marlborough and Wellington. It is a very interesting museum which still charges only £2.00 for senior citizens. We also visited the Guards Chapel which is situated next door. Construction of the present chapel was completed in 1963 (the previous one having been destroyed by a flying bomb in 1944). The chapel contains some very interesting glass, a small terracotta frieze, regimental flags and is the spiritual home of Her Majesty's Household Division.

Rosalie Woods

Ramblers 1 : Leader Annette Jansen

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In May eight members of Ramblers 1 flew off to Mallorca for a week of walking in one of the more remote and most attractive parts of the island. Our base was a hotel situated in Puerto de Soller on the seafront of a landlocked bay backed by the Sierra de Tramuntana mountain range which rises to 1400 metres. It was in these mountains, and on coastal paths, that we were to walk. Rather different from our usual stamping grounds in Kent. Our local leader was Juan, a native of Soller, who had a dry wit, a fund of stories and a girlfriend in every cafe and beauty spot where we stopped for freshly squeezed orange juice, cake or beer.

Day 1 saw us walking the Valley of Oranges. The local economy used to depend upon trade in oranges, lemons and olive oil – now it is tourism. The valley is still full of groves of trees laden down with oranges and lemons, and oranges are offered free at cafes and bars. We stopped at a 400 year old farm to sample the produce – olives, oranges, olive oil and wine, and learned how the olive oil is extracted.

Our subsequent walks took us along the coast to the haunts of the poet Robert Graves, and we had grilled sardines on his favourite beach. We walked from a height of 1000 metres to a picnic lunch at an abandoned farmhouse guarded by a stone penguin, then down a narrow cliff path to join a pilgrim's path at a Calvary which evolved into the downward mountain track of 1000 steps to an attractive village and a welcome beer.

En route, Juan would tell us his stories of local life and history: of life in the now abandoned farms; of the nomadic life of the medieval charcoal burners while pointing out the evidence of their temporary homes and limestone kilns in the oak woods; of the enormous stalactites on the pilgrim's path that had once been inside a vast cave; and showing us an exhibition of paintings by the proprietor of an "agriturismo" in a 13th century farm complete with tower and chapel.

Yes, we did have some free time to sunbathe, swim and wander through the old town and sit in cafes; to ride the tram into Soller and the 1912 narrow gauge railway under the mountains; and catch the boat back from our last coastal walk.

The holiday was full of memorable moments, enhanced by the smell of jasmine and the delicious taste of oranges straight from the tree.

June Brown

GROUP VACANCIES

group name	leader	vacancies
Amblers (Group 1) (3 miles) 3 rd Wednesday (morning)	John Harbert 020 8300 5361	Yes
Antiques Appreciation 2 nd Friday (10 am - noon)	Martin Baker 020 8300 1752	1
Antiques Appreciation (Group 2) 4th Wednesday (10 am - noon)	Martin Baker 020 8300 1752	3
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
Lunch Club (Group 2) 2 nd Friday	Joan Smith 020 8300 3566	1
Music (Group 2) 2 nd Friday (2.30 pm)	Derick Johnson 020 8850 1245	3
National Trust/English Heritage Various dates & times	John & Olive Mercer 020 8300 3136	Yes
Online Computer Group Does not meet	John Harlow 020 8300 3865	Unlimited
Ramblers (Group 1) (6-7 miles) 4 th Tuesday (10.30 am)	Annette Jansen 01322 522252	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.

José Steward, 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

2008

June	Mr. M. Matthews	Around the world with music
July	Mr. M. Lloyd	Passports, Assassins, Traitors and Spies
August	Mrs. Eavis	The History of Blue and White China
September	N/A	Photography competition
October	Mr. T. Western	Magic as Entertainment
November	Wing Cmdr. Patrick Coulcher	Natural History of the South Downs
December	Mr. J. Buttress	Royal Parks

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	José Steward	020 8302 1627
Raffle Organiser	Valerie Gosden	020 8300 0664
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

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 and forum

www.sidcup-u3a.org.uk

(This Newsletter may be read or downloaded from our website)

Afterthought

In case of doubt, make it sound convincing.