

## ROYAL OPERA HOUSE INSPIRATION DAY

The recent Royal Opera House Inspiration Day organised by the National Office attracted over 60 U3A members from across the South East and some Sevenoaks members attended. We were given a very informative tour of the workshops at the Thurrock site close to the Dartford crossing. This spacious new facility resulted from the need to relocate from their former East London site to make room for the Olympic Park.



This facility is home to scenic painters, carpenters and metalworkers. Here they translate the designers' visions into reality, creating the many different sets that appear in the ballet and operas performed on the stage of the Royal

Opera House in Covent Garden. The design and production process is complex as a stage set can incorporate up to 720 tonnes of staging and lighting equipment so the complete set is built up at full scale in the workshop with all the lighting so that the director can be satisfied that it meets his requirements.

A further highlight of our visit was taking part in a workshop activity with a set designer to produce at 1/25th scale a stage set design for the Opera Hansel and Gretel. This kind of 3D model, similar to those used by Architects for building structures, is used to help directors to visualise stage set layouts and confirm requirements before the manufacturing drawings are commissioned.

Adjacent to the workshop is a Costume facility where around 20,000 costumes are stored but it also includes workrooms for making costumes for Royal Opera House productions. This operates in partnership with South Essex College and offers students opportunities for training with the Royal Opera House. A number of apprenticeship schemes are offered in the various skills used on site to ensure long term continuity of skills for the future.

We can recommend a visit to U3A members should the opportunity occur again.