

# Watford Central

## U3A

*Learn Laugh Live*

Volume 15, Issue 1 -January 2026

[www.u3asites.org.uk/watford-central](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/watford-central)

### Happy New Year!

Hello and welcome to our newsletter for 2026! I hope the coming year is kind to you and, whatever your situation or your plans everything goes the way you want it to.

The reality of writing this piece is that Christmas has not yet happened. The turkey hasn't yet been bought, let alone cooked and Santa Claus is still trying to sort out the last things on his sleigh. Poor Santa, rushing around trying to make the last bits of time count. I hope that by the time you read this you will have enjoyed your Christmas whatever you were doing and wherever in the world you were celebrating.



So, forwards into the New Year. I am not a maker of resolutions, mine rarely last into the afternoon New Years Day if I do, but I do like to look forward to where we are going and what we would like to achieve. It feels very strange that we are not having a monthly meeting in January this year and our next one will be on 5<sup>th</sup> February. However, we must look forward and give some thoughts to Watford Central and how things will look for us by the end of 2026.

The most pressing question is about the membership; how many people will be rejoining in the next couple of months when we send out membership renewal forms? The numbers have been increasing a little recently, which is great, but not everyone wants to or can renew and for all sorts of reasons. Also, as a committee, this is the time of year when we ask questions of ourselves. Who will serve on the committee after the AGM which will be in April? Who will do what? So, it is also the time of year to say could I serve on the Committee? We cannot ask our current committee to continue as they have done for the last several years since the pandemic. They have done their stints and wonderfully well! The biggest question is, are we to continue as a branch of the u3a? If that question is yes, then who are willing to help plan and organise its continuation? I shall leave that question hanging .....

As many of you know I love to know about unusual customs and ceremonies that are held in this, often, strange country of ours. I had a look on the Internet to find something about New Year customs and, amongst the common first footing etc that we know about, found a very strange one that takes place to Queen's College Oxford every year. Is this real, I thought and looked for more evidence. Which I found. A ceremony is held there every year, in January, called the Needle and Thread Ceremony. In a ceremony dating back 600 years, each college member is given a needle and some coloured silk thread to mend their academic hoods and instructed to 'Take this and be thrifty'. Nowadays it is rather less of a thrifty affair, more a reason to get together at your old university for a good dinner. It's now called the Needle and Thread Gaudy (a gaudy at Oxford means a traditional, celebratory reunion). The dinner involves the College's Bursar threading a needle into each guest's jacket and advising them to be thrifty in the coming year. What an extraordinary country the United Kingdom is and there is so much evidence to prove it?



I look forward to seeing many of you over the small group meetings this month and eventually at the next monthly meeting in February.

With best wishes, Sally

**Watford Central u3a will not be meeting in January 2026  
and the next meeting will be held on**

**Thursday, 5th FEBRUARY, 2026 at 2.00pm**

**at the Ex-Services Club, 12-14 St Albans Road, Watford WD17 1BN**

We hope you enjoyed your visits to our 2025 general meetings and are looking forward to some interesting and entertaining meetings during 2026, for which several speakers are lined up!

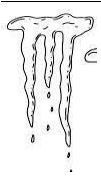
We will also be entertaining ourselves or joining in with some great entertainers at one or two of our 2026 meetings, including the Christmas party in December 2026, which we hope will mark the end of a healthy and happy year for all of you.

**Those of you who belong to any of our Interest Groups shown on the following pages, please note the dates of the first 2026 meetings.**

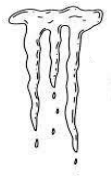
Last but not least, let me wish you all the best over the festive season and I very much look forward to our first general meeting of 2026 on Thursday, 5th February at the Ex-Services Club.

Sue

**The Speaker at our FEBRUARY meeting will be Helen George who will be talking about the Watford & Bushey girls who became GI Brides. Helen's talks are always bright and interesting and this one seems especially so. Does anyone have a family member or friend who was a GI Bride?**



**Don't forget to  
wrap up warm  
on those chilly  
winter days**



## Interest Days Out

Leader: **Sandra Kay**

**PLEASE NOTE** There won't be a visit for **January**, (Sally is planning one for February).

Our next day out will be on **Tuesday 17th March 2026** when we will visit The Portrait Gallery in St. Martin's Place, just an 8 minute walk from Leicester Square underground station. A sign-up sheet will be available at February's monthly meeting. See you all then.

Sandra.

## Walking Group Leader: Jenny

Sandra took the last walk in November, but it was only a short stroll around Cassio Park, then a tea/coffee (and cake), in the cafe. Photo below.



## RUMMIKUB

We will be playing on our next usual meeting date of **Thursday, 8th January 2026**.

## Canasta

Due to the December 2025 and January 2026 normal meeting dates being so near to the festive season, the next game will be played on **Friday, 16th January 2026**.

## CHAPER ONE

This group will meet next on **Thursday, 29th January 2026**.

## CHAPER TWO

The next meeting will take place at 10am as normal at the Almshouses on **Tuesday, 13th January 2026**.

## Lunch Group

Leader: **Sally Macaulay**

**Lunch Group 15<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

Just a reminder for those of you who signed up for this at the December Meeting. We will be at Opuz Kitchen this month and the cost is **£18**. Please bring the money with you this time and I will collect it and pay the bill as I normally do.

At Opuz Kitchen we choose on the day and the menu will comprise of a starter and main course. If you want one of their 'side dishes; Bulgur Wheat, Classic Turkish wheat rice, Rice, Plain white basmati rice, Chips Topped with sea salt, it will cost an additional **£2.90**, but you should pay that as an extra like you do drinks. I did not add it to the overall cost because the items would be very much a personal choice which not everyone would want.

If you were successful for a place for the extra **College Lunch on the 29<sup>th</sup> January**, you will be notified early in the New Year, by email (or text if you're not on email). This lunch is different that we need to be at the college at **12 noon**. I will send you the menu before the day and please reply as soon as you can because I have to order the meals in advance. Also, please bring your money on the day and a little extra cash should you want to leave a tip for the students.

## Theatre Visits

**Leader: Sally Macaulay**

**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> January at 2.30 p.m. Watford Palace Theatre**

For those who have booked a seat for the Mikado on 24<sup>th</sup> January. I will be in the foyer (or possibly the café) of the Palace Theatre at 2 p.m. with the tickets. I shall look forward to seeing you all and to enjoying some G and S again.

It looks like the number and variety of plays and shows on offer at the Palace have improved since my rather pessimistic thoughts about it a few months ago. Watch this space in the coming months.

## Out & About Visits

**Leader: Sally Macaulay**

**Visit to Costume Couture : Sixty Years of Cosprop**

Textile Museum,  
83 Bermondsey Street London SE1 3XF  
**Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2026**

***Payments will be taken at the February Meeting.***

If you are unable to go in February, we will expect the booking to be honoured. Should you *pass the ticket to someone else they should be a member of our u3a and that is for insurance reasons.*



Sally recently had a request from another u3a Branch who are looking for additional members for their Cryptic Crossword Group . If you are interested in learning more about this activity, please ask Sally..

## What's Your Story?

**Leader: Sue Ettridge**

By the time we next meet on **Wednesday, 28th January**, I for one will be sad that we have not met since November 2025!! That was last year! We will have a lot to catch up on and will be going over our experiences of the first quarter of the 21st century and what we could do better in the second quarter, plus of course, making a rough plan of our meetings for the coming year..

If you would like to join us at our future meetings, call, text or email me and I will make sure a cup and a biscuit are ready for you at the Almshouses, when you will be made most welcome. We have plenty of material to work on, so even if you don't have a story of your own, we are always happy for you to listen to one of ours.

My very best wishes for the New Year go to all my WYS? friends and everyone who belongs to Watford Central u3a.

Sue Ettridge - Newsletter Editor

## Norma Partridge

Many of you will remember Norma, who was a member for a number of years until the pandemic came along. At that point she decided to live close to her family and she went to live in Lymington. We have recently had the sad news that Norma passed away on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December. Norma, will be very fondly remembered and indeed we missed her company when she moved away - she was often spoken about. She always had plenty of energy and we had several happy group holidays together. Whatever she was doing she did it with great joy, not to mention her characteristic class of wine. Norma never seemed to be fazed by anything and just kept going. We send our sincere condolences to her family and to her friends.



Thank you to Mair Haynes for the photograph

*Norma's funeral is to be on 8<sup>th</sup> January, we now have an address should you want to send a card or even flowers to her family. We won't publish it here, but it is available to any members who would want it. Please contact Sally.*



*Life lessons*

## WORDS OF WISDOM

Stella Snow of March u3a offers these simple, cheering thoughts



### PRACTISE GRATITUDE

Give thanks for everything each day: even the 'awful' things are there for a reason, usually hidden to confuse us! Gratitude always makes me very cheerful.

### SPREAD LAUGHTER

My mission in life is to make people laugh as it cheers up so many. Often giving someone a chance to laugh makes their day into a happy one. That's certainly the case for me.

### BE KIND

Buying a bunch of flowers for a stranger gives pleasure to them, and to me. If others think that is weird, just carry on with a daily RAK – that's a random act of kindness.

## SPORTING FIRSTS OF THE VICTORIAN AGE

With the wealth generated by trade and industry in the Victorian era and, only minor wars to finance, the middle and upper classes could afford a certain amount of leisure time. Parliament had attempted to remove all the fun by banning bull and bear baiting and cock fighting, so new games and activities had to be invented;

- 1834 – The first town park is opened in Preston, Lancashire.
- 1839 – Sussex forms the first County Cricket Club.
- 1843 – The first Rugby Football Club is formed at Guy's Hospital, London.
- 1863 – The rules of soccer are formalised by the Football Association.
- 1863 – The first athletics club is founded in London.
- 1872 – England 0 – Scotland 0, the first international soccer match ends in a draw.
- 1873 – Lawn\_Tennis game invented.
- 1875 – Snooker is conceived at a British Army officers' club in India.
- 1877 – England and Australia play the first international cricket test match.
- 1888 – Twelve clubs found the Association Football (Soccer) League

The less energetic could enjoy trips to the new museums and the less salubrious music halls or visit the many theatres to perhaps listen to Charles Dickens reading from his latest novel or one of the comic operas of Gilbert and Sullivan – either way a more civilised existence for most compared to previous times.