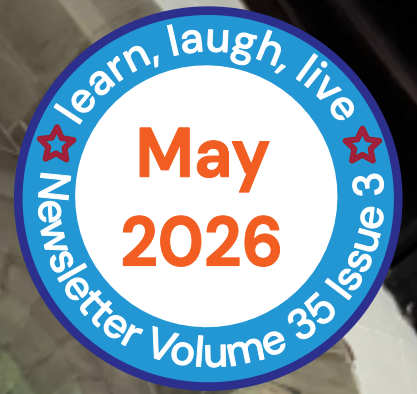


u3a Bromley



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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 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

5th May 2026 Local Studies

Peter Martin

The History of London's Green Belt

8th May 2026 Barn Dance

19th May 2026 General Meeting

Dr Sohail Husain

Beyond Beliefs – One Family's Incredible Story

2nd June 2026 Local Studies

Ian Bevan

Drury Lane Theatre

16th June 2026 General Meeting

Janie Ramsey

Lifestyle of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor

7th July 2026 Local Studies

Kate Boyle

The History of Trinity House

15th July 2026 Mamma Mia Singalong

Details on page 20

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**.

Front cover photo: Sandy and Colin at Wakehurst Place and Botanical Gardens, Sussex (Gardening All Hands Group, February 2026)



Welcome to Issue 3, May 2026

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Lots to look forward to as the year warms up! Our May Barn Dance is booking up but there are still places and you can bring a non u3a friend! And look out for the advert for our **Mamma Mia Singalong** in July at the Bromley Little Theatre (details on page 20).

Our 36th AGM

This took place on 21st April, a summary of the reports will be emailed out afterwards and there will be a report in the July newsletter. The agenda and documents were posted out in good time to those members without an email, and emailed out to everyone else.

A moving experience

After the initial trauma of walls of unpacked boxes, I can report that it all went well and I am feeling the benefit of no stairs and a nice small garden. Worth it all and good to experience a feeling of lightness as I divested myself of a lot of 'stuff'! Cats are looking satisfied too, most important.

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 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?

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



Committee members at the AGM, 21st April



Members at the AGM, 21st April

bromley little theatre celebrates new accessibility works



bromley little theatre has celebrated the massive achievement of raising £90,000, through the efforts of its supporters, and has completed the new accessible entrance foyer, lift, stairs, and a reception area.



As regular users of the BLT, **u3a Bromley** was invited to the celebration. Committee members Celia, Laury and I attended on 28th March, and we were royally entertained with fizz and a splendid buffet.

The Deputy Mayor, Cllr Gemma Turrell (pictured), and her consort also attended and officially declared the work 'open'! This is a crucial stage in BLT's modernisation plans, with the aim of making the theatre more welcoming, accessible and enjoyable for everyone.

Sandy Boden



bromley little theatre

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

Further details on back cover (page 20)

Wartime Memories from a Centenarian



I was evacuated to Yeovil for two or three years. My mother kept threatening me as to what would happen to me if I didn't keep hold of my brother. When we got to Yeovil people came and said, "I'll take this

girl" but I said, "I cannot come with you without my brother," because I was determined not to be separated from him. In the end Mrs Wilson, who was in charge of placing us with families, took us both.

I had a wonderful time because I preferred the country to the town. They were extremely kind and I wish now I had appreciated them more in days gone by. Mr Wilson was in the Home Guard. He used to go off with his gun once a week. He told us that if we were playing in the field and a van or truck came past with a swastika and a German flag on it, we were to stand by the road and smile and wave at them. The adults really thought we were going to be invaded.

Our house in Walworth had been badly damaged by a land mine but had been

repaired. My parents disagreed as to whether to return to that house or go to live in Peckham, in a house that my aunt knew of that had been abandoned by people. My mother won, which was just as well because that same night the Walworth house was destroyed by a flying bomb.

I was about 18 by VE Day and I was used to going up to Victoria on a Sunday night to hear Dr Sangster at the Central Methodist Centre. We took the number 12 bus to Victoria. We walked from there to the Palace. There were soldiers, sailors and airmen of different nationalities. Every now and then a group would surround you and join you to dance with various people. We saw Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret on the balcony but weren't fortunate enough to see them in the crowd.

Old Queen Mary came on the balcony as well as the King and Queen. We stayed because we wanted to see the King and Queen again, and every time the curtain drew back a great cheer would go up. By the time we decided to go home it was so late that we missed the last bus and it was a long walk home to Walworth.

Heather Donovan

With thanks to The Span, Shortlands newsletter

Art Appreciation (1)

On 11th February Graham showed us American paintings from mid C19th, when there were magnificent landscapes, patriotic Civil War and Wild West scenes to delight city dwellers. Winslow Homer painted romantic scenes of countryside life and fishermen, by the C20th Georgia O'Keefe painted abstracts, Hopper was depicting lonely city scenes and Norman Rockwell showed happy American modern life in the 1940s. Towards the end of C20 came Abstract Expressionism with Jackson Pollock throwing paint around and Rothko painting large moody canvases of very few colours.

On 25th February a group of us rambled through the centuries of art in Tate Britain displayed in consecutive rooms - there was so much to see, we couldn't get through it all and it was a reminder to return.

On 4th March Laraine showed images of Elizabeth I, the Virgin Queen, whose portraits were crafted to aid her political agenda, proclaiming her as chaste, powerful and ageless by means of her dress and jewels, comparing her to classical goddesses and praising her many virtues. Multiple portraits were painted in workshops using an approved face pattern. There is an exhibition starting on 14th May at Philip Mould in Pall Mall called Elizabeth I and her Courtiers.

On 18th March we had a zoom meeting when some of us showed precious items we owned. It was interesting to see others' tastes and hear the histories of the articles. We shall do it again.



On 1st April Lesley talked about Belle Epoch posters 1871-1914. The public had disparate views of them but it gave everyone a chance to view art on the walls, buildings and the special columns designed for them, which have become an iconic part of Paris. Many were by well known artists and colourful and they advertised entertainments, cabarets, cafes, foodstuffs and drinks and depicted colourful scenes of cafe life. Toulouse Lautrec was an instant success

with colourful images and Alphonse Mucha used the art nouveau style. He painted Sarah Bernhardt and these posters were very popular - she used him to design her clothes and jewellery.

Glensy Crane

The Liffy Swim



THE FREDERICK HALL PORTRAIT 1893



Forthcoming talks:

6 May	Theatre	All	Tate artworks for discussion
20 May	Zoom	Richard	Norman Rockwell
3 June	Theatre	Anne	Joseph Wright
17 June	Zoom	Graham	Roaring 20s

If you are interested in joining the Art Appreciation Group please email

Astronomy (1)

Proposed Astronomy group

Susan Harris suggests forming an Astronomy group. Interested members should contact Peter Browne, Group Liaison Officer 1.

Depending on interest, Peter and Susan will hold a meeting to set up the group.

Contact Peter for further information



Canasta (2)



In March our new Canasta group started and the response was encouraging, with 14 players attending. Everybody appeared to enjoy themselves so it will be repeated, for now at least, on the last Tuesday of every month.

Venue: The Chequers,
Southborough Lane, BR2 8AP,
a Greene King pub which offers lunches and snacks.

There is no charge for this event but management ask that all players spend some money behind the bar. Play begins at 1pm but I'll be there lunching from 12.00.

The May meeting is Tuesday 26th May at 1pm -

To book please contact joan

Tables have to be reserved so please remember to turn up if you have booked

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

Daytime Disco (2)



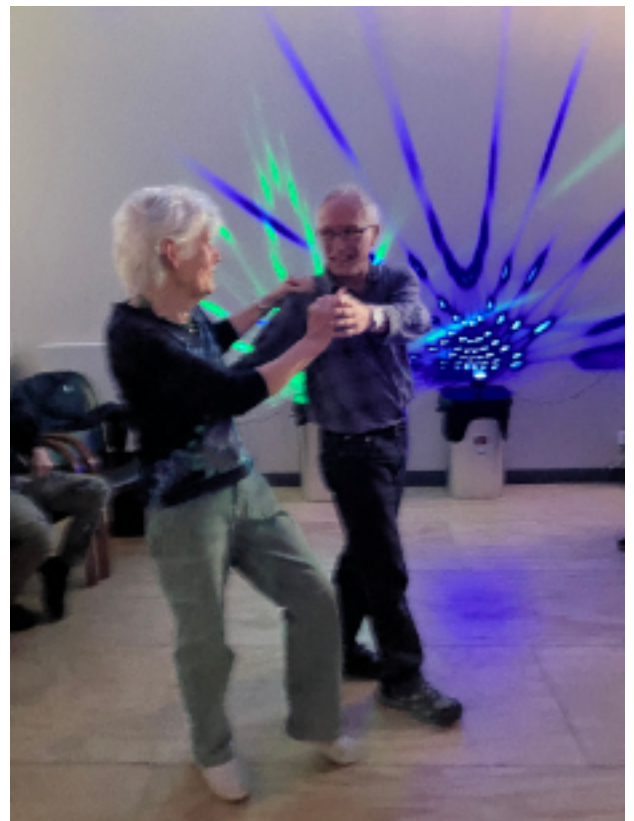
The disco is still flourishing in the *bromley little theatre* rehearsal rooms, and now that the builders have finished the renovations at the theatre we can use the front door again. Many health experts say that dancing is good for our health, any form of dance, formal or free form, and it makes you feel good. We have two members who had some dance training in the past and have discovered that they can both dance the Ceroc, so they have a

go when the music lends itself to that. And we have a lady, Sarah, who is very good at the twist!

If you would like to try the disco, in semi darkness with disco lights, do come along from 2-3pm every Tuesday at the theatre in North Street, Bromley.

For further details contact Christine:

Christine Cavanagh



Creative Writing (1)

Calamity, Celebration and Chaos

The three men had now all arrived at the pub. Since their childhood days they had periodically got together to catch up and go over their early years.

They would reflect on the paths their lives had taken; the uncertainties, the successes, the failures and always ask whether futures are pre-determined or not.

They would agree that as young boys they had no idea how their lives would develop. Their meet-ups were usually fun, recalling all the sillinesses of youth and the ridiculous exploits they had shared. This time the mood was different. John was in financial trouble, a messy divorce, a business collapse in a world going through massive upheaval. He wasn't in a chatty or friendly mood.

Pete and Mike were going to have a hard time lifting the mood. It was tough for Pete as was hoping to share and wallow in his recent success in finally getting that big promotion. He was going to have to keep it low profile so as not to depress his friend.

Mike's life had been a steady settled life. Not spectacular but steady. He'd got married early to a sweet girl whose main ambition was to have family and a non-conflicted life after her own childhood had been spoilt by a spectacularly rotten father.

Drinks were ordered and the three sat back facing each other across the table. Mike began by asking how things had gone for the others since their last meet-up. "Pretty good" answered Pete; "Pretty crap" answered John. A pause then as Mike sought out another opening line.

"We've come a long way since our schooldays; what do you think of how our lives have gone generally?"

For John the past had been a series of calamities; bad decisions, bad choices and poor outcomes. It seemed as though life would always be tough for him. He'd like a rerun.

For Pete, everything had come easily, home, family, job - lots of things to celebrate.

Mike was more considered in his analysis. "For all of us, at the outset nothing was certain or pre-determined". Life is pretty chaotic and influenced by many factors. Small events, a slight wrong turn or a missed opportunity can dramatically change our lives and then over time amplify those mishaps and then we are in a downward spiral. Equally, things may have gone well for us in an unexpected way. What were those events/decisions that set the scene? We know what they were. We should also know ourselves by now.

"So let's have another drink to the future and then see if there's something we might help John with." But in their hearts they knew this was unlikely.



Raising his glass to "Calamity, Celebration and Chaos".

Ron Bennett

Gardening - Monthly Talks (4)



In March Michelle Ernout, an experienced beekeeper, came to talk to us about bees and how flowers have evolved in order to attract bees. There are about 280 different types of bees in the UK but these are declining. This is for many reasons; the

way that farming has changed with the increased use of machinery, the loss of hedgerows, the use of pesticides and insecticides and the desire to have neat and tidy gardens. She advised us to have a bug hotel, to plant flowers in clumps for the bees to move from one flower to another and to have a patch in our gardens that is wild, allowing weeds to flower.

In April Stephen Harmer came again to tell us about our native plants and the stories of Victorian plant hunters who attempted to bring back plants from other countries. At first it was dried or pressed plants, which were put in a herbarium, sketched and painted. Later, when the Wardian Case was developed, plants could be brought back as live specimens.

6th May – Annual Plant Sale

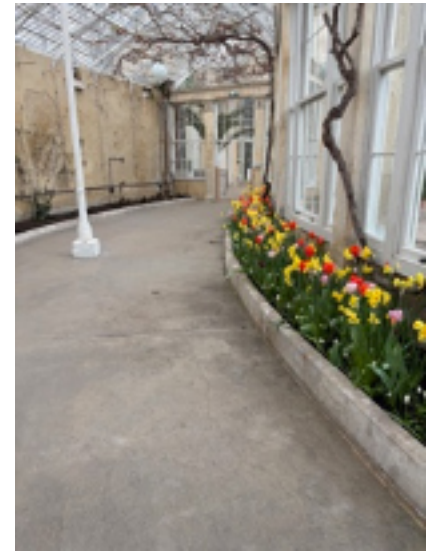
3rd June – Nick Dobson – Summer Sizzlers

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 contact **Sue Goodger**

Gardening All Hands Group (4) - Syon Park



Our year started in earnest with a trip to Syon Park (see photos) in March. It was an incredible day from the very start. Lynn and I met up at Waterloo East, bumped into Sue and Peter on the bus and met Val and Dallas in the café when we arrived - sadly we missed Jane, though. We wandered around the park independently after a break at the café and managed to meet up for lunch at the restaurant, visiting the shops for some excellent bargains before going home.

The foundation stone to the house was laid by Henry V in 1415, and in a little more than a century of existence it had reached a position of unique influence with close links to the Tudor Dynasty.

In 1595 Syon passed by marriage to Henry Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland. By this time the house was essentially the building standing today. It has many layers of interesting history and has seen some profound changes over the years.

The Great Conservatory, a very impressive building, was the work of the architect Charles Fowler, creating a building combined with neo-classical elevation on a Palladian model. There were palms and amazing cacti as well as spring bulbs and flowers on display.



The Park itself, an amazingly peaceful and pretty place, also underwent many changes and was eventually shaped by Lancelot (Capability) Brown and looks every bit a natural parkland.

We found grasslands ranging from lawns to open meadows and parkland with the river running picturesquely through it all.

A number of areas were managed for specific purposes such as a traditional hay meadow, spring meadows of primroses and cowslips in the Arboretum and other exotic annual plantings; in particular an amazing large magnolia.

The food in the restaurant and cafe was delicious and the shop had an enormous selection of plants, statues etc at very reasonable prices. We managed to get lost a couple of times and left happy that we had made the most of the day and had found some lovely bargains.

Gladys Donovan

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
Jean Fergusson	27th 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

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 through Biography (4)

Have you heard of Alexis Soyer, 'the greatest chef of the nineteenth century' or Max Müller, who translated the Hindu scripts? We've looked at lives of these and and people like Amy Johnson and Clement Attlee at recent History Through Biography meetings. Our subjects include people from politics, science, literature, medicine, art, fashion, sport, discovery and many more, women and men who have made a difference.

We do not have outside speakers. It is a participating group where we all contribute a talk from time to time. It is a challenge but also rewarding to read a biography of an interesting person and share it with the group.

Meetings have two sessions, typically of 30 minutes each with a break for coffee and biscuits and a chat among ourselves. The speaker can choose to talk for both sessions or just one if that suits the speaker and subject best.

It is a relatively small, friendly, welcoming group of about 15 regulars. Except for a summer break, meetings begin at 1.30pm on the second and fourth Wednesday of every month in The Lounge at Bromley Parish Church, Church Road, Bromley BR2 0EG. There is a charge of £3 per head per meeting to cover the cost of the room and refreshments.

There is room for more. If this might be of interest to you, please contact Diane Barry for further details.

History of Fashion (5)



**Robert Dudley,
Earl of Leicester**



**Darnley Portrait
of Elizabeth 1**

Over the last two months the **History of Fashion** groups have been concentrating on the 16th century, learning about the evolution of the fashions in European countries within their historical context and the stories of the people who had their portraits painted. Members from both groups joined together for a tour of the Tudor portraits in the National Portrait Gallery. It took a couple of hours to weave our way between school groups and talk about the 40 or so portraits. In May we will be learning about the Stuarts and their contemporaries.

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:

5rd May	Peter Martin	The History of London's Green Belt
2nd June	Ian Bevan	Drury Lane Theatre
7th July	Kate Boyle	The History of Trinity House

For further information, please contact Steve

Steve Woods

Reports on previous meetings:

March – The work of the Woodland Trust

Allan Goodison



Allan Goodison (pictured), a volunteer with the Woodland Trust, spoke about the important work the Trust does to ensure we have woods for people and wildlife to thrive in. Their work involves creating trees from seed, protecting those needing it and restoring sections of woods. We were reminded that we need trees for health and wellbeing, for clean air, cool cities, purified water, to stop soil erosion, and for the

creation of beautiful habitats. As others have said, trees are our planet's lungs. Our ancient woodlands are under major threat with fewer rowan, oak and ash trees than many other European countries; tree loss started in the agrarian and industrial revolutions, continued through the Napoleonic and many other wars, and now it is caused by infrastructure

development, intensive agriculture methods, and Climate Change. Tree disease like Ash dieback and Dutch Elm has been devastating as has the loss of hedgerows followed by a huge decline in flora and fauna like butterflies. Over-planting of conifers has reduced ground cover and biodiverse species.

The Trust is not the only player, but it is the largest wood conservation charity. Begun by a single individual, Kenneth Watkins, in 1972 at a wood in South Devon, its reach has seen it planting 68 million trees, caring for 1200 woods and saving 1172 ancient woodlands. What amazing achievements! Current projects include promoting work to schools and colleges, helping landowners wanting to improve their lands (at a cost), working with councils that own woods, and helping communities to fight proposed development of ancient woods. Finally, Allan encouraged us to locate our local woods and also woods on holiday and to visit and enjoy them. Hopefully we can all do that. Allan is pictured here beforehand. Thank you very much Allan for sharing this.

Angela Dowling

April – Majesty and Menace

Siobhan Clarke



Siobhan Clarke (pictured), a Guide Lecturer at Historic Royal Palaces, gave us an enthralling insight into the life of the Tower of London from the earliest days to today. It is Britain's oldest palace and most visited attraction. Its success may be traced to its location and its constant adaptation to circumstances. While many of us think of it as a prison, only a relatively small number of high-profile prisoners considered a threat to early monarchs were

held there before execution (ordinary people were sent to the Clink). It is first and foremost a Royal Palace with chapels for worship, and started as a fortress to repel invaders. Begun in 1078 under William the Conqueror, the Normans were a minority people against two million Anglo-Saxons, so an imposing fortress tower and defences were needed. Further fortifications were added later including a moat. There was also access via the Thames. Tower Hill nearby was the main place of execution, which the public attended, (though only seven high-profile prisoners were executed publicly at the Tower itself).

Within the Palace, Siobhan told us about the White Tower, St Thomas' Tower, Wakefield Tower, Garden Tower, Beauchamp Tower and some of the various occupants at different times - Henry VI, the little Princes, Sir Thomas More, Thomas Cromwell, Anne Boleyn, Lady Jane Grey, her husband Guildford Dudley and his brothers. Then, later, Queen Elizabeth I, Sir Walter Raleigh, Guy Fawkes, the Earl of Arundel, the Jacobites after defeat at Culloden etc. Tradition dictates that a monarch awaiting coronation will stay at the Tower the night before. Few Monarchs seem to have lived there, preferring the comforts of other Royal Palaces.

The Tower also functioned as a menagerie, keeping animals gifted to the King from other monarchs including elephants, polar bears, lions and tigers till 1828 when they transferred to Regents Park Zoo. It also housed the Royal Mint for a while and still has an impressive armoury and the Crown Jewels as one of its most popular draws (though many were lost or melted down in the English Civil War, so its exhibits are those that were created for the Restoration monarchs onwards). Queen Victoria was the first to open the Tower to the public from 1895 and her Yeoman Warders offered tours. This proved very popular and the Tower has gone from strength to strength. Thank you, Siobhan, for this wonderful presentation on the Tower of London. Definitely a place to visit.

Angela Dowling

Lowe (3) Third time lucky - trip to Rotherhithe

On the first and second occasions we had attempted this visit our plans were scuppered by inclement weather in the form of torrential rain. It was definitely third time lucky since our third attempt took place during school holidays so the Brunel Museum, usually closed on weekdays during the winter months, was open. A short walk from Rotherhithe station, it is situated on Rotherhithe Street next to the brick-lined shaft which once served as an entrance to Marc Brunel's Thames tunnel – the first in the world to run under a river. The museum, which contains much information about its construction and about Marc and his son Isambard, is located in what was the engine house with a tall chimney for powering its former pumps. Originally a pedestrian tunnel, some of it is still in use today as part of the Windrush Line, which stretches from Rotherhithe to Wapping station.

Almost opposite the museum is the historic Mayflower pub, where we enjoyed a fortifying lunch in traditional surroundings with a view of the river – it also has a delightful terrace for enjoying the food and view on warmer



days. The pub was named after the ship carrying the Pilgrims to America, which moored here in the Thames before leaving for Plymouth. Fed, watered and warmed, we proceeded to St Mary's Church, built in the 18th century along with the charity school it supported. The church holds an impressive pipe organ and recently restored bells which are frequently rung, as well as a memorial marking the final resting place of the Mayflower's captain, Christopher Jones.

Walking west alongside the river we come to another Grade II listed pub dating back to the 1830's, The Angel, which also has a balcony overlooking the river. Outside is a statue of Dr Salter who, with his wife, Ada, worked tirelessly to improve working and living conditions for the poor people in Bermondsey and Rotherhithe. Promoting free healthcare and education, he eventually became their MP in 1909, the same year that Ada became mayor. From here most of the group continued west along the Thames path to London Bridge station to catch the train home.

Carole Blacher.

Lowe (3) Wonderful Wapping

Our next stop on the Windrush Line was Wapping, sitting on the north bank of the Thames in the London borough of Tower Hamlets. It was once a central part of the busy commercial Docks area, housing major components of the Port of London including the London Dock complex and Tobacco Dock. These facilities were used to unload and store luxury goods like wine, tobacco and

spices, so criminal activity was rife and the shipping companies were keen to minimise their losses. This led to the formation of the first London police force – the Marine Police Establishment - in 1788, which pre-dated the Metropolitan police by over 30 years.



We learned this on our visit to the small but fascinating **Thames**

River Police Museum where the curator and former river police officer, Rob Jeffries, introduced us to the history of the force using some of the many exhibits. He also spoke about their current activities, including that of police divers who are sometimes called upon to search for drugs hidden by criminals on the undersides of ships behind the propeller and rudder. For lunch we went to a local pub called the Town of Ramsgate, an excellent parting recommendation by Rob since it was Pie and a Pint day. Those partaking agreed that the steak and kidney pie was the best they had ever tasted.



From here it was a short walk in the sunshine along the river to St Katharine Dock, the only marina in central London, which gets its name from the former hospital, St Katharine's by the Tower, built in the 12th

century. The scheme involving commercial docks and extensive warehousing was designed by Thomas Telford and opened in 1828. The docks were badly damaged by German bombing during the war but continued to function until 1968. The current marina and leisure area was part of the London Docklands redevelopment and completed in 1990. A walk across Tower Bridge and past the Norman Foster onion shaped glass building, formerly City Hall, took us to London Bridge station where we dispersed and caught our trains home.

Carole Blacher



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

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, take a tube to Westminster, then another to Bermondsey. 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.

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.

Please pay by Bank Transfer: reference as ObPT, last name + initial, then inform me when the payment has been made.

Psychology (3) - Growing old disgracefully



What do you do if you are a Group Leader and a meeting date falls on your 80th birthday?

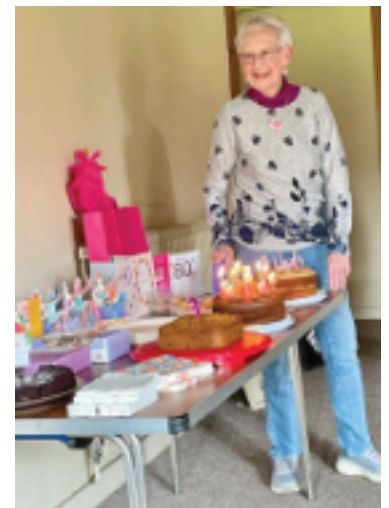
Well, obviously, you have a party – but first you watch an uplifting TED video called “Ageing – It’s not what you think”. In it a psychologist/neuroscientist with the unlikely name of Thad Polk, explores the commonly held belief that memory, and therefore performance on any kind of cognitive task, systematically deteriorates with age.

There are distinct types of mental activity – Fluid processing refers to the capacity to think logically, analyse new

information and solve problems independent of previous knowledge. This depends upon working memory and processing speed which actually begins to decline in our 20s. Crystallised processing depends upon the ability to use skills, knowledge and experience accumulated over time, which increases throughout adulthood and can continue growing and peak in the 70s or even 80s. As we grow older we slow down and may gradually lose our processing power but in its place comes wisdom and self-knowledge, including the ability to control our emotions, resulting in a more positive and fulfilling social life. Of course, this assumes that we manage to avoid debilitating diseases which impair our cognitive ability, but

also that we are open to new experiences and do not lose our enthusiasm for learning new things and meeting new people... and having fun. But you don’t have to tell that to members of the u3a!

Carole Blacher



Rambles (2)



Outside Holwood House:
April Farnborough walk

These are our walks for May and June 2026, a mixture of London, suburban, and country. 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.; similarly email me if you wish to be removed from the list.

For any new rambles, 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**, Suburban and Country walks do not need to be booked – just turn up on the day.

Thur. 7th May 2026 – Down the Strand & Up the Embankment (repeat of 23rd Apr)

Meet at 10:45am in Charing Cross Station by platform four, for a two mile walk capturing points of interest of Dukes, hotels, palaces, architecture, alleys, pubs, churches, engineering, art, gardens and monuments. <https://what3words.com/atom.trim.salads>

NB: Contact the Walk Leader to book your place.

Leader: Brian Benson

Thur. 14th May 2026

– St Paul's circular

Meet at 10.45am at St Paul's Underground station for a two mile circular walk with over 20 points of interest. Unfortunately, I have found no toilets on this walk but there are plenty of pubs for emergencies. <https://what3words.com/quest.starts.tamed>

NB: Contact the Walk Leader to book your place.

Please book by email if at all possible.

Leader: Graham Haynes –

Fri. 15th May 2026 – Circular walk around Bloomsbury (repeat of 26th March)

Meet at 10.45am outside Euston Underground station by the orange benches and tables. We will see many buildings of historical interest as well as an Auto Icon. <https://what3words.com/atom.trim.salads>

NB: Contact the Walk Leader to book your place.

Leader: Marie Blakeley

Tues. 19th May 2026 – Bromley Old Town and The River Ravensbourne

Meet for 10:30am departure by the notice board at the Norman Park car park (accessed from Hayes Lane). A two hour or so circular walk from Norman Park following part of the Ravensbourne River and onto Bromley Old Town. Several Places of interest including churches, houses, plaques, colleges and The Old Bishops Palace.

One steep uphill climb. No need to book.

Approx location: <https://what3words.com/parks.legs.badge>

Leader: Brian Benson

Wed. 27th May 2026 – Petts Wood circular

Meet at 10.30am at Petts Wood station (the west/Iceland side where the station car park is also located) for an approx 4.5 / 5 mile circular walk through Petts Wood, the Hawkwood Estate and Jubilee Park.

Cafes available in Petts Wood for lunch.

Petts Wood station is directly accessible from Beckenham Junction, Shortlands or Bromley South on the Orpington line. The 208 bus also stops at Petts Wood station.

Location: <https://what3words.com/gloves.recent.area>

Leader: Maggie Nicol

Thur. 4th June 2026 – Kemsing Circular

Depart at 10.30am from the car park at Kemsing TN15 6NB for a 5.5 ml circular walk via Knockmill and Cotman's Ash. There are a number of high stiles and although hilly there are no steep inclines. Refreshments available afterwards in the Bell pub or Cafe.

<https://what3words.com/fuzzy.snaps.violin>

Leader: Marie Blakeley

Tues. 9th June 2026 – Bromley Old Town and The River Ravensbourne (repeat of 19th May)

Meet for 10:30am departure by the notice board at the Norman Park car park (accessed from Hayes Lane). Details as for 19th May. Approx location: <https://what3words.com/parks.legs.badge>

Leader: Brian Benson

Thur. 18th June 2026 – Richmond Riverside walk

Meet by 10:35am at Waterloo Station under the clock and we take the **10.48 train to Richmond**. We walk along the north bank to Marble Hill Park for Cafe or picnic lunch, crossing the Thames via the Hammerton foot ferry (£2 charge), returning to Richmond via St. Peters church Petersham. 5 miles. No need to book, just turn up.

Leader: Alan Canham

Wed. 24th June 2026 –

St Paul's circular (repeat of 14th May)

Meet at 10.45am at St Paul's Underground station for a two-mile circular walk with over 20 points of interest. Unfortunately, I have found no toilets on this walk but there are plenty of pubs for emergencies. <https://what3words.com/quest.starts.tamed>

NB: Contact the Walk Leader to book your place.

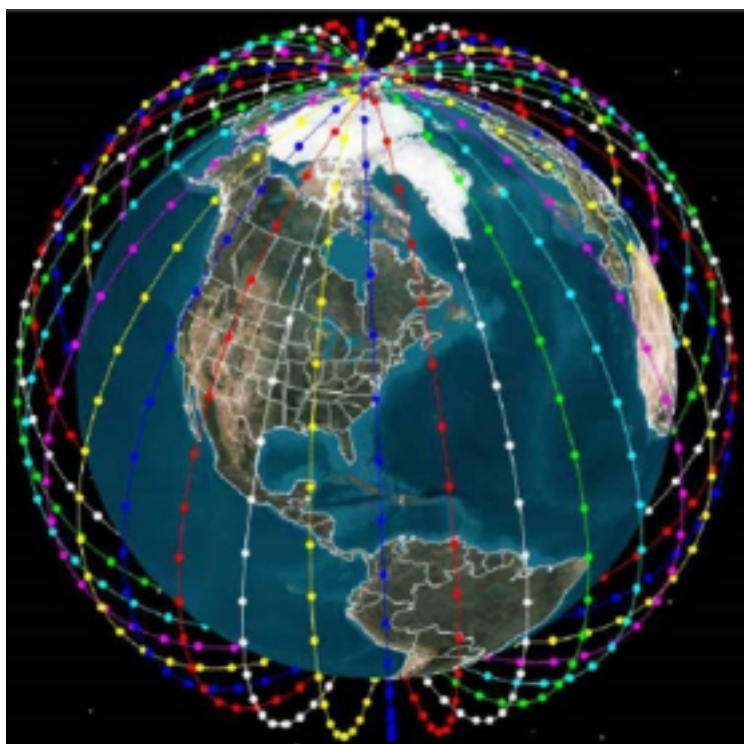
Please book by email if at all possible.

Leader: Graham Haynes

**Peter Wood –
Rambles Group Co-ordinator**

Science & Technology (5)

Starlink Satellites



At the February meeting, Steve Hearnden spoke to us about Starlink, the world's largest satellite internet constellation operated by Elon Musk's SpaceX company. Starlink is designed to provide high-speed, low-latency broadband internet to users across the globe, especially in remote areas where traditional ground-based infrastructure, like fibre optic cables, is unavailable or unreliable. Unlike traditional satellite internet, which uses large, distant (36,000km) satellites, Starlink's constellation of thousands of small satellites orbits much closer to Earth, at about 550km: this proximity reduces, significantly, the time it takes for data to travel. As of March 2026, the global reach has increased to over 10,000 satellites serving approximately eight million customers worldwide. As expected, it is very expensive to connect and run: hardware kit includes a satellite dish (often referred to as 'Dishy Mc FlatFace'). Starlink is not geopolitically neutral: it was heavily utilised in Ukraine until recently, when Musk blocked unauthorised use of terminals by Russian forces. Similarly, since November 2023, Starlink will only be operated in Gaza with explicit approval of the Israeli government.

Development of Dyes and Colour Analysis

At our March meeting, Richard Ball presented a talk titled: **Development of Dyes and Colour Analysis**, explaining the industry's fascinating and kaleidoscopic history. Dyes can be defined as chromophoric substances with a capacity to interact, chemically or physically, with substrates, leading to selective absorption of specific wavelengths of light and resulting in a display of variegated colour. Their evolution is a testament to the ingenuity of mankind in harnessing botanical (woad, saffron, madder), mineral (ochres, iron & chromium oxides) and even animal-derived sources (insects, seashells, squid) to imbue fabrics (cotton, linen, flax, silk, human hair etc) with vibrant colours. Archeologists have discovered examples of dyed textiles dating back to Neolithic times, and as societies grew with the Silk Road (>6,400km long) and maritime trade routes expanded, foundations for the flourishing textile industries of the Middle Ages and subsequent globalised markets for dyes emerged. The advent of synthetic dyes in the mid-19th century, arose as byproducts derived from aniline, a petrochemical, became available during the



Industrial Revolution. It was a serendipitous discovery by chemist William Perkins, who, while attempting to synthesise quinine, a known treatment for malaria, discovered aniline purple (Perkins' Mauve) that catalysed the development of innovative synthesis methodologies and spurred advancements in colour theory. Subsequent years witnessed rapid proliferation of synthetic dyes, providing industries and artists with an unprecedented range of colours and consistencies. Many synthetic dyes are of concern as they may pose environmental and health challenges. Some used as food and drink additives are known to be toxic, mutagenic, carcinogenic and bio-accumulative. Increasingly, as countries regulate to control the use of hazardous chemicals in synthetic dyes, natural dyes (biodegradable, typically non-toxic and hypoallergenic) are fast gaining popularity, as modern techniques are expanding their range and usage.

Brenda McCormack

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

14th May	Tony Harris	My life in the theatre and TV
11th June	Susan Elkin	The pleasures (and otherwise) of professional theatre reviewing
9th July	Kate Boyle	Annual walk : tour de Penge booking in advance essential
16th July	Social meeting	at Bromley Little Theatre
3rd Sept	Tour of theatre Royal Drury Lane	Booking in advance essential
8th Oct	Ian Bevan	The London Coliseum

PADDINGTON THE MUSICAL 5th February 2026 Savoy Theatre A joint visit with Beckenham U3A



On 5 February a group from **u3a Bromley Theatre Group** joined **Beckenham U3A** to visit the Savoy Theatre to see Paddington the Musical.

This beautiful theatre was built in 1881 for the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company. It was completely restored in 1929 in the Art Deco style but had to be rebuilt again in 1993 following a fire. Today it feels warm and cosy and we had excellent seats in the dress circle.

This show has something for everyone, young and old, with laughter and tears. The appearance of Paddington is a showstopper. His confusion as he asks for help at the busy station is sad. However, after he is rescued by the Browns he tries to fit in, but despite being told "Don't touch that" he almost wrecks the house. Mr Brown wants to send him to the zoo or lost property office but is out-voted.

Every aspect of this show is clever, unexpected and wonderful, including the choreography, scenery and perfect sound (not so in all theatres). Tom Fletcher's lyrics and score are fresh and catchy but have a darker theme, which runs through the show and promotes the message in the show-stopping finale "if everyone was a little kinder to everyone else the world would be a better place".

The final curtain call reveals the two actors who synchronise the singing with the acting of Paddington so perfectly one doesn't realise it isn't technology. The whole production fully deserved the five-minute standing ovation

This show will run and run. Thank you, Liz and Mary, for arranging this.

Janet Easto



How I was so looking forward to seeing this musical and it did not disappoint. First of all, I love musicals (providing they are not too loud) and second – I love Paddington. The sound levels were just right and, miracle of miracles, no flashing lights!

The acting was extremely professional by all the actors. Particular mention has to go to Bonnie Langford playing Mrs Bird and Adrian Der Gregorian playing Mr Brown. I was a bit thrown in the beginning when a screen came up with a film – I thought, 'That's funny, I thought I was coming to see a stage performance, not a film,' but it was all very relevant and set the scene nicely.

The scenery and costumes were ideal and the music, not particularly memorable, was toe-tapping and the lyrics very relevant to the story line. I noticed from the programme that Paddington was played by four different actors and it was only at the end, when they all came forward for their bow, that the actor playing Paddington was revealed and I will say that Abbie Purvis was an excellent Paddington. The whole production left one with a feeling of having spent a fun and feel-good afternoon.

Sheila Warr

Theatre Group (2)

THE WINSLOW BOY bromley little theatre 7th February 2026



Set in 1912, this Terence Rattigan play, based on a true event, is the account of what transpired when a 13-year-old naval cadet from a middle-class family was dishonourably discharged from his naval school for stealing a five shilling Postal Order. Vehemently maintaining his innocence, the boy is believed by his father who is then determined to get justice

and have the case tried in court at whatever cost. It takes two years for this to happen and we, the audience, are witness to the financial and emotional toll on the family during this period.

When the screen rose at BLT it revealed the most authentic-looking drawing room of the time. Quite a pleasant change, I thought, from the minimalist sets that are popular these days. I was also extremely impressed by the costumes, which I am sure were true to the era as BLT seems not to tolerate anything less than perfection in any aspect of their productions. As for the actors, well they were all really great and gave very believable performances (of course!). For this reason I hesitate to single anyone out, but I have to say Deborah Hedges, as Violet the Parlour Maid, was absolutely brilliant, especially towards the end of the play.

Ticket prices may have gone up slightly this year but we are still getting West End standard at a fraction of the cost and it was very much enjoyed by 40 theatre group members

Pat Ward

WOMAN IN MIND Duke of York Theatre 11th and 18th February 2026

The West End play for the theatre group in February was Woman in Mind by Alan Ayckbourn, starring Sheridan Smith and Romesh Ranganathan. This proved very popular and we could not all get tickets for one day so two groups were booked a week apart. This suited everyone as one was dress circle and the other stalls!



This was Ayckbourn's 32nd play and was premiered in Scarborough in 1985 and then had a West End run in 1986. In this play, everything is seen from the point of view of Susan, played by Sheridan Smith, who never left the stage. Susan is a neglected wife with an estranged son and patronised by her sister-in-law. Following a blow to her head, an imaginary world develops, and she has another adoring family and successful career. Sheridan was remarkable in her performance, which was both moving and very energetic. Romesh played the doctor who had quite a fondness for Susan and surprised us by his well-crafted performance in his West End debut.

The play was in some ways quite puzzling as it swapped between the two lives and at the end was almost pantomime-like. Maybe suitable, as it was on over Christmas and is due to end its run by the end of February. However, the majority of the group really enjoyed the play and were pleased to have attended.

Mary Garside

THE UNLIKELY PILGRIMAGE OF HAROLD FRY Theatre Royal Haymarket Tuesday 3rd March 2026

A select group from the theatre group went to The Theatre Royal Haymarket to see this new musical. It was based on the best-selling novel by Rachel Joyce, who also wrote the show's script.

It stars Mark Addy as Harold and Jenna Russell as his wife Maureen, who have a very monotonous life in Devon and barely speak to each other. A letter arrives from an old colleague, Queenie, now in a hospice in Berwick-upon-Tweed, who Harold hasn't seen since they both worked for a brewery. In it she thanks him for his help back then when she was being bullied. Harold takes his reply to the post box but keeps on walking. He is completely unprepared for the journey but, despite setbacks, keeps



on walking until he reaches the hospice and Queenie.

The journey is accompanied by a gentle score of folk music and Harold is joined by a spiritual figure whose presence becomes clearer over time. As the Metro says, "This one runs deeper and quieter like a life-enhancing hymn to the difficulty of being alive."

The group enjoyed this very much and felt the stage was used in a very inventive way to show the journey. Those who knew the book and film felt it had kept true to the story. It was a good and engaging show for the afternoon

Mary Garside

Theatre Group (2)

A MIRROR by Sam Holcroft bromley little theatre 7th March 2026



What happens when a society begins to control not only what people may say but even how stories may be told? That intriguing question lies at the heart of A Mirror, a thoughtful and intellectually playful contemporary drama that explores the

relationship between storytelling, censorship and power.

Well, that was the question. But on exiting many were saying to each other, "I didn't understand it – did you?" In fact, Holcroft's play is unusual and at times deliberately disorienting, but it is also highly imaginative in the way it turns theatrical form itself into part of the argument.

The play imagines a world in which strict rules govern theatrical performance. Certain events cannot be represented directly, and actors must adapt their storytelling to fit changing political constraints. As the play progresses, these rules tighten, forcing the performers to retell the same underlying events in increasingly indirect and stylised ways.

Rather than offering a straightforward narrative, the play invites the audience to piece together fragments of a story that appear in different forms.

Gradually we realise that what we are watching is not simply a drama but a reflection on how truth itself can be reshaped when expression is restricted.

We, as audience, were sometimes part of the performance; I recalled the opening of the TV comedy "Soap" in the 1970s – "Confused? You will be!" But it takes a while to realise that if we feel confused Sam Holcroft has achieved her goal. Welcome to postmodernism!

* * * * *

Laury Burr & ChatGPT !!

I'M SORRY, PRIME MINISTER Apollo Theatre 26th March 2026

A Theatre Group of over 45 members attended I'm Sorry Prime Minister on 26 March at The Apollo Theatre

This play is written and directed by Jonathan Lynn, co-writer of the hit TV programmes **Yes Minister** and **Yes Prime Minister**. In this comedy we see Jim Hacker in older age struggling to retain a position where he still has some power. He is now Master of an Oxford College named after him but is due to be forced into retirement (thereby losing his free accommodation). So, he calls for help from Sir Humphrey Appleby, who had been the Permanent Secretary during his parliamentary days, hoping for advice on how to maintain his position.



Griff Rhys Jones gives a convincing performance as Jim Hacker, who now needs a little practical help from Sophie (Stephanie Levi-John), who has to constantly remind him that she is a care worker and not a carer and Sir Humphrey, played excellently by Clive Francis, is still able to bewilder Hacker with a torrent of

practically meaningless words, which seem to make sense at the time.

Although a superb comedy, there is a little touch of pathos to this play, where a once powerful person begins to become needy rather than needed.

Pat Ward

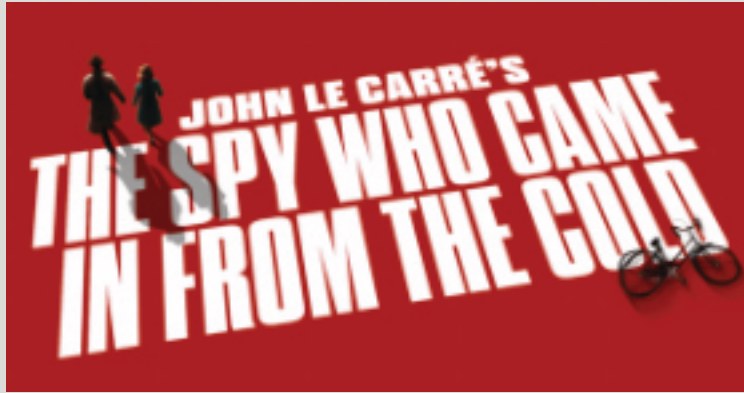
Theatre Group (2)

THE SPY WHO CAME IN FROM THE COLD Churchill Theatre, Saturday 28th March 2026

Following a critically acclaimed sell-out West End Season, this stage adaption of John le Carre's classic Cold War novel by David Eldridge embarked on a UK tour which included a week at the Churchill Theatre. Directed by Jeremy Herrin, it had a brilliant cast led by Ralf Little playing Alec Leamas, a British intelligence officer - weary, hardened, disillusioned and ready to come in from the cold.

Alec returns to London from East Germany following the killing of his most prized agent who was attempting to cycle through the checkpoint at the Berlin Wall, with the agent's death marking the end of Alec's network in Germany. Alec is enlisted by Control, the Chief of the Circus (the headquarters of British Intelligence), to undertake one final, dangerous mission. Dispatched into enemy territory, he finds his convictions tested and his

defences breached by Liz Gold, a quietly defiant librarian whom he met in London when working for a few days in the library where she was based. As a Communist, Liz was offered the chance by the East German Communist Party to participate in an exchange programme to East Germany where Liz and Alec's paths collide, ending in tragedy when they are both shot attempting to escape East Germany by climbing over



the Wall. This was the first time a novel by John le Carre has been brought to the stage and was a thrilling and gripping adaption. Despite the novel having been written in the 60s, it certainly seems to have some relevance for today. Thank you, as always to Mary for having organised such an entertaining and completely absorbing afternoon.

Ann Wright

Wider Horizons (4) *Visit to the National Portrait Gallery*



Sir Walter Raleigh 1588



We met in the Audrey Green Cafe before heading upstairs to view the portraits

Wider Horizons meets on the fourth Saturday of every month for an outing organised by one of our members.

I organised the March meeting, taking groups around the Tudor Portraits in the National Portrait Gallery in the morning and in the afternoon. They learned a lot about the paintings, the stories of the subjects, and the historical context that shaped their lives.

They must have enjoyed looking at portraits because several members have booked to go to the Wallace Collection next!

Laraine Burr

u3a Bromley Event
Mamma Mia Singalong
at bromley little theatre
15th July, 3-5pm



bromley little theatre is holding a Community Week at the end of its season in July and reached out to its current partners to ask how they might make use of the theatre during this special period. Thus, we are holding a Mamma Mia Singalong afternoon show on 15th July from 3 to 5pm.

Arrive a bit early to make use of the BLT bar and get in the mood 😊

You can book from the beginning of JUNE (not before)
Online booking instructions will be emailed out at the beginning of June.

Come along and release your inner Abba!