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Peter Browne 1

Mary Garside 2

Carole Blacher 3

Celia Thompson 4

Celia Thompson 5

Interest Group Numbering Explained

Against each group name a single number is given to identify the Group Liaison Officer (GLO) responsible for that group, also shown in the February 2024 Interest Groups Booklet, and to whom you should refer if wishing to start a new group or for further information regarding groups.

Dates for your Diary

7th Jul 2026 Local Studies

Kate Boyle
The History of Trinity House

15th Jul 2026 Mamma Mia Singalong
Details on page 3

21st Jul 2026 General Meeting
Mary Smith
A School Girls' War

Aug 2026 Local Studies
NO MEETING

18th Aug 2026 General Meeting
Ian K Davidson
Fraud and Scams

1st Sep 2026 Local Studies
Fay Tennet
Protecting Politics (Security
in the Houses of Parliament)

9th Sep 2026 Bingo Night
Details on page 3

15th Sep 2026 General Meeting
TBA

All Local Studies (1st Tuesday of the month)
and
General Meetings (3rd Tuesday of the month)
are held in the
**Whitfield Hall,
United Reformed Church (URC),
20 Widmore Road,
Bromley, BR1 1RY**

Time : 10.30am

Entry fee:

Local Studies: £3.00
Non-members £5

General Meetings: Members free.

Non-members £5.00, refundable if
joining as a member of **u3a Bromley**.



Welcome to Issue 4, July 2026



Bromley u3a learn, laugh, live

BINGO NIGHT

Future Events for Bromley u3a Members

WHAT: BINGO

WHEN: Wednesday 9th September, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

WHERE: Whitfield Hall United Reformed Church Widmore Road, Bromley

ENTRANCE FEE: £8
Includes 1 book of bingo tickets
Extra books available for £2 each

Gift Voucher Full House Prizes up to £25

REFRESHMENTS
Bring your own drinks and nibbles.
Tea and coffee available midway through the evening.

IMPORTANT
Put the date in your diary
Booking details will be emailed in early August.

Come along and bring a friend!

Friendship Fave Community

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FREE EVENT bromley little theatre

Mamma Mia Singalong
afternoon show
on 15th July from 3 to 5pm.



Come along and release your inner Abba!

Some of the past few weeks have felt like we have been catapulted straight into high Summer, having bypassed late Spring. And then hail storms, thunder, rain and the winter duvet being put back on the bed as I write this! Luckily our breadth of interest groups provides indoor and outdoor pursuits whatever the weather.

Our 36th AGM

This was carried out on 21st April and passed without issue. An overview was emailed out shortly afterwards. There were some very heartening comments from people afterwards, always nice to hear. Everyone was invited to join us at the Partridge pub afterwards.

New Beacon Administrator

A warm welcome to newish member Richard Jones, who has agreed to take over from David Moody. Richard's details will be on the Contact Us page in the newsletter. Thanks to David for all he has done to help move u3a Bromley into the 21st century with our lovely website.

Local Studies - Speaker Organiser

We are looking for someone to take over organising speakers for the Local Studies meetings. It's a wonderful way to make a real impact on our u3a offerings. Please contact Steve or Hester to discuss this.

Sound System - set up

Also, additional people to be on the rota for the sound system which is used at our two large meetings and sometimes at the various social events we run. Full training will be given!

Meeters and Greeters for talks and new members social

The value of having people to meet and greet our members at these meetings cannot be

undervalued. The difference between a new member coming in to a large hall and being ignored or having a friendly welcome can be vital. Those first impressions can make all the difference. At our last new members' social, we had the best comment ever, that never had the member been to any event and been made so welcome. Come and be a part of this.

Succession Planning – New Chair

THIS WILL BE REPEATED IN EVERY NEWSLETTER.

As my term of office is coming into its final year, ending at the 2027 AGM, we need people who can take u3a Bromley even further forward. Would you like to see what's involved by sitting in on meetings, job shadowing and generally getting a feel for the role?

A vice chair would be useful and also be an aid to a potential new chair. Two heads and all that!

Please get in touch with me for a chat, completely without commitment, the earlier the better, even though I have just moved!

And of course there are other roles that might suit you, so please, think about joining us on the committee!

So, on behalf of all of us on the committee, thanks for continuing to enjoy u3a Bromley and helping to make it a continuing success.



Sandy Boden

chair@u3abromley.org.uk

u3a Bromley at the Volunteers' Fair



URC Community Hub Day

On 6th June, as part of the national Volunteers' Week, **u3a Bromley** participated in the United Reformed Church Volunteers' Week Fair.

This community celebration brings together Bromley charitable organisations to highlight the incredible work of volunteers across our borough. This was very much a two-way networking event. Local Charities and members of the public found out about **u3a Bromley** and its 80+ Interest Groups and we found out about initiatives that could help and advise our own members.

These included personalised advice about making your homes more energy efficient from Bromley based Greener and Cleaner, how our members' expertise might assist at Repair cafes and the possibility of u3a Yoga classes.

Sandy Boden

Some Thoughts on Inheritance Tax in the UK

by Peter Runacres

Peter Runacres, *u3a Bromley* member and retired Chartered Accountant shares his thoughts about making a Will to achieve the outcomes you want for your beneficiaries. Inheritance Tax of course looms large in all this. He has produced the following Q&A to guide you in discussions about your arrangements with a professional advisor.

What is Inheritance Tax?

Inheritance Tax is the tax payable on the value of the total assets left by a person on their demise. The assets are everything they own at the date of death, which may include major assets like their house and car but right down to literally their underwear. These assets are valued at their market value. Underwear probably not worth much!

What is a Will?

A Will is a legal document drawn up during your lifetime instructing your Executors how you would like your assets to be distributed after your death. It is usually drawn up by a Solicitor but can be written yourself (not advised)

What is an Executor?

An Executor is the person named in your Will to administer your estate, it is their job to get all your assets valued as at the date of death, calculate any Inheritance Tax due and declare these figures to the Probate Office. (A Government Office that administers Your Will) If the Probate Office is happy with the valuations and tax paid, they will issue a Probate Certificate, which is a legal form enabling your

Executor to realise your assets (sell, if a House or Car or cash-in if an investment or Insurance policy) and distribute the proceeds so raised to your beneficiaries. An Executor can also be a beneficiary provided they are not one of the witnesses to your signature when the will is signed.

What is a Beneficiary?

Anybody named in your will who is to receive some or all of the assets left at the time of your demise.

What is the Rate of Inheritance Tax?

Currently it is 40% on any assets over the threshold which is £325,000 (£650,000 if a married or Civil Partnership couple). This exemption can be increased to £500,000 per person if you leave your house to your children.

If you leave a minimum of 10% of your total assets to charity, see below, this rate is reduced to 36% on the remaining 90% (or less if more than 10% is left to charity) of your Estate.

What is Exempt from Inheritance Tax?

Any gifts left to a surviving spouse or Civil Partner (but not if left to a surviving partner where there is no legal relationship). If everything is bequeathed to a surviving spouse then their tax-free threshold can be used on the second death.

Any gifts to a registered UK or Eire Charity. So no Inheritance Tax is payable on these bequests.

If you give away any of your assets in excess of the £325,000 allowance during your lifetime and you live for 7 years from the date of the gift then the value of these assets is not part of your Estate. There is a sliding scale if you live more than three years but not the full seven years (called a potentially exempt transfer).

If you do give away any assets that would be subject to Capital Gains Tax if sold by you then giving them away during your lifetime may trigger a Capital Gains Tax liability so beware!

Gifts made during your lifetime

You can give away any surplus income during your lifetime and these gifts do not form part of your Estate but you must keep records to show that these gifts are genuinely from income and not from Capital.

Nasty Fact

Without proper advice and planning the beneficiary getting the biggest share of your Estate over the £325,000 may be the Tax Authorities!!

Peter Runacres, u3a Bromley Member and Retired Chartered Accountant

DISCLAIMER: Inheritance Tax is extremely complicated. Always get professional advice when making a Will. The purpose of this article is to give you some ideas to discuss with your advisor. The article is not endorsed by u3a Bromley or any other u3a or the Third Age Trust.

Peter's next info share will be on Equity Release.

Barn Dance a Stompin' Success

Our first u3a Barn dance was a great success, thanks to the fabulous music of SELFOLK, who provided a 16-piece South East London Ceilidh band, and their very patient caller, Nathalie Hobbons.



As most of us were new to the dances, a clear description of each dance and a walk through for each was very necessary, and sometimes several walkthroughs! There was as much enjoyment in watching the dancers and listening to the music as in actually dancing. New members were welcomed, especially those brave enough to come on their own, very much our Bromley ethos.

This has set the bar high for future events but I am sure we will rise to the challenge.
Sandy Boden

Art Appreciation (1)

On **15 April** Graham took us to Venice, which in the past had been a very wealthy and influential city with a powerful navy. Before the days of a united Italy it was made rich by the spice and silk trades from the East and it has a Byzantine flavour of architecture with the splendour of the Doge's Palace and mosaic tiles telling histories. Wealthy houses and palaces line the canals and the many churches are filled with famous paintings and altar pieces by the grand artists of the day such as Titian, Giorgione and three generations of the Bellinis. Most paintings on show are religious but there are also paintings showing the many processions and grandeur of the day. A confraternity was formed by like-minded wealthy citizens, which was formed of hospitals, chapels and schools and sponsored artists. Canaletto's paintings of the canals are world renowned and there is also the Guggenheim Gallery on the Grand Canal, exhibiting famous modern art.

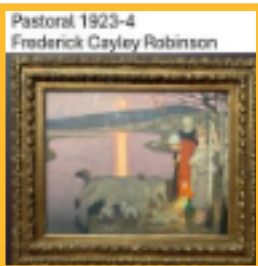
On **6 May** Glenys showed some paintings which are displayed in the galleries of Tate Britain. So often we visit a special exhibition there and have no time or energy to visit the galleries afterwards, but a few of us visited the galleries on 23 March and it was good for the whole group to see some of the works we had enjoyed and also for us all to have time to discuss them.

On **20 May** Richard showed us paintings by Norman Rockwell and how he depicted American families with humour and charm. He was very observant and captured the essence of what it is to be human in his paintings. He was very prolific between 1921 and 1975 and painted for the Evening Post for 47 years such scenes as a family Thanksgiving dinner, teenagers leaving home, sick children being nursed, the love of pets and holidays. Although he painted happy scenes he didn't show it in

himself and was often treated in a psychiatric hospital. His paintings helped raise 130million dollars for the war effort. Around 1963 he stopped his work for the Evening Post and concentrated on political subjects such as civil rights and apartheid.

On **3 June** Anne Jones showed us some of the later paintings of Joseph Wright (of Derby). These did not show his special paintings of scientific discoveries for which he is so famous, but mainly his landscapes. He visited Italy with his wife and children and painted Vesuvius. He had a history of depression and he had spent time earning money by successfully painting worthy portraits but he eventually went to live in Dovedale and concentrated on many local scenes. He called himself an exhausted mechanism and became a recluse, suffering from depression and rheumatism.

Glenys Crane



Forthcoming talks:

1 Jul Theatre	Lesley	David Hockney
16 Sep Zoom	Graham	Surrealism
7 Oct Theatre	Laraine	To be decided
21 Oct Zoom	Diana	Marc Chagall stained glass windows
4 Nov Theatre	Richard	Samuel Palmer
18 Nov Zoom	Graham	Sea-scapes
2 Dec Theatre	Graham	Social and Quiz

Computing: Tablets etc (5)

Aggravated by Android? Exasperated by email? Irritated by your iPhone or iPad? Maddened by your Mac? Rattled by Ringo? Wound up by Windows?



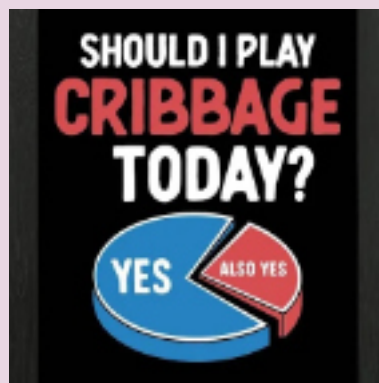
We can probably help. Drop into the Richmal Crompton pub (opposite Bromley South Station) any Thursday or on the 1st or 3rd Monday each month

at 10am for friendly patient advice from one (or more) of our team of experienced users. Ideally, let Keith know you are coming beforehand, especially if you might be a bit late. You will find us right at the back of the pub, near the kitchen door.

No charge, though the pub appreciates it if you buy a coffee (other beverages are available).

Contact Keith

Cribbage (2)



Cribbage — or *Crib*, as the game is more commonly known — has been around for many years. It may, at first, appear to be a complex game, but it really only requires the ability to add to 31. We

hope to add this game to our list of activities, and if you are interested, or would like to learn how to play, please contact our Group Liaison Officer (2)

Creative Writing (1)

(Not so) Creative Writingor is it?

Every month we meet in the Richmal Crompton to share what we have written in the weeks since our last gathering on the chosen topic, which at our May meeting was *Inspiration*. It is then up to each group member to interpret and develop the subject matter, which in some way explores the title and the variety of approaches is always quite fascinating. Inspiration is invariably the initiator of the process and the more tangible act of writing follows. I had an idea for a story which drew on the ancient Greek idea of the Muses and its modern, but far less romantic, equivalent, the creative capability of AI. Anyone who uses Google uses AI, as it will automatically generate an AI summary of any topic you feed into the search engine, but how good is it at creating novel content I wondered. In a recent Radical interview on Radio 4, the billionaire 'Tec bro', Reid Hoffman (founder of LinkedIn) stated, in response to a question about the possible turmoil and chaos caused by the AI revolution, that it is not possible to turn back time or to slow its advance. He advised people to embrace it, exploring its potential to assist them in their jobs and everyday lives – if you can't beat it, use it. Since my story concerned the creative ability of AI, why not utilise it, I thought, and fed a brief outline of the narrative into Chat GPT (which stands for Generative Pre-trained Transformer), asking it to produce a story of around 500 words.

I was pleasantly surprised by the result - but you can judge for yourselves by reading. Not so divine inspiration. Of course you need to check through whatever it produces and I did make one or two small changes/additions to the finished product. ChatGPT is a very powerful tool which also writes excellent letters and reports, as well identifying photographs of buildings and giving you their history, as I discovered on a recent visit to Whitechapel. If it requires additional information it will ask questions or prompt you to supply more detail. You can even ask it seemingly silly questions like "Where do lost socks go?". Its response:

Mostly? Into very ordinary places.

Single socks disappear because of a few surprisingly effective mechanisms:

- They get trapped inside fitted sheets, duvet covers or pant legs in the wash.
- They stick to other clothes through static electricity.

- They slip behind or underneath the washer or dryer.
- They get eaten by gaps in front-loading washer door seals.
- One sock is judged "too worn" and quietly discarded while its partner survives.
- They migrate into gym bags, under beds or into completely different laundry baskets.

There's also a math effect: if you own 40 pairs of similar black socks, one missing sock feels mysterious even though statistically you're constantly mixing and separating nearly identical items.

The mythological explanation is better, though: socks are recruited into a hidden civilisation that survives entirely on lint and unmatched Tupperware lids. It seems it also has a sense of humour despite being prone to Americanisms such as 'a math effect'.

Not so divine inspiration

Jez had spent the last three weeks staring at the same four chords.

The studio smelled of stale coffee, dust, and overheated electronics. Gold records lined the walls—proof that his band, The Fall Parade, could still fill arenas and dominate streaming charts—but none of that helped now. Their label wanted five new songs for the next album. Jez, the group's principal songwriter and guitarist, had exactly half of one.

He tapped random notes on his acoustic guitar and groaned. Every melody sounded like something they'd already recorded.

"Writer's block?" laughed Dan, the drummer, as he passed through the control room.

"Creative exhaustion," Jez corrected.

"Same thing."

That evening Jez wandered through internet rabbit holes searching for inspiration. Songwriting techniques became articles about ancient poetry, which became mythology. Soon he found himself reading about the nine Greek Muses: divine spirits who whispered ideas into the minds of artists.

Most of it sounded ridiculous, but one obscure website described an ancient ritual once used by poets. A bowl of water. Olive oil. A spoken invocation beneath candlelight.

Jez laughed at himself even while setting it up in his apartment kitchen at midnight.

"To the Muses," he muttered theatrically, "I could really use a hand."

He extinguished the candles and went to bed feeling stupid.

At three in the morning he woke suddenly.

A woman's voice drifted through the darkness.

The chorus needs to rise on the fourth line.

Jez froze.

"You're dreaming," he whispered.

No. Pick up your phone. Record this.

Heart pounding, he obeyed. Melodies poured into his mind—sharp, complete, undeniable. Lyrics followed effortlessly. Images of oceans, city lights, heartbreak, memory. By dawn he had rough demos for four songs.

The next morning at rehearsal, the band listened in stunned silence.

Dan blinked. "You wrote these overnight?"

"They just... came to me."

"These are brilliant," said Mara, the bassist. "The second one's a single."

For the first time in weeks Jez felt alive. The voice returned each night afterwards, helping him finish the fifth track. The album came together faster than any they'd ever made. The rest of the band were delighted, although a trifle mystified when he insisted they call it Euterpe, after the Greek muse of poetry and music.

But a month later, while working late in the studio, Jez noticed his laptop microphone light flicker on.

A notification appeared.

Gemini Suggestions Available

Below it sat fragments of lyrics eerily similar to his songs.

Curious, Jez opened the activity log. Recorded voice snippets appeared from previous nights: exhausted mutterings, half-sung melodies, complaints about chord progressions. Gemini had apparently been analysing his verbalised thoughts through open apps and generating musical suggestions in the background.

Jez sat back in horror.

The Muse hadn't been divine inspiration.

It had been an AI assistant listening through his laptop.

For a long moment he stared at the platinum records on the wall.

Then, reluctantly, he opened a new document.

"Alright," he muttered. "Got anything for track six?"

Carole Blacher & ChatGPT

Daytime Disco (2)



The Disco is still very popular with lots of new members joining, but very few men, so come on guys, join the lovely ladies and re-live your youth, John Travolta, Mick Jagger, or whichever way you feel like dancing. We have very low lighting!

Disco is every Tuesday at Bromley Little Theatre, 2-3pm.

Contact Christine

Genealogy (4)

The Genealogy (Intermediate) group meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month at a member's home (currently in Orpington near the station and centre) so we are somewhat restricted as to numbers. However, we have space for another couple of people who are interested in tracing their family history – whether you have just started looking or have some knowledge about your background.

At meetings we discuss what we have done in the past month and have a look at a topic which has been set at the previous meeting; this topic can be any aspect of family history such as wills, censuses, houses in which our ancestors lived.

Gardening - Monthly Talks (4)

In May we had our annual plant sale. This was very successful with members bringing plants to sell and buying plants and seedlings to take home and it raised £50. We also had a cryptic quiz based on plants, which proved challenging but great fun.

In June Nick Dobson came to give his talk entitled 'Summer Sizzlers' in which he showcased plants that are the most colourful for us to grow in our gardens in the summer and the conditions they need to flourish.

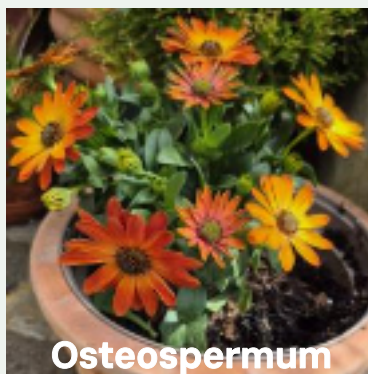
We do not meet in July and August.

2 September – Michael Holland – Zest and the Rest

Michael's talk about oranges, lemons and the citrus family will touch upon world-changing medicinal and technological breakthroughs, tangy tastes, perfumery, religious symbolism and much more.



Osteospermum



Osteospermum

Meetings are held at St. Mark's Church Room, Westmoreland Road, Bromley, at 2.30pm. A small entrance charge includes tea and biscuits. **NB there is no parking at St Mark's Church.** For further details telephone Sue Goodger

Golf Lessons (5)

Our next session of Golf Lessons starts again on Wednesday 16th September at Chelsfield Golf Centre. These friendly groups are taken by Steve, a Professional at the Centre and are suitable for beginners and improvers.

u3a Bromley Golf dates at Chelsfield

Autumn 2026

Wed 16 Sept

Wed 23 Sept

Wed 30 Sept

Wed 7 Oct

Wed 14 Oct

Texas Scramble and Lunch: Wed 21 Oct

Wed 18 Nov - Drop in

Wed 9 Dec - Drop in

Price £10 per session – max per group 7-8 persons per session.

You will need to book slots.

For further details of sessions and times available please contact Mary Golds.



Gardening All Hands Group (4)

The Oast, Mayfield, Sussex



The Oast tulips

On a glorious day in late April, the group picked up the coach from Bromley South Station and headed for a National Garden Scheme Garden in Sussex, opened just for our group. The garden has

been featured in *The English Garden*, *RHS The Garden* and *Which? Gardening* Magazines.

Described as an atmospheric one-acre garden in an idyllic setting, nestled in the folds of the rolling High Weald with a beautiful view. The draw was the planting of over 4000 tulips plus other spring bulbs and flowers in April and they did not disappoint!

The owners, Mike and Tessa Crowe moved to Mayfield 18 years ago, but the garden had to take backseat for two years while they completely gutted their 1850's oast house. They have done everything in the garden themselves over the years. We enjoyed teas and cake in the gardens after our tour round. Then with time to spare, we walked into historic Mayfield village, where we continued to enjoy the sunshine but while sitting in the garden of the local pub!

Gatton Park, Surrey – by coach



Luckily, it was the day after the hottest May Bank Holiday temperatures when we set off for the historic Gatton Park. We were welcomed with a hot drink and homemade cake in the magnificent Gatton Hall tea room before splitting into two groups for our guided tour of the grounds, starting with its history. The hamlet of 'Gatone' was valued in the Domesday book at £6 but from the 18th Century was owned by various families who initially built the hall itself and engaged Capability Brown to provide a typical landscape. Gatton was given

parliamentary borough status in 1450 with the privilege of having two MPs, both in the pocket of the Lord of the Gatton Manor, and was one of the infamous Rotten Boroughs and described by William Cobbett in 1830 as a "very rascally spot of earth" until the 1832 Reform Act did away with it.

The last person to own Gatton Park outright was Sir Jeremiah Colman, of mustard fame, in 1888. He made use of the glasshouses and became a global authority on orchids. Colman's additions to the park include the Japanese garden, the rock garden, the pleasure gardens, and the parterre.

Our tour of the garden took us through the rock garden and Japanese garden, which was featured in the Channel 4 'Lost Gardens' series featuring a very young Monty Don.

We finished our tour with the Grade 1 listed church of St Andrews, initially built as a chapel for the Hall, with a cosy parlour for the lord and family and hard pews for the congregation. Since 1948, the park has housed a boarding school, now state owned with circa 1,000 pupils. The group went on to a nearby garden centre for lunch and plant buying!

Sandy Boden

Our schedule for the year ahead can be seen below.

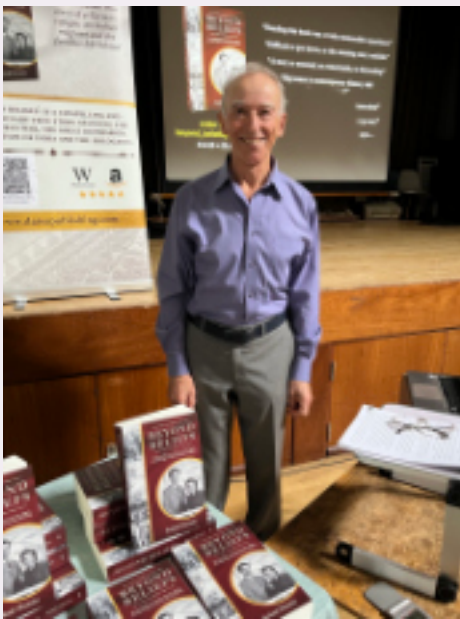


Contact Sandy Boden to go on the member list.

Future Trips

Name	Month/Date	Place	Travel
Marilyn Hardwick	17th July	Borde Hill, Haywards Heath RH16 1XP	Coach
Donna	August TBA	Wisley	Coach
Sandy Boden	September TBA	West Dean Gardens	Coach
Gladys Donovan	October TBA	Brogdale	Coach
Sandy Boden	November	Planning Meeting	St Marks

General Meeting May 2026: Sohail Husain



We had a very interesting speaker for our May General Meeting. The audience was totally engaged in the subject he presented.

Sohail was born in 1951 to mixed-race immigrant parents who lived in London. They worked in London's famous street markets. Leaving school, he studied Geography at the University of Nottingham and was awarded a

PhD there in 1976.

He started his career as a University Lecturer for 13 years. Then for 15 years with an NGO dedicated to creating safer communities, and then became an adviser to the United Nations working on programmes to prevent violence against women and girls.

In his retirement, using his professional skills as a social scientist, he embarked on research into his family's history, which led to many amazing discoveries. Over a very long time, six years in fact, he wrote his memoirs. His account included many extracts from correspondence and other documents. Although most were in English, a proportion were in German and quotes from there were translated into English.

He outlined the talk in a very professional way and covered a great deal on his family history.

He lives in Hampshire with his wife and two daughters and I was so pleased that Sohail accepted doing this talk for us.

Shirley Corney

Speaker Secretary



Guitar Group (5)



Come and have fun and join our u3a Bromley Guitar Group. We play Baroque, Classical, Folk, Blues, Ragtime and Pop.

You must be able to read basic music notation.

We meet every 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month.

Time: 2.00 - 4.15pm.

Venue: The Wesley Room,
Bromley Methodist Church,
College Road,
Bromley BR1 3NS.

Please contact Christine Dabrowa for more information

History of Fashion (5)



A typical Rococo couple. Mme de Julienne, holding shuttle and thread, is knotting (a fashionable pastime creating a textured trim).

Members have been learning about the Stuarts and the Georgians and their European contemporaries and the extreme fashions before the French Revolution.

I have vacancies in my Tuesday group (usually 2nd Tuesday of the month) 10am-12noon. I will be talking about the Regency and the Napoleonic era on 14th July. Come along for a taster session if you are interested in the history, fashion and art of that period. Please email me

Laraine Burr

Local Studies (4)

Please note that all our meetings are in the **Whitfield Hall, United Reformed Church, 20, Widmore Road, Bromley, BR1 1RY**. They take place on the **first Tuesday of the month**, running from **10:30 am** until **12:00 pm** at the latest. These are Open Meetings, and all members are welcome.

Please note that there is an admission charge of £3, payable by cash or card. Non-members may enter for £5.

Forthcoming meetings:

7 July	Kate Boyle	The History of Trinity House
August	NO MEETING	
1 September	Fay Tennet	Protecting Politics (Security in the Houses of Parliament)
6 October	Tom Hart Dyke	Lullingstone Castle

Steve Woods

For further information, please contact Steve.

Reports on previous meetings, with thanks to Angela Dowling:

MAY – The story of the London's Green Belt Peter Martin



One of our members, Peter Martin, who is Vice Chair of Bromley Civic Society, explained how the Green Belt has supported and protected much of Bromley's rich natural and built heritage to date. This green girdle around London has made Bromley one of the greenest boroughs with parks, open spaces, gardens and forest, but it now faces massive population growth and housing and other development pressure as part of Greater London planning and development. Ebenezer Howard was the

Green Belt Godfather. With other planners and architects he saw a need at the beginning of the 20th century to create the garden cities of tomorrow as the Industrial Revolution, railway development and urbanisation intensified. They aimed to stop the city growing and spreading out further. They were influenced by health considerations such as how disease can spread rapidly between close dwellings, new transport improvements, and a knowledge of and the need for us to enjoy nature.

A major milestone was London County Council's establishment of the Green Belt in 1938 (Bromley celebrated 50 years of the Belt in 1988 with a giant cake in the High Street!). A Greater London Plan followed in 1946 and then the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 enshrined the Green Belt. Examples of garden cities are Harrow, Stevenage, Welwyn Garden City, all north of London. There is talk now of Thamesmead in South London being given the same status.

Peter showed us aerial photographs of Coney Hall from the 1930s with fields around some housing and few roads. There had been a plan to develop the area to Biggin Hill. This has not happened because of the Green Belt but what we are now seeing is a series of changes and challenges to the existing planning frameworks and land usage guidance over several years from Local Authorities, the Mayor of London, developers, etc to allow previously Green Belt land to be used for other purposes e.g. Bishop Justus School, housing on the former Hewitt's Farm, the new proposals for Hayes Farm and Jubilee Country Park, housing being built on previous industrial land and intense housing builds around the fringes of Bromley High Street. Much of this development may be granted if plans can show substantial affordable housing, necessary infrastructure and an element of green access. There are no easy answers to any of this development apart from challenging applications. There were a number of questions from our very engaged audience and concern that more was not being done to utilise all the housing stock of the borough as well as incentives to downsize, creation of new units for later living as other countries have done, etc.

Thank you Peter for providing this important update for us in Bromley.



JUNE – The history of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane Ian Bevan

Ian Bevan returned to u3a Bromley to share his passion for the Theatre Royal Drury Lane in London. There are 41 theatres in the West End and this is the largest, currently the fourth building on the site. Started in 1660 at the Restoration, friends of King Charles II opened two different player companies to fill the gap left by the Oliver Cromwell years. Early productions featured acclaimed Shakespearean actors of the time and Nell Gwyn, the King's

mistress. Going to the theatre became increasingly popular, and became the place to be – and to be seen..

Sir Christopher Wren designed the second slightly larger building around 1672, following a fire. One of the new leaders of the theatre was Charles Macklin, the Olivier of his day. He was followed by David Garrick in the 18th Century who started play rehearsals and got rid of the brothel next door. Other notable names who succeeded him were Richard Brinsley Sheridan,

John Philip Kemble and Henry Holland. All were able to attract the big actors from this era. Under Holland a third and larger theatre was built following another fire in 1791. At this point, a fire curtain was installed. The theatre only lasted till 1809 and a new much larger build and most of what is the current design emerged. A truly sumptuous theatre, it had a rotunda, grand saloon and two different doors for King George III and the Prince of Wales who famously did not get on. Big names of this time were Edmund Kean and Joseph Grimaldi, the original clown.

The 19th century saw various cycles of expansion and decline under different leaders. However, innovations included the first Christmas pantomime with music hall actors, a revolving stage thanks to hydraulics and the first ballet.

The 20th century saw the advent of musicals with e.g. Rose Marie and the Desert Song from 1924 then Cavalcade and the Dancing Years in the 1930s. During the 2nd World War, with theatres closed, it became the HQ of ENSA. Post War the big musicals began – Oklahoma, Carousel, South Pacific, the King and I, My Fair Lady, Camelot etc. Then Mame, Billy, Chorus Line, Pirates of Penzance, 42nd Street, Miss Saigon (4296 performances), Lord of the Rings, Oliver and lots more.

The Theatre closed again in the COVID years and Andrew Lloyd Webber, the owner, was one of those to press for the earliest reopening. More recently, it has hosted Frozen and Hercules as it continues to update offerings for the audiences of today.

Thanks, Ian, for a very entertaining and interesting talk.

Lowe (3) Shadwell

Shadwell station on Cable Street in East London lies directly north of Wapping, and you don't have to walk far to get a flavour of its history. St George's (formerly Stepney) Town Hall is a recently renovated Grade II listed Victorian building which now has several large ceremony rooms which we were unable to explore. It backs on to St George's Gardens which can be accessed by taking the path down the side of the building past a huge mural depicting the infamous 1936 Battle of Cable Street. A united community of local residents, trade unionists and anti-fascists successfully blocked a march by Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists.

On the other side of the park stands the once magnificent St George's Church, designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor and built in the early 18th century. During the Blitz in 1941 it was severely damaged by an incendiary bomb – the current interior is a

functional and modest worship space in contrast to the proud Hawksmoor shell.

Leaving the church, we continued down the busy Cannon Street Road to the Royal Pharmaceutical Society Museum, which covers all aspects of British pharmacy history, from the 1400s up to the present day and entry is free. After a well earned coffee stop we pressed on to Wilton's Music Hall which we knew would be closed, but managed a quick peek into the foyer and a look at posters of their previous and up-coming productions. Unfortunately we were unable to view the historic auditorium of what is thought to be the oldest surviving music hall in the world. From here a short walk took us past St Katharine Dock to Tower Hill Station, where we picked up the District line.

Carole Blacher



Lowe (3) Whitechapel

The multi-cultural mix of this area is apparent as you leave the station beneath a sign which gives its name both in English and in Bengali – around one third of the current residents came originally from Bangladesh. Almost immediately outside is a busy street market selling fresh, exotic produce, aromatic spices, cultural clothing and jewellery as well as everyday household items. It is only a short distance to the infamous Blind Beggar pub, site of the 1966 gangland shooting by Ronnie Kray. We didn't venture inside so were unable to check out the vintage original features or its highly regarded, large beer garden. In stark contrast, it was outside this pub where Methodist minister William Booth gave his first sermon back in 1865, which led to his meeting up with a local group of Christian missionaries with whom he and his wife Catherine established the East London Christian Mission later that year. In 1878 the name was changed to **Salvation Army** and the movement grew into a global church, operating in over 130 countries. Further down, on the Mile End Road, we came upon statues of both William and Catherine.

Before that we encountered the gated community of the Grade I listed Trinity Green Almshouses, originally built in 1695 to provide housing for retired sailors. They were damaged during WWII but restored by the LCC in 1954. On the wall of the house next door, the Mile End Mural depicts former residents of and people associated with Whitechapel such as George Bernard Shaw, William Booth, Captain Cook, Prince Monolulu, Vladimir

Lenin, Edith Cavell and Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man. Queen Mary Café in the old Wickham's Department store building, right next to the Spiegelhalter's jewellery shop, provided us with a reasonably priced coffee stop before crossing over and making our way down an alleyway and some narrow backstreets. Eventually arriving at Rinkoff's Bakery, founded in 1911 and still using some of the old Eastern European recipes, many of us were tempted to make purchases by their deliciously unusual looking cakes and pastries.

Proceeding back along Whitechapel Road, but on the other side, we pass the very grand looking Tower Hamlets Town Hall building, formerly the Royal London Hospital, before coming to the modern East London Mosque and London Muslim Centre. Continuing on to the Whitechapel Bell Foundry I am saddened to see its slowly deteriorating façade and still fail to understand why such an iconic historic site could not have found funding to keep it as a working museum and tribute to 450 years of unique and skillful endeavour. We crossed over again to the Whitechapel Gallery only to find that it is closed on a Monday. Ah well, we will have to catch up with the works of Veronica Ryan and Senga Nengudi another day and the proximity of Aldgate East and the District line did enable a few of the more energetic members to continue on to Sloane Square and visit Chelsea in Bloom.

Carole Blacher



This group is full but if you would like to undertake any of the walks described you can email me: and I will be happy to share the map we used.

Motorcycle Group (3)

Dear u3a .Bromley

Our number is gradually growing but we'd love to see more new members, any age, with any size bike.

We have reconvened for the monthly summer jaunts, and went from Sidcup to Battle and Pevensey Bay. We had two welcome breaks where

much tea and cake was consumed along with great conversation. We covered over 100 miles from 10am until reaching home at 6pm.

If anyone would like to know more, please contact me.



Outings by Public Transport (4)

The outings for the next few months are listed below:

- 14th July Keston Mosque**
The 320 bus goes there from Bromley. Get off at Keston Mark and I will meet you at that bus stop at 10:15am. Our tour begins at 10:30am. The cost is £10
- 10th Sep Valence House** With a history from 1250s, there should be lots to investigate. It was recommended to us by folk in the ELLE group.
We will meet at Bromley South station at 9:30am, travel to Herne Hill (9:50am) and on to Farringdon (10:20am). From here we will take the Elizabeth Line to Shadwell, followed by a bus journey and a ten minute walk. The cost is £15.
- 23rd Nov Peek Frean Museum.** This was once the factory of one of the largest biscuit manufacturers in the country. Its history will be shown by ex-employees. *I, myself, lived right next door and am excited to see inside!*
We will meet at Bromley South station at 9:30am, Victoria at 10am (outside Smiths at Platform 8), take a tube to Westminster, then another to Bermondsey. This tour starts at 11am.
We will then walk past my childhood home (!!), once a sweet shop, to the museum. taking about ten minutes. The cost is a £5 donation.
- I have arranged a second visit, 1:30pm the same day**, as this museum can only hold 12 people and I currently have 15 on my list. Please let me know if you can be flexible with the timing and which time you would prefer. The second set of train times will be published in the September Newsletter.

If you are interested in any of the above, please contact me to book your place.

Do not pay until confirmation of a place has been issued, as making refunds is not straightforward.

Ann Woollins

Music Appreciation Classical (5)

Our select group of classical music enthusiasts continues to meet once a month to listen to and discuss music. This year members have devised programmes based on very different themes.

In January we heard music which had been written for or used in films. Films as varied as *Death in Venice* and *Apocalypse Now* have made certain pieces of classical music iconic. But 20th century composers such as Addinsell, Korngold and Bernard Herrmann have produced significant pieces of film music which have been turned into concert pieces. The Narrative for Orchestra by Herrmann based on the music for Hitchcock's *Psycho* was new to me and a piece I will want to listen to again.

We turned our gaze to the heavens for our next programme chosen by a member. Music linked to the moon and stars proved to be a rich source of material. It is always interesting to hear a programme which combines well known pieces such as Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* or Holst's *The Planets* with new works such as Judith Weir's *Stars, Night, Music and Light* and challenging works such as Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*. Mozart's piano variations on

a tune which we know as *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* are guaranteed to raise a smile.

In months when we have no formal programme, all members bring in pieces of music to play and discuss. Our latest formal programme was on the subject of Schumann, Brahms and Dvorak. We heard the *Rhenish symphony* and the piano work *Carnaval* by Robert Schumann, who had encouraged and inspired the young Brahms. A little known choral piece and a piano quintet represented Brahms who in turn had recognised and nurtured the talent of Dvorak. We heard Dvorak's *Serenade for Strings* which is deservedly popular and his *American String Quartet* and left for home dancing a *Furiant* from his *Slavonic Dances* which Brahms had arranged to be published.

We have spaces in our group, so if you would like to expand your knowledge of classical music, do come and join us. We meet on the second Wednesday of every month from 2pm to 4.30pm - drop an email to me for more details

Peter Whitehead

Poetry Literary Discussion (3)

Places available in the Poetry Literary Discussion Group
Do you enjoy reading poetry, and discussing your ideas about it with other people?

Can poetry help us to process important aspects of our lives such as love, loss and regret?

If you would say yes then you may like to come along to try the poetry discussion group, on the second

Thursday afternoon of the month. I hold it at my house, near Beckenham town centre, close to St George's Church and Marks and Spencer.

Please contact me if you would like more details.

Adele Radelat

Psychology (3) - Global Mind Health Project

The Global Mind Health Report is produced by a non-profit organisation called Sapien Labs made up of international academics. It is one of the largest ongoing studies tracking mental health and wellbeing across the internet-enabled world. It does this via an online test consisting of 80 questions which generates an MHQ – Mind Health Quotient – a composite score assessing 47 different cognitive, emotional and social capacities. It also collects some demographic information and, to date, over 2.5 million people from over 85 countries have taken part. If you wish to look at or take the test you can do so here: <https://sapienlabs.org/mhq/>

Since they started measuring in 2019, the mind health of adults aged 55 and over has remained fairly consistent, whereas that of young adults under 35 deteriorated significantly during and after the pandemic. Today almost half suffer mental health challenges that substantially impact their ability to function in everyday life and the data shows a

pattern of diminishing mind health in each younger generation. Surprisingly, the decline in younger generations is most pronounced in wealthier, more developed countries. The project has been investigating the root causes of the decline in an attempt to understand the aspects of modern life responsible for this trend and has come up with four key factors which it believes are responsible for three quarters of the effect. These are: diminished family bonds, diminished spirituality, smartphones at an increasingly younger age and the increasing consumption of ultra-processed food. In coming weeks we shall explore each of these factors in more detail and examine

ways in which countries might address the problems which arise from them.

Carole Blacher

The Psychology group currently has a waiting list – should you wish to be added to it please email me.



Rambles (2)

These are our walks for July and August 2026, a mixture of London, suburban and country. Email me if you need to join the distribution list for our circular "Pathways" which enables you to receive last minute information of changes, additions or cancellations (there may well be an additional walk this period); similarly email me if you wish to be removed from the list.

For any new ramblers, full information will be in our circular "Pathways", but guidance in brief is:-

Attendees are responsible for their own **safety**, both in country & town, and their own fitness to complete the walk. Use suitable **footwear** and **dress** for the weather, plus a **drink**. No dogs please.

New Walk Leaders are always wanted even just for an occasional walk a year.

The Walks

NB On Central London walks, numbers are limited so **contact the Walk Leader to book your place**, and **if booking by email, ensure your booking is confirmed by them**. Other Suburban and Country walks do not need to be booked – just turn up on the day.

Thur. 09 July 2026 – Cudham Circular

Meet at 10.30 at Cudham Recreation Ground Car Park just SE of Blacksmiths Arms for a 5 mile walk via Downe Village, mostly footpaths but some hills. Recommend a walking stick and suitable shoes. There will be an opportunity for lunch at the Blacksmiths Arms after the walk. No need to book in advance.

Leader: Robin Burnhams

Wed. 22 July 2026 – Keston Circular via Nash

Meet at 10.30 outside the Greyhound pub on Keston Village Green for a 5 mile circular walk with 1 stile and 1 slight incline. There are pubs and cafés in Keston for

refreshments after the walk. Buses 146 and 246 from Bromley stop at the green. No need to book.

Leader: Kate Irwin

Thur. 06 Aug. 2026 – Shoreham Circular via Romney Street

Meet at 10.30 at Shoreham Station (trains from Bromley South) for a 5 mile walk taking in the North Downs. There are a number of climbs and descents along the way with views over the Kent countryside. Not suitable for those who prefer a gentle walk, and a walking stick is advisable plus suitable walking shoes. There are several pubs in Shoreham serving lunch.

Leader: Robin Burnhams

Wed. 12 Aug. 2026 – King's Cross area (In the Footsteps of Fanny Wilkinson)

Meet at 11am outside King's Cross Station by the Black Sheep coffee shop for a linear walk to Russell Square Tube Station via historic buildings, parks, gardens and curiosities. About 2.5 hours with plenty of cafés at end of walk.

NB: Contact the Walk Leader to book your place.

Leader: Alan Canham

Tue. 25 Aug. 2026 – History of Toilets (London)

Meet at 10.45 at Platform 19, Waterloo Main Line Station to finish at Covent Garden. This is a short walk of only 1½ miles but with a lot of information about the history and use of toilets in general and in London in particular.

NB: Contact the Walk Leader to book your place.

Please book by email if at all possible.

Leader: Graham Haynes –

Peter Wood – Rambles Group Co-ordinator

Tennis (2)



The group has managed to play most weeks, despite the weather ranging from cold to hot, extreme wind, and intermittent rain.

Bromley Lawn Tennis Club is a lovely venue not far from Bromley South Station with free parking and reduced rates for u3a members.



We welcome new members to the group, which meets every Thursday from 1pm - 2.30pm.

Don't worry about being rusty, we play in groups of four, and everyone is very friendly.

Join the club and enjoy good exercise in the fresh air.

Contact: Christine

Science & Technology (5)

How we perceive colour

April's presentation explored several aspects of how we perceive colour.

Topics included the rods and cones in our eyes, forbidden colours, colour constancy, and tetrachromacy.

The retina contains light-sensitive rod cells, which produce a monochrome image, and three types of cone cells—blue, green, and red—which add colour. Signals from the retina are then processed by the visual cortex, the part of the brain that forms the image we see.



Concetta Antico - Peacock

Because of the way signals from our three cone types are processed, we cannot perceive two colour combinations: yellowish blue and greenish red. These are known as forbidden colours. This was demonstrated in the presentation by shining equal amounts of yellow and blue light onto a white card. Although the eye received yellowish-blue light, we perceived only white.

The colour we perceive depends on both the light an object reflects and the light shining on it. For instance, sunlight becomes redder in the evening, yet objects do not appear to change colour. This is because the visual cortex adjusts what we see

according to the ambient light.

This effect, called colour constancy, was demonstrated with an image of strawberries under strong green light: the brain interpreted them as red even though they were actually green.

The visual cortex carries out so much processing that it accounts for about 40% of the cerebral cortex, the brain region responsible for higher functions such as conscious thought, memory, reasoning, and language.

Tetrachromats are people with four types of cone cells in their retinas — red, green, blue, and yellow. They can perceive up to 100 times more colours than the average person, so the world appears much more colourful to them. Most are women whose father was colour-blind, a faulty cone gene from the father resulting in an additional functioning cone in women. The artist Concetta Antico is a tetrachromat who tries to show through her paintings how colourful the world appears to her. Of course, this is not really possible as we can only see one hundredth of the colours that she can see!

Chris Lawson

The Secret life of Algae: From Garden Pond to Patagonia

Palaeontologists (scientists who find and analyse fossilised remnants of prehistoric ancient organisms and how they evolve within their ecology), estimate that life on Earth started around 3.8 billion years ago (bya). The first primitive life appeared in the oceans and these were single-celled, non-oxygen breathing micro-organisms, similar to modern-day bacteria and archaea. Hundreds of millions of years and multiplications later (3.0-2.5 bya), photosynthesis emerged, single-celled cyanobacteria evolved that could convert sunlight and water into energy, releasing oxygen as a byproduct. Flooding the oceans and atmosphere with oxygen profoundly shifted the Earth's environment so that, by 1.6bya, an anomalous, fortuitous event (endosymbiosis) allowed cyanobacteria to evolve into photosynthetic, multicellular plants and algae.

Algae are a hugely diverse group of mostly aquatic, plant-like organisms. They soak up sunlight and carbon dioxide and produce up to 80% of all the oxygen on earth and serve as the tiny, microscopic foundation of the entire marine food chain. Far more than just pond scum or the green slimy film on stagnant water containers, some algae, like giant kelp, grow up to 60metres long, forming massive, majestic underwater forests. In fact, algae can be stunning!

While the occasional nuisance blooms are toxic, many species are aesthetically breathtaking – from bioluminescent algae that turn crashing ocean waves neon blue at night, to the intricate geometric shapes of microscopic diatoms.



Macroalgae are highly sustainable, nutrient-dense organisms, rich in protein, essential fatty acids, vitamins, and minerals and are increasingly used as dietary supplements to promote global food security and health. They can be found in natural food colourants, as thickeners, while seaweeds such as wakame, nori and kelp are integral to Japanese and South-Asian diets. Spirulina, a dried blue-green algae biomass popular mixed into smoothies and healthy energy drinks, is regarded as a superfood! Furthermore, macroalgae are known to be a rich source of natural bioactive compounds with anti-viral, anti-fungal, anti-bacterial, anti-

oxidant, anti-inflammatory and anti-neoplastic properties.

The next time you recoil from films of green slime on a pond, think of it as a microscopic powerhouse that's been quietly keeping our planet alive for over three billion years!

Brenda McCormack

The Wordsmiths (2)



We started the writing course for beginners at The Tennis Club, Sandford Road, Bromley on 30th July 2024 and finished on 24th September 2024. This was a six week course with our tutor Chris Bishop, author, who very kindly offered to do this course for the group.

After a successful career as a Chartered Surveyor, Chris Bishop retired to concentrate on his writing. His interest was Anglo Saxon History and he has had published six historical novels receiving excellent reviews. He has also published many short stories and blogs. Chris has inspired us all to continue,

I set up The Wordsmiths as Group Leader, and over time the group has produced some excellent work and I am pleased by all the talent, creativity and writing skills..



One of our members, Norma Powell, has written a children's book and her story was inspired by her eight-year-old grandson. She has written this book as a surprise for him. Her book, Brackenrock Bay, Keep out of the Tower, has been published and is available to buy from June 2026.

We are all so happy for her achievement and it makes us all so proud that she had the confidence to put pen to paper and write her first children's book.

Watch this space for our next author!

Shirley Corney
Group Leader

A Small Rant About Small Irritations

Adverts are all you see

On every programme of ITV

It's not uncommon to have eight or nine
Which all in all is quite some time

An advert about stair lifts in the house
Or a mobile scooter for your spouse

Funeral plans coming out of your ears
Insurance policies for over 50 years

Care Co chairs of all different sizes
Different competitions with lots of prizes

Show me the Moola car finance
Finding your ancestry at a glance

The Viking way elegant small ships
Beauty products and girls with big lips

Bulky pee pants always discreet
Use Revitalift for those aching feet

Hotel Trivago you must always check
Otherwise it is such a pain in the neck

For dogs and cats who need a home
For old donkeys that need to freely roam

Try to lose weight on a food plan with Jane
Or buy cheap tickets for the cross country train

Get involved with Sky bingo
I think I would rather watch Lingo

Donations for this, donations for that
So many different charities and that is a fact

Too good to leave behind
A case of baked beans how undefined

I could go on and on with so many more
But I do not want to become the biggest bore!

Shirley Corney
The Wordsmiths Group

Wine Enjoyment (2)

I am delighted to report that we had another full house where an array of Portuguese wines were enjoyed. Four whites followed by some snacks which set us up for the four reds that followed. Not a Mateus Rose nor LBV port in sight.

These evenings are proving extremely popular and, seven years on, we have to rely upon the attendees choice of theme. Our next event is 24th July and in the spirit of our warm summers we will be discovering eight different chilled rose delights.

We currently have a short waiting list and new potential participants will be made most welcome.

Joe Weiss
Group Leader



Theatre Group (2)

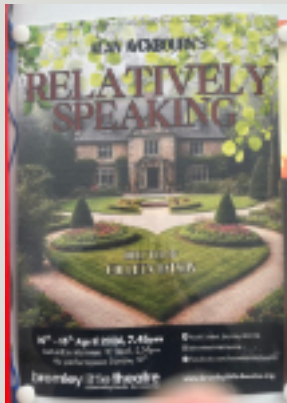
The group meets at **Bromley Little Theatre** in North Street, Bromley, on the second Thursday afternoon of the month at 2.15 for a 2.30 start. We have a varied programme of speakers each month and visits and outings to local and West End Theatres as well as visits to other places of theatrical interest. Payment for meetings is £10 to cover the meetings at **Bromley Little Theatre**. Payment can be made by BACS as long as Mary Garside is notified or by cash at a meeting. One-off guest visits are £2 per meeting. We are pleased to be developing our links with **Bromley Little Theatre** and attend many of their excellent productions. Booking in advance for meetings is helpful. We attend monthly Saturday matinees at **Bromley Little Theatre** - all are welcome. Please let Mary Garside know if you would like to receive emails about trips and outings and our meetings or have any other queries about the group.

Mary Garside

9 July	Kate Boyle	Annual walk : tour de Penge, fully booked
16 July	Social meeting	at Bromley Little Theatre, all welcome but let Mary know in advance.
3 Sept	Tour of Theatre Royal Drury Lane.	Fully booked
8 Oct	Ian Bevan	The London Coliseum

RELATIVELY SPEAKING Bromley Little Theatre Saturday 11 April 2026

Relatively Speaking is one of the earlier Alan Ayckbourn plays and has the classic Ayckbourn set up – you pretty much know what to expect but you also know it will



make you laugh out loud if performed well. Set in the '60s, two 20-somethings, Ginny and Greg, start a whirlwind romance. The more experienced Ginny tries to hide the fact that she has been having an affair with her married boss, but flowers and expensive chocolates in her flat make Greg distrustful.

Ginny thinks that Greg is probably 'the real thing' but is acutely aware that Greg is very suspicious. She wants to put the past behind her, so in a desperate attempt to finally put an end to her fling – and which for her has petered out anyway - she decides to take the train to her boss's country home with the aim of telling him that it is all over and to leave her alone for good. She knows that his wife is generally at church on a Sunday morning, so she chooses then to take her surprise trip.

But she tells Greg that that she is going to see her parents, and, believing her, on a whim he decides to make the same journey, planning to surprise her there with an offer of marriage once he has met her Mum and Dad. Of course, in the event, the wife (who Greg takes as Ginny's mum) decides not to go to church that day, and the scene is set for a wealth of confusion as to who is who and the relationships between the parties. Glorious and hilarious scenes follow.

The Bromley Little Theatre company pulled off this farce with word perfect-aplomb. Particularly impressive was Marion Barker playing the wife, but all the actors carried off their parts with great skill and confidence. After all, getting a complicated comedy plot right is difficult enough for professionals, and this amateur group did it proud. This was yet another success for this gem of a production house set in the heart of Bromley.

Clive Nash

KINKY BOOTS London Coliseum 16 April 2026

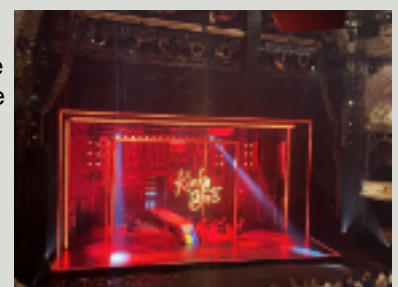


Based on a true story, Kinky Boots is an uplifting, sequin-strewn extravaganza, so having the use of the largest stage in London for its latest outing seems quite fitting.

Charlie Price (Matt Cardle) is desperately trying to leave his father's failing shoe-making business in Northampton for a new life in London but when his father dies he feels he has a moral obligation to try to carry on for the sake of the very loyal staff. He is handed a lifeline in the shape of Lola (Johannes Radebe of Strictly Come Dancing fame), a drag queen whose boot breaks while performing at a show Charlie is attending and he realises that women's boots are not made to support a man's weight distribution, so the two collaborate to make 'sexy' boots for men, with Lola having to contend with the prejudices of those who refuse to accept or try to understand anyone who is not a stereotypical man or woman.

While it was an extremely enjoyable show, along with at least a few others in the group I felt Johannes could have done with a few more singing lessons and I think we all agreed the music was FAR TOO LOUD!

Pat Ward



Theatre Group (2)

SHADOWLANDS Aldwych Theatre 22 April 2026

Shadowlands is essentially a bitter/sweet love story covering the period in the life of C. S. Lewis when he met, married and faced the grief of the tragically early death of American poet and novelist Joy Davidman.

Who could possibly follow the performance of Anthony Hopkins in this role? Hugh Bonneville of course! He is mesmerising as the Oxford don and author of the Narnia Chronicles while Maggie Siff is excellent as the feisty straight-talking Joy. We, the audience, observe their relationship develop from being one of written correspondence, through great friendship and eventually to deep love in spite of a 17-year age gap. When Joy is diagnosed with terminal cancer 'Jack' (C. S. Lewis's

nickname) is devastated and Hugh Bonneville gives a very moving portrayal as a grieving man struggling to equate this with his Christian faith. Nevertheless the play isn't all doom and gloom and there are one or two lighter moments to give us a laugh.

All in all an afternoon of absolute pleasure for 28 theatre group members.

Pat Ward



A MIRRORED MONET the Musical Charing Cross Theatre 6 May 2026



A group of 16 from the theatre group went to the little theatre under the arches at

Charing Cross. It was a first visit here for many of the group.

A new musical about the life of artist Claude Monet was being performed. It features two Monets, an older Monet in his 70s during World War 1, looking back at his life with a younger Monet and his friends Bazille, Renoir and mentor Manet. It centres on his love life and relationship with his first wife, Camille Doncieux, his muse and lover and mother of his two sons. The stage has changing backdrops of paintings of the salons and also Monet's impressionist offerings and reflects the struggle that the artists had with the establishment to have their work recognised as worthwhile. It portrays their poverty and hardships, which have a major impact on Camille.

The elder Monet played by Jeff Shankley narrates the play and shows his anger with his younger self in his treatment of Camille. His is the standout performance. Dean John-Wilson performs as the young Monet and Brooke Bazarian as Camille.

Monet's life at this early period is well portrayed but the songs tend to blur together with similar tone and tempo sung to the audience rather than the character.

However, the group generally were pleased to have come and enjoyed the afternoon.

Mary Garside

THE SON by Florian Zeller Bromley Little Theatre 9 May 2026



It was the Saturday matinee trip for the month of May for 40 theatre group members.

With such a deep pool of talent to draw from, it is no surprise that

it was possible to find appropriate actors to play the lead parts in this highly emotional play about a deeply disturbed and depressed adolescent boy.

After the breakdown of his parents' marriage, Nicolas feels abandoned by his father who has remarried and has a baby boy. Unknown to his mother, with whom he lives,

he has ceased attending school and just walks the streets all day. When Anne, the mother, discovers this she appeals to his father, Pierre, for help in uncovering what is wrong. Both parents are bewildered and cannot understand why and how Nicolas is feeling and are frustrated and at times angry with him. Nicolas asks to go to live with his father and stepmother Sofia, who tries hard to be sympathetic, but it is difficult for her as she finds it tiring just taking care of her own infant.

This is a very powerful drama about not understanding and not coping with mental illness. The four main characters portrayed so sympathetically by Josh Clarkson (Nicolas), Chris de Pury (Pierre), Roxanna Graves (Anne) and Lucy White (Sofia) certainly do it justice and I have to say I was crying at the end.

Pat Ward



Theatre Group (2)

PHANTOM OF THE OPERA His Majesty's Theatre Haymarket 20 May 2026

Several theatre group members attended the matinee performance of Phantom of the Opera and here are some comments below



Wow! I cannot believe I have waited so long to see this show. It has everything... fantastic music, spectacular scenes, romance, heart-break, danger and comedy. The costumes are so bright and sparkling and the whole excitement of the unfolding story pulls you in and you feel enveloped by the

combination of lights, song and the oh so familiar overture. I was thrilled by entire show and could easily have sat and watched it through again. The part of Christine was played perfectly, and her voice was clear and amazing in its range. Fabulous seats centre stalls. Thank you, Mary, for organising this very special event

Susan Donovan

Phantom was really good. I thought it might have seemed tired after all these years, but it was just as fresh with good actors. I saw it years ago when I couldn't afford good seats and couldn't see much and I was pleased to get good seats this time.

Christine Cavagnagh

1536 (Kings don't kill their wives, right?) Ambassadors Theatre 27 May 2026



I think many theatre group members were reluctant to travel to the theatre in the West End in the middle of a blistering heatwave but we are a stoic bunch and were well rewarded for our efforts on this occasion.

The Ambassadors Theatre is quite small and the intimate atmosphere ideally suits this play about three young women frequently meeting up in a field in rural Essex to discuss, amongst other things, news filtering down from London regarding the arrest, trial and eventual execution of

Ann Boleyn. Jane, Anna and Mariella are very close friends in spite of being very different from each other. Jane is rather naive and modest, Anna is bold, independent and rumoured to have had sexual encounters with many men in the village, whilst Mariella is a world-weary midwife.

Two hours of powerful electrifying drama including the timeless issues of rape and domestic violence reveal that in 1536, no matter whether a female be a queen or a lowly village woman, her life was controlled by and at the mercy of male entitlement. Circumstances have slowly improved since then but it's worth noting that it wasn't until 1991 that marital rape became a criminal offence!

I know I wasn't the only one to feel emotionally drained when the play ended. Absolutely brilliant!

Pat Ward

BROMLEY DISTRICT TALKING NEWS

Each week for the last 50 years, in a small studio in the middle of Bromley town, a group of volunteers has met to produce the Bromley District Talking News. Previously recorded on cassette tapes, then on CDs and nowadays on memory sticks, the News is a free summary of local happenings, events and features in audio form for the blind and partially sighted residents of Bromley.

Come rain or shine, a panel of editors selects news items and features from local feeds and the internet. A team of readers records the week's edition which is then copied on to USB sticks using high-speed equipment and posted to listeners.

We've been told that the sound of familiar and trusted voices coming into their homes each week provides listeners with a sense of belonging and friendship; that although they can no longer read the newspaper, they know more about events in the borough than many sighted friends; and that elderly parents are able to join in family discussions at the dinner table again.

If you know a blind or sight-impaired person, do introduce them to us. If you yourself have an hour or two spare each week, do join us as a volunteer; the work is far from onerous and takes place in a central, convivial atmosphere. Our arms and doors are always open.

Web : www.bromleytn.org.uk