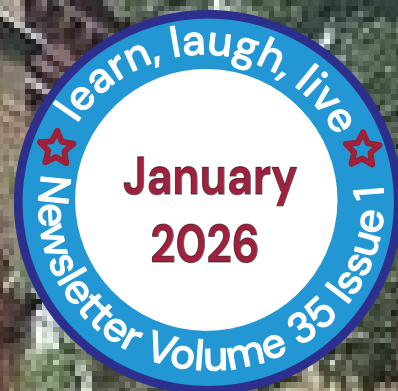


u3a Bromley



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Contact Us

Chair Sandy Boden
chair@u3abromley.org.uk

Secretary Angela Dowling

Treasurer Gary Chin

Membership Secretary Laury Burr

Editor Rashmi Lal

Website Team David Moody

Sally O'Donnell

Online Newsletter Distributor David Moody

Room Hire Pat Apps

Group Liaison Officers (GLOs)

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 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

6th Jan 2026 Local Studies

Nick Dobson
Gilbert and Sullivan

20th Jan 2026 General Meeting

Kirk Martin (u3a member)
Along the Waterways of Britain

3rd Feb 2026 Local Studies

Tom Carradine
The history of the Victorian Music Hall

17th Feb 2026 General Meeting

Mike Sheehan
Optical Illusion, Art and the Brain

3rd Mar 2026 Local Studies

Allan Goodison
The Woodland Trust

17th Mar 2026 General Meeting

Andrew Baker
The Crumbling of British Politics in Turmoil

21st Apr 2026 Annual General Meeting

All Local Studies and General Meetings are held in the Whitfield Hall, United Reformed Church (URC), 20 Widmore Road, Bromley, BR1 1RY



Front cover photo: The Railway Pub, Bromley North

Welcome to Issue 1, January 2026



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2025 has been a year of expansion for our u3a. Our promotional event seems to have sparked a real boost to our numbers with 225 new Members at time of writing thus making our membership 1,280. With three weeks to go to the New Year, we may well have even more.

And although we have had a number of new groups also starting this year, more groups are always needed. Hopefully our new members with their new ideas and enthusiasm will come up with some crackers!

Succession planning – new chair

Now for the serious stuff. As my term of office is coming into its final 18 month, ending at the April 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? We are also thinking that 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.

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. Wishing you all a very happy new year for 2026.



Sandy Boden

chair@u3abromley.org.uk

Susan Elkin – Author

And I said I couldn't do fiction ...

It came to me in the middle of the night, as things tend to once you reach a certain age. That poor child in Jane Eyre, the one Jane tutored, was shamefully treated. Why not have a go at telling Adèle's story and giving her a voice? So the next day I began researching in the original novel, making notes and – eventually – writing a substantial short story describing events from Adele's point of view. In my version she's now an elderly widow with a lot of memories, some fonder than others.

Well, I've written lots of books – English text books, advice books for teachers, memoir and more along with masses of journalism – but always said I couldn't do fiction. Had I just proved myself wrong? Well, I'd had such fun writing "Adèle" that I then asked myself what else I could do in similar vein.

Ideas began to flow and my brain began to fizz.



What about Jessica in the Merchant of Venice? Surely she'd have felt contrition? Or take Liza-Lu, Tess of the D'Urbervilles's younger sister. Was she really going to roll over and meekly marry her sister's widower? Surely not. Bertie Stanhope is one of the most colourful characters in Barchester

Towers. I reckon he's a closet gay. And I've long thought about that poor woman in the Bible who had an "issue of blood". Who was she and what happened to her after Jesus had cured her?

It took me about nine months to assemble fourteen "Tales from the Margins of Literature" and a bit longer to find a way of getting them published which finally happened last October. And, perhaps because it was a completely new departure, it has given me enormous satisfaction not least because it has entailed quite a lot of historical research.

Of course the stories will appeal to people who know the source novels, plays and poems. Equally, though, I really hope that they will act as introductions to some of the finest literature in English for anyone who's new to it. Or, naturally, they can just be read as standalones.

Inevitably – creative brain still bubbling, especially at 3am – I am now planning and working on "Unheard Voices: More Tales from the Margins of Literature" which I hope might surface later this year or early next.

Unheard Voices: Tales from the Margins of Literature by Susan Elkin is available from Amazon as paperback or e-book. It can also be ordered through any bookshop.



Christmas Social - 16th December 2025



Our Christmas Social replaces the General meeting talk in December, held as usual at the URC in Bromley. Our helper elves arrived early and were soon blowing up balloons and decorating the 16 tables and once the urn was hot, teas and coffees flowed.

Each table had to decide on a name and the Beckenham Beauties and the Crackers tied for photo quiz. They had to name various celebrities who were 'Santified' with a hat and white beard.

There was a fiendish choice where two pictures looked almost identical, one was Neil Diamond and the other was Mantovani, who fooled everyone.

Next was a Christmas themed quiz, another goody from the Clewleys, where no-one had a perfect score, a real brain teaser. After the raffle was drawn, we finished with a Christmas sing-a-long led by Ray Currier. All in all, a great way to finish our 2025 program.



Art Appreciation (1)

On 15th October Graham took us to Madrid, where the three famous galleries are close to each other, the city centre and transport.

The massive Prado has a spectacular collection of works by European artists through the centuries including Durer, who spent time in Italy, but mainly Spanish artists including a large collection of Hapsburg works.

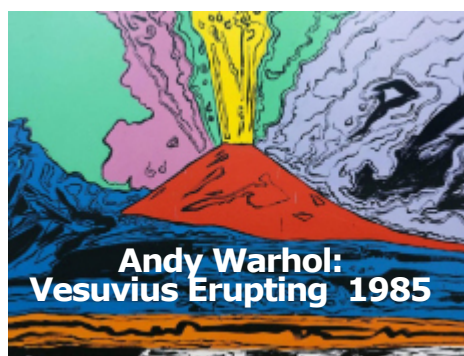
Velasquez painted many of Spanish royalty including Philip IV, who re-developed Madrid, and the very popular 'Las Meninas'. Other major painters are well represented - Goya, Murillo, Zurbaran, Bosch, El Greco and Sorolla. The Reina Sofia concentrates on modern painters such as Braque (cubism), Dali (surrealism), Miro, Gris and of course Picasso with the famous 'Guernica'.

The Thyssen-Bornemisza favours paintings of German Expressionism, Impressionism, Fauvism, etc. Baron Thyssen moved his collection of Italian Renaissance masterpieces to Madrid and it has been built up with works by Kirchner, Degas, Van Gogh, Marc, Cezanne, Derain, etc.

On 5th November Richard told us about Berthe Morisot (1841-1895), one of the founding Impressionists. From a wealthy family, she moved to Paris and was taught art with her sisters - a commonplace occupation for bourgeois ladies. She developed a loose brush style under Camille Corot to paint landscapes and children. She exhibited regularly with the Impressionists from 1874. She married the brother of Edouard Manet, with whom she had a close friendship, he painted twelve portraits of her. She was prolific - mainly women and children and landscapes, one of these being a desolate scene from the Trocadero after the Franco-Prussian war. She introduced synthetic purple to her palette after its discovery. She had one daughter, Julie, regularly her subject, and she unfortunately died of pneumonia whilst nursing her daughter through the illness.

Graham took us to Naples on 19th November. There were Roman cities all around the coast and the Archeological Museum has many well preserved wall

paintings of Roman life. Vesuvius has been a magnet for artists through centuries, including Turner and Lichtenstein and the bay and harbour has been painted many times, showing its growth. Similarly the city has expanded up the steep hill to the Museo Capodimonte which houses a collection of white porcelain sculptures and many paintings by well known artists such as Titian, Bellini, Parmigianino and Caravaggio, who influenced artists with his power of showing light and dark. El Greco spent time there before moving on to Spain. Artemesia Gentileschi portrayed Judith slaying Holofernes. She liked to paint showing the power of women (she was raped when younger). One contemporary painting was street art - faces on the side of a former psychiatric hospital using a window as a mouth. There have been rich collectors over the years and there are also beautiful masterpieces in the churches including a well preserved fresco in the 'Caracciolo del Sole' Chapel in San Giovanni a Carbonara painted in 1435.
Glenys Crane



Forthcoming talks:

21 January	zoom	Graham
4 February	theatre	Glenys
18 February	zoom	Graham
4 March	theatre	Laraine
18 March	zoom	Members
1 April	theatre	Lesley

Vienna at the Two Peaks
Canadian Seven
American paintings
Reading Elizabethan Portraits
Showing an item from home for discussion
Belle Epoch Posters

The Art Appreciation group is currently full.

If you'd like to join the waiting list please email for further information

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 you buying a coffee (other beverages are available).

Contact Keith

Bridge (1)



Have you ever wanted to learn to play bridge?

Bridge is one of the most popular u3a activities because it is fun, it keeps you mentally active, it is sociable and a great way to make friends. It is a trick-taking card game which developed from whist but it requires considerable effort and dedication to learn the basics of the game. A beginner's course gets you off to a great start, but you will continue learning, improving and developing your bridge for the rest of your life – it's a never-ending and rewarding journey. The u3a Bridge Group offers you the opportunity to take a course online with the support of enthusiastic mentors from the u3a bridge-playing community. It is a well structured programme which has been enjoyed by many members since 2022. Much of the weekly study can be done in your own time and at your own pace, but there are weekly scheduled meetings and play sessions to support your learning. There is a small annual fee for the use of online websites and bridge platforms.

More information can be found on their website:

<https://www.bridgewebs.com/u3abridgegroup/>

Karen Roberts

Chess Club - New



Dear u3a Bromley members,

We are setting up a Chess club for u3a Bromley members. It is for all standards and in a relaxed atmosphere.

'Chess is a board game played between two players that simulates a war between two kingdoms. It is one of the most popular games in the world. Millions of people play it both recreationally and competitively.

It is a turn-based strategy game with no hidden information. For this reason, the element of luck is virtually non-existent in the game.'

Weekly : Wednesday afternoons 2pm to 4pm.

Start date : 7th January 2026

Address : United Reformed Church,
20 Widmore Road, Bromley BR1 1RY.

Leaders : Laurie & Janice Bourke.

Cost : £4.00 per week, to be paid weekly.

To join the group or find out more email Janice

We would love to hear from you if you are interested.

Laurie & Janice Bourke

Film Studies (5)



So we've looked at things like sound, colour, stars, finance, German film of the 20s, Russian film, Italian film of the 40s, British cinema of the 60s and much more! We see lots of clips and have interesting discussions...

Our film studies class is thriving, we have attendees each week, on zoom, 10 am-11.30am, new members are welcome, no previous knowledge required, only a liking for movies.

We look at film history, different aspects of how to understand a film, all sorts...

We meet on Wednesdays, 10.00 - 11.30 am

For further details please email me

Gardening - Monthly Talks (4)

In November Nick Dobson's talk entitled 'From the Rainforest to the Living Room' took us on a virtual tour of the rainforests of the world showing us where the many plants that are familiar to us today were found and brought back to this country. From the humble begonia to the Giant Water Lily (Victoria Amazinoca) we were treated to a colourful journey around the world.

In December Michael Holland brought to us, through a Powerpoint presentation, the twelve plants of Christmas. These were: holly, ivy, mistletoe, spruce tree, poinsettia, citrus fruits, brussels sprouts, cranberry, potato and chestnuts. After tea and mince pies we went home feeling very Christmassy.

4 February - Andrew Babicz - The London Garden Society

4 March – Michelle Ernoult – Gardening for Bees

**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**



Begonia



Holly and Ivy

Gardening All Hands Group (4)

After our successful planning meeting in November with 38 members attending, we have our trips planned for next year. Members agreed that they do prefer coach transport where the journey is up to an hour or more, so we have seven coach trips, one public transport and one car share. Various members have agreed to help organise trips.

Each trip will be advertised to members for booking at the appropriate time.



Future Trips

Name	Month/Date	Place	Travel
Finola Rendle	January	Lunch at the George, Hayes	
Colin Wannell	February	Wakehurst	Coach
Kay Harbridge	March	Syon Park	Public Transport
Sandy Boden	23rd April	The Oast, Mayfield, Sussex Booked	Coach
Jean Fergusson	May	GATTON PARK, Reigate	Coach
Jean Fergusson	9th June	Court Lodge Horton Kirby, Dartford BOOKED	Car Share
Marilyn Hardwick	July	Borde Hill Haywards Heath RH16 1XP	Coach
Donna	August	Wisley	Coach
Sandy Boden	September	West Dean Gardens	Coach
Gladys Donovan	October	Brogdale	Coach
Sandy Boden	November	Planning Meeting	St Marks

Golf (5)

Our next session of Golf Lessons starts again on Wednesday 11th February at Chelsfield Golf Centre. These friendly groups are taken by Steve, a Professional at the Centre and are suitable for beginners and improvers.

U3a Golf dates at Chelsfield Spring 2026

Wed 11 February – Drop in
Wed 25 February – Drop in
Wed 4 March
Wed 11 March
Wed 18 March
Wed 25 March
Wed 15 April

Texas Scramble

Wed 22 April

Summer 2026

Wed 13 May – Drop in
Wed 3 June
Wed 10 June
Wed 17 June
Wed 24 June
Wed 1 July
Wed 8 July

Texas Scramble Wed 15 July

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

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



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)

My original History of Fashion Group ended the year with a shared lunch and are looking forward to the next meeting which will be a Show & Tell of fashion related objects. For our third year together we are returning to look at fashion chronologically through illustrated talks.

The new History of Fashion Tuesday Group is now full and will be starting with an introductory meeting on 13th January before following the same programme. I am looking forward to meeting the members and hope they too will enjoy the company and the content.

Laraine Burr



LOWE (3) First trip on the Windrush line: Surrey Quays

We made the first outing on 15/10. I was very apprehensive about the commute as it seemed far out of my way. But with Carole's reassuring direction it turned out to be a hassle-free journey which I enjoyed. We all reached Surrey Quays station which is situated on a busy junction, but our destination, Southwark park, was just around the corner and a peaceful paradise.

The weather was fine and we were eager to explore. A short walk took

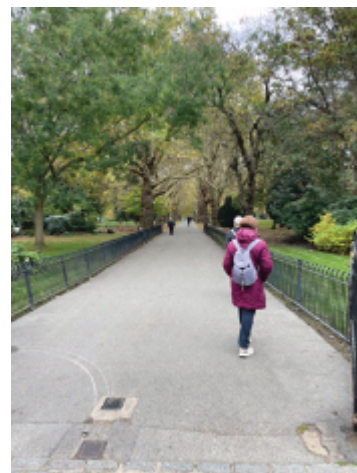
us to the lake where we stopped for coffee and cake in the Pavilion café overlooking the water. That was really beautiful with all kinds of water birds swimming about. A set of gulls were all lined up as if ready for a race. They remained that way for a long time, waiting patiently for the starting gun.

The park also had beautiful sculptures and a fountain. The trees were huge and diverse, some lining the paths forming a canopy.

The autumn leaves were all different colours adding to the charm. Many had already fallen to form a colourful carpet, but others clung on as if the trees were reluctant to part with them. The trees looked very old and as Anne commented "If only they could talk...?"

It was a lovely day out and a good beginning to explore a new line.

Malini Karu



LOWE (3) goes off piste to the Guildhall Christmas Market

Having had to cancel our second LOWE trip to Rotherhithe due to inclement weather, the forecast for this seasonal special trip to Guildhall Christmas market did not look very auspicious with Storm Bram on the horizon. Most of the journey was on trains and undercover, the only 'dodgy' part being the (supposedly) six minute walk from Moorgate to Guildhall. Six minutes that is if you go the right way when leaving the station. But when the station has two exits, on opposite sides of the road, this is a bit of a coin tossing exercise. In the event most of us initially set off in the wrong direction adding a further 5 minutes to the walk. However, in London, Bram was being kind and although the wind was a little gusty, the rain held off and we eventually reached the magnificent Grade I listed building which dates from the 15th century. If you have never been I wholeheartedly recommend a visit, not only to the hall but

also to the attached Art Gallery, Museum and the fascinating display of the remains of a Roman amphitheatre which once stood on this site.

We were there for the Christmas Market, a biennial, ticketed event held in aid of the Red Cross. There were dozens of stalls spread throughout the hall and adjoining nooks so one could hunt for bargains (and there were many) whilst admiring the splendour of the medieval hall and its beautiful stained glass windows. Down in the crypt a makeshift café was operating under the magnificent vaulted ceiling and free glasses of wine were also on offer. The guilds were very much in evidence and all money collected went to the very worthy cause of supporting the Red Cross.

Carole Blacher



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.

Forthcoming meetings:

6 January	Nick Dobson	Gilbert and Sullivan
3 February	Tom Carradine	The history of the Victorian Music Hall
3 March	Allan Goodison	The Woodland Trust

Steve Woods

For further information, please contact Steve

Music Appreciation - Classical (5)

Our small group of classical music enthusiasts continues to meet once a month to listen to well-known pieces and also to explore lesser known areas of the classical repertoire. We have a presentation on a theme chosen by one of our members every second month and in the intervening months, we each bring a piece of music to share with the group. Tea and cake provides an opportunity for discussion of the music and other topics.

In 2025, we started our programme with a session devoted to The Sea. Pieces included the Four Sea Interludes from Peter Grimes, Debussy's La Mer and the Last Night of the Proms favourite, the Fantasia on Sea Songs by Henry Wood - although we managed to refrain from singing along to Rule Britannia.

We then enjoyed a journey through Italy courtesy of pieces such as Respighi's Fountains of Rome and Mahler's Adagietto made famous by the film Death in Venice before Luciano Pavarotti sent us on our way with the Neapolitan popular song Funiculi Funicula. In

another session we took a detailed look at Verdi's formidable Requiem.

We came back home for a programme devoted to music inspired by English folk music. Delius, Elgar and Grainger all featured in the selection of music alongside some lesser known songs by Ivor Gurney. We stayed in Britain for our last programme of the season which was devoted to piano concertos by British composers of the 19th and 20th centuries. This unearthed a wide selection of works which were largely unknown to most members of the group. Since the meeting I have certainly investigated further the output of composers such as Sterndale Bennett and Dora Bright.

Should you wish to hear some of the music played at our meetings, you can log on to Spotify (no payment required if you don't mind the adverts), search for my account peterdwhitehead and there you will find playlists for each of our meetings.

Peter Whitehead

Outings by Public Transport (4)

The Outings for 2026 are outlined below. Transport details will follow.

28 Jan Fishmongers' Hall The first recorded Fishmongers' Hall was built in 1310. The fourth hall was opened 1834 but suffered severe bomb damage. It was restored reopened in 1951. We will be given a tour looking into the various old halls and learning the history of this ancient Guild. Meet at Bromley South station at 1:00pm for a train to Orpington, then on to London Bridge Our tour starts at 2:15pm. **This outing is FULL**

23 Mar Handel / Hendrix Museum
Meet at Bromley South station at 9:30am for a train to Victoria, 10am, followed by a bus to Oxford Circus and a short walk. Our tour begins at 11am. **Please note, there are a lot of stairs.** The cost is £25.

13 May Freemason's Hall.
Meet at Bromley South station at 9:30am for a train to Victoria, 10am. Probably 2 tube rides and a 10min walk. Various routes so I will check this after Christmas.
A 90min tour starts at 11am. The cost is £20.

14 July Keston Mosque
The 320 bus goes there from Bromley, get off at the Keston Mark. I will meet you at that bus stop at 10:15am. Our tour begins at 10:30am. The cost is £10

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

If you prefer to pay by Bank Transfer, please reference as ObPT Last name + initial, then inform me when a payment is made. **DO NOT PAY until JANUARY 2026 except for the Fishmongers' hall.**

Ann Woollins

PS If you leave me a message on my answer phone, please give your full name and the phone number as single digits – to give me time to write it down!!

Psychology (3) – Personality

For the past few months the psychology group have been looking at the topic of Personality – your unique pattern of thinking, feeling and behaving which distinguishes you from others. Babies are born with a temperament some seem calm, contented and quickly slip into a routine whereas others can be fretful, unpredictable and difficult to settle. Their ability to adjust will also be influenced by the environment they are born into and the way their parents react to their behaviour. Throughout life personality evolves in response to our experiences into a relatively stable pattern of behaviour which others recognise. Many attempts have been made to measure personality using models such as the Big Five Traits, often described by the acronym OCEAN:



Openness to new experience; Conscientiousness – hard working, organised and reliable; Extraversion – outgoing, enjoying the company of others; Agreeableness – friendly and easy to get along with; Neuroticism -anxious and unstable. We used an online test to measure our own personalities and to see

where we each came on a continuum. Always a fascinating subject of study, personality is related to life outcomes such as success at work, relationships, mental health and overall well-being. A little self-knowledge and understanding never goes amiss and some people have more than others...

Carole Blacher

Science & Technology (5) Battling the bugs: antimicrobial resistance

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) has become a global public health crisis, whereby all classes of microbes, including bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites have evolved mechanisms to resist the drugs and therapeutic treatments designed to control or eradicate them. AMR means that a microorganism is resistant to an antimicrobial drug that was once effective. Resistance is a property of the microbe, not of a person or other organism infected by a microbe. All types of microbes can develop drug resistance: thus, antibiotic, antifungal, antiviral and antiparasitic resistance can occur.

Antibiotic resistance, a significant AMR subset, enables bacteria to survive antibiotic treatment, complicating infection management and therapy options. Resistance is an integral property of genes and arises through spontaneous mutation, horizontal gene transfer and increased selective pressure from environmental factors. It's almost 100 years since Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin, a new class of drug therapy that revolutionised treatment of infection and contagion. Over the following decades, antibiotic overuse, both in medicine and agriculture (casual widespread use of antibiotics to promote growth was once common in healthy livestock), which together with poor infection control, has accelerated resistance development.

The standard method of antibiotic discovery involves, sifting through huge quantities of soil, screening,

culturing and identifying potential candidates - a painstaking, trial-and-error procedure. Further development requires a series of precautionary costly rules and regulatory conditions, all taking up to 15 years! Pharmaceutical companies are reluctant to invest in this area, due to lack of economic incentives.

AI and machine learning is a powerful emerging tool that accelerates discovery by analysing vast chemical libraries and biological data. Scientists train machine learning algorithms by showing them compounds that can harm bacteria, and others that cannot.

The AI designs antibiotics by looking for fragments of proteins with antibacterial properties in data sets it has

not seen before. These models can predict potential 'hits' from millions of compounds in a fraction of the time it would take manually, or even design entirely new-to-nature classes of antimicrobial drugs.

The World Health Organisation claims that AMR is one of the top global public health threats, estimating that bacterial AMR, in 2019, pre-Covid19, contributed to almost five million deaths. Moreover, along with other international health bodies, WHO warns that AMR could lead up to 10 million deaths annually by 2030. Investment in research and development is not only vital, but essential.

Brenda McCormack



Rambles (2)

These are our walks for January & February 2026, a mixture of London, suburban, and country. Don't forget that our "Pathways" circular enables you to receive last minute information of changes, additions, or cancellations. Email me if you need to join the distribution list; 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, so that we can offer more walks; assistance with planning or navigation is available if wanted.

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. 08 January 2026 - Canning Town to Canary Wharf - Walk full (Repeat of 11 Dec walk.)

This information is only for people already booked or joining from the waiting list:-

Meet at 10.45am at Canning Town tube station (Jubilee line) for a 2hr linear walk to Canary Wharf. The route will take us through London City Island, Trinity Buoy Wharf and onto the Thames path, finishing at Canary Wharf tube station.

NB: Contact the Walk Leader to book your place (Walk full).

Leader: Marie Blakeley

Tues. 13 January 2026 – Lost City part 1 – Aldgate to St Pauls (repeat of 30 Oct walk).

Meet at 10.45 at Aldgate underground station for a 2 mile walk with 24 points of interest (Note: there are 3 flights of stairs). A lot of Roman history, the history of the Thames and other buildings of interest.

NB: Contact the Walk Leader to book your place. Please book by email if at all possible.

Leader: Graham Haynes

Thur. 29 January 2026 – Westerham circular

Depart at 10:30 from Churchill's statue, Westerham Green, for a 5 mile circular walk. There are a couple



Autumn at High Elms

of steep inclines but no stiles. Options for lunch available afterwards in Westerham.

Parking is in the Darent Car Park, Westerham (on the A25 Brasted Road). Bus is the 246 from Bromley via Hayes, Coney Hall, Keston, and Biggin Hill. Suitable Footwear essential.

Leader: Marie Blakeley

Wed. 04 February 2026 – The Lost City part 2 – Blackfriars to Cannon Street (repeat of 4/12/25)

Meet at 10.45am at the entrance to Blackfriars Station. A 2 mile walk seeing London as it was, from Blackfriars to Cannon Street.

NB: Contact the Walk Leader to book your place. Please book by email if at all possible.

Leader: Graham Haynes

Tues. 17 February 2026 – Limehouse to Mile End

Meet at 11am at Limehouse DLR Station for a 5 mile linear walk to Mile End Station via the Regents Canal, Mile End Park, Bethnal Green Gardens, and Victoria Park, with a Cafe lunch stop near end of walk. No need to book this walk, just turn up.

Leader: Alan Canham

Wed. 25 February 2026 – Hayes to Shirley (London Loop)

Meet at 10.30 at Hayes Station for this approx. 4.5 mile walk. There are a couple of steep slopes and if muddy be prepared for that. We end in Shirley on the 119 bus route to return to Hayes station if necessary. There are a few cafes in Shirley for refreshments or back in Hayes.

Leader: Kate Irwin – No need to book this walk, just turn up.

Peter Wood – Rambles Group Co-ordinator

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 all 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 as well as those attending meetings after the summer break who have not yet paid for the year. 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 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

8 Jan	<i>Simon Waterfield</i>	William Wordsworth, Tintern Abbey and the Romantics
12 Feb	<i>Dean Caston</i>	Rogers and Hammerstein
12 Mar	<i>Nick Dobson</i>	Round and about with Boz
9 Apr	<i>Social meeting</i>	at Bromley Little Theatre

Born with Teeth Wyndhams Theatre 15 October 2025



Based on a book by Liz Duffy Adams, the play *Born with Teeth* at Wyndham's Theatre imagines the relationship between William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe when they are forced by Royal decree to work on a play together.

Ncuti Gatwa (of Dr Who fame) is Marlowe and Edward Bluemel plays Shakespeare. The setting is a writer's

bench in the back room of a pub, where Marlowe initially greets Shakespeare with distain, given that he is already rich and famous with acclaimed plays such as Dr Faustus while Will is still a struggling beginner.

The play concentrates on their developing relationship as they work on one of the Henry series together: apparently there is some scholarly opinion that the differing writing styles in those Shakespeare plays give credence to the theory that Marlowe was a collaborator.

But while any evidence that one or both of these two were bisexual or gay seems unlikely, of course, this being 2025 with two men on stage, sexual tension and sexual activity between them is portrayed. Such renditions are now so commonplace that they have become clichéd and boring, in my view demonstrating an acute lack of imagination on the part of the writer.

What is far more interesting is their developing intellectual relationship. Over the two or so years that the play covers, Marlowe diminishes in power whilst Shakespeare's reputation grows and grows. Gatwa shows a subtlety when he brings this out. He plays Marlowe exceptionally well and conveys Marlowe's waning authority to a fault.

The historical setting is of course the time of Elizabeth I and the fear that both men have of her spies and how that affects their actions during the play (apparently it was Elizabeth who "invented" spies) was also captured well.

The stage setting too was imaginative, with short video clips conveying Marlowe's demise with huge imagination.

On leaving, by chance we went past the stage door, where there was a sizeable crowd waiting. no doubt hoping to catch a glimpse of or maybe even get an autograph from their hearthrob, Gatwa, and who, it has to be said, fully deserves such adoration for his splendid portrayal of Marlowe.

Clive Nash

Theatre Group (2)

Top Hat New Wimbledon Theatre 16 October 2025



A group from the theatre group ventured to Wimbledon to see the Chichester Production of Top Hat on tour. They were in for a treat as Irving Berlin's score came to life on the stage. Numbers like Let's face the music and dance, Top Hat, White tie and tails, Cheek to cheek were performed and tap danced to our delight.

The show, based on the 1935 film starring Fred

Astaire and Ginger Rogers, won the Olivier Award in 2013 for best new musical and the theatre group went to a production at The Churchill Theatre in June 2015.

The story is as always quite thin but the spectacle and singing and dancing and energy of the cast was great.

When Broadway star Jerry Travers played by Phillip Attmore, crosses paths with model Dale Tremont, played by Lindsay Atherton, whose beauty sleep is rudely interrupted by Jerry tap dancing in the hotel room above hers, Jerry vows to abandon his bachelor life to win her. But with true love things never go smoothly as the scene changes to Venice and mistaken identities continue until the inevitable happy ending.

We all enjoyed the show and came out singing along with tunes that had stayed in our heads.

Mary Garside

The Importance of Being Earnest The Noel Coward Theatre 23 October 2025

The Importance of Being Earnest is a farcical comedy depicting the tangled affairs of two young men who live double lives to evade unwanted social obligations, both assuming the name Ernest, while wooing the two young women of their affections.

First performed 130 years ago; it was Oscar Wilde's final play before he was imprisoned and is considered his masterpiece. The play is celebrated for its wit and repartee, satirising late Victorian manners.



This reimagined production has transferred from the National Theatre, albeit with a different cast. This cast had two standout performers, Sir Stephen Fry in the guise of Lady Bracknell and Olly Alexander as Algeron. Lady Bracknell is a formidable character, previously portrayed by Maggie Smith and Judi Dench among others. This rendition is joyful, witty and camp. It was not liked by all our group; some would have preferred a more traditional performance.

At the end of the play the curtains closed, for slightly longer than is usual. Then unexpectedly the whole cast returned to the stage for their curtain call skipping along in skimpy flower costumes. A sight to behold!

Diana Langford

The Lady from the Sea Bridge Theatre 5 November 2025

The Lady from the Sea by Simon Stone, a modern-day interpretation of the play of the same name by Henrik Ibsen. The Bridge Theatre is "in the round", and the central stage was cleverly used. There was an emphasis on water throughout, with references to swimming in the first half, then the second half enacted in pouring rain, after which the stage transformed into a swimming pool.

Alicia Vikander and Andrew Lincoln as central characters Ellida and her husband Edward gave superb performances, as did all the actors, justifying their standing ovation. The dialogue was rapid in pace and full of humour.

The play addressed themes of loss:

Edward and his two daughters lost his first wife, their mother, when she died

Edward will soon lose his friend Heath, who is dying

Edward offends his friend Lyle by rejecting gifts

Edward faces losing, at least temporarily, both daughters, who have made plans to study elsewhere

Edward faces losing Ellie, when her former lover Finn appears, hoping to take up where he left off with her 25 years previously

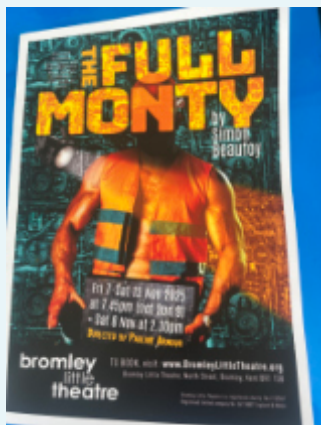
Ellie is faced with choosing between ex-lover and husband, and eventually rejects both, sending away Finn and departing Edward's house, saying she might never return.

Elizabeth Adcock



Theatre Group (2)

THE FULL MONTY Bromley Little Theatre 8 November 2025



I'm sure everyone knows the plot so I don't think much needs to be said about that, but I must say although for the most part we, the audience, were

literally crying with laughter, we were made conscious of the underlying desperation of men out of work and the dreadful consequences to their lives.

The auditorium of BLT is a very small almost intimate space, so the bravery of the actors who had to strip has to be acknowledged and they did it with such style.

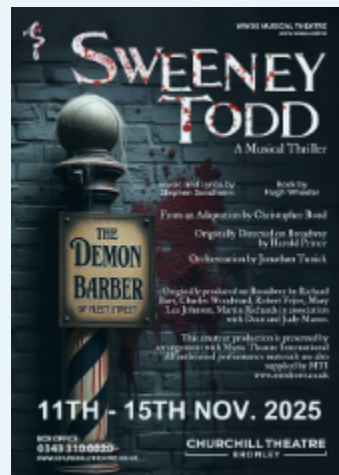
Bravo and brava to all, and a special thank you to Pauline Armour, director, for her persistence in spending seven consecutive years applying for the performance rights. Yes Pauline, it was worth the wait and it was ABSOLUTELY BRILLIANT!

Pat Ward

Sweeney Todd The Churchill Theatre 15 November 2025

A select number from the theatre group attended the matinee on Saturday 15 November of West Wickham Operatic Society's ambitious production of Sweeney Todd. Directed by Kevin Gauntlett there were strong performances from the leads with Jamie Fillery as Sweeney Todd, Jane Werry as Mrs Lovett and Sam Webber as Tobias.

This Stephen Sondheim musical is one of the darkest ever written and is operatic and full of soaring beauty and pitch-black comedy.



Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street is the unsettling tale of a Victorian-era barber who returns home to London after fifteen years of exile to take revenge on the corrupt judge who ruined his life. When revenge eludes him, Sweeney swears vengeance on humanity, murdering as many people as he can, while his business associate Mrs. Lovett bakes the bodies into meat pies and sells them to the unsuspecting public.

It's seen as one of the signal achievements of the American musical theatre of the last fifty years, and it's the high-water mark of Sondheim's six collaborations with director Harold Prince. The show received 8 Tony Awards, including best musical, 9 Drama Desk Awards, and the Olivier Award for best musical. Well done WWOS for such an excellent production which was very well received by the audiences. Quite an achievement yet again.

Mary Garside

PUNCH Bromley Little Theatre 23 November 2025



Having directed a play in 2016 at Bromley Little Theatre about Restorative Justice, I was excited to see James Graham's play which also covered this. Like "The Long Road", Graham's play was about much more – in this case the deprivation of a Nottingham council estate, one parent families and the wider 'family' often high on drugs and alcohol and spoiling for a fight. The play is based on the true story of a young man, training to be a paramedic, who came face to face with Jacob, resulting in him receiving a punch that killed him. Jacob was convicted of manslaughter and served 14 months in prison. When he came out he was homeless and adrift, but luckily, he was helped and turned his life around. His victim's parents decided to write to him because they wanted to know why he'd punched their son and from that, over a two year period, had face to face meetings followed by talks in schools by James' mother and Jacob on the damage done with just one punch.

The compelling script, imaginative set, lighting, sound and choreography, plus outstanding performances by the small cast playing multiple roles, and the brilliance of the young man playing Jacob, confirmed my belief in the power of theatre.

Nikki Packham

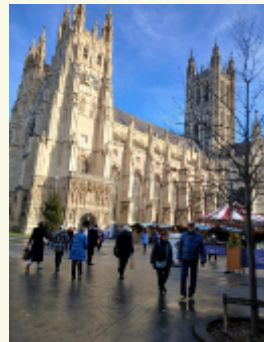
Theatre Group (2)

Theatre Group trip to Canterbury, 2nd December 2025

The theatre group took a trip to Canterbury on 2nd December. The weather was very kind with blue skies and the coach journey was smooth and comfortable.

Members enjoyed the town and Christmas markets and some explored the cathedral and even went to an advent service in the crypt.

An enjoyable day to start us feeling Christmassy.



Golf: 9 Hole (2)

Golfers visit London Beach



It doesn't have a beach, and it's not in London, but it does have a golf course. So for the last few years, the u3a 9-hole Golf group, has visited the **London Beach Country Hotel & Golf Club** in Tenterden.

We arrive late-morning, play either 9 or 18 holes, before relaxing and sharing an evening meal and an overnight stay.

After breakfast, it's time for another go at the golf course.

This year, the weather was not the best. The photo shows us, all dressed up in wet weather gear: – a ploy that usually works, as on this occasion, the rain stayed away and we had a wonderful round.

Same again next year.

Thanks to Diana, Sue, Andy and Gary (our leaders) for enabling this trip and all our weekly golfing visits.

Alan

Wider Horizons (4) *Visit to Tate Britain - 27th September*



In September ten Wider Horizons members went to Tate Britain where I talked about the 23 paintings in Room 1. These date from 1545 to 1638 and are nearly all portraits. We looked at each portrait and learned about the artist (where known), who the sitters were, their stories and their dress.

Laraine Burr

Wider Horizons (4) *Visit to Charterhouse - 1st November*

Charterhouse is a collection of buildings with a variety of uses, ranging from a medieval monastery, a Tudor mansion, a boys' school and an almshouse, which is what it is today.

The original Carthusian monastery was built on a black death burial site and existed as such until the Reformation. A grand Tudor mansion was built from the ruins, and in 1611 it was bought by Thomas Sutton and turned into a school and almshouse for impoverished single men.

Outdoors there are quiet courtyards and a well maintained garden square.

The original homes are still used but a new block has been added. To qualify to be put on the waiting list you need to be single, over 60, have a financial, housing or social need and crucially you have to be keen to contribute to the community and be involved in community living and projects. They do now take women. Male and female are called Brothers.

Only a five minute walk from Farringdon, this oasis of peace provided us with an interesting and informative visit, with all the history explained by a London guide.

Donna Warenik



Wider Horizons (4) *Visit to Peak Freans Biscuit Museum - 22nd November*

12 of us set off to visit the Peak Freans Biscuit Museum. This is a small museum in Bermondsey, hence the need to restrict the number to 12. It is run by two men, Frank and Gary. Frank had previously worked at the PF factory for 30 years until it closed in 1989 and he gave us a very interesting talk about his time there.

There were lots of exhibits showing the history of the factory, including a replica of the wedding cake gifted to

Princess Elizabeth and Philip Mountbatten in 1947 and many decorative biscuit tins and advertising posters from bygone years

The museum is well worth a visit and we all enjoyed it. They only open by prior appointment so if anyone would like to go just drop them an email.

Celia Chappell



Creative Writing (1) *The Journey Home*

James saw the sign for Clacket Lane Services loom up in his headlights. He felt thirsty, hungry and tired all at the same time. He was relieved to have found the service station; the others had been closed.

He placed one slender foot out of the car, drawing it back in quickly. Must put on the heels, my lovely, he muttered. Looking in the car mirror, he reapplied the red lipstick, combed the blonde wig through, opened the car door and stepped out.

Walking very carefully in the three inch heels, he noticed a few men smiling at him as he tried to hurry, without success, into the service station. How do these women wear heels so high, or even higher, he wondered as his foot skidded slightly on the polished floor. He knew he looked good today; that wig brought out the colour of his blue eyes. Coming back from a drag show in France, he'd been openly admired by his fellow artists on the ferry.

But that drive back from Dover; so wearing. Probably the heels—he wasn't used to driving in heels, so had kicked them off and had driven in stockinged feet.

The hand knitted scarf he was wearing (keeping the vocal chords warm) had been a present from an aunt. Its multi-coloured stripes, with its beautiful tasselled fringe, gave it a jaunty air, rather like its owner.

Grabbing a black coffee, plus a Thai curry, he positioned them on a tray, then sashayed to the till. The cashier barely gave him a glance --- there had been a party of drag artists only yesterday. Spotting a table by the window, he hurried over, hoping his heels would not let him down.

Oh no! An elderly lady had beaten him to it. He had to have a seat next to the window otherwise his claustrophobia would start. Fighting down a desire to scream he said, 'Can I share your table?'

'Yes dear,' replied the elderly lady, peering up at him. 'It's nice to have a young thing like you to share my table.' James smiled, the smile he kept when he was being 'Mimi.'

'Thank you,' he murmured, looking at her through his long, false eyelashes. The elderly lady smiled saying, 'It's cold today. A fierce wind. I see you have a lovely scarf. Hand-knitted?'

'Yes,' replied James, 'my aunt knitted it for me.' 'How lovely to get a present. Such a beautiful scarf. And that fringe, how clever. No one gives me presents now.' She then lapsed into silence.

As James ate his curry he studied her. She appeared careworn, an old cotton scarf covering her head, grey

wisps of hair escaping. Gnarled hands held the mug of tea, a couple of biscuits on the table between them. Her coat was thin; too thin for this weather he thought as she shivered.

'Come far?' he asked. 'That M25 round to here. Dreadful journey, but nearly home.'

'Where's that?'

'Banstead. Been visiting a friend in hospital, in Hertfordshire. I went by coach; much cheaper than rail.'

'Oh,' said James, not knowing where she meant. He watched her through half-closed lids. She looked worn out and cold. She shivered again. A warm scarf would help, he thought. It was a very chilly night. He found himself unravelling his scarf and offering it to her.

'But it was your present, so beautiful. Looks warm too.'

'I'd like you to have it. Will keep you warm. It's nearly Christmas. Think of it as an early Christmas present,' replied James, standing up, ready to go.

'Thank you,' she whispered.

James smiled. It was a small sacrifice for him, but seemed to mean so much to her.

'Merry Christmas,' he said, walking to the exit. Looking over his shoulder, he had a last glimpse of her wrapped in his hand-knitted scarf, with a wonderful smile on her face.

Liz Crossingham

