



Volume 15, Issue 2 -February 2026

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Happy New Year!

Hello and welcome to our newsletter for February. As I write this, January is coming into its later days and I shall be very glad to see its end. At least February brings us lengthening days and the longer afternoons give me a real boost. Some of you will know that I am someone very attached to reading several newspapers every day. These days it's made possible by Hertfordshire Libraries with the use of PressReader - I would need to be quite rich to do it without the library.

I saw a headline the other day which said, Brains Need Friends. This front-page grabber turned out to be an article about a book of that title, written by Ben Rein a neuroscientist at Stanford University described as a renowned science communicator. The book blurb says: *From your morning coffee order, to weaving through passengers on the train, sitting through tense work meetings, riding in a packed elevator, attending a happy hour with colleagues, or relaxing on the couch with family, every day is filled with social interactions that nurture and support your brain's health. Whether mundane or extraordinary, they collectively make up the 'social diet' that you feed your brain, that influences your well-being, shapes your experience, and, done right, even lengthens your life.* I'm very glad to say that, although we may no longer be experiencing tense work meetings or riding in a packed elevator, we still do need social interaction and, in our lives, we have, at least one, u3a. So, come and enjoy a bit of social interaction and play games, enjoy lunch, come to the theatre, discuss politics all in the aid of giving you and your brain some friendship!

One of our groups with the title 'What's in the News' does what it says on the tin and looks at daily news and for a while puts the world to rights. In this group one of the things we like is some cheerful news and our much-missed friend, the late Janet Golding, was a great one for finding us cheerful items, often when we needed it most. I was driving on Sunday morning with the radio on and a programme came along called 'In Other News'. It's a compilation news item which, they say, sidesteps the main news headlines and delves more deeply into what's going right in the world. What a refreshing change, unfortunately, it's only ten minutes long, but I shall listen every week to get my fix of cheer. Find it on Radio 4 at 8.50 every Sunday morning or on the (free) Sounds App if you have one of those.

You are welcome to come to What's in the News on the 2nd Wednesday of the month. Bring £1 for the Alms Houses kitty, a cup of something to drink and a current copy of a newspaper of your choice. We open the paper and discuss what we find, in a kindly way.

It seems such an age since we were together for a monthly meeting so I am really looking forward to seeing many of you on the 5th February.

With best wishes, Sally

The next monthly meeting of Watford Central u3a will be held on
Thursday, 5th FEBRUARY, 2026 at 2.00pm
at the Ex-Services Club, 12-14 St Albans Road, Watford WD17 1BN
Our Speaker at this meeting will be Helen George who will
be giving her *Bushey & Watford GI Brides Talk*
Be prepared for an informative but amusing time with Helen!

Theatre Visits

Leader: Sally Macaulay

Theatre - Ticket prices shown are the maximum asked by the theatre, but cheaper seats are sometimes available at the time of booking. Refunds are given if this occurs.

I am presenting two theatre events this month. They are both some weeks away, but I think they are likely to be popular so early booking is sensible.

Palace Theatre Watford, Saturday 14th March 2026 at 3 p.m.

The Mesmerist - Ticket cost: £33

Prepare for magic, mystery and unforgettable theatre as multi-talented actor, comedian and presenter Rufus Hound (*One Man, Two Guvnors*, *National Theatre*; *A Christmas Carol: A Ghost Story*, *Birmingham Repertory Theatre*) takes centre stage in *The Mesmerist*, the headline production of Watford Palace Theatre's Spring season.

Step right up and prepare to be astonished. *The Mesmerist* is not just a play—it's a spellbinding fusion of theatre and magic, blending heartfelt storytelling with real illusions, audience interaction, and a chilling finale that lingers long after the curtain falls.

Told through the eyes of a modern-day 'Mesmerist' uncovering his eccentric family legacy, the show transforms a dusty inheritance of tricks and journals into a hauntingly personal journey. With echoes of music hall, séances, and Victorian spectacle, it conjures a world where the past is never truly gone... and no secret stays buried for too long. One man's gift can change everything.

Palace Theatre Watford, Saturday 2nd May 2026 at 2.30 p.m.

Tilted Wig and Mayflower Southampton in association with Theatre Royal Winchester: Part of Play to the Crowd presents:

The Spitfire Girls by Katherine Senior - Ticket Price £29.50

INSPIRED BY REMARKABLE TRUE EVENTS

"It's built for us, isn't it? The Spitfire. Built for women."

New Year's Eve, 1959.

Decades after answering the call, two women separated by the war meet again as the rain hammers down on the windows of The Spitfire pub. As we hear their story, we're transported back to a time when female pioneers defied expectations and soared through the skies. Spitfire Girls is inspired by the extraordinary true stories of the women who dared to fly during WWII and the incredible bond that tied them together. Funny and heart-warming, this is an untold story of strength, courage and loss. But above all else, hope.

(Recommended ages 10+ This production contains themes of war.)

Women who served in WW2



Not all Air Force girls flew Spitfires, risking their lives "at the front" so to speak (or married GIs!) - some were drivers or support workers confined to base.

The photograph on the left shows two brothers and a sister brought up in Watford and Croxley Green.

The brothers, both Cubs, Scouts and Leaders with the 2nd/1st Watford Scout Group, served in the Air Force during WW2. Both lived into their mid-late nineties, despite the fact that, during the war, one was a bomber pilot and the other a reconnaissance pilot of low-flying aircraft, carrying out military observations of enemy strategic features.

Their sister, a member of the Women's Royal Air Force, drove various vehicles around the country. Aged just 27, she died of pneumonia, thought to be related to poor conditions at the camp where she was stationed. Her family were aware of other girls who suffered due to this problem.

Sue, Newsletter Editor

Out & About Visits

Leader: Sally Macaulay

I have bought the tickets for this exhibition and they were **£11.50** each.

I will collect the money at the meeting on 5th February.

I have booked us to go into the exhibition between 12 noon and 1 p.m.

It could take up to 1½ hours to look through all the costumes as there is a lot to see in quite a small space.

Meet at Watford Junction at 9.45 to take the 10.02 train into London. Some of us will be happy to go by tube and others would prefer to go by bus. Fortunately, it isn't a long journey by either way. The bus takes you near to Southwark Cathedral and the tube to London Bridge. There is a Wetherspoons, The Sun Wharf, (50 Tooley St, London SE1 2QF) a few doors down from London Bridge Station and I suggest we pop in there to meet up and maybe have a refreshing something before walking to the exhibition. The walk from the Sun Wharf to the Fashion Museum takes about 10 minutes.



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

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.

Lunch Group

Leader: Sally Macaulay

Blue Check, High Street Bushey - 19th February 2026 to eat at 1 p.m.

Cost of Lunch for a two-course lunch, including service charge, **£22**. Choose from the set menu on the day. Choose a starter and main or main and desert. If you would like a three-course meal the cost will be £27.50 and the extra cost should be paid for as an extra as we do for coffee or other drinks.

Interest Days Out

Leader: Sandra Kay

Reminder The next day out arranged by Sandra, will be on **Tuesday 17th March 2026** when a visit to The Portrait Gallery in St. Martin's Place has been arranged, just an 8 minute walk from Leicester Square underground station.

A sign-up sheet will be available at February's monthly meeting.

Walking Group **Leader: Jenny**

The next walk on Friday 27 February will be along the canal footpath from the Grove Hotel to Croxley Green. Catch the 322 bus at 10.21 am at Watford Junction Station. I shall already be on the bus as I shall catch it near my home. At Two Bridges we shall go to the Harvester for refreshments before getting the bus back to Watford.

The usual signing up sheet will be available at the next main meeting, otherwise phone or text me if you would like to join our friendly group.

New walkers will be very welcome.

Reminder

The walk on Friday 30 January will be a circular walk from Leavesden Country Park, College Road. Walkers can join me on the 20 bus at 10.35 am at Watford Junction, as I shall be on it or can drive to the car park where we shall meet you at about 11 am. The walk will be about an hour and we shall go to the cafe for refreshments afterwards.

What's Your Story?

Leader: Sue Ettridge

Our meetings throughout 2025 were most enjoyable and although membership has been limited to a small number of people, we have managed to cover a variety of topics. For the 2026/27 year we may be looking to include a wider range of topics in order to attract more members, so would much appreciate learning from readers of this newsletter what they believe to be suitable subjects to include, or if they would like to change the format of this monthly meeting.

Our next meeting will be on 25th February 2026 when you will be greeted by u3a member, Lynda Bullock, who will no doubt have some hair-raising tales to tell you.

Sue - Newsletter Editor



A Facebook post by Bushey Museum and Art Gallery

The story noted below and the drawing on the right relate to Sally's thoughts about how important it is for people to communicate with each other regularly. What better place could there be to do this than at the Ex-Services Club, the Almshouses and all the other meeting venues where Watford Central members meet each month? Let your friends know about us and what a great time we have together at our meetings.

Brew Monday is an annual initiative in the United Kingdom that encourages people to connect with others over a cup of tea or coffee. It aims to combat loneliness and provide emotional support, especially during the winter months when feelings of isolation can be more pronounced. It was launched as a response to the concept of "Blue Monday," which is often considered the most depressing day of the year.

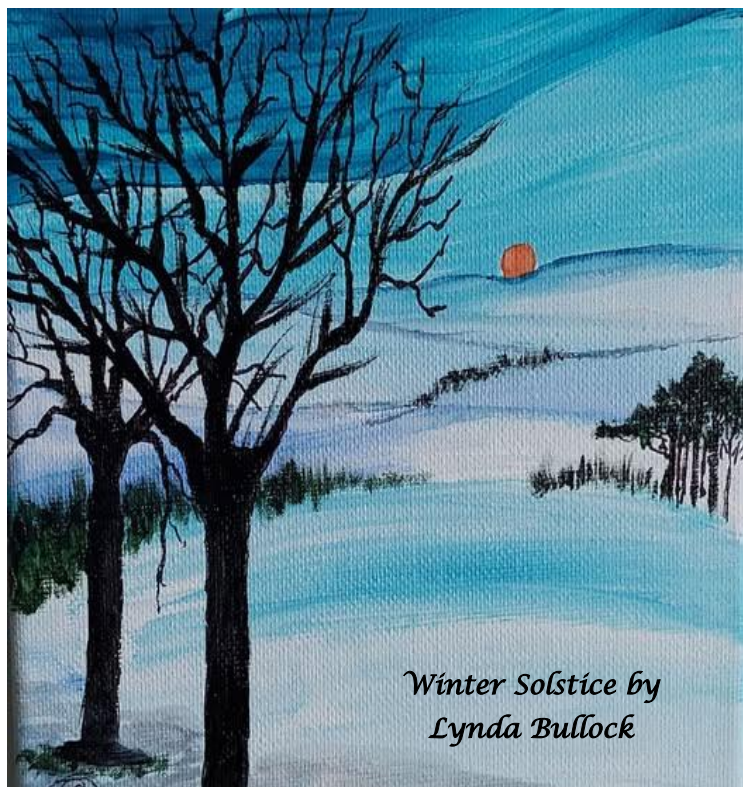
The Samaritans are turning the day on its head and into something positive by encouraging people to get together over a warming cuppa and really listen to what others say.

The website says, "*Brew Monday 2026 is a day dedicated to promoting social connections and mental well-being. It encourages individuals to take a break, share a warm beverage with friends or colleagues and have meaningful conversations to lift their spirits.*"



It looks as though the three people in the foreground of this picture by Francis Gower are leaning in to listen to each other.

The picture is part of the Museum's collection, entitled 'As it Was (II) (in Lyons Teashop)'.



Winter Solstice by Lynda Bullock

"Years end is neither an end nor a beginning, but a going on, with all the wisdom that experience can instill in us. Cheers to a new year and another chance to get it right,"

Oprah Winfrey

Facebook Post by Watford Borough Council 22nd January 2026

Over the next few years, Watford Town Hall will be opened up and reimagined. Instead of being used mainly for meetings and offices behind closed doors, it will once again become a building for the town.

Following the successful restoration of the Colosseum and focusing on making the buildings more energy efficient, upcoming plans include:

- A new museum celebrating Watford's history and identity
- An innovation hub supporting ideas, skills and local enterprise
- A café and places to meet and spend time
- Improved and more accessible council services
- Flexible community spaces