



Volume 15, Issue 5 - May 2026

<https://watfordcentral.u3asite.uk>

Hello Everyone,

Welcome to the newsletter for May. This is what the 'AI' on my computer found to tell us about the month of May: May is the fifth month of the year in the Gregorian calendar, boasting 31 days and acting as a bridge between spring and summer in the Northern Hemisphere. Named after the Roman goddess of growth, Maia, it is associated with flowers, festivals, and the start of warmer weather. Key observances include Mother's Day, Memorial Day, and May Day. Memorial Day if you live in America but not one that we celebrate here. It is a day to honour those who died in service of their country. Like our Remembrance Day but warmer.

I like the idea that May is the bridge between spring and summer but, as we can all attest, it can be very chilly sometimes. I was with Cub Scouts camping one Spring Bank Holiday (such a long time ago) and I thought I would never be warm again.

There are lots of May time activities and one of the most famous in the UK is the Helston Floral Day or Dance. This takes place on the 8th May each year (unless that's Sunday or a Monday - complicated) and it celebrates the arrival of spring with street dances, the Hal-an-Tow pageant, and floral decorations throughout the town. (*See Illustration on Page 2*)

I had to look up 'Hal-an-Tow pageant' and it is part of the morning festivities where performers reenact folklore characters to "drive out the old and welcome in the new". I'm guessing that's about losing the winter and welcoming new growth with the summer. Please enlighten me if I have that wrong. The picture is of some of the actors in the previous pageant.

So, welcome to May and remember "Ne'er cast a clout till May is out" a traditional British proverb warning not to discard winter clothing ("clout") until May is over, or until the hawthorn tree ("May") blossoms. It advises caution against unpredictable cold snaps, as the weather can turn cold even after warm spring days. Oh dear! We're back to the weather again.

Looking forward to seeing you at the next meeting on 7th May where there will be a warm welcome.

With best wishes

Sally

**The next monthly meeting of Watford Central u3a will be held on
Thursday, 7th May, 2026 at 2.00pm**

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

To ring the changes, we will be looking at Watford through the eyes of a boy who was born in Watford and lived there all of his life until moving to residential care. John Gloag wrote his memoirs shortly before he died and donated them to Watford Central Library. We are grateful to the Library for providing copies of John's writings which we will match with images that back up his childhood memories of the home town he was very fond of. We would be interested to hear your own recollections of where you once lived.



The Helston Floral Day or Dance

May Day
8th May 2026
Who remembers May Day celebrations & May Pole Dancing at school?




~ And now returning back again,
We bring a branch of May."



100

Celebrating Sir David Attenborough at 100

8th May 2026



The only man who can whisper dramatically about a snail and make 10 million people tune in

A butterfly farm is preparing to release 100 butterflies into its attraction to mark the 100th birthday of Sir David Attenborough.



On 24th April 1908, freak snow covered the town, as seen in this WO photo of the Park Gates

Lunch Group

Leader: Sally Macaulay

Thursday 21st May at 1 p.m. Opuz Kitchen, King Street the cost of the meal is £18 for a starter, main course and the service charge. Drinks, coffee, dessert are extras and should be paid for separately. Opuz kitchen is modern Turkish and Mediterranean cuisine.

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.

Note from Sally - I have thought hard about this show, should I offer it? You might like to sit down to read the price:

Watford Palace Theatre Saturday 20th June at 2.30 p.m.

The Last Laugh - A new play by Paul Hendy

Three Legendary Comedians...One very unusual dressing room, DYING EASY IS EASY, COMEDY IS HARD

The Last Laugh is a smash-hit, West End play which imagines three of Britain's all-time greatest comedy heroes – Tommy Cooper, Eric Morecambe and Bob Monkhouse – in a dressing room, discussing the secret of life, death, comedy and what it means to be funny... *really* funny!

Written by the award-winning Paul Hendy, The Last Laugh stars Damian Williams as Cooper, Simon Cartwright as Monkhouse and *Britain's Got Talent* finalist, Steve Royle as Morecambe.

Warm, funny, nostalgic and poignant, The Last Laugh will have you laughing and crying in equal measure. If you're a fan of comedy, this "*irresistible, blissful blast of nostalgia and belly laughs*" is not to be missed.

There's a trailer on the Palace Theatre web site (<https://watfordpalacetheatre.co.uk> look for the information about the play) well worth a look.

Ticket price **£39.50** (see note about tickets above)

What's Your Story?

Leader: Sue Ettridge

We will not be meeting in May as the intended date clashes with another date in the branch diary.

At our meeting on Wednesday, 24th June we will continue looking at personal memorabilia and discussing our intentions for the summer months. Why not join us and bring along some new ideas or simply listen to our stories and recollections, You will be most welcome and a welcome cup of tea or coffee are always waiting for you.

INTEREST DAYS OUT

Leader: Sandra Kay

For our trip to Gunnersbury Park and Museum on Tuesday on 19th May 2026; please meet at Watford Junction Station at 9:30am in time to catch the 09:52am Southern Train to Clapham Junction. From there we will get a South Western Train to Kew Bridge Rail Station and then make a 10 minute walk to Gunnersbury Park. You can use Oyster cards or contactless bank cards for travelling.

At present our trip to Fulham Palace House & Gardens is on Tuesday, 30th June. However, "IF" the underground strike is cancelled by 19th May then I'll revert it back to **Tuesday 16th June.** This is because we must have tickets for entry into the House and we will have to order two lots, as the system only lets you book for 7 people and we can't leave it too long to order them.

You may of course make your own way to destinations, but please let Sandra know in advance, so that we know to look out for you and in case travelling situations change. Also to let Sandra know if you have to cancel.

Thanks Sandra.

Days Out by Minibus

Sally is beginning to plan a day out by minibus for July, hoping that all will be well with the world by then. She hasn't yet finalised where to go, so watch this space in the June edition and all will be revealed.



This was us during last year's trip eating the much needed ice cream at the Open Air Museum.

Walking Group

Leader: Jenny Graham

The next walk on Friday 29 May will be along the canal from the Grove Hotel to Croxley Green. Catch the 322 bus towards Hemel Hempstead at 10.13 am at bus stop S at the top of Clarendon Road opposite Beecher Grove Church or at 10.22 am at Watford Junction. The bus no longer stops at Market Street. I shall get on the bus near my home.

We shall get off the bus at the Grove Hotel at about 10.30 am and walk along the canal to Two Bridges Croxley Green where we shall have refreshments at the Rising Sun before getting the bus back to Watford.

NOTES FOR YOUR ATTENTION

Interest Days Out with Sandra Kay and Out & About Visits with Sally Macaulay

If you were at the last monthly meeting, you will have heard about an incident that happened when we went to the picture gallery. The Committee had a conversation afterwards and this is a summary of their thoughts.

- Always be sure you have signed up at the monthly meeting - tickets are often needed for entry even though there is no cost.
- If you prefer to travel alone you are welcome to meet at the venue but please let the leader know in advance.
- If you prefer to go in a group, please understand that routes are often deliberately chosen because there is step free access or other features according to individual need.
- If you want to travel some of the way by bus, or by taxi that's fine but please tell the leader and a meeting place will be agreed.
- Travelling on the underground, try to use more than one door if possible, stopping times at stations are quite short.
- When we're together on buses or underground we will nominate one person to be the last off to make sure that everyone else is off and nobody is left behind.
- If you are the nominated person and you get stuck on the train, go to the next station and do a turnaround. The remainder of the group will wait for you to re-appear, probably in a public area such as a ticket hall.

Chapter 1 Reading Group

Unfortunately, for reasons beyond anyone's control, we have had to bring this group to a close. We're really sorry this has happened as it began very early in the history of Watford Central. Chapter 2 is still going strong but it has reached capacity (there is a strong need for one person one chair) so if there is an interest we would like to instigate a new book group.

At the moment there is no day set, or anywhere to meet but if you are interested in reading and having such a group, please sign up at the next meeting and we can go from there.

As a matter of interest, Chapter 1 (and indeed Chapter 2) have always used the library to provide the books. For an annual fee the library provides sets of books which are chosen from a list available on line. That can continue or there can be different ideas. It would be up to the new group.

Watford Ex-Services Club

Members have been asking about membership of the Ex-Services Club and the rules around using the bar.

We are very grateful to the Committee of the Club and especially Frank and Avril Goodenough who are very kind in helping us run our groups especially with the inconveniences of the scaffolding. We want the club to continue having a strong membership base and be a competitive enterprise.

If you are able, would you consider becoming one of their members. It is £25 in the first year and £15 in subsequent years (current prices), if you have previously been a member and still have your card it is £15. Ask Frank or Avril or anyone in the bar and they will explain the procedure.

Whether you have membership or not we ask that, when we come to play games in the bar, we buy at least one drink (it doesn't have to be alcohol). They have very good sausage rolls too!

CANASTA *The following note has been included from Sandra Kay*

On 1st May we will be playing in the Hall at the Ex-Services Club and not the Bar, as they are putting on a funeral reception. I will be going to the funeral also, but then so are Frank and Avril, If, therefore, the front door isn't open, it will be as soon as they get back.

If anyone is interested in playing Canasta, we would love you to join our group. It doesn't matter if you don't know how to play, we are more than happy to teach you. If interested contact Sandra. Games are on the 1st and 3rd Friday in the month 12:30 to 3:45pm at the Ex-Services Club.