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Boat trip to London Canal Museum, page 14

# 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

**4th Nov 2025 Local Studies**

Sarah Slater

Ghosts of Hampton Court

**18th Nov 2025 General Meeting**

Andy Tennet

How to catch a Killer

**2nd Dec 2025 Local Studies**

Stuart Robinson

City Churches

**16th Dec 2025 Christmas Social**

**6th Jan 2026 Local Studies**

Nick Dobson

Gilbert and Sullivan

**20th Jan 2026 General Meeting**

Kirk Martin (u3a member)

Along the Waterways of Britain

**All Local Studies and General Meetings are held at**

**Whitfield Hall,**

**United Reformed Church (URC),**

**20 Widmore Road,**

**Bromley, BR1 1RY**

## General Meeting

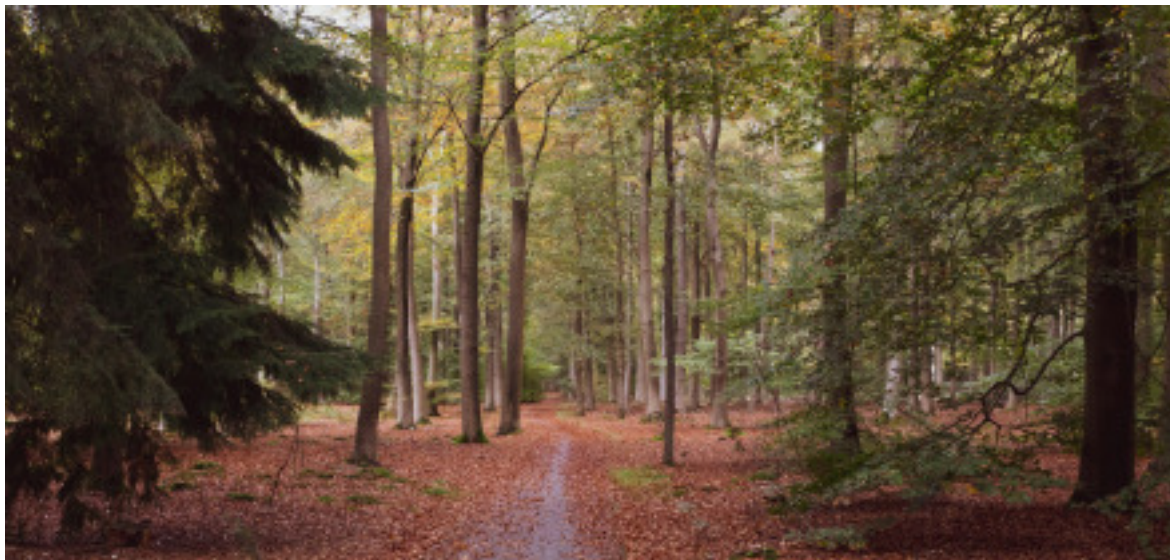
**16th September at the URC Bromley**



**Lucy Allen, Stunt Woman and Public Speaker,** gave a talk about the Titanic. She certainly added some drama and excitement in her talk making it lively and interesting for our u3a members.

**Shirley Corney Speaker Secretary**

Front cover photo: Regent's Canal, Theatre Group Visit, by Mary Garside (page 14)



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# Welcome to Issue 6, November 2025



Above: At the 4th October Anniversary Celebration: the Daytime Disco and Tennis Group table

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## Christmas Social - 16th December

Remember that the 10.30am General Meeting on 16th December will be replaced by our Christmas Social.

Places will need to be booked for this as we sit at tables and bring our own drinks and nibbles but we will provide teas and coffees as usual.

Bookings will open on 17th November. You will receive an email at that time giving details of how to make your booking.

Those of you without email can ring our new u3a phone number to reserve a place. But please DO NOT ring before 17th November when booking opens.

Bookings close at midnight on 12th December.

**The Christmas Social is for members only.**

# Message from the Chair

On Saturday 4th October we held our 35th Anniversary event at the URC to promote awareness about Bromley u3a. For the first time we used a Facebook page to help push out the details on social media. But we also relied on our members to help promote it, and it was wonderful to see the posters popping up everywhere!

Our groups did a magnificent job of arraying their 'wares' and talking enthusiastically to the people who came in, there was a real buzz in the hall. The Sound System team had everything set and ready and the Events Team decorated the hall and manned the urn.



The Mayor of Bromley, Counsellor Jonathan Andrews, arrived and spent over two hours walking round and chatting to nearly everyone, which we really appreciated.



**Members and visitors**



**Singing for Fun Group**

But best of all, 29 new members signed up and 30 more have joined online since then, it was beyond our wildest expectations. So, a hearty 'Welcome' to the October intake and we hope to see you all soon and benefit from your fresh eyes and enthusiasm.

It was a great tribute to 'volunteer power' which is at the heart of the u3a movement's ethos.

Some of the photos taken by Michael Maggs are here but you can see more on the u3a Bromley website [www.u3abromley.org.uk](http://www.u3abromley.org.uk), and a video of the event by Brian Bell is there too.

## New Comms Team

We have had three people respond to the call for volunteers, a good start to a team. If any new members would like to find out more about this, just contact me.

**And 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](mailto:chair@u3abromley.org.uk)**

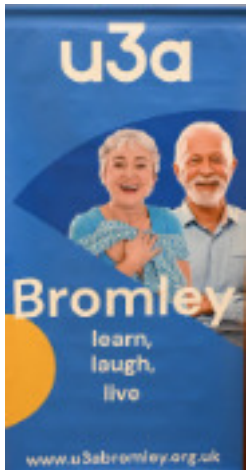


**Mayor at the Science and Techonology table**



**Members and visitors**

# 35th Anniversary Celebration, 4th October



Refreshments



u3a Bromley table



Performance by the Guitar Group



Chatting with the Mayor



All Hands Gardening Group



History of Fashion



Philosophy, Art Appreciation, Film Studies and Italian Conversation groups



History: Local Visits

## Art Appreciation (1)

Our zoom presentation on 17th September by Graham was on Mary Cassatt (1844 - 1926). She was the daughter of a wealthy American family and travelled much as a child. Whilst in Italy she copied famous art works and at the age of 22 she studied art in Paris, funded by her wealthy rail magnate brother. She became a friend of Degas, joined the Impressionists alongside Berthe Morisot and soon had a painting accepted by the Paris Salon.

She learnt to paint plein air with paint which was now in tubes. She was influenced by Japanese art, especially the way they depicted women with mirrors and their reflections, and she used dry point and etching techniques like the Japanese. But her many oil paintings of mother and child were by far her most popular.

She supported women's rights and used the sunflower symbol in paintings. She had 20 paintings at the Suffragette Festival 1915.

Unfortunately, due to failing eyesight she had to cease painting in 1914 and she died in 1926 in her Parisienne villa. She was largely forgotten until the nineteen seventies.

On 1st October Lesley took us through history along the river Thames. The first image was a picture from 1415 which included the Duke of Orleans who was imprisoned in the Tower. The Thames has always inspired artists and musicians (Handel's *Water Music* and The Kinks' *Dirty old river*). It has always been essential for trade and transport.

One etching showed it before the Fire of London with details such as The Globe and a bear baiting arena. We viewed many paintings of processions with many visible landmarks along the banks (especially St Paul's) for the Lord Mayor and the funerals of Nelson and Churchill. Canaletto's painting of 1746 shows just how many churches were in London by the number of crosses on the horizon. Of

course, Henry VIII used it as a route from Hampton Court.

There have been many depictions of frost fairs, the river being wider thus slower in those days and the ice being thick enough to use fires for cooking on it.

Walter Greaves painted a 1862 view of the crowds on Hammersmith Bridge watching the boat race and by late C20th Whistler was painting simpler unusual views influenced by Japanese art. Monet visited London and enjoyed painting the river through the smog. Andre Derain, a Fauvist painter, depicted the river and boats in bright colours. Very many artists over the years have enjoyed painting it, including Nevinson, Stanley Spencer and, of course, David Hockney, who made an iPad image of Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip on their barge in the rain celebrating her Diamond Jubilee in 2012.

Glenys Crane



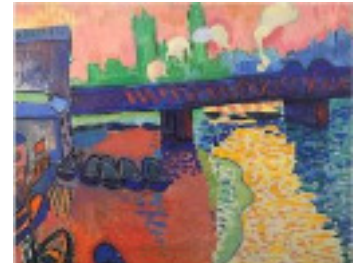
Mary Cassatt 'The boating party' 1893



Mary Cassatt: Maternal Caress



Hammersmith Bridge on boat race day, Walter Greaves, 1862



Andre Derain Charing Cross Bridge

### Future meetings:

|             |         |               |                         |
|-------------|---------|---------------|-------------------------|
| 5 November  | theatre | Richard Ball  | Berthe Morisot          |
| 19 November | zoom    | Graham Taylor | Naples                  |
| 3 December  | theatre | Graham Taylor | Christmas quiz + Social |

## 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**

## Daytime Disco (2)



The Disco is thriving at Bromley Little Theatre, but we had to cancel a few sessions due to essential building works at the theatre, which is still going on. We now work in partnership with the builders, who move their things out of the disco room giving us time to sweep up and set up, and then return when we've put everything away. Earlier this year the disco was filmed in action by Brian Bell, who joined the u3a but had previously been a press photographer. He came to have a look but then decided to film that day. We felt very unprepared, we might have dressed up a bit more and brought in a few more people if we'd known in advance, but it was very enjoyable being filmed professionally. Brian has put the video on YouTube under the heading Bromley u3a Disco, so we're famous! We enjoyed promoting the Disco at the u3a 35th Anniversary event, and many people signed to say they were interested. Thanks to all the current members who enjoy coming every week, or when they can, and feel they're blending exercise with music they love listening to.

**Christine Cavanagh**

## ELLE (3) Cliveden



Now a National Trust Property, the estate was first acquired by George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham, in 1666 as a place close to London where he could entertain his mistress, the Countess of Shrewsbury,

and friends in style. It changed hands many times and was burnt down, extended and rebuilt until 1893 when it was bought by William Waldorf Astor who further developed and remodelled the house and garden before giving it to his son, Viscount Astor, as a wedding gift in 1906. Cliveden hit the headlines in 1963 as the place where John Profumo met Christine Keeler. The National

Trust took over management of the estate in 1966 and the Grade I listed country house is now a 5 star hotel offering Profumo Affair Breaks where you can discover the 'scurrilous secrets' of the affair.

The Elizabeth Line train to Taplow and a short cab ride took us to Cliveden, but unfortunately we were too late to book one of the house tours. However, we had a lovely afternoon in the Gardens and managed a sneaky peek inside the hotel foyer.

Carole Blacher



## ELLE (3) Stratford - visit to the V&A Storehouse

It's actually quite a long hike from Stratford station to the V&A Storehouse as we discovered on 4th September when we made our visit. The route took us through Westfield, past the London Aquatic Centre and the London College of Fashion, across the River Lea and past the Copper Box Arena. Fortunately, we discovered, on the return journey, that there is a regular shuttle bus which runs backward and forward to the bus station, but unfortunately you cannot use your Freedom pass on it – but by then most of us were so weary that we were happy to pay. The Storehouse itself is a diverse cornucopia of items displayed on four levels in a light and airy innovative building and is free to enter. Housing half a million 'works', obviously not everything is on display but you can explore the collection online and order objects to be shown to you individually or to a group, at a booked appointment by a member of the access team. The Storehouse is very access friendly having lifts and clear signage and it also has a café.

It's well worth a visit to appreciate the design of the building and the walk, although long, is quite pleasant. But you could wait for the main V&A East Museum to open in the new year and visit both. Carole Blacher



## 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

## Gardening - Monthly Talks (4)



In July a small group of us spent an afternoon visiting the garden at Down House, the home of Charles Darwin. One of our members, Jim, who volunteers there, helped with the tour and shared his knowledge of Darwin's family life and his garden experiments. The garden was full of interest.

Although the lawn was brown and the vegetable garden was very dry, the six flower beds in front of the drawing room were really colourful. We went into the greenhouses with their collections of unusual plants including orchids and carnivorous plants and into Darwin's laboratory where we saw a colony of bees. We ended this very enjoyable afternoon with tea and cake from the tea room, sitting outside in the sunshine.



Some of our group stayed and had a guided tour by Jim of the downstairs rooms in the house.

In September Richard Winston who is a brilliant photographer came to entertain us with his talk entitled 'My Big Garden Safari'. His close-up photographs of birds, butterflies, other insects

and flowers were amazing. When asked about what camera he used he



was able to give advice on the best models.

Our speaker was unable to come but we were lucky to find a replacement in time. Brian Nobbs, who is a member of Sevenoaks local R.S.P.B. group, gave us a very interesting talk entitled 'Gardening for Wildlife' and shared his extensive knowledge of birds which might frequent our gardens. He also advised us on which plants are best to attract pollinators and invertebrates.



**5 November – Nick Dobson** – From the Rainforest to the Living Room Many of our garden and houseplants originate from tropical rainforests. Nick will take a colourful look at these plants.

**3 December - Michael Holland** – The Twelve Plants of Christmas Michael will give us an insight into the twelve most important plants we associate with Christmas.

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 no parking at St Mark's Church.**

For further details telephone Sue Goodger

## Gardening All Hands Group (4) Visit to Great Comp Garden

In September the group visited Great Comp for a guided tour of the gardens, where we also found out more about the history of the lovely old house.

Great Comp Garden, as we know it now, owes its planting, design and personality to Roderick (known as Eric) and Joy Cameron.

They moved to the 17th Century Manor of Great Comp in 1957 with the intention of building a wonderful garden to enjoy and created a peaceful hide-away in Platt; developing the paddock land into a seven-acre plantsman's delight of a garden. which they decided to open to the public in 1968.

In 1984 the Camerons set up the *Great Comp Charitable Trust* to ensure the future of Great Comp. One of the trustees is William Dyson, the Curator at Great Comp, who also runs his own nursery specialising in Salvias.

We enjoyed a marvellous tour of the gardens from the sole paid gardener, Kristina. She pointed out points of interest with their over 1000 trees and shrubs and the glorious late summer borders and, of course, Salvias. Several of us left with these as a memento. The various follies were all put in by Eric Cameron and we found the secret of the 'Tower': it is underfilled with old fridges, and other metal objects. Something for future archaeologists to puzzle over!

Our last meeting of the year will be in November (date TBA) at St Mark's Church at Bromley South, to plan next year's events.

In December we lie fallow (😊) and enjoy our Christmas lunch in January.

Contact Sandy Boden to go on our member list.



## NEW : History of Fashion group starting January 2026

I am offering one last opportunity to become familiar with the evolution of Western fashion from Medieval days to our times. It will be monthly at my flat in Shortlands on the 2nd Tuesday of the month (starting 13.01.26) with coffee at 10am and continuing for the rest of the morning. For the first year I will be talking about and illustrating fashion chronologically, in the context of its historical period. Contact me by email to learn more and if you want to reserve a place on this course. There are a couple of places left.

You will be invited to an introductory meeting on 13th January and can then decide if the group is for you. Members of my first group are enjoying the friendship, learning and sharing their experiences. We are almost at the end of our second year together and looking forward to a shared meal in December and continuing to explore aspects of fashion next year. I will then contact everyone interested in November

Laraine Burr

## History of Fashion (5)



One of the huge Jacobean portraits by William Larkin. This is Richard Sackville, 3rd Earl of Dorset in the magnificent clothes he wore to the wedding of Princes Elizabeth Stuart in 1613

August is a month when many of the groups take a summer break but we had a meeting at the beginning of the month where I talked about the outstanding paintings in the Iveagh Bequest and the Suffolk Collection at Kenwood House in Hampstead. Some of us then visited and also saw *Heiress*, an exhibition of

Sargent's sketches and huge paintings of society ladies. At the end of the month eight of us followed a route round the National Gallery and I talked about some of my favourite paintings. Afterwards we were ready for a meal at the Crypt in St. Martin's Place.

Laraine Burr



We started our tour of the National Gallery with The Wilton Diptych c1395 in the Sainsbury Wing



Pausing in the Library at Kenwood House



I really love this small Vermeer - it is one of only four Vermeers in London.

Sargent kept refusing commissions for huge portraits and compromised by only agreeing to sketch his subjects.



## 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:

|                   |                        |                                |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>4 November</b> | <b>Sarah Slater</b>    | <b>Ghosts of Hampton Court</b> |
| <b>2 December</b> | <b>Stuart Robinson</b> | <b>City Churches</b>           |
| <b>6 January</b>  | <b>Nick Dobson</b>     | <b>Gilbert and Sullivan</b>    |

**Steve Woods**

For further information, please contact Steve

## Monday Drawing Club (1)



We have covered a wide range of topics to develop the drawing skills of the group. It was advertised in a Spring email from Angela as an introduction to drawing group, on a Thursday afternoon and by tea time 20 u3a members had shown an interest and by Friday evening another 20 had. I read through them all and replied to all those who had said they would enjoy a class on a Monday that the first 8 to respond could have a place. And these folk were the first to sign up.

We have drawn objects, each other, considered the basic principles of perspective and how to draw shapes, textures and glass etc.

Topics are suggested by members and I also add things I think would be fun and improve their skills. The plan for our next group is to draw an illustration for a book or children's story. In my opinion the standard of drawing and confidence of every one has really improved.

Martin Cooper

## 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 and 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. The cost is £20. **The final date for booking will be 21st November as I have to pay a month in advance.**
- 23 Mar **Handel / Hendrix Museum**  
Our tour begins at 11am. **Please note, there are a lot of stairs.**  
The cost is £25.
- 13 May **Freemason's Hall.**  
A 90min tour starts at 11am. The cost is £20.
- 14 July **Keston Mosque**  
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.

Cheques payable to U3A Bromley should be sent to me

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

## Autumn Quiz Night, 24th September

On the 24th September 14 teams took part in Bromley u3a Autumn Quiz night. As on our previous quiz, Lillian and Bill Clewley did a sterling



job as quizzers – setting and asking the questions on a range of topics and keeping the scores. The ultimate winners, The Quizzicals with an 80 point total, could also have won a prize for the most elaborate spread. They each received a £10 M&S voucher but the second prize had to be shared between three teams with 75 points each. The three raffle winners also received M&S vouchers. A great time was had by all thanks to the hard work of the Dynamic Clewley Duo and the Events team. Watch out for more Quizzes in the New Year when they will be taking place in the afternoon.

Carole Blacher

## Rambles (2)



**Ramblers at Whitstable**

These are our walks for November & December 2025, 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 "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.

### **Wed. 12 November 2025 – High Elms Circular (from Farnborough Village)**

Meet at 10:30am in Farnborough Village at the triangle which is at the top of Church Road where it meets the high street. A 5 mile circular walk around High Elms. There will be one steep hill and it could be muddy if we have had a lot of rain. Cafes at the end in Farnborough Village.

**Leader:** Wendy McEvoy

### **Tue. 18 November 2025 – Three Commons**

Meet at 10.30am outside Hayes railway station for a 5 mile circular walk through the commons of Hayes, Keston and West Wickham. Refreshments in cafes and pubs in Hayes available at the end of the walk.

**Leader:** Maggie Nicol

### **Thur, 04 December 2025 – The Lost City part 2 – Blackfriars to Cannon Street**

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

### **Thur. 11 December 2025 – Canning Town**

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.**

**Leader:** Marie Blakeley

### **Wed. 17 December 2025 – Three Peaks**

Meet at 10.30am at Ladywell Station for a 4 mile walk covering the 3 peaks via Blythe Hill fields, One Tree Hill and Hilly Fields.

There is an opportunity for lunch in Ladywell at the end of the walk.

**Leader:** Robin Burnhams

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



**Amy Johnson  
at Herne Bay**

## Science & Technology (5)

Our September talk centred on the James Webb Space Telescope, a highly advanced telescope, purpose-built to explore the Universe through the infrared spectrum. Unlike traditional telescopes, which are limited to the range of visible light, the James Webb Space Telescope is capable of detecting wavelengths far beyond what the human eye can perceive. In addition to unveiling obscure regions, the telescope excels at detecting extremely distant galaxies that remain invisible to other tools. As the Universe continues to expand, the light emitted by these remote galaxies is stretched, causing a shift into the infrared portion of the spectrum – a phenomenon known as redshift. This allows the James Webb Space Telescope to observe galaxies located much farther away than was previously possible.



Among its many achievements, the telescope has discovered the most distant galaxy ever observed that existed just 290 million years after the Big Bang. This extraordinary finding challenges current cosmological theories, as it suggests that galaxies could form much earlier than previously thought. In addition, the onboard spectrometer allows the telescope to analyse the atmospheric composition of exoplanets, which are planets orbiting other stars. Recently, it has detected traces of dimethyl sulphide in the atmosphere of an exoplanet located 124 light-years away. On Earth, this molecule is typically produced by microbial marine life and, if its presence is confirmed, it would represent the first evidence of life beyond our solar system!

Christopher Lawson

## Tennis (5)

We have enjoyed playing tennis every Thursday at Bromley Lawn Tennis Club, where we have been allocated two courts, and if just four people can play, we can book one court. We have been lucky with the weather, which often looked unpromising, but we were able to play for at least some of the time on those days. The tennis club is a lovely venue and the u3a has been given a

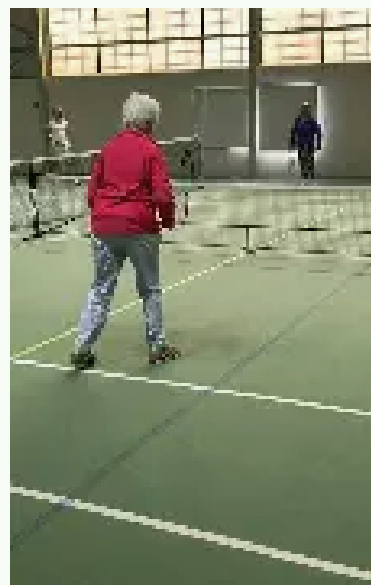


much reduced rate for hiring a court. This is an all ability group and members have enjoyed playing together, and

chatting on the seats around the courts. Our promotion at the 35th u3a Anniversary Event on 4th October attracted a lot of interest, so hopefully numbers will grow.

Christine Cavanagh

## Walking Tennis (2)



Walking Tennis at Wickham Park Tennis Club is also very popular, and some of the tennis players have migrated there as they needed a less strenuous form of the game. Although the game is played on a normal tennis court there are different rules, eg you cannot run or jump and the scoring is different. There

was a lot of interest at the u3a 35th Anniversary Event on 4th October. This club is organised by the club manager and coach Rob Sheath.

Anyone interested should contact Rob Sheath

## The Wordsmiths (2) *Reflections on Change*



Who would have thought people could change so much so quickly?

I see change in people of my age group: glued to their phones day and night,

unable to answer any question or make the smallest calculation without resorting to Google – general knowledge, who needs it? Mental arithmetic – obsolete! - and believing implicitly whatever their device throws up.

We have handed control of our monies to card machines. At home, we seem unable to carry out jobs for ourselves these days: it's "Alexa, play my music", "Alexa, draw my curtains, switch on the downstairs lights" and so on. We increasingly rely on robots to clean our homes and keep our gardens tidy, and they decide when and how to carry out these tasks, we do not even have to tell them to stop or start. Our sense of direction in our brains is declining, and we cannot compensate for this lack without technical help – why is this? It's because we have handed over control of our travel to online maps and directions, we have consciously and willingly abdicated responsibility for getting ourselves from A to B to "sat navs". These are useful tools, but if there is any hitch with the technology, we are literally lost, we no longer have the ability to take back control. Physical maps, a key tool for people in earlier times, are no longer produced, even Ordnance Survey maps are all online now.

Are we, through our reliance on technology, becoming less knowledgeable and less aware of the world around us? Many people now source all their news and information online, often from social media, and will repeat what they have seen on their screens as what is true/happening now, although we do know how often such sources contain suspect information, AKA "fake news".

Traditional reliable sources of local and world news, such as printed newspapers and the BBC are

increasingly under pressure and losing readers/viewers to online alternatives, which often seek to draw in people through "click bait" non-stories about the personal lives of celebrities, rather than trying to explain what is going on in the wider world.

These traits become ever stronger in younger age groups, with generations now growing up thinking that the norm is to be technology-dependent. In days not so long ago, man domesticated animals and controlled machinery they invented and manufactured. Now, machines design and manufacture other machines, and increasingly control what eat, through the cultivation and harvesting of fruits and vegetables and the care and eventual dispatch of farm animals.



So, we need to ask ourselves, have we been domesticated by the machines?

It is perhaps not idle speculation to wonder how far our children's physical presence will be affected by these trends, and how soon. Surely, in the near future, children will be born with enlarged thumbs, ready for using their first smartphone? There is much talk about delaying the age at which children are allowed smartphones, but the overwhelming trend is for younger and younger children to have access to their parents' or their own devices – we have all seen babies peering at tablet screens and jabbing little fingers at mobile phones.

Children of all ages now spend many hours each day in front of a

screen, a strain on anyone's eyes. Is it my imagination, or is the sight of a young child wearing glasses now a much more regular occurrence? Maybe in the near future, babies' health check-ups (carried out by machine, of course) will include eyesight tests from the earliest age, and glasses-wearing the norm for 2- and 3-year olds.

And what of ears? Ear buds to keep you locked into your device in a private world will surely soon appear on present lists for christenings, maybe even baby showers?

Up until our 21st century, the greatest threats to man and to our civilisation have been physical: diseases such as smallpox and TB, and the threat of war. Most recently, we have become aware of the dangers of pollution-related

diseases, caused by the emissions of the machines we have created.

Now, however, in the light of very recent attacks on some of our best-known industries and brands, and in what should be safe seas and airspace, we are forced to acknowledge that the biggest threats are not physical, they are the work of computer hackers and drone operators, remotely based and so an invisible enemy. Our progress in so many areas has not made the world a safer place, sadly.

We may have largely brought under control the biggest diseases, but the threat of war seems stronger now than at any other time in my lifetime.

You may think that this is a gloomy, even apocalyptic, view of our fast-changing world. But it is based on personal knowledge and observation. We have already embraced new technologies and are currently engaged in a frantic race to produce ever-faster, ever more powerful machines to pursue ever more change in our societies. But is it a race to the top or to the bottom? Will we – can we? – stay in charge, or is all this change leading to the inevitable dominance of the machines? Are we concerned enough to prevent it? Or is it already too late?

Elizabeth Adcock, September 2025

## 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

**13 Nov Ian Bevan The London Palladium**

**11 Dec Lucy Allen On the Buses: Remembering a Comedy Classic with the Directors Daughter**

**8 Jan Simon Waterfield William Wordsworth, Tintern Abbey and the Romantics**

**12 Feb Dean Caston Rogers and Hammerstein**

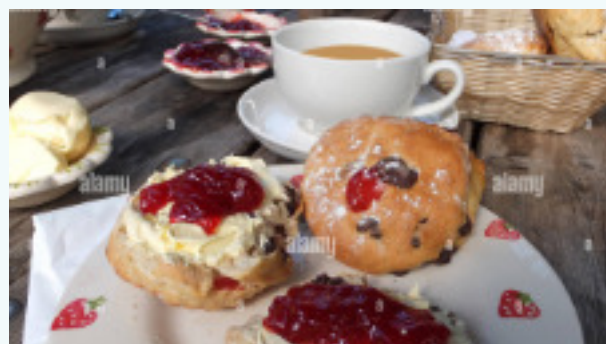
**12 Mar Nick Dobson Round and about with Boz**

**9 Apr Social meeting at Bromley Little Theatre**

## Theatre Group trip to the London Canal Museum 11th and 18th September



Regent's Canal



September saw the Theatre Group going on the water as we visited the London Canal Museum where we embarked on a canal trip with a cream tea on board. Such was the enthusiasm for this trip that we had four boats of 12 people on two different dates.

Mary Garside



## Theatre Group (2)

### EVITA Thursday 3 July 2025 London Palladium



The London Palladium entertained 50 members of Bromley and Beckenham Theatre groups among its audience of 2200. How welcome it was to leave the heat of Argyll Street and enter the air-conditioned auditorium of the cavernous Palladium.

The curtain went up to display a large block of letters E V I T A at the top of a series of six wide steps spread across the stage on which the

ensemble are crouched in dark coats. They are mourning the death of Evita - Yes the production starts at the end of Evita's life! The narrator Che, played strongly by Diego Andres Rodriguez in his West End debut, sings us through the life of the ambitious Eva Duarte. Behind the E V I T A letters the music blasts out from an 18-piece orchestra. The sound is rock concert loud.

This show is produced by Jamie Lloyd who first presented it at Regent's Park Open Air theatre in Summer 2019. He has enhanced that show which, for me, was spellbinding.

The star of the show is Rachel Zegler who plays Evita. She has starred in two films West End Story and Snow White and here she is all 5 feet of her acting and singing her socks off. She has huge stage presence and is on stage most of the time dressed in bra

and shorts scheming her way up the social ladder until she meets Juan Peron, played satisfactorily by James Olivas. Rachel's voice range is incredible. The balcony scene for *Don't Cry for me Argentina* where she sings to the assembled crowd in Argyll Street whilst it is video fed to the theatre is cleverly done and doesn't make you feel shortchanged in the Stalls!

Choreography by Fabian Aloise was mesmerising and the ensemble danced with sexual energy, aggression and charisma. Lighting, design, ticker tape and streamers before the interval were all memorable. This was a very polished production Theatre group members were buzzing from what was a hugely uplifting afternoon. Then it was off to Oh What A (Oxford) Circus for the journey home!

Ann Dalton

### FAWLTY TOWERS Apollo Theatre 6 August 2025



A small group from the theatre group attended Fawlty Towers and below is Marilyn's review

I watched Fawlty Towers on stage at the Apollo Theatre on the 6th August.

I found this a brilliant adaptation of the 70s sitcom, directed by John Cleese himself, and had the audience in stitches.

The comic timing was spot-on, especially the goose stepping - it was a real hoot. I am a great fan of this type of humour and would thoroughly recommend it for fans of the original series and anyone who enjoys a fast-paced British comedy.

Marilyn Knott

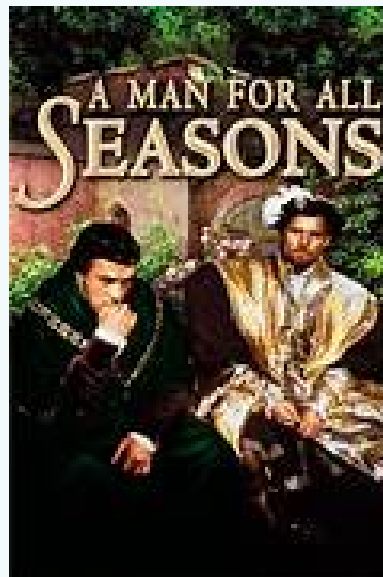
### A Man for All Seasons Harold Pinter Theatre 4th September 2025

A Man for All Seasons is a play by Robert Bolt based on the life of Sir Thomas More, a staunch Catholic answering only to God and the Pope, during the reign of Henry VIII. More was played excellently by Martin Shaw as a reprise of the same role some 20 years ago.

Thomas More, a loving family man who was an English lawyer, judge and social philosopher. He was a Councillor to the King and became Lord Chancellor for a short time.

He opposes Henry VIII's separation from the Catholic Church, his new role as Supreme Head of the Church of England and the annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon in order to marry Anne Boleyn.

Thomas More adheres only to the rule of law, his faith and conscience and refuses to sign the Oath of Supremacy.



Enter the villain of the play – Thomas Cromwell, who through devious means and misinterpretation of facts, weaves a web of lies to accuse Thomas More of treason.

Throughout the proceedings Thomas More **does not and will not** relinquish his strong conviction that man is only answerable to God. As a

result he is beheaded at the Tower of London.

But the play has a lighter side too – with the Common Man excellently played by Gary Wilmot – who becomes (with just a cap or a cloak and some scene shifting) many characters which guides the audience through the play. But even he succumbs to the power of money and betrays Thomas More.

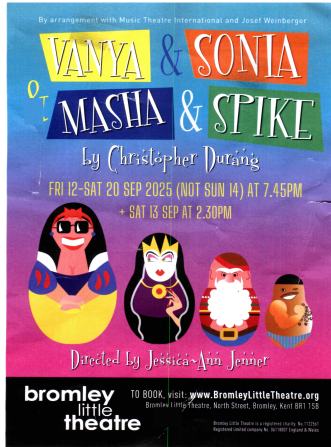
A most enjoyable and thought-provoking play which could be viewed as a reflection on today's society, where ambition, power and money can change the course of events!

June Ford

## Theatre Group (2)

### Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike Bromley Little Theatre Saturday 13th September 2025

Following a break in August for our Saturday matinees at Bromley Little Theatre we returned to a comedy which had won awards on Broadway and brought to the UK in 2019. Bromley Little Theatre has been trying to get the rights to perform since then.



This was an enjoyable play with many references to Chekov, not least the naming of characters whose parents had named the three siblings and in particular Vanya and Masha. There were some very funny moments and Spike seemed to be rehearsing for the November production of The full Monty.

Set in the USA, Masha, a famous film actress had returned home to her two siblings who had nursed their ageing parents until their deaths. They were jealous of the glamorous lifestyle of Masha who appeared with her much younger lover, Spike. Into this appeared Cassandra, the cleaner who came with all her soothsaying and warnings and a young Nina, visiting relatives nearby, who evoked jealousy in Masha and interest from Spike. The six cast members all played their parts well and we particularly enjoyed Marion Barker as Sonia's take on a Maggie Smith accent and also Spike, played by Kobi Maynard, revealing his physique. Richard Gissing as Vanya gave us an incredible tantrum which must have been really difficult to perform and remember.

All in all an interesting and provocative play which was well performed and directed as always.

Mary Garside

### Calamity Jane Churchill Theatre, Bromley Wednesday 17th September 2025

**Calamity Jane** is based on the much-loved Doris Day movie, and this production starred Carrie Hope Fletcher. I was not sure how it would transcend into a musical stage show but I was not disappointed,



The gun slinging tomboy Calamity Jane – biggest mouth in Dakota territory - was always up for a fight. She rescued the dashing Lieutenant Danny Gilmartin, from the Indians but in an exaggerated story. But when the men of Deadwood fell for Chicago stage star Adelaid Adams, Calamity promised to bring this big star back from Chicago. Unfortunately, she mistook Katie, the maid, for Adelaid Adams and persuaded her to come back to Deadwood. However, Katie was found out as not being the big star. Calam felt sorry for her and invited her to share her cabin. At a dance, Calam saw that her Lieutenant fell in love with Katie and told her to get out of town. Wild Bill Hickock then declared his love for Calam and she realised she loved him too. All was well that ended well with Calam stopping Katie from leaving and a double wedding. With the classic songs The Deadwood Stage (Whip-Crack-Away), The Black Hills of Dakota, Just Blew in from the Windy City, and Secret Love it made for a very enjoyable and entertaining afternoon!

Linda Baker

### INFAMOUS Bromley Little Theatre 26 September 2025

Infamous was a brilliant, very intimate production performed "In the Bar"

It is a modern play by April De Angelis about the life and times of Lady Emma Hamilton, original West End cast members were Caroline Quentin and her daughter Rose.

The story of Emma Hamilton is a complex one. Born to a northern working class family, she travelled to London aged 12 to work in service, she later became an actress, model and prostitute before marrying Sir William Hamilton.



In Act 1 we see Emma living the grand life in Naples, excitingly discussing the imminent arrival of Lord Nelson. We later find that she is pregnant with his child.

In the second act we have jumped 17 years, Lord Nelson has been dead some years and Emma is destitute in Calais with her daughter Horatia.

Infamous gives a history lesson that is as entertaining as it is enlightening. It is both witty and heartbreaking.

The play was of the usual BLT high standard and perfect for the very small stage area. I had great admiration for the cast members, who had nowhere to hide with the audience so close!

Diana Langford

## Theatre Workshop, 30th August



We were contacted by an international student, Dhanush Giridhar, offering to run a theatre workshop with a focus on Intergenerational Theatre Experimentation and International Storytelling. It sounded intriguing, so after various email conversations we agreed on a date. Dhanush provided a number of duologues and everything else for the day, we provided a hall at the URC. Here is a report on the day from Francis Kimmins:-

### Canvas drawing by u3a members



*"I thoroughly enjoyed the whole session and both the Artist and u3a thespians made it a very entertaining and thought-provoking day. It was also a different session to others we've had, although they are enjoyable too, as we actually had to contribute to the day and not just sit, listen and watch.*

*The Artist was a lovely person and he managed us beautifully, I thought, allowing us time to talk and the group responding enthusiastically. I've already shared some of the elements with my friends and they were intrigued and fascinated that we covered so much about characterisation in a couple of hours."*

As part of the event, we were encouraged to draw on a large canvas which provided Dhanush material to display at an exhibition in the W3 Gallery in Acton, London that he was doing as a follow up on the workshops, see picture.

Sandy Boden

## Walking Football (2)

### What is Walking Football?



Walking football is like the game you love, played in a new way

Walking Football is a unique small-sided ball game created by John Croot in 2011. It's similar in some respects to Association Football and

this is what makes it such a great sport. When playing the sport, all of the skills you have learned will come flooding back. Memories will

come back too because the game is familiar. It's the game you love and remember but played in a new way.

**Do you fancy playing this every Friday afternoon? Bromley football club has a session from 4.15 to 5.30 at £5 a session at their stadium in Hayes Lane.**

**Let's get a group of u3a members to join and keep fit in a fun way. Open to men and women  
Contact GLO (Group Liaison Officer) Mary Garside if interested:**

## Wider Horizons (4) *Visit to Rochester - 26th July*

"All things come to those who .." says the proverb and so it was that at the end of July members of the Wider Horizons Group finally made it to Rochester, previous attempts having been derailed, literally, by train strikes and a storm.

Our patience was rewarded by an excellent tour of Rochester provided free (donations gratefully accepted) by the City of Rochester Society Guided Walks, with an extremely pleasant and knowledgeable guide.

Recommended and well worth waiting for.

**Celia Thompson**



### Forthcoming

**22 November** : Visit to Peek Freans Biscuit Museum – Led by Celia Chappell and Sheila Lucas

**Christmas Lunch** : Date TBA

## Wider Horizons (4) *Visit to the Queen's House, Greenwich - 23rd August*

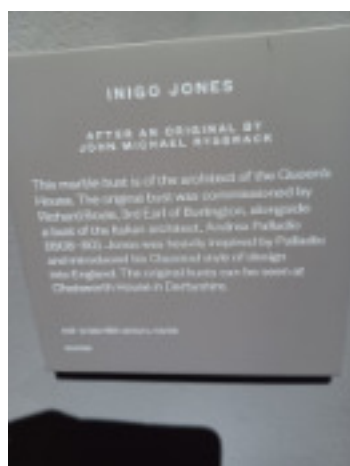


On 23rd August, a lovely sunny day, our Wider Horizons Group travelled to Greenwich to visit the Queen's House.



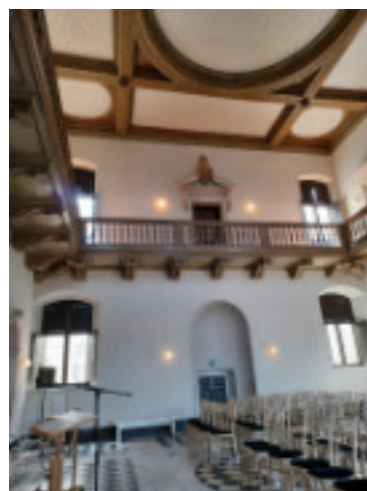
staircase, also copied from Italian Renaissance architecture.

Today the expansive art collection is what people come to see, featuring a number of well-known artists and many less well known. The theme is mainly naval but also paintings of the house and environs painted at different times over the past four hundred years, which I found particularly fascinating.



The building was designed by Inigo Jones, who was commissioned by Queen Anne in 1616 but it was not finished until 1635 under her successor Queen Henrietta Maria. It was the first Palladian style Villa in England, and constructed in Portland stone rather than Tudor brick, a departure from tradition.

The classical exterior is matched by several interior innovations notably the Tulip



After exploring at our own pace and inclination for an hour or so, we assembled and strolled down to the busy, lively centre and by chance found a restaurant where all nine of us could sit together (a few people were unable to stay for lunch) After a leisurely meal we dispersed homewards by various routes, some taking the boat back up the Thames.

**Margaret Caddy**