

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

October 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

Renewal of Membership for 2009

This is to remind members that I shall be giving out membership renewal forms starting at the current General Meeting. The cost of membership will remain the same as for this year.

It would be appreciated if, when collecting your own form, you could also take the form of a friend who will for any reason not be at the meeting. This will save us the excessive cost of posting the forms to them.

Many thanks for your assistance in this matter.

John Harlow, Membership Secretary

Sidcup & District U3A Website & Forum

Our website, the creation of which was announced in the September 2007 Newsletter, has now been in operation for more than a year. Thankfully, it continues to attract a reasonable number of visitors daily and possibly new members; Newsletters, however, are downloaded or read from the website at the rate of only five or six copies per month. This means that we are not achieving the desired savings to the number we print each month. As a reminder – those of you with internet access may read the current issue from either the “Home” page or the “Meetings” page of our website up to three days prior to the meeting at which it will be issued. Newsletters dating back to April 2007 are also still available for reference purposes. When visiting our website, please ensure that you type its address (www.sidcup-u3a.org.uk) *exactly as shown* into the Location or Address Bar/Box of your web browser – *not* a Search Bar/Box.

At the time the website was created an internet Forum was introduced on an experimental basis. This facility allows us to post messages, or to hold discussions and share information, relevant to Sidcup U3A at no additional cost. Unfortunately, this has attracted no interest (with not one single message being posted in over a whole year) so this has now been closed. Consequently, the Online Computer Group, created by John Harlow in December 2007 and which relied for its existence upon the Forum – and which also posted no messages – has also closed.

Webmaster

Coach Outing to Oxford

On Monday 15th September a group of members went to Oxford by coach – and what a very enjoyable and interesting day we had. After strolling around visiting various places of interest and having our lunch, some of us joined a guided tour of Christ Church College.

Our excellent guide took us into the Picture Gallery where we were shown, amongst other works of art, a collection of Italian art from the 14th to the 18th centuries, and a collection of Old Master Drawings including those of Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael and Rubens. The Dining Hall has connections with Lewis Carroll's book, "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" and there are portraits of Alice and other characters from the book. Lewis Carroll was the pen name of Charles Dodgson who was a mathematics tutor at Christ Church from 1855-98. John Wesley was also educated at Christ Church.

The Cloister and the Cathedral are parts of the original Priory of St. Frideswide, which pre-dates the college. Human remains from the time of Frideswide (a 7th-8th century princess and abbess) were found in the central plot. As you enter the tower there is a wooden door which has the words "NO PEEL" studded into it. This was a protest against the Home Secretary, Sir Robert Peel (a Christ Church man) who, in 1829, proposed greater freedom for Catholics.

There is so much more I could write about Christ Church College; I recommend that members visit this place should they ever have the opportunity. A big thank you must go to Anne Evans for organising such an interesting day out. Thank you, Anne.

Ann Harlow

Group Co-ordinator & Raffle Organiser

José Steward will be standing down from the post of Group Co-ordinator at the next AGM. Many thanks go to her for her considerable efforts and enthusiasm whilst performing this job which she will continue until her resignation. We are now trying to find a member who would be interested in succeeding her. Are you that person? (José assures me that she will be on hand to give her successor assistance if required). If you would like to know more about what is involved please speak to José or any other Committee member. Val Gosden is also looking for somebody to take over the task of Raffle Organiser following the next AGM. Val is happy to continue as Speakers' Secretary and I think we all agree that Val has got enough on her plate as it is. If you are prepared to offer your services, please have a word with Val.

George Murrell

Reminder for Group Leaders

Group Leaders are reminded that, in the event of an accident, no matter how trivial it may seem, a U3A Accident form should be completed and passed to a member of the Committee for safe keeping. Forms can be obtained from either José Steward, the Group Co-ordinator, or from the Secretary, George Murrell. Forms can also be downloaded from the U3A Third Age Trust website under "FAQs for Committees".

George Murrell

(i) Please note that you will need to be a registered member of the U3A Third Age Trust website and log in before you can access the "FAQs for Committees" section.

Editor

Water Water Everywhere

Congratulations go to Val Gosden and Annette Jansen for arranging an innovative and entertaining variation to the monthly meetings with the Photographic Competition held at the September meeting. Val “floated” the idea at a Committee meeting some months ago and Annette volunteered her assistance. The final result was, I feel, a great success and it attracted 53 entries. The interest in the exhibits shown by members was very apparent from the excitedly chattering “scrum” gathered around the exhibit boards all of whom were impressed by the quality of the photos.

Introducing a theme of “Water” was a very good idea of Val’s and produced a wide variety of interpretations.

I’m sure this competition was enjoyed by the “judges” and competitors alike and is likely by popular request to become a regular feature. Many thanks are due to Val and Annette for their hard work and organisational skills.

(PS. I returned from holiday the day before the competition with a total of 112 photos on my digital camera, ninety of which included a lot of water. I don’t know whether the forthcoming competition had influenced my choice of subjects, or whether it was the fact that my holiday was spent touring Wales and the County Fermanagh Lakelands in Northern Ireland. And yes, it did rain every day).

George Murrell



It was lovely to see so many entries for the competition last month. Most of the photographs received at least one vote by the members who voted, thus showing a variety of opinions and tastes. However, the overall joint winners were Chas Owen, with his photo entitled “Whee!!!” and Michael Jordan with “Panning for Gold”. Our congratulations go to both of them. The winning photographs are now on display in our website (www.sidcup-u3a.org.uk) on the Gallery page.

Val Gosden



Our meeting was a general, all-inclusive one of participation and the idea of a photographic competition was floated before us some months back. It could have been a flop with only a handful of members taking part, but, in the event, the organisers were overwhelmed with pictures depicting a water theme. They obviously realised what members were capable of and so had a photographic exhibition ‘par excellence’. Michael Jordan’s winning entry was really different having animation in it due to the young boy. I did, in fact, vote for it – the scene was thoughtfully arranged – and my first impression was that of a Spanish painting.

The afternoon did not just happen but was carefully thought through by Annette Jansen and Valerie Gosden. So, thank you to both of them and all the photographers for a different and pleasurable afternoon. We must include John and Olive Mercer in this who compiled a quiz that really got our brain boxes going and, in many instances, took us down memory lane. It was a jolly good ‘Do It Yourself’ meeting.

Frances Percival

Newsletter

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.

Editor

Local History 3 : Leader Pam Kirk



On Wednesday 10th September 12 of us made our way separately to the Royal Observatory at Greenwich. Although mornings are reserved mainly for school parties, we were able to buy tickets in good time to see “The Sky Tonight” in the Peter Harrison Planetarium. We had time to see some of the new exhibitions, browse in the shop and enjoy coffee or a light lunch before the first afternoon performance at one o’clock. An astronomer guided us through what we could expect to see in the sky that night had there been neither light pollution nor cloud cover. (At least the moon was visible – but Jupiter? Maybe a telescope or stronger lenses in our glasses would have helped us to identify it). We were warned that it would be very dark at times during the performance and so one of us, who shall be nameless, clutched the hand of the person next to her. I can assure you that Doreen’s hand was warm and comforting! The astronomer welcomed questions at the end as we were on our way out of the Planetarium and several of us remained behind to hear his answers. It was an interesting day out.

Ilena Harrington

(i) The Royal Observatory was commissioned in 1675 by King Charles II. At this time the king also created the position of Astronomer Royal (initially filled by John Flamsteed), to serve as director of the observatory.

Editor

National Trust & English Heritage : Leaders John & Olive Mercer



Visit to Standen and Saint Hill Manor, West Sussex

On 25th September, which was a lovely autumnal day, seven members of this group made a visit to two of the most attractive buildings near East Grinstead. First we went to Standen, which is owned by the National Trust and which is of particular interest to Bexley residents as it was the last major building to be designed by Philip Webb – his first being The Red House in Bexleyheath. Evidence of the friendship between Webb and William Morris is clear from the many Morris designs incorporated into the house, the home of the Beale family for whom it was built. To many of us it is an old favourite that you can visit time and time again.

After taking advantage of the catering at Standen, we made our way to Saint Hill Manor which is now the headquarters of the Church of Scientology. Although the site was first recorded in 1567, the Manor House was built in 1792 for the Crawford family. One of the owners was the Maharajah of Jaipur whose influence can be seen in one of the rooms. After four owners it became the home of L. Ron Hubbard, the founder of the Scientology Movement, and a man of many talents. It is a most impressive house, now used for senior church meetings and weddings, etc. We enjoyed an hour’s guided tour which began with the room in which John Spencer Churchill (Sir Winston’s nephew) painted a monkey mural on all four walls. Over a period of 3 months he sketched the monkeys at London Zoo and over another 3 months he painted them standing on two legs with the heads resembling people of that era. Even Sir Winston is recognisable with his paints and large hat. The painting is a unique feature, a 100 foot mural covering the whole room, which was a talking point when the American Ambassador’s wife (the owner at the time) entertained in 1945.

We were all delighted with the twin visits and thoroughly enjoyed our day in Sussex.

Eric & Frances Percival

Birdwatching : Leaders Gay Braybrook & José Steward



On Wednesday 1st October 2008, with a weather forecast of 30mph winds and heavy showers, four intrepid U3A twitchers drove to the Sevenoaks Wildfowl Reserve for our monthly bird watch. After hot drinks at the Visitor Centre, we set out along the Nature Trail and were rewarded for our bravery with sunshine and only light winds and no rain. We saw blue tits, goldfinch, stock dove, glimpsed a kingfisher, pied wagtail, lapwing, ringed plovers, snipe, herons, cormorants, Canada geese, grey lag geese, great crested grebes, little grebe, red-necked grebe, swans, Egyptian geese, mallards and tufted ducks. This was a very satisfactory result. Back at the Visitor Centre we enjoyed a look around the exhibits which included most of the birds we had seen for real. After more hot drinks and a look around the delightful, recently completed garden next to the Centre, we made our reluctant departure.

Our next meeting is Wednesday 5th November, 10.30am at Bough Beech Reservoir.

Birdwatching is open to all.

José Steward

On-line Computer Group : Leader John Harlow



This group has closed for the reasons stated in an earlier article.

ENTERTAINMENT

My Rockery - Ian Brydon

I made my garden rockery
Of bricks and broken crockery:
Admittedly, a mockery
Of what it ought to be.

No matter what I sow there,
Not even weeds will grow there:
I've not one plant to show there
For all my industry.

I sprayed with fertilisers
And floral appetisers
Through special atomisers –
Each potent remedy.

To quell my mounting panic
I thought I'd go organic:
With fervour Messianic,
I forswore chemistry.

I tried the country cure
With cartloads of manure:
The air is now impure -
The neighbours think it's me.

I can't stand this frustration,
This constant irritation:
I'll give it to the nation –
It's all too much for me.

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
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	Yes
Local History (Group 3) 2 nd Wednesday	Pam Kirk 020 8856 8372	Yes
Ramblers (Group 2) (4-5 miles) 4 th Tuesday	Pat & Alf Cracknell 020 8302 0823	Yes
Music (Group 2) 2 nd Friday (2.30 pm)	Derick Johnson 020 8850 1245	2
National Trust/English Heritage Various dates & times	John & Olive Mercer 020 8300 3136	Yes
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

October	Mr. T. Western	Magic as Entertainment
November	Wing Cmdr. Patrick Coulcher	Natural History of the South Downs
December	Mr. J. Buttress	Royal Parks

2009

January	Mr. T. Swan	Canterbury Oast Trust
February	Mr. & Mrs. Wagner	Phantasmagoria
March	AGM & Mr. S. Robinson	The City

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

www.sidcup-u3a.org.uk

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

Afterthought

The nicest thing about not planning is that failure comes as a complete surprise, and is not preceded by a period of worry and doubt.