

Watford Central

U3A

Learn Laugh Live

Volume 14, Issue 5 -May

www.u3asites.org.uk/watford-central

Hello Everyone,

Welcome to the newsletter for May. The meeting this month will be on Thursday May 1st. I shall be very interested to how many of you will be getting up extra early to celebrate May Day?

May Day is celebrated around the world as a day of great importance. It marks the end of harsh winter and ushers in the celebration of spring and summer. There are different versions of how it began, ancient civilisation or Celtic beginnings? Sadly, it has become politicised over the years and is often used for showing off rockets, tanks and other war machines – our tanks are bigger than your tanks!

When there were pleasant ways of bringing May there were often May Queens crowned, the selection of a May Queen, often a child, adds to the celebratory atmosphere. May Pole dancing too which in earlier times had the ulterior motive of bringing together young women and young men in a way not minded by parents. Unfortunately, the Puritans in the 17th century put at stop to such awful goings on as May Pole dancing. However, despite being opposed through the centuries by both Church and State many May Day Celebrations survive today.

If you happen to be in Padstow, you'll find the Hobby Horse, in Oxford the Choristers of Magdalen College singing from the Great Tower of Magdalen College at dawn. In Lancashire they had something I have never heard of before, May Gosling.



The first of May was a kind of late 'April Fooling' when all sorts of pranks would take place and "May Gosling" was the shout if you managed to trick someone.

One thing about the words 'May Day' has always puzzled me? It's the word used around the world to make a distress call over a radio and signals a life-threatening emergency, usually on a ship or a plane, although it may be used in other ways. Procedure calls for the mayday distress signal to be said three times in a row — Mayday! Mayday! Mayday! It was devised by one Frederick Stanley Mockford, a senior radio officer in London, in the early 1920s. It's not the words we think but it's from the French term "m'aider" - "help me". Every day is a school day! Looking forward to see you on May Day, without any distress, I hope.

With best wishes, Sally

The next monthly meeting of Watford Central u3a will take be on
Thursday, 1st May 2025 at 2.00pm
at the Ex-Services Club, 12-14 St Albans Road, Watford WD17 1BN
The Speaker at this meeting will be Lucy Martin who is the
Chief Executive Officer at Watford Women's Centre.



Easter Parade in Watford High Street in the 1950's

This may bring fond memories back for some of our members, although we hope that everyone belonging to Watford Central u3a had a very happy Easter.

80th Anniversary of VE DAY - 8th May 2025

At our meeting on 1st May, there will be a small display of photographs and information about how this day was experienced by our grandparents, parents, older siblings and friends. It was probably a very memorable and happy day for many, but for those who had lost loved ones in the previous war-torn years, it would have been a very sad one.

EVENTS BEING ORGANISED BY WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

9:30am – Flag Raising Ceremony by the Peace Memorial, Town Hall

A moving morning ceremony featuring the reading of The Proclamation and the raising of the VE Day 80 flag. Schoolchildren will be joining us to pay tribute and reflect on the day's significance.

9pm – Beacon Lighting at Benskin House. An evening of remembrance including:

- Reading of The Proclamation and The Tribute
- Singing of 'I Vow to Thee My Country'
- Special performance by the North London Military Wives Choir
- Lighting of the beacon – a powerful symbol of hope and remembrance

2025 is a significant year for commemorations.



28 February 2025 marked 100 years since a countywide library service opened.

Watford Central Library

This library opened in 1928 to replace the old public library in Queens Road which shared a site with the School of Science and Art. Councillor R F J B Hemming, chairman of the Watford Library Committee, laid the foundation stone of the new library on Saturday, February 25, 1928. The completed building was officially opened in December of the same year by Sir Frederick Kenyon.



Watford Central Library - 1930's

Watford Peace Memorial Hospital when first built, prior to the installation of the Spirit of War statues, cast in bronze from the Mary Bromet sculptures. These were removed and placed at the side of the town hall in the 1970's when Rickmansworth Road was widened.



BUILDING THE WATFORD AND DISTRICT PEACE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL: 1917 – 1925

“The Hospital will be a living memorial of the dead, and by its nature more enduring than any monuments of stone or brass.”

Watford Observer circa 1917 (taken from David Wellings historical displays for the Peace Hospice Appeal in the early 90s).

Lunch Group

Leader: Sally Macaulay

Thursday 15th May at 12.30 at Zaza Bushey

We're going to try a different restaurant this month and are going up the hill to Zaza in Bushey. You can take the 142 bus, either from Watford Junction Station or from the lower High Street (near to Watford High St station). If you're driving there are parking spaces with disabled markings in the High Street or around the corner in Kemp Place.

The way Zaza charges is slightly different from other restaurants. They charge for a main course and again for either a starter and/or desert. So, for simplicity, we will take money for two courses and you chose which you prefer, starter or desert. If you want both that's fine, but it will cost you an additional £4.40 (including service charge) and it will be up to you to pay separately. As we do for wine, coffee etc.

The cost of two courses plus the service charge will be £17.50 chose on the day. A booking sheet will be available at the meeting on the 1st May.

Theatre Visits

Sally has been unable to find any suitable performances for our theatre-goers for the coming month, so is organising an **Out & About Visit** for May. Perhaps, a little later, Sally will find an afternoon performance that would be of interest to everyone.

Out & About Visits

Tuesday 20th May Natural History Museum Cromwell Rd, South Kensington, London SW7 5BD

We will meet at Watford Junction for 10 a.m. to travel to London on the 10.15 train into Euston and then travel by underground to the museum. It is approached from South Kensington Station through the tunnel to the museums. The museum is free to visit, though we have to have tickets and the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition is still on. If you would like to see the exhibition, I am happy to book tickets for you, the cost of which will be £12.50 – Senior Citizen off peak rate.

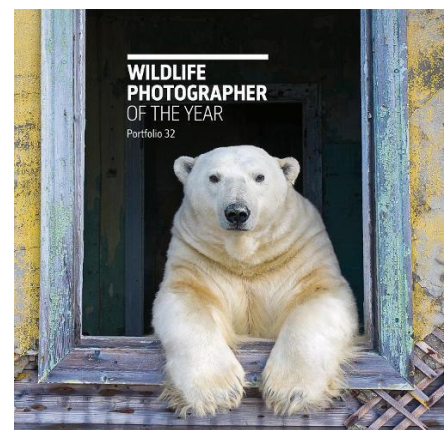
It is well worth seeing and it will probably take at least an hour to view. The photographs are shown in large size with lighting behind and the room is darkened so as to see each one to the best advantage.

Other exhibits include dinosaurs, human evolution, oceans, space; there are several coffee shops etc to enjoy throughout the day.

The Museum has recently opened Nature Discovery and Evolution gardens both available to enjoy.

There will be a sign-up sheet at the meeting on 1st May.

Best wishes, Sally



Walking Group

Leader: Jenny

The walk on 25 April to Whippendell Woods was postponed and will now take place on 9th May. We hope the bluebells will still be in bloom. Our usual end of the month walk will be on Friday 30 May to Rickmansworth Aquadrome.

For both walks meet at the short term car park at the front of Watford Junction station at 10.30 am where Sandra and I will be waiting to drive to the relevant car park.

After the walk round the woods we shall go to a local pub for refreshments. Following a walk along the canal and around Stocker's Lake at the Aquadrome we shall go to the cafe. The walks are about two miles.

There will be two signing up sheets at the next main meeting, otherwise phone or text me if you wish to join our friendly group.



Interest Days Out

Leader: Sandra Kay

Our visit to the Chelsea Pensioners Museum was extremely interesting, we learnt how it all started in the 1600's. Pity we couldn't visit part of the Chelsea Hospital, but just one of those days when we couldn't. However the lunch in the cafe was excellent, it made up for it and the drizzly weather.

I have not arranged a visit for May, but will be back in June and on Tuesday 17th there will be a visit to The National Archives, only a short walk from Kew Station.

There are exhibitions of MI5 Official Secrets, the Coronation Commission and the Cabinet Table, amongst other things. There are reading rooms which we **won't** be visiting, booking is required with all your personal details. But there is a cafe, which is open all day. A sign-up sheet will be available at the next monthly meeting.

The Royal Hospital Chelsea



What's Your Story?

Leader: Sue Ettridge

Our next meeting is at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 21st May..

So far, this year, we have enjoyed some most interesting afternoons, mulling over a variety of topics. We have a good number of local and not so local stories ready to tell, some of which have been passed to us by friends and family.

If you wish to join us for a cosy afternoon at the Almshouses, listening and chatting over tea and biccies, then contact Sue by phone or email or just come along one Wednesday afternoon - you will be most welcome.

Yellow Envelopes

Please remember to carry your up-to-date medical details with you if you're out and about with u3a. It's not compulsory but a good idea to have. If you need a new form or envelope we have plenty of both.

We look forward to welcoming new members of Watford Central u3a and to original members who have offered to assist our executive committee. Membership forms are available from our Chair, Sally Macaulay, for those wishing to take up membership.