u3a Bromley

learn, laugh, live

Newsletter Volume 35 Issue 9

November 2026



IN THIS ISSUE

Message from the Chair	p 4
Policies and Constitution	p 3
Christmas Social	p 3
New Chair Needed	p 5

GROUPS INFORMATION

Luncheon Club - NEW	p 10
Quiz Morning	p 12
Travel Group - NEW	p 18

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Treasurer	Gary Chin
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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 (GLO) responsible for that group, also shown in the February 2024 Interest Groups Booklet, and to whom you should refer if wishing to start a new group or for further information regarding groups.

Dates for your Diary

3rd Nov 2026 **Local Studies**
Stephen Harmer
Sissinghurst

17th Nov 2026 **General Meeting**
Tony Harris
Donald Trump

1st Dec 2026 **Local Studies**
Nick Dobson
The History of Christmas

15th Dec 2026 **Christmas Social**

5th Jan 2027 **Local Studies**
Nicholas Bennet
Richmal Crompton

19th Jan 2027 **General Meeting**
Mel Byron
Old Movies saved my life

2nd Feb 2027 **Local Studies**
Will Noble
Croydonopolis

16th Feb 2027 **General Meeting**
Andrew Baker
Liverpool: From Crisis to Renewal

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:
Christmas Market - Bromley High Street.
Photo by Kay Harbridge - member of ***u3a Bromley***

Welcome to Issue 6, November 2026

Our u3a Bromley Policies and Constitution

Did you know that **u3a Bromley** works in accordance with a number of good practice policies?

These range from treating each other considerately and inclusively, to processing the information we need to grant you membership, protecting your data via the u3a Beacon Management system, covering us when we meet together, allowing us to copy materials legally, guiding new and more experienced Group Leaders, and to providing access for everybody.

We also have the **u3a Bromley** Constitution which sets out how we operate as an entity, including through the AGM, the Committee and so much more.

You can find these on the **u3a Bromley** Website on the **Home page** or under the **Members Area**. Choose the **Join Us** tab, scroll to the bottom and click the link to view the policies. We will be reviewing and updating them in due course.

Have a question or want to know more? Please speak to one of the Committee.

Many thanks,

Angela
u3a Bromley Secretary

Contents

Policies and Constitution	3
Christmas Social	3
Message from the Chair	4
New Chair Needed	5
News from the Groups	
Art Appreciation (1)	6
Computing: Tablets etc (5)	6
Gardening - Monthly Talks (4)	6
Gardening - All Hands Group (4)	7
Daytime Disco (2)	8
Film Studies (5)	8
Gardening - Monthly Talks (4)	7
Golf Lessons (5)	8
Guitar Group (5)	8
History of Fashion (5)	8
Local Studies (4)	9
Lowe (3) Haggerston	9
Luncheon Club - NEW	10
Music Appreciation - Classical (5)	10
Outings by Public Transport (4)	11
Psychology (3)	12
Quiz Morning	12
Rambles (2)	13
Science and Technology (5)	16
Theatre Group (2)	14-17
Travel Group - NEW	18
Membership Renewal Form	19 & 20

CHRISTMAS SOCIAL

Tuesday, 15th December – Replacing the 10.30am General Meeting

ENTERTAINMENT: The Kentones – THE Bromley Barbershop Harmony Club.
Founded in 1975, celebrating 50 years in 2025.
Winners of a European Barbershop Music Festival – Most Entertaining Chorus
Also featuring a competition for the Best Christmas Get-Up

REFRESHMENTS: Please bring your own drinks and nibbles. Tea and coffee will be provided

BOOKING ESSENTIAL – Seating will be arranged at tables, places must be booked

Bookings open on 9th November, email will be sent with details

Bookings close at midnight on 13th December

MEMBERS ONLY – This event is open to u3a Bromley members only

DON'T FORGET TO DUST OFF YOUR CHRISTMAS REGALIA!

u3a Bromley

Message from the Chair

Successful Promotional Event on 3rd October at the URC

Thanks to all our members, group leaders and helpers plus the Guitar Group who made the day a resounding success. There is always that awful worry, as the empty hall fills up with tables and groups set out their wares, that no-one will come. Posters had been put out the week before and adverts in all the local Facebook groups and Nextdoor App. But it's like shouting into the void, has anyone heard?

So it is with relief that I can report that 32 new members signed up on the day and another eight have also joined which may also be a result of the event. Our membership now stands at over 1,350, the largest it has been since before Covid.



The Mayor of Bromley, Councillor Christine Harris, arrived with her attendant, and was very happy to be photographed and investigate what our group leaders had on show and chat with them.





She confessed to have done a bit of on-line research the night before and was shocked to discover u3a Bromley had been around for 36 years, and she had not heard of us! This is something that often comes up, so I hope to meet her in the Mayor's Parlour and try and improve our profile with the Bromley 'powers that be', it's about time we had a bit of recognition don't you think?

New Chair - Crunch time

How much do you value your u3a?

I am addressing this to you, the potential new chair, I know you are out there 😊. There's only 6 months left before I step down, it's your turn to take u3a Bromley onwards and upwards. Remember just because things have been done a certain way, things can always be changed and improved, nothing is 'graven in stone' As a new chair, you put your own stamp on things, that's one of the joy's of the role. And remember too, you are not on your own, the committee is with you, it's a team and everyone uses their different strengths to help support the whole.

The role is what you make it.

And a vice chair could be useful and also be an aid to a potential new chair. Two heads and all that! Perhaps there are two of you who already know each other and think that you could work as a pair? Let's think outside the box!

See the advert in the magazine with an overview of the role.

I am waiting to hear from you!



Sandy Boden

chair@u3abromley.org.uk

or 07710 466 048

u3a Bromley

Learn • Share • Make Friends

A brighter future together

NEW CHAIR NEEDED FROM APRIL 2027

A chance to make your mark on your u3a

Could you help shape the future of Bromley u3a?

To take us where we've never gone before...

More members

More opportunities

Stronger community

A brighter future









Bromley u3a is thriving, but we want to do even more. We're looking for a new Chair who will work with our enthusiastic committee and volunteers to help take our u3a to the next level.

Help take your u3a to the next level

- Increase the membership
- Grow our interest groups
- Share the u3a offering as widely as possible
- Work with a wide range of local organisations
- Strengthen our profile locally
- Help make our u3a the first port of call for Bromley retirees
- Actively encourage our volunteers to take responsibility for keeping our u3a running
- Recognise opportunities for delegation of routine and project tasks

Role overview

As Chair, you will:

- Work with the committee to manage the activities of u3a Bromley
- Chair u3a committee meetings and the annual AGM
- Host the general meetings
- Represent u3a Bromley to the wider community
- Chair the annual Group Leaders' Lunch
- Create the Chair's greetings for the 6 newsletter publications
- Engage with the Third Age Trust and London region for the benefit of u3a Bromley

You won't be on your own

You'll be supported by an experienced committee and a dedicated team of volunteers.

A rewarding role that makes a real difference

Interested?

Why not find out more with no commitment?

Contact Sandy for an informal chat about the role and the 'Nuts and Bolts'.

chair@u3abromley.org.uk

07710 466 048

Our u3a • Our community • A brighter tomorrow

u3a Bromley

Learn Laugh Live

Art Appreciation (1)

On 16th September Graham told us about Surrealism. Parisian paintings had become boring by early C20th whereas German and Spanish painters had moved to expressive colours and cubism and Swiss artists invented DADAism where used objects were depicted giving different meanings.

So Andre Breton in Paris invented Surrealism, blurring the line between reality and imagination, depicting dreams, eroticism, the uncanny and absurd. Photographers manipulated photo images, sculptors made incomprehensible art and film editors produced strange films.

Belgium produced Magritte, and Spain had Joan Miro. Picasso flirted with it but Dali became the real face of it, producing many inexplicable paintings.

Leonora Carrington, who eventually became a Mexican citizen, was the most famous British Surreal artist.





Forthcoming talks:

4 Nov	Theatre	Lari Burr	Medieval Illustrations
18 Nov	Zoom	Graham	Seascapes
2 Dec	Theatre	Graham	Social and Quiz

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

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.

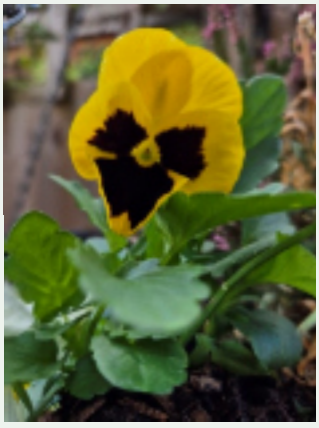
No charge, though the pub appreciates it if you buy a coffee (other beverages are available).

Contact Keith

Gardening - Monthly Talks (4)

4 November – Kevin Tooher – Winter Interest in the Garden
Kevin is based in Kent and loves sharing his passion for gardening and helping people to improve their knowledge.

2 December – Steve Edney – Preparing for a Great Garden Next Year
Steve, who runs his own nursery, may have some interesting ideas and suggestions for our own gardens.



Meetings are held at St. Mark's Church Room, Westmoreland Road, Bromley, at 2.30pm.

A small entrance charge includes tea and biscuits.
NB there is no parking at St Mark's Church.

For further details telephone Sue Goodger

Gardening - All Hands Group (4)

Our last three trips to Wisley, West Dean in Sussex and Brogdale near Faversham finish off this year's programme of outings and has proved more popular than ever. The group voted that coach trips were a favourite way of travelling, so seven out our nine trips used this method. Our planning meeting, usually in November may slip to December, the date is still to be agreed. Please start thinking about places we could go next year so we can decide at the meeting. Here's a review of the last three months

Sandy Boden.

Visit to Wisley 12th August



A beautiful sunny day for it and a full coach of 39!. We had a guided tour planned as a benefit of our Associate status with the RHS and were pleasantly surprised that they split us into three groups with different guides, making it much easier to hear all the useful information they could impart. We were all seeking those magical plants that could survive our tropical summers without water! Wisley has something for everyone, one of our best trips so far.

Visit to West Dean 18th September



At the foot of the South Downs, West Dean Gardens near Chichester is one of the greatest restored gardens open to the public today. This was an unstructured visit, the group free to wander round at their own pace and decide when to eat. Highlights were the impressive collection of working Victorian Glasshouses, a walled kitchen garden, a 300ft Edwardian pergola, a sunken garden, and the occasional surreal fibreglass tree as well as amazing displays of pumpkins. Some of us also managed to catch a glimpse of the historic West Dean House, which holds a variety of different courses which some of us had sampled in the past.

Visit to Brogdale 8th October



Brogdale is the home of the National Fruit Collection with over 2,200 different varieties! The tour guide, Mike, led the group to see apple, cherry and plum trees with a few nut trees thrown in too.

We sampled several of the apple varieties on a 90 minute amble in the sunshine, a lovely way to finish our year.

Contact Sandy Boden to go on the member list.

Future Trips			
Name	**Month/Date**	**What**	**Place**
Sandy Boden	November or December TBA	Planning Meeting	St Marks

Golf Lessons (5)

Our next season of Golf Lessons starts on Wednesday, 3rd February, with a drop-in on Wednesday 13th January at Chelsfield Golf Centre. These friendly groups are taken by Steve, a Professional at the

Centre, and are suitable for beginners and improvers.

2027 **u3a Bromley** Golf dates at Chelsfield

Wed 13th Jan – Drop in
Wed 3rd Feb
Wed 10th Feb
Wed 17th Feb
Wed 24th Feb
Wed 3rd March
Wed 10th March
Texas Scramble and lunch Wed 17 th March
0930-1030 or
1030-1130 or
1130-1230 or
1400-1500



Price £10 per session
Max per group 7-8 persons per session

You will need to book slots

For further details of sessions please contact Mary Golds

Guitar Group (5)



Come and have fun, and join my 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. I have now started a Concert Performer Group from 1.00pm-2.00pm. All Guitar Members then continue from 2.00pm-4.15pm

Venue: Bromley Methodist Church, The Wesley Room, College Road,

Bromley BR1 3NS. Car Park Access (North Street) Bromley BR1 1SB.

Please contact: Group Leader: Christine Dabrowa

History of Fashion (5)

We held our September meeting at the 1917 cafe where they made us very welcome. I talked about the fashionable ladies of the Directoire – Therese Tallien, Juliette Recamier and Josephine Bonaparte. We were back at my flat in October. using a powerpoint to look at the frequent changes in fashion between the French Revolution and the accession of Victoria. We also watched a You-Tube of a lecture on fashions in the time of Jane Austen.

A group of us took a tour around the Liverpool Street area where a friend talked about the history of the area and the building work being done and then over to Spitalfields talking about the houses of the Huguenot silk weavers. I might be able to persuade her to lead another tour next Spring.

Laraine Burr



Local Studies (4)

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:

3 November	**Stephen Harmer**	**Sissinghurst**
1 December	**Nick Dobson**	**The History of Christmas**
5 January	**Nicholas Bennet**	**Richmal Crompton**
2 February	**Will Noble**	**Croydonopolis**
2 March	**Peter Martin**	**A virtual tour around Victorian Bromley**

Reports on previous meetings are available on the website. Apologies for their absence here, owing to a technical issue.

Steve Woods

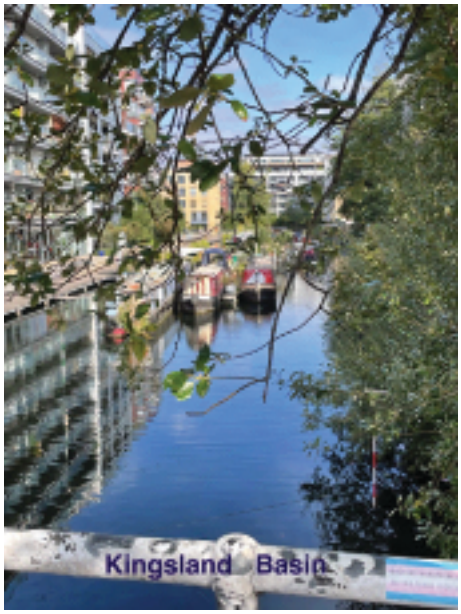
Lowe (3) Haggerston

Our next stop on the Windrush line was Haggerston, another refurbished railway station, only a short walk down the Kingsland Road away to the Regents Canal. Mentioned in the Domesday book as Hergotestane, it became an outlying hamlet of Shoreditch and in 1656 it was the birthplace of Edmond Halley after whom the comet is named.

Descending on to the Kingsland towpath our first stop was at a café beside the Kingsland basin. Once an industrial hub with wharves and warehouses it is now a peaceful watery cul-de-sac surrounded by newly built low-rise flats and containing moorings for houseboats.
The 1.5 mile walk along the Regents canal towpath was surprisingly peaceful, dotted with small cafes and bars to our right and lined with some interestingly decorated houseboats to our left. There are still two working locks on this stretch of the canal, and a barge was passing through City Road lock as we walked by.

The towpath ends abruptly at the eastern end of the 960 yard long Islington tunnel. In the days when barges were pulled by horses, the horse would have to be unhitched and walked overground to the other end of the tunnel while the boat was “legged” through the tunnel by bargemen on their backs with their feet on the roof of the tunnel “walking” through it.
We walked up to Colebrook Row and then through Duncan Gardens which runs between Colebrook and Duncan Terrace down to the busy City Road and then round the corner into Islington High Street and the Angel Islington.

Carole Blacher







Luncheon Club - NEW

We will meet once a month on the third Thursday and enjoy meals at a variety of local restaurants.

Group Liaison Officer: Angela Dowling

If you are interested in joining the group, please contact me



Music Appreciation – Classical (5)

How do you define classical music? This is a topic which we frequently touch on in our group. Is it just music by great composers which you would hear if you went to a concert at the Royal Festival Hall, being careful not to applaud at the wrong time? Is it music that you hear on Classic FM while you are busy doing something else? Is film music included - or music you might hear played in the park by a military band?

We have a very wide definition which incorporates all of the above - and a bit more. You will hear what a wide range we encompass if you come to one of our meetings where members all bring a piece of music on CD or streaming services to play and discuss. If you are interested in vocal music, you would have heard in recent months some lieder by Schubert as well as Mahler's Song of the Earth. Choral music has been represented by Dvorak's Stabat Mater and orchestral music has taken us around Europe from Respighi's Pines of Rome to Scandinavia and Dag Wiren's Serenade for Strings - which had us all trying to remember which TV programme used it as its theme music. There are always discoveries to be made such as a Piano Concerto by Moszkowski.



Our most recent programme devised by a member looked at the link between classical music and the Far East. Many composers have been inspired by stories from the Far East but we started with Gilbert and Sullivan and The Mikado, which of course is nothing really to do with Japan. The unique instruments and styles of eastern music such as gamelan music from Bali have also been an inspiration to composers such as Benjamin Britten. But the influence works both ways and we were able to hear some works by modern Chinese composers which are very much in the Western idiom. We ended with some music (including film music) by Japanese and Korean composers who have clearly been influenced by American minimalist composers such as Philip Glass.

We have spaces in our group, so if you would like to expand your knowledge of classical music, do come and join us. We meet on the second Wednesday of every month from 1400 to 1630hrs - drop an email to me for more details.

Peter Whitehead

Outings by Public Transport (4)

The Outings for next year will include three outside London. This is a new venture so please give feedback.

14 Jan **Salters' Hall.**
First licensed in 1394, the ***Salters***' Company has its origins in the salt trade of medieval ***London***. We will learn of its history and its function in today's world.
We will meet at Bromley South station at 10:00am, change at Herne Hill, 10:27am, continue to Farringdon on the Thameslink and then a City + Hammersmith tube to Moorgate. A 5min walk will take us to the Hall in time for an 11:30am tour.
Please pay for this outing (£10) before the end of November as I have to pay the venue by mid-Dec.

Early April **WW2 tunnels at Maidstone Grammar School for Girls.**
Following the superb talk by Mary Smith in July, I have contacted the school for a group booking of these unexpected tunnels. I have asked for the Easter holidays (29th March – 9th April). Once they can confirm dates, I will let you know. The tour will be at 2pm (as we will not make the morning one) but I propose a walk around the city in the late morning followed by lunch and the tour. It is a 2 hour tour and has very steep steps down into the tunnels (hand rails on both sides). The cost is £25 including the rail fare (this may come down due to group rail fares).

I still have no dates, but I have visited Maidstone so have some timings. We will meet at Bromley South station at 10am, take the 10:12am train and arrive at 11am. We will visit the museum for an hour, then either lunch by the river or a café in town. We will reunite at the station at 1:30pm to walk (uphill) to the school.
We will catch a train home after 4:20pm arriving at Bromley an hour later.
When booking, please state whether you have a Senior rail card.
Do not pay till January 2027.

14 May **Hunterian Museum.**
Royal College of Surgeons. Discover the art and science of surgery from ancient times to the present day, including the extraordinary specimen collection of the 18th century surgeons. The museum is free but I suggest I collect a £5 donation to keep the place open, to be collected on the day.

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 a payment is made.

Ann Woollins

As requested, my mobile on the day :

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

Psychology (3) - Getting old Psychosocially

That wonderful ITV programme 7up returned for the final time in September to present the remaining participants in their seventieth year. It was fascinating to see the retrospective snapshots of these diverse individuals from the very first episode in 1964 when they were seven years old and at 7-year intervals since then. In terms of their personalities, most were recognisable at 70 from their seven-year-old selves, suggesting that, although they had matured through a variety of life experiences, their characteristics had not changed drastically.

Many psychologists have sought to explain how we develop and mature, quite often coming down on the side of either nature or nurture as the most powerful influence. We looked at the theory of Erik Erikson who proposed that human beings develop through eight stages, each one defined by a core conflict that shapes personality and identity.



Successfully resolving these conflicts leads to healthy development while unresolved conflicts can harm future development. The first stage is Trust vs Mistrust, which occurs in the first year of life when the infant learns to trust others if carers are nurturing, or to mistrust if carers are neglectful.

Erikson's is called a Psycho-social theory because it seeks to explain how social experiences and relationships influence who we become over time. Erikson had a long and productive life but it is interesting to note that, as he progressed into his eighties and became more frail, he introduced a further, ninth stage. In this final stage the previous eight are reversed as we decline into the less productive, more unhealthy closing years of our lives. Even this, Erikson proposed, can be successfully navigated and people can achieve a state of wisdom, moving past the fear of death and gaining a deeper connection to the universe. He called this **Gerotranscendence**.

If you wish to find out more about Erikson's theory go to: https://www.verywellhealth.com/psychosocial-development-5220563

Carole Blacher



Rambles (2)



September Cudham Hills, photo by Roger Sexton

These are our walks for November & December 2026, a mixture of London and country suburbs.

if you need to join the distribution list for our circular "Pathways" which often contains more details and 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 ramblers, full information will be in our circular "Pathways", but guidance in brief is:-

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

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

The Walks
NB On Central London and some Town 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.

Thurs. 05 Nov. 2026 – History of toilets (London)
Meet at 10.45 at Platform 19, Waterloo Main Line Station to finish at Covent Garden. This is a talk with a short walk of only 1½ miles including a lot of information about the history and use of toilets in general and in London in particular. **NB: Contact the Walk Leader to book your place.** Please book by email if at all possible.
Leader: Graham Haynes

Wed. 11 Nov. 2026 – Penge East to West Dulwich
Meet at 10.30 outside Penge East Station (exit by platform 1 northbound) for an approx. 5 mile linear walk to West Dulwich station, via Crystal Palace Park, Wells Park, Sydenham Hill Wood and Dulwich Park. Some steep slopes; Cafes in Dulwich Park, Gallery, or village. Return from W Dulwich station.
Leader: Maggie Nicol

Tue. 24 Nov. 2026 – Exploring Grove Park: "Hope, Grace and Peace"
Meet at 10:30 outside 589 Downham Way (Constable & Toop funeral directors) – about 60m up the road opposite Grove Park Station. This is a circular walk of approx. 4 miles with some steps and pavement walking, moderate short inclines, with no toilets until the end.
We will explore some of the history of the area and visit locations that mark the lives of three notable residents. For those wanting a shorter route of about 2 miles that only misses one key stop, I can give directions when we meet. No need to book.
Leader: Richard Martin

Fri. 04 Dec. 2026 – Three Peaks (Ladywell – Brockley circular)
Meet at 10.30am outside Ladywell Station (Hayes line to London) – northbound side, for approx. 5 mile walk covering the 3 'peaks' via Blythe Hill fields, One Tree Hill and Hilly Fields. There are cafés in Ladywell at the end of the walk.
Leader: Robin Burnhams

Fri. 11 Dec. 2026 – High St Kensington circular
Meet at 10.45 inside High St Kensington tube station (outside Cafe Nero) for a 2 hr walk around one of the most expensive areas in the UK. The walk will include historic and memorable buildings as well as parks and gardens.
Kensington High St tube is on the Circle Line and the District Line from Earl's Court. Also on bus route No. 9 from Charing Cross station.
NB: Contact the Walk Leader to book your place.
Leader: Marie Blakeley

Peter Wood – Rambles Group Co-ordinator



Theatre Group (2)

The group meets at Bromley Little Theatre in North Street, Bromley on the second Thursday afternoon of each 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 to other places of theatrical interest. 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 our trips, outings and meetings or have any other queries about the group.

Mary Garside

12 Nov	*Peter Martin*	History of Bromley Little Theatre
10 Dec	*Jane Lee Redman and friend*	Musical entertainment
14 Jan	*John Drewry and Co*	An audience with Florence Nightingale
11 Feb	*Dean Caston*	Lionel Bart
11 Mar	*Tim Harrison*	The Oscars

Theatre Group tour of Theatre Royal Drury Lane
3 September 2026







There were so many of us (around 40) we had to split into two groups to do this very interesting tour. I was on the second and our guide was very competent and interesting, as was the guide for the first group.

The history of the theatre spans over 350 years and four successive buildings. The current theatre was built in 1812 and recently (2019) closed for a £60 million renovation. The result is an exquisite example of elegant Georgian symmetry.

The tour lasted about an hour and a quarter and was full of facts, figures, myths and legends - far too many to remember them all. Among the many ghosts the theatre claims to have is the man in grey - and we were treated to a sighting of him! There was some seating available at most of the stops so anyone who needed it was able to take the weight off their feet for a few minutes now and again. I think that is worth knowing if you would like to do this tour but find it difficult to be on your feet for long periods.

I didn't have the opportunity to ask very many people whether they thought it an enjoyable experience, but those I did all reacted positively.

Pat Ward

Theatre Group (2)

THE ORESTEIA
The Bridge Theatre
10 September 2026

I love Greek mythology, with its combination of the spoken word (so important when the actors wore masks) and the cautionary tales it tells. In this production, we are told that the writer and director, who is Australian, has written a modern retelling "after Aeschylus and Others".



Aeschylus wrote three plays within the Oresteia that are essentially about revenge for wrongs in which gods and goddesses have intervened - a tit for tat situation. Revenge can be hidden for years, but when it erupts it usually ends in someone being killed.

The revenge motif is brought up to date here with the help of a terrific set. We, maybe as a Greek Chorus, watch the action being played out over 10 years, with dates to help us, within a glass box divided into rooms with lovely furniture, and immediately know we are in a wealthy family home. Now, as we all know, wealth can't buy you happiness and what starts off as an attempt at normality, a 21st birthday party for twin daughters, ends with the marriage breakup of the parents, Christopher and Montie, played by David Morrissey (Christopher/ Agamemnon} and his American wife Montie, a hyper Mary-Louise Parker (Montie/Clytemnestra) with a gift for funny one-liners.

Not only has Christopher been "playing away", but Montie holds him responsible for the death of their eldest daughter and the next thing we know is he is lying dead in this pristine white bath. We were promised blood and gore, but I've seen much more in Midsummer Murders! To cut a very long story short, this fuels the differences and grievances between the remaining family members and their close friends, resulting in the despatching of the siblings.

Good news to finish - in the third part of Aeschylus' tragedy, the Furies (Greek Chorus) change into instruments of justice and the seeds of our modern court system are born.

Nikki Packham

The Comedy About Spies
Adelphi Theatre
24 September 2026

A smallish group from Bromley u3a and Beckenham u3a theatre groups attended the matinee of The Comedy About Spies. This play is performed by the same company, Mischief, as The Play That Goes Wrong. They announced that at the end, although some members had already spotted actors they knew from that play. As such, it is very much a Marmite production. You either love it or hate it! A couple of members left at the interval, but the others really enjoyed the play which, as always, is very fast moving and cleverly staged and performed. Slickness is what was needed and it certainly showed this.

The play, set in 1961, centres on a rogue British agent who pilfers plans for a top-secret weapon. CIA and KGB spies converge on London's Piccadilly Hotel in pursuit of the elusive file. 'Marvel at the comic timing and sheer physical bravura' (The Telegraph) of a clueless young couple, a hapless actor angling for an exciting spy movie role, and enough double agents to confuse even the sharpest operative, and you've got a mission that's hilariously out of control.

Some members of the group are enthusiastic enough to have tickets to see Christmas Carol Goes Wrong at The Churchill Theatre in October!

Mary Garside



Theatre Group (2)

HOW TO DATE A FEMINIST
Bromley Little Theatre
26 September 2026, matinee

Bromley Little Theatre is such a thriving place that apart from monthly shows in the main theatre it also has a monthly bar show, with matinees on Saturday for both main auditorium shows and bar shows. This month, a small group went to see How to Date a Feminist. This is an intimate experience, with the actors and audience very close together. It must be quite a feat to direct and perform in this small area and still put over such an incredible performance.



The play is a romantic comedy turned upside down: it's the man who's the feminist! Meet Steve, son of a Greenham Common activist, who proposes to Kate with a lengthy apology for the patriarchy. On their first date, he asks to kiss her collarbone, citing 'explicit verbal consent'. Unfortunately, Kate prefers lipstick, cupcakes and Heathcliff!

The whole run was fully booked, which was really good to see. If you haven't yet been to Bromley Little Theatre, give it a go.

Mary Garside

BARNAM
The New Wimbledon Theatre
30 September 2026



A select group from Beckenham and Bromley U3A Theatre Groups took the tram to Wimbledon again this year to see another musical, and this time we were in the stalls. The show was the circus musical, Barnum, which many remembered seeing many years ago at the London Palladium with Michael Crawford as Phineas Taylor Barnum.

This touring performance didn't disappoint and, unsurprisingly, given the quality, Zippos Circus and the National Centre for Circus Arts were consultants. It starred Matt Rawle in the title role and an amazing group of acrobats, dancers and musicians. One member commented that the cast members were so multi-talented – they all demonstrated so many different skills. Barnum even did a tight-rope walk although it took him a couple of attempts. Interestingly, the production was choreographed by Oti Mabuse of Strictly fame.

The show follows Barnum and his wife Charity through the ups and downs of his life, which unfolds on stage with all its twists and turns as his dreams lead him to headier heights. Songs such as Colours of my Life and Come Follow the Band brought the performance to life and there was some really great singing from Dominique Planter as the aged Joice Heth and understudy Elena Bluck as the famous soprano Jenny Lind. Tom Thumb was played by Fergus Rattigan and



Jumbo the elephant was a much admired puppet performance, with several actors manipulating the massive figure.

It was a shame that the matinee performance was not particularly well attended but all of us were pleased to have made the journey and enjoyed the show.

Mary Garside

Theatre Group (2)

APOLOGIA by ALEXI KAYE-CAMPBELL
Bromley Little Theatre,
12 September 2026

It was hard to believe that this was an amateur production - all six cast members were quite brilliant. Kristin's birthday party turned into a disaster, starting with the oven not working and featuring family tensions and clashing views. Kristin's son, Peter, a successful banker, and his Christian American girl



friend, Trudi, were the first to arrive, followed by Claire, the two-timing girlfriend of her second son, Simon, and Kristin's friend Hugh. Peter met his girlfriend at a prayer meeting and Kristin, a feminist and communist, can't decide whether being a Christian is worse than her son's job as a banker. Kristin is a well known art historian, an idealist, who fled America to make her home in Europe. Her recently published book does not mention her two sons taken by their father when they were very young. The questions that have tormented the sons are why she did not try to win them back, why she wasn't there for them, and why she *had* them. Simon misses the dinner party but comes later with a bloodied hand which his mother treats while he tells her about a scary incident in Genoa that haunts him to this day and was the cause of his subsequent breakdowns. Where was she when he needed her then?

It is hard not to feel sympathy for Kristin at the end, when she clearly feels pain and self-recrimination for the past.

An engrossing play, which gave us much food for thought about how we see ourselves and how others see us. Thank you to Mary for organising yet another great theatre afternoon.

Ann Wright

High Society
Churchill Theatre
7 October 2026



The musical High Society was the summer show at the Barbican with an all-star cast including Helen George and Julian Ovenden. We nearly booked but then discovered it was coming on tour in the autumn and was at the Churchill Theatre in Bromley. Consequently 51 members from Bromley and Beckenham **u3a**s came with great anticipation to the theatre on a rainy afternoon in October.

We were not disappointed. It was a great afternoon filled with nostalgia. Members commented on the beautiful 1940s dresses and period outfits, which added greatly to the atmosphere. We were treated to memorable Cole Porter favourites, including *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?, True Love, Let's Misbehave and Well, Did You Evah!*. Each number was performed with impeccable skill, timing and enthusiasm.

The show is set in Newport, Rhode Island and the story is about the approaching Society wedding of the year and how it descends into chaos, with old and new acquaintances, reporters and photographers all in attendance.

The production had been hailed as a five-star success at the Barbican, described as "pure theatrical escapism" and "studded with diamond performances from a top-notch cast". I think we all agreed that the praise was thoroughly deserved as the full theatre applauded at the end.

Mary Garside

Travel Group - NEW

Watch this space!

A new Travel Group starting in January 2027





Photo by Malini Karu: A visit to the Wallace Collection by the Ageing Positively Group

Meet the Committee



Left to right: Shirley, Angela, Carole, Gary, Sandy, Laury, Pat, Linda, Peter, Celia, Kay