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Poppy Display at the Methodist Church

The wonderful Remembrance Day Poppy display at the Methodist Church was created as a result of a fantastic response from the whole community. Special thanks must go to the Air Cadets, Guides and Brownies, all the individuals who knitted hundreds of poppies, organisations and clubs including Watton Evening Women's Institute, Carbrooke Hub, Buckingham Lodge, Watton Inner Wheel, Methodist Tuesday @ 2 and the British Legion. The team of organisers hope to create the display each year from now on and would like to give a big thank you to all those who made this possible.

Breckland Council Brings Back Free Warm Packs

From Councillor Claire Bowes

Breckland Council is distributing free 'Warm Packs' to local residents to help them stay warm and well this winter, funded through the Mindful Towns and Villages programme.

The scheme is building on the success of last year's initiative and will see the Warm Packs distributed through local community groups.

Residents will not need to register or meet any eligibility criteria to receive comforting items, such as blankets, insulated cups, slipper socks and soups (while stocks last), to help them during the colder months.

This initiative also supports Breckland's commitment to developing Age Friendly Communities, helping older residents and those who may be more vulnerable to stay warm and well during winter.

Cllr Tristan Ashby, Breckland Council's Executive Member for Health and Communities, said: "We know some of our residents may struggle to stay warm and well during the winter, and the Warm Packs are just one way we are supporting those in need during the particularly difficult cold and dark months. This initiative reflects our commitment to care for our community."

For more details on how to access a warm pack, as well as advice on staying warm and well this winter, tackling energy costs, warm spaces, and other support, visit: www.breckland.gov.uk/community/warm-and-well

The council also provides other support to help people struggling with the cost of living. Residents can explore financial support options, including help with energy bills, housing, and more at: www.breckland.gov.uk/community/energy-bills-housing People in need of welfare support or help accessing a Warm Pack can contact the council via: community@breckland.gov.uk



What A Year This Has Been!

This is our second Christmas together under this title, and also the end of our first year as a limited company. And what a year that has been.

I want to say thank you to everyone who has advertised in the paper, everyone who has written for the paper, to Lorren and Watton Town Council for their content, and, of course, Sharman & Co. of Peterborough for printing the paper. And, as they have done for many years gone by, worked above and beyond to help me deliver you the best publication I can. Just as importantly, thank you to every single one of you, my readers.

And finally, to those of you, readers and organisations, who have donated or set up standing orders, as if paying for the paper, you will never be able to understand what a difference that has made! It has given me the freedom and confidence to experiment and grow the paper in a way that was never possible before.

I think that what you and I together now produce, is possibly one of the best publications of its kind and while I can not promise you this, I sincerely hope to be able build a product and organisation that will continue long into the future. Please enjoy this issue of the Watton & Wayland Times, have the Christmas and New Year you would wish yourself, and I hope to see you all again in January.

Thank you so, so much. Julian



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Witches and Spooky Scary Things Defeated Again!

Once more, for Halloween, the High Street Witches Trail gave general witch-finders (see what we did there?) a positive and fun experience of an event that has,, in the past, been more tricky than treaty.

Around twenty business on the High Street laid in rations of sweets to pay off the young witch-finders. Some shops, such as Watton Bakery took a chance on scaring their many regular customers by transforming into some dreadfully scary characters as you can see in the photo (below). We understand all was well however and the serving wenches are back to their friendly, chatty and beautiful normal selves.

At Adcocks, a veritable coven of witches, monsters and scary spirits (bottom) took over the cellar, which after much digging was transformed into a cave, (top), and made the bravest of the young witch-finders (right, right again and lower right!) walk past a haunted rocking chair, skeletons, spiders and a scary clown amongst other things, then down the tunnel to collect their ticket to a chance of winning draw for a tub of sweets! We are pleased to report that almost two hundred families and nearly all the children braved the scariest scenes all over Watton, and we believe you may all sleep safely in your beds for another year.



FITNESS PILATES

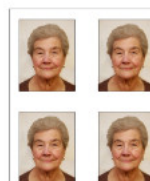
6-week courses are running throughout the year on **Thursday** mornings (**10:30am**) in **Ashill Community Centre (IP25 7AX)**

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The Bell

**A Short Story
By Mike Wabe MAHGTG,
Watton Town Crier**

The town of Merebridge lay quiet in the flat Norfolk countryside - a place of narrow lanes, ancient elms and a market square lined with Georgian shopfronts that had seen better centuries. Its heart was the voice of its town crier, Edward Calthorpe, a man of fifty years, tall and broad-shouldered, whose clear baritone had once carried across the cobbles and down the lanes with an authority few could ignore.

But in recent years, the people had stopped listening. The old tradition of the town crier had lost its weight; proclamations about council meetings or market closures were now better read on noticeboards or, increasingly, online. Edward continued his duties out of pride and habit - and perhaps a faint hope that the dignity of his calling still meant something.

That was before the bell.

It began on a damp November morning, when Edward visited Brackenford, a larger town some twenty miles away. He was there to participate in a small gathering of criers from neighbouring towns, a friendly event with tea, scones, and a token round of announcements in the square.

As he walked through the market streets, his gaze was caught by an antique shop squeezed between a baker's and a tobacconist's. Its window was cluttered with the usual detritus of forgotten lives - cracked porcelain, old clocks stopped forever at ten past two, faded photographs of strangers. But in the centre, gleaming faintly in the grey light, stood a handbell.

It was beautiful - the brass shining a deep golden - the sort of instrument that had once rung out in parish schools and manor halls. Its handle was of dark wood, polished smooth with age, and just above the join, on the collar of brass, was a single word etched in a fine, elegant script:

FIDDIAN.

Edward stood staring at the bell longer than he meant to. There was something about it - something more than beauty. It called to him. That was the word that came to mind later.

He stepped into the shop. The bell was far cheaper than it should have been - almost absurdly so. The shopkeeper, a small man with a lazy eye, seemed oddly eager to be rid of it.

“Old thing from Birmingham, sir,” he said. “Early nineteenth century. Name of the foundry's there on the collar. Lovely tone, if you fancy a ring.”

Edward lifted it, feeling its weight, perfectly balanced in his hand. He gave it a small shake. The note that came forth was unlike any he had heard before - deep, mellow, almost human. The sound seemed to fill the room, and hung in the air a moment too long.

The shopkeeper flinched. “Yes,” he said shortly, “quite something, isn't it?”

Edward paid without haggling.

When he returned to Merebridge, he began using the new bell in his daily duties. On the first morning, he stood in the market square and raised his arm high.

“Oyez, Oyez, Oyez!”

The bell's tone rolled through the town like the water of an incoming tide. Heads turned. People came out of their shops, leaned from upstairs windows. The butcher, the greengrocer, even Mrs. Warburton who rarely stirred from her house - all gathered, smiling faintly, listening as though the sound itself had summoned them.

For the first time in years, Edward felt the old thrill return. His voice rose strong and clear; the people clapped when he finished.

That night, he polished the bell carefully, admiring how the brass caught the firelight. He slept soundly, the bell on the top shelf of the bookcase in his study.

But curiosity gnawed at him. In the days that followed, he researched the name Fiddian. It turned out to be a small bell foundry in Birmingham, active from 1803 to 1831. They had made fine ecclesiastical bells, handbells and even a few sets for town criers in the early industrial years. But the records were sparse.

A note in an old directory mentioned that the

founder, one Josiah Fiddian, had died suddenly in 1831. The business had closed shortly thereafter, and its bell moulds sold at auction. There was a passing mention in a local paper - “Master Bellfounder Josiah Fiddian, whose craftsmanship was as exacting as his temper was ill.” Edward chuckled when he read that, but a faint unease stirred.

That night, before bed, he thought he heard a soft ting from the shelf, as though the bell had been brushed by an unseen hand.

Over the following weeks, Edward's fame grew. He entered several town crier competitions - at Ely, King's Lynn, Norwich and further afield at Sleaford and Warwick - and won them all. The judges spoke of his projection, his phrasing and, above all, the marvellous clarity of his bell.

But odd things began to happen.

Once, while preparing to deliver a proclamation about roadworks, he found that when he lifted the bell to begin, it refused to sound. He shook it again - nothing but a dull clank. Annoyed, he re-read his announcement. Something felt wrong, the phrasing was awkward. He rewrote it to sound more formal, more old-fashioned somehow. Then, when he tried the bell again, it rang out perfectly.

It happened again the following week, and again after that. If the words were clumsy, rushed or modern, the bell remained mute. Only when he made them stately - worthy, almost - would it ring. He laughed at first, calling it superstition. But deep down, a chill crept into him.

As the months passed, Edward found himself unable to leave the bell alone. He polished it daily, sometimes twice. The brass shone like the noonday sun, his own face warped and golden, reflected in its surface. He told himself it was only pride - keeping his tool in good order. Yet he couldn't rid himself of a nagging doubt.

Whenever he was in his study, his hand had to touch it. When he went to bed, he found himself thinking about it. On several mornings, he awoke to find it resting on the floor beside his bed, though he knew he had left it on the bookcase shelf.

At first, he thought he must have moved it in his sleep. But one morning, the bell was found in his hand - cold, heavy, as though it had been placed there.

Spring came, and with it, a certain confusion.

Edward began to forget things - small at first - the date of the next proclamation, a friend's birthday, the name of a street on which he'd walked for thirty years. Then larger lapses - how long he'd lived in Merebridge, when his parents had died, whether he had ever married (he had not, but the doubt unsettled him).

He thought it must be age, or fatigue. But as he polished the bell one morning, he noticed something - the word FIDDIAN was fading. The etching that had once been so sharp was now barely legible.

He realised, with a kind of dread, that he had polished it hundreds of times, and the polish had worn away the letters.

And with that realisation came another - the bell gleamed brighter than ever, almost too bright to look at, and when he rang it that evening, the sound was no longer mellow - it was hungry.

In May, Edward began to hear whispers when the bell rang. Not words exactly, but shapes of sounds behind the note - a breath, a murmur. At first, he thought it was an echo, or some quirk of acoustics. But one night, alone in his house, he lifted the bell and gave it a single ring.

The sound filled the room, lingering. Then, beneath it, a whisper:

Mine.

He dropped the bell. It rolled across the floor, coming to rest upright, as though it had stopped of its own accord.

He did not sleep that night. Nor the next.

By midsummer, the townsfolk noticed the change. Edward still performed his duties, but his eyes seemed distant. He carried the bell everywhere, even when not working - to the grocer's, the post office, even to church. Some joked about it kindly, but others began to whisper that he looked unwell. On the morning of the 2nd of August, he was meant to make a proclamation about the upcoming harvest fair. At eleven, the townspeople gathered in the square, as they had done since the bell came to Merebridge. But Edward did not appear.

At half past eleven, the town clerk, Mrs. Lydia Hartwell, walked to his cottage on Willow Lane.

The front door was ajar.

“Mr. Calthorpe?” she called softly. No answer. Inside, the air was close and still. Dust motes drifted through slats of sunlight. She found him in the parlour, slumped in an armchair, head tilted to one side, arms wrapped around the bell as though it were a child.

“Edward?” she said, moving closer.

He stirred, slowly lifting his head. His eyes were open - but vacant, pale as candle wax.

“Edward,” she said again. “It's Lydia. Are you alright?”

He blinked. His mouth moved soundlessly for a moment, then he smiled faintly.

Mrs. Hartwell reached out and gently prised the bell from his hands. It was warm to the touch - almost hot. She glanced down and saw that the brass collar was perfectly smooth. The word Fiddian was gone, erased entirely.

“Edward,” she said softly, “what's happened?”

He looked at her, still smiling. “Hello,” he said. “Who are you?”

She froze.

He looked around the room, puzzled, then back at her. “And who am I?”

Edward was taken to the hospital, but his memory never returned. He lived out his remaining days in a quiet ward overlooking the river, a kindly, vacant man who sometimes hummed the notes of a bell's ring under his breath.

As for the bell itself, Mrs. Hartwell locked it away in the council archives. It sat in a padded box, darkened slightly now, the shine dulled. The staff avoided it, though no one could really say why.

Years later, a visiting antiquarian examined the collection and noted the fine craftsmanship of the handbell. “Curious piece,” he said, turning it over. “No maker's mark, though you can just see where one was - something beginning with an F. Fiddian, perhaps? You don't see many of those nowadays.” He set it down on the table, and for a moment, the faintest echo of a tone seemed to stir the air - soft, low, as if from a distance.

The antiquarian frowned. “Did you hear that?”

But the Lydia Hartwell, pale and still, shook her head.

A year later, a new shop opened in Brackenford - on the very street where Edward had first seen the bell. Its window display, once again, was filled with old clocks and brass trinkets. In the centre stood a single object - a handbell, dark with age, its handle smooth, its collar faintly scratched.

A small card beside it read:

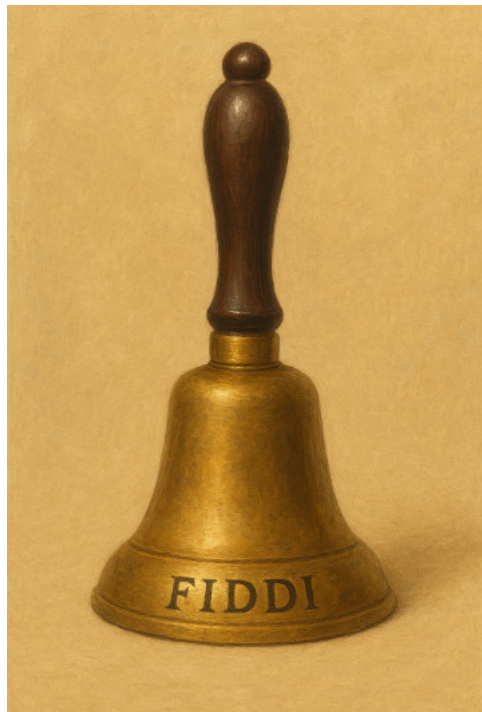
ANTIQUA HAND BELL - £12.

Lovely tone.

I had decided to apply for the post of Town Crier that had recently been advertised by the Council, and the bell looked perfect for the job, and such a good price too.

I was fascinated by it, and as I looked at it, around the brass collar at the bottom of the handle, I saw the letters F-I-D-D-I. I wondered what they meant, and as I gazed upon this, to me, magical item, the letter I appeared after the second D. Then the letter A appeared, followed shortly by the letter N.

I had to have it.



Lest We Forget By Terry Jermy MP

November 11th marked Armistice Day commemorated each year to recognise the Armistice signed between the Allies of World War I and Germany. That agreement took effect at 11am - the “eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month” of 1918.

As the Member of Parliament for South West Norfolk, it is an honour to participate in Remembrance Day activities, and I was deeply moved by the services I attended in both Thetford and Downham Market, and I was pleased to also support the Festival of Remembrance in Swaffham.

I was thrilled to see so many children and young people involved in Remembrance services across our three towns, with a number of children laying their own wreaths. I always feel this is such an important part of our collective responsibility - keeping the memory of such awful conflicts in our minds and sharing this history with future generations. It is crucial that the service of those who made the ultimate sacrifice is recognised and we must collectively work to ensure that such conflicts never happen again.



Since becoming an MP, I have been concerned by the state of military housing in the constituency, and it is something I receive complaints about by serving personnel. I am committed to ensuring improvements are made, and I was pleased with the recent announcement of the Defence Housing Strategy. This £9 billion investment will see improvements made to over 40,000 military homes and the building of 100,000 new homes on Ministry of Defence land to drive growth.

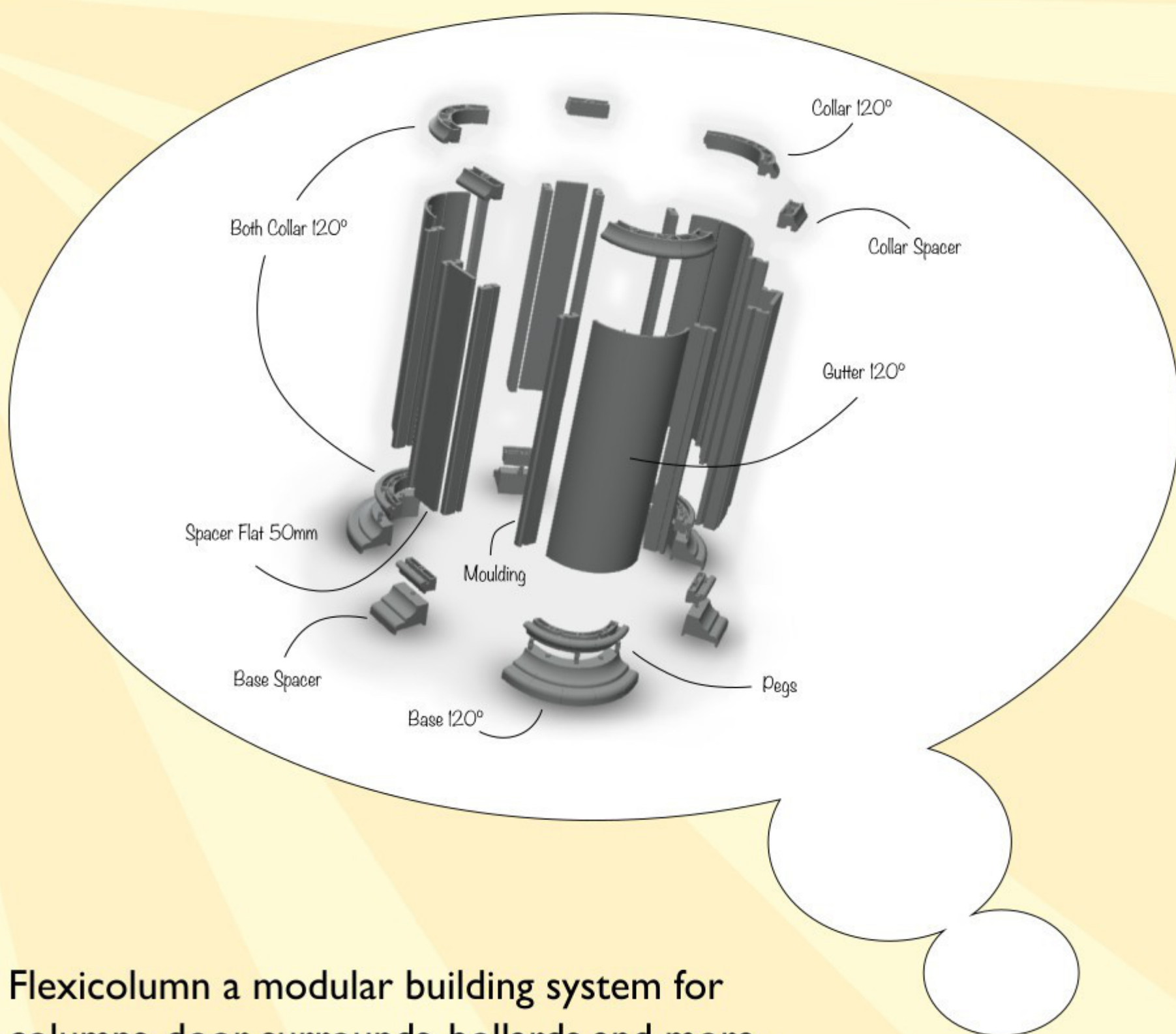
Locally, 826 homes in South West Norfolk will be supported by the initiative. Our British service personnel - and their families - make extraordinary sacrifices to keep us all safe. In this new era of threat, we rely on them more every day. The least they deserve in return is a decent home.

Separately, I am also continuing my work in bringing 15 long-standing empty homes at RAF Feltwell back into use.

Last week, I also welcomed the government announcement that Türkiye will be purchasing 20 Typhoon fighter jets in a deal worth up to £8 billion. This game-changing defence deal is the largest UK fighter jet order in a generation and will support 1000 jobs across the East of England. I am committed to supporting our armed forces personnel, veterans and their families, and am proud of the Labour Government's work to ensure those who have served our country are looked after.

If you are a veteran, a member of our armed forces or a dependant, and have any matters that you need support with, please get in touch: terry.jermy.mp@parliament.uk

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Anti-Social Behaviour

Police Data and Thoughts From Residents.

Editor: Last month, I published letters on the subject of Anti-Social Behaviour on the High Street and Mr Dingwall wrote, of the meeting where the Town Council declined to support the Safer Street Wardens scheme as highlighted by Councillor Bowes. Mr Dingwall said:

“ . . . I was present at that meeting and spoke. That very morning, I had asked Norfolk Police about complaints of street drinking in Watton. Their reply was unequivocal:

“We are not aware of any formal complaints made directly to police on this matter recently.” This was attributed by Mr Dingwall to Paula Gilluley, Norfolk Police, 26 August 2025.

I was aware that some calls had been made, so submitted a request under Norfolk Police's Freedom of Information policy as follows: “I would like to know the number of calls to the police, either to 999 or 101, in the period from 1st March 2025 to 30th September 2025, concerning problems (ASB or otherwise) in the IP25 6AE postcode area, or Watton High Street if the data allows”

Their response was “Research has been completed of the Constabulary’s call system for all incidents recorded ON Watton High Street within the postcode IP25 6AE.” And the results were tabulated as shown in the table (upper right). I leave you to consider whether any of the categories used by Norfolk Police would be interpreted as Anti Social Behaviour by a member of the public witnessing them and whether you think the presence of Safer Street Wardens would have made any difference.

In retrospect, I should have also asked which of these reports the police responded to immediately, and the time taken.

I also invited comments from readers which I would précis without revealing names. Of the five people who emailed, four said it deterred them from using the High Street and, a self described older female, said she had no problems or concerns. Here are the comments made:

“Having recently returned to live in Watton I was very pleasantly surprised about how safe I felt the town to be.”

“100 percent it puts me and my family off going to the high the same men drunk all day and night and clearly on other substances to a huge turn off. These men are are there during schools runs at 8am”

“Another reason for not using the high street,

The total number of calls received via the 999 and 101 phone lines, are supplied below by reason for call.

Reason for Call	999	TELEPHONE
ASB - NUISANCE		1
COLLAPSE/ILL/INJURY/TRAPPD	1	
DOMESTIC INCIDENT		1
MENTAL ILL HEALTH		1
POL GENERATD RESOURCE ACTIVITY		1
PUBLIC ORDER		1
THEFT - OTHER	1	
VEHICLE - THEFT OF	1	
VIOLENCE AGAINST PERSON	1	1
Grand Total	4	6

are the groups of mainly men loitering around, with no apparent purpose. As a mature lady I don't feel safe shopping on my own.”

“Men drinking alcohol, getting drunk and littering on and near the bench outside Corals. This is happening from 8.30am, a time when some children are walking to school.”

“I do not like walking down the high street, especially on a Saturday afternoon when there seems to always be a group of men drinking and hanging around outside Adcocks.”

Lastly, I have received more letters on this subject – for and against paying for extra protection:

Sir, I read with great interest the recent articles and letters concerning the Breckland Safer Street (SSW) scheme and the decision by Watton Town Council (WTC) not to support this initiative aimed at reducing ASB in Watton. Regarding the question you posed: "Does the fear of perceived anti-social behaviour deter you from visiting High Street businesses?" The simple answer, from my perspective, is no, I am not personally deterred. However, I fully appreciate that a growing number of Watton residents are discouraged in visiting Watton High Street by the general decline in public standards, a trend visible not just locally but nationwide.

Having lived in Watton for nearly 40 years, I have witnessed a significant deterioration in standards, and I am deeply disappointed by it. For WTC to decline the opportunity to participate in the SSW scheme strikes me as incredibly short-sighted. No one can truly assess the scheme's potential impact until it is properly trialled.

I found the case made by Councillor Hebborn unconvincing, and I am confused about the capacity in which he was writing. While he states he was writing in his personal opinion as

a Town Councillor, a Town (Parish) Councillor cannot act or speak autonomously in the way a District or County Councillor can. Clarification on whether he represents the Town Council's official position is needed.

What truly intrigues me is that year after year, WTC is content to spend a considerable sum on the annual free fireworks display. Coincidentally, I believe the Council's contribution to this event is at least £10,000 going up in smoke, which is the same amount required for the Safer Street scheme contribution!

Therefore, my suggestion is clear: Divert the funding for next year's fireworks display and instead support this vital initiative to reduce Anti-Social Behaviour in Watton. Let’s prioritise the long-term safety and well-being of our community over a single night of entertainment.

M Wassell.

Sir. Sometimes Stan Hebborn talks sensibly and his latest piece re the High St and SSW-Warden I can agree with. I have seen the idea of Town Centre Wardens before and in other towns, it is a good idea BUT whatever happened to the Policeman on his beat? In the ‘days of yore’ society (Government) came up with the idea to enforce law and order in Cities especially, PEELERS, they then became Police Men!

Rushing up to modern times when the cost of Policing becomes very high, there was the creation of PCSOs-Presence but no Powers-sounds familiar. These PCSOs could have had the power to issue littering fixed penalty notices if the Chief Constable deemed it fit, but before long GOVERNMENT had Cut Backs, so PCSOs were lost. Seems we are in the same situation again; we have low level ASB in our high streets so we reinvent the wheel to deal with them, we have paid for policing but do we get a Bobby on the beat? You get a 101 phone

number-when it came about this idea seemed very good-what has happened-cut backs-101 is now a waste of time to call-you tell 101 about a non MOT car next door and NOTHING is done-do we have faith?

So this ‘NEW’ idea by Breckland Council? So why should their idea be so clever/effective? Seems that Breckland Council need to carry out their present duties as opposed to coming up with fancy new schemes.

Problems with Breckland Council-there is No enforcement for planning! No enforcement for Fly Posting. No enforcement for littering and No enforcement for Not Drinking in designated places, Pavement car parking!?! Yellow Line parking. All having been paid for within out Council Tax.

Clair Bowes lists the problems in the High St- mostly already within the law that Breckland Council are empowered to deal with. So Breckland Council- employ your High St Wardens! but at NO cost to the Towns.

A Osborn – resident. (Mr Osborn indicated he was happy to have his name published.)

Sir, Thank you for your item regarding “Anti Social Behaviour in Watton High Street” and for publishing Councillor Stan Hebborn's personal views letter and the letter from Paul Adcock. I agree with Councillor Hebborn's decisions and comments regarding the Breckland Safer Street Warden Scheme, and fully understand his reasons for rejecting the Scheme.

Security surveillance camera evidence of offenders should be (if not already?) provided to the Police to enable them to take the necessary actions. We pay extra Council Tax for Policing our town but see little, if any, deterrent visual Police presence.

I also sympathise with Paul Adcock's frustrations of Police failing to take action for reported crimes.

Most people will agree the Police have a difficult job to do in today's broken society. The problems they face of trying to be in many places at once has two reasons:-

1. Understaffing
2. The building of so many new housing projects without sensible social infrastructure planning.

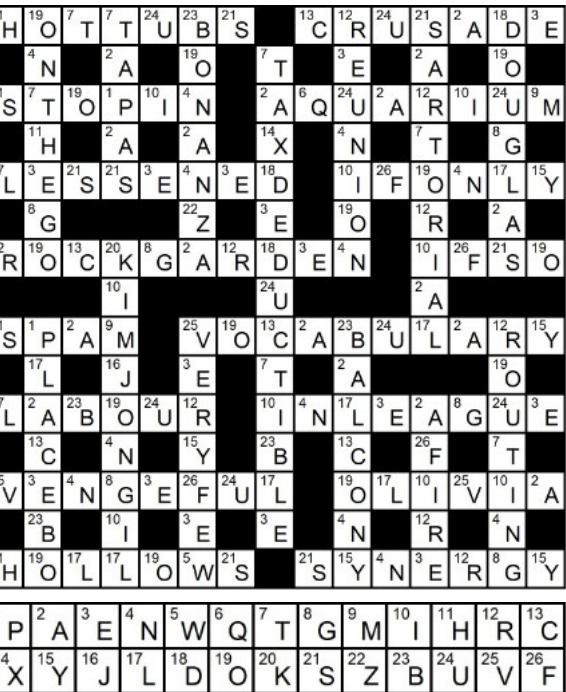
Look how Watton has grown in the past 5 years. There is less Policing; no new schools; lack of NHS medical and dental provision; less local shopping facilities; lack of local employment opportunities etc. etc.

Watton needs a proper Police presence of officers on beat duty, and not just in the High Street but throughout the town, day and night.

Yours faithfully, (I think the author was happy to have their name published, but I was unable to confirm that therefore, I have withheld it as was promised).

Last Month’s Codeword Result

Last month’s winner was drawn by Mary at Adcocks. The prize was a collection of gadgets



to help you survive the cold winter. The answer was:

GOOD KING WENCESLAS

The winner this month was J Sexton and the Runner Up was H Grix

To explain how the winners were drawn; all correct entries were recorded in a table format as they arrived, each line of which has a single card from a standard pack assigned to it. e.g. 6 of Diamonds or 7 of Clubs etc.

For the draw, Mary was given the pack, which she shuffled as she wished, and then drew one card for the Winner and one for the Runner Up.

The Editor supervised and correlated the cards drawn with the table of entries, and if it is there was no assigned winner to that card, it was then discarded and another drawn.

In that way I ensured winners are drawn at random and fair play is guaranteed. As always, I hope you found the puzzle both fun and not too challenging.

For the next Codeword grid and more details of this month’s competition please see page 14.

A Big Thank You From Ron Wheeler

As many of you will know my dear wife Margaret passed away on the 17th of September after along battle with Alzheimer’s and Dementia and her funeral was on 13th October at St Mary’s church Watton followed by cremation at Scoulton Crematorium. I would like to give a big heartfelt thank you to all our neighbours and friends here in Saham Toney and Watton. Your help over the last 5 years has been fantastic, your visiting Margaret in hospital and her last two weeks in York House care home at Dereham. All the cards and condolence messages I have received from you have helped so much, and to know that she was thought of so much. St Mary’s church was full, and you all came to the crematorium for the committal that was wonderful.

We came to live in Saham Toney in 1989, Margaret was an active member of the WI, she was also treasurer for the Royal Air Force Association Watton branch for 15 years and for many many years treasurer for the Samsen Club here in Saham Toney until it closed through Covid 2021. She retained her sense of humour to the last amusing the nurses and carer’s

CPR and Defibrillator Training

As mentioned previously Watton Evening WI members are hoping to offer CPR and Defibrillator Training to members of the Watton Community sometime in the new year, please watch out on the WI noticeboard in the High Street and this publication for full details when they are to hand.

If you would like to look at digital opportunities please go to The British Heart Foundation site www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/how-to-save-a-life

where there is a 15 minute training tool. Remember Bystanders can be Lifesavers.

by saying the alphabet backwards and her mental arithmetic, she remembered what she had been taught at school so well.

No matter what our day had been each night with her head popping up over the bed sheets, she would say “God bless, love you, sleep tight.” Yes, I will miss those few words. But Margaret you are now in the safe arms of Jesus, and I will always love you. Sleep tight my love.

In Your Garden With Lotta Potts

I just opened my book at December to get a bit of inspiration and I don't know whether to laugh or cry. One of the first comments made reads, "December is a time for planning and dreaming, hopefully without panicking." So far so good and I can relate to that. However, it goes on, "Spring, after all, is at least three and probably four months away." That's the bit I found depressing. The next bit suggests sitting by the fire with a full glass and the catalogues. No. Still awful as I can't shift the three or four months...

Still, let's try for positivity. We are over November and that's always good. This year the first half was warm and dry, which is not necessarily a good thing for the onset of winter but at the time of writing the forecast is colder, wetter and windier soon. So go and sit by the fire! In the meantime I have to find something to say for December otherwise Boy Julian will not be impressed.

Notable days:

- 1st Start of Meteorological winter. We might already have it.
- 21st Winter Solstice – start of astronomical winter and the shortest day. This is a positive as you can start to count how long the days become. I have a friend who does this, She's not a fan of winter.
- 24th Christmas Eve
- 25th Christmas Day
- 26th Boxing Day, St Stephen's Day when Christmas gifts (boxes) were handed to staff/servants by a grateful employer.

So onward and upward through the hangover.

December is generally a bit slow when it comes to gardening. The weather rules even more than during the rest of the year. If we are fortunate enough to have a mild, dry day or two there's lots to be done. Plant the last of the spring-flowering bulbs. Tulips will be fine and on time but you may find daffs are a bit later than they should be. They'll catch up in later years. If you want winter colour there's a good deal available. For small areas, containers and hanging baskets you can't beat pansies or violas as these cheery faces will go on and on. They look a bit frazzled after a heavy frost but will perk up again when the temperature rises. All they need is water and dead-heading. If they get leggy just cut them right back and they will recover. Decent drainage is a good idea so they don't get water-logged. That actually is true whatever you have in pots or containers. On that note I have bought some flowering wallflowers. You read that right, wallflowers in bloom in October. I thought it was a gimmick but they are still thriving and flowering. The sales blurb suggests they will keep this up until 'normal' flowering time. Delightful scent as well.

There is a varied choice for winter containers. If you fancy a bit of scent try sarcococca or Christmas Box. There are a few varieties but the best-known ones are hookeriana var dygna with purple-ish stems, long green leaves (it's evergreen) and tiny white fluffy flowers. The other variety is confusa which has shorter leaves and is a tighter-growing plant. Both have powerful scent. Another scented shrub in flower now is Viburnum (right). Again, there are various varieties but bodnantense dawn with small pink fading to white flowers is, I think, the most freely available. The flowers will spread scent all

over the garden on a still day so it might be as well to find one in flower and have a good sniff. Same with sarcococca. The viburnum is deciduous but might hang on to its leaves in a mild winter. The flowers will still be there on and off until spring. There's a shrubby honeysuckle, lonicera x purpusii which is a round shrub about 6 x 6ft with white flowers the same shape as those on the

climbing varieties but grow singly. This one's fragrance doesn't travel as well as the viburnum's so needs to be close to where you pass it. It would be a mistake to plant all the scented shrubs together as they might combine to something more like a smell! All these shrubs will be fine in containers until spring when you can plant them out.

There are climbers for this time of year as well. Clematis 'Winter Beauty' is lovely, again with white flowers and 'Freckles' which is as described with dark red spots in the cream flowers. These are the small cup-shaped ones. There seems to be a pattern that winter flowers are mainly pale and the ones above as well as others with or without scent must be like that to attract pollinators. Probably the odd bee perhaps? I'm not to well-informed on wildlife but it must be beneficial for such as there is about to try and cater for them in the garden. The only unwelcome wildlife are slugs and snails. They will thrive under pots and heaps of leaves or other rubbish left lying about so if there's just one job you can face on a decent day have a pest hunt. Dispose of them as you will but normally a bucket with a drop of bleach or maybe a beer if you're feeling generous. The results can be binned. You could, according to one expert, put them in the compost heap where they will break down the green stuff via the digestive system. All very fine and large but like everything else if you have more than one lots will follow so I can't recommend this. Salt or bleach water and the rubbish bin are my ideas of disposal.

Most of the work is to do with planting deciduous trees and shrubs and renovating old ones in situ. This is best done by removing completely any dead, dying, diseased or crossing branches. After that take out about a third of the old wood. Do this every winter and in three years the whole thing is healthy and looking well. Don't heavily prune anything that will be flowering in spring such as mimosa, forsythia, ornamental currant as you will remove next year's flowers. These shrubs should be pruned after flowering. Fruit trees can be planted now and winter-prune standard apples and pears to keep them in shape and allow decent access to the fruit. However this can be done any time in winter before the blossom appears. Maybe January would be a better bet.

Keep off the grass unless it's dry as if there's frost or water-logging the lawn will be damaged and very compacted. If it's dry and mild it might need mowing and leaves removing. If you want to repair the edges by cutting out the damaged length and replacing with another bit of turf or just turning it round to make a better edge this can be done but I think it better to wait until it's all not quote so wet.

Christmas excess can be worked off with digging or gently forking over any bare soil. The fresh air will do you good and if all else fails take a quick look round and you'll be surprised what's showing through the surface. Bulbs mainly so it's an incentive to buy and plant next autumn. Try a walk round an open garden. Quite a few winter gardens are on show, particularly in very large gardens with the space for dedicated winter plants such as the silver birch trees underplanted with snowdrops or somewhere with the colourful stems of dogwoods and some willows.

If we get snow all bets are off and all gardens become equal. We haven't seen a lot of snow for a few years but at the moment some forecasters will be going for a long, hard winter and the rest for a short, mild one. Take your pick. Look out of the window – it's as good as anything. So there we are. A very Merry Christmas to all and don't forget: if there's soil showing keep weeding.



The Wayland Partnership News

The big news is that the Digital and Creative Media Community Centre plans are moving a step forward. Following the success of the presentation to local government leaders and businesses who might be able to help and support, we will be holding an information event in January in Watton to update everyone. It is vital to us that we keep Watton and Wayland informed. Details will be advertised in this paper next month, and you can also view social media and other advertising. We don't yet have a date and venue finalised but will make sure it is widely advertised. You will be able to learn a lot more about the progress of the project, see an animated promotional video, photo boards showing the plans, and more, as well as be able to ask questions and, hopefully, show your support for this exciting project. We are mindful that you are the people who will benefit most so we want to make sure you are fully informed. We would welcome your input too in order that we get it right for you so please do join us. We are also keen to present the information to the Wayland villages so if you would like us to attend an event in your village venue then please get in touch.

For those of you who use social media you may have seen images on Facebook of the proposed plans and an appeal to register support on our website. Registering support is not a commitment to giving money but a way for us to demonstrate to potential funders and planners that this community centre is wanted and needed. Go to our website www.wayland.org.uk and you will get a pop up which will take you to a form to register support. Thanks to current publicity the number of those logged in at the time of writing is really good and climbing. Help us contribute to making Watton the place to be.

COMING UP

We have a number of other events coming up in early 2026, and dates will be advertised in the

next issue of this paper. In January Andy Reid will give a talk on the history of Watton. Some of you may remember him as a history teacher at Wayland High School, as it then was. He is a noted historian and has conducted exhaustive research on Watton for his book, which was published earlier in 2025. He is an excellent speaker so this is sure to be a very enjoyable event.

We will also have video show(s) and Q & A sessions with Julian Horn, who has extensive knowledge of RAF Watton and some very interesting material on the role of the base and its airmen in WW2. Full details to be confirmed, but will be in early February.

Back to 2025 and the run down to Christmas. If you receive the paper before the end of the month you will know that the Watton Christmas Market is on November 30th. We will be having a stall on the High Street as well as opening Dragonfly Gallery for hot drinks and cake so do drop in. Meanwhile Dragonfly Gallery will have Christmas crafts on sale or, if you are a crafter and like to make your own gifts, we have plenty of swapshop items at very low prices. Come and have a browse. We offer coffee or tea too!

WORKSHOP

On December 12th we have another in our series of mindfulness stitching and crafting with Wendy of CollinsCrafts. We will be having a go at Kantha stitching and making some Christmas related items. £12 a head and all materials supplied. 10.30am -12.30. Please contact us to book a space.

For any of the above and any queries please contact officewaylandpartnership@gmail.com or phone 01953 880204 or pop in during office hours of 9-12 each weekday.

And finally, a very Merry Christmas to everyone in Wayland from all of us at Wayland House.

Recycle Your Christmas Tree and Support Young People in Care

If you're planning to have a real Christmas tree this year, you may be wondering what to do with it once the festivities are over. Luckily, local charity Break has a solution that makes disposing of your tree simple — while also changing the lives of young people living in care across East Anglia.

Break has partnered with Just Helping to offer a Christmas tree recycling service for households in West and North Norfolk, and parts of Norwich. Residents in postcode areas NR10-12, NR20-25 & 28, PE30-38 and IP24-26 can have their tree collected between 7-9 January 2026 in exchange for a small donation. All proceeds will go directly towards helping Break support children and young people living in care making sure they have always have someone by their side. The deadline to book your tree collection is Sunday, 4 January 2026.

Hayley Malone, Break Fundraising Manager said: "If you're having a real tree this year, this is a fantastic way to take the hassle out of disposing of it. We'll take your tree away in January, and all donations raised ensure we can continue our vital work supporting children and young people living in care to build their confidence, create strong relationships and experience new opportunities." Break is also looking for volunteers to help

collect trees in January. Those interested in lending a hand are encouraged to get involved and make a difference in their community. This year, why not let your Christmas tree's final act be a generous one? Book your collection today and start the new year knowing you've made a positive impact on the lives of young people in care.

For more information and to book your collection: <https://www.break-charity.org/charity/get-involved/events/christmas-tree-recycling/> When: Collections from 7-9 January 2026, booking deadline 4 January

Where: Visit www.break-charity.org to schedule your collection or volunteer to collect

About Break: No young person should feel alone in the world. At Break, we make sure they don't. We walk alongside children and young people in, around and leaving care when we're needed most. Through fostering, residential homes, family support, mentoring and our leaving care service, we help children and young people build their confidence, create strong relationships and experience new opportunities.

Simply put, we care differently. More than support, we offer life long care, love and ambition so that young people can grow beyond what they thought was possible.

Flowers of the Norfolk Coast Ashill, Holme Hale & District Garden Club

On a bright but windy late October Thursday afternoon, garden club members were treated to an extremely informative and visually engaging presentation on the flowers that populate the Norfolk coastline. Simon Harrap, a well-known naturalist and was a font of knowledge on the topic. Simon has written books on the flowers of both the Norfolk Coast and also the Norfolk Broads. Simon structured his talk from the edge of the sea inwards, starting with the flowers and plants found on the beach, then the shingle, then the sand dunes and finally the salt marshes beyond.

On the beach, just above the high water mark, you find plants such as sea rocket with its small lilac flowers, a member of the cabbage family and sea sandwort, both of which have adapted to their exposed and windy environment by developing waxy cuticles on their succulent leaves so as to minimise water loss. Other plants found in this environment include frosted Orache, a silvery leaved annual which sprawls in low-growing patches on beaches, prickly Seawort and Sea Beet, a wild ancestor of beetroot, sugar beet and mangel-wurzel, which is a perennial which was first cultivated 3 to 4 thousand years ago.

On the shingle, where water drains very easily, you find flowering plants like Shrubby Sea Blite (Suaeda vera), sea campion and sea milkwort. These all possess tiny flowers as they are wind pollinated so do not need the 'flashy' or large blooms to attract pollinating insects. It was fascinating to learn that Sand dunes are created by plants trapping the wind-blown sand so that they form dunes initially around a few plants, which proliferate and result in larger sand dunes. You find grasses such as Sand couch grass, which can grow 2-3 feet tall and develop extensive root systems that trap the sand. This is accompanied by Marram grass, such a common sight of the Norfolk sand dunes and with a big root system that further contribute to the development of the sand dunes. Other plants include Sea spurge, a member of the euphorbia family, and Sea holly an eryngium of the Apiaceae family, with its spiky leaves and blue flowers.



Samphire is a name given to a number of plants found on the salt marshes round the coast in Norfolk The correct name of Norfolk Samphire is Salicornia europaea but is also known as Marsh samphire or common glasswort (the ashes were used to make soap and glass). The name samphire is a corruption of the name "Saint Pierre", the patron saint of fishermen. One can see several species of samphire on the Norfolk coast in addition to Marsh samphire, including rock samphire. Simon covered numerous other flowering plants in his presentation such as sea purslane, sea aster and sea lavender along with other flowers on our coastline in a very informative afternoon for members.

Upcoming Events

Our November meeting (20th) will have Graham Watts talking about 'Hydrangeas and how to look after them'. All meetings are held at Holme Hale Pavilion and start at 2.30pm. New members from anywhere in the district are always welcome, so come along and improve your gardening knowledge, while enjoying a welcoming environment with like minded colleagues.

Website: ashillgardeningclub.wordpress.com/
Email: ashillholmeahlegardenclub@gmail.com

Grand Second-Hand Book Sales

Griston & Thompson PCC's & Thompson Community Hall Would Like To Wish You All A Very Merry Christmas

At the time of writing, we have yet to hold our last book sale of 2025, our last booksale with Caroline

and Keith in charge of books, so a report will have to wait until January's edition to see how we do. However, I will remind you all that although Caroline and Keith are stepping down, we are not stopping the book sales; in fact, our volunteers are working tirelessly behind the scenes sorting books and planting bulbs in preparation for our first sale of 2026 on Saturday, March 14th. If you wish to volunteer or would like to donate any books or gardening goods, please email booksale@thompsoncommunityhall.co.uk or phone 01953 488508 and leave a message. Thank you for your continued support.

Watton Rotary Club Welcomes Its First Corporate Member



History was made at a recent meeting of Watton Rotary Club when President Andrew Barwood inducted our very first Corporate member, Bowles and Walker Ltd, plastic injection moulding specialists of Watton. Andrew is Managing Director of the Company and his son Michael Barwood will represent the company as a 'Designated Employee' at Rotary meetings and events.

Corporate Membership benefits the Rotary Club in a number of ways. We increase our membership whilst expanding our network and visibility in the community, as well as increasing our capacity to undertake service projects locally. Stronger and wider connections are forged locally, sponsorship and fundraising opportunities are enhanced, and our diversity is improved, enabling our membership to be more representative of Watton and surrounding villages.

Benefits to businesses include being able to put their Environmental, Social and Governance

(ESG) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) plans into action. Employees will be able to engage in volunteering through service projects, and develop themselves in areas such as leadership, team working and public speaking.

Andrew Barwood said 'We are delighted to welcome our first Corporate Member, particularly as I have been associated with Bowles and Walker Ltd for so many years myself. Michael will represent the company at Rotary events and will be able to vote on behalf of the Company at our meetings. It is a great opportunity for the company to be associated with Watton Rotary Club, not least because of Rotary's longstanding reputation as a service organisation, both locally and internationally.'

Our club would welcome approaches from any other local organisation who wish to discuss Corporate Membership with Rotary. We can be contacted by e-mail at wattonrotary@uwclub.net or by phone on 07594 637770.

Memory Corner

My parents were living in Little Cressingham Arms at the time, I remember my mum telling me that one day she had no idea what to give us for our meal. She decided to go out to the vegetable garden (dad always had a very good selection), she collected an assortment of vegetables which she cooked and on put on pie crust. My two sisters and I thought it was lovely and requested that again many times. Mum always managed to give us half a boiled egg each. How on earth did you only get a half? Mum

used to crack and open it very quickly from one egg cup to another and then we were told to fill up on bread and butter.

A memory from my school days at Little Cressingham School, our packed lunch had an oxo cube included which Miss Cracknell (the school teacher who lived in Watton I believe) would add hot water which she boiled on the old black stove which also heated the school. Best of all was being taken and collected from school in a pony and trap by my mum. Mrs Sheila Basham (Nee Howe)

Christmas
at All Nations Church
7TH DECEMBER - 10:30AM
Christmas Café
Refreshments and Crafts for Children

14TH DECEMBER - 10:30AM
Advent Worship Service
Christmas Worship, Bible Talk and Children's Group

21ST DECEMBER - 4PM
Carol Service
Carols, Christmas Talk and Children's Activities


All Nations Church
harry@ancwatton.co.uk


THE INNER WHEEL OF WATTON
CHRISTMAS
WINTER
WONDERLAND
WITH CAROLS, SONGS AND VERSE
AIDED BY DARRIN SINGING
WEDNESDAY, 10th DECEMBER
AT THE
QUEENS HALL,
WATTON
11:00 AM START
TICKETS £7 AVAILABLE
FROM ADCOCKS ON WATTON HIGH STREET
TEL NO 01953 881248 OR 01953 881792
ALL PROCEEDS TO CHARITIES SUPPORTED BY US
(CHARITY NO 01048151)

All Saints Church
THREXTON
invites you to join us for

Christmas Carols
with Watton Silver Band
2 p.m.
Sunday 21st December
A Warm Welcome to All


All Nations Church
Invites you to our
Christmas
Carol Service
SUNDAY
21st December
4pm
Watton Youth and Community Centre
37 Harvey St, Watton IP25 6EB
Carols, Christmas Talk, Children's Activities
Mince Pies & Mulled Apple Juice
harry@ancwatton.co.uk

Museum 4 Watton

Wednesday-Saturday 10 am-4 pm.

Merry Christmas 'The Babes of Wayland Wood'.

Wayland Wood is just a short walk from the town of Watton, but there will be some of you reading this article who have never made the journey to this special place managed by Norfolk Wildlife Trust. One of the largest native broadleaved wooded areas in south Norfolk, it is rightly famed for its rare wild flowers and bluebell displays in the spring. With a recorded history dating back to before the conquest of 1066, the woodland covers a much smaller area of land today than it did in the past, possibly at one time comprising areas in the villages of Griston, Thompson, Merton and Stow Bedon. Wanelund is the ancient name of the wood, which incorporates the Scandinavian element lundr, which means 'a grove'. Several items of Iron Age pottery have been found and there are suggestions Wayland Wood may have been a place of sacred pagan worship, but thus far, very little evidence has been found to support this. An ancient oak tree named the Hundred Oak once stood on the west side. This tree provided a meeting place for official gatherings and became the site of the Hundred Court. Which in turn was to give its name to the Wayland area. Aside from its beauty, Wayland wood has become synonymous with the tragic tale of 'The Babes in the Wood', a story which has captured the imagination of the public for over 450 years. I cannot possibly do the topic justice in such a short article, and won't attempt to do so, but will give a brief outline of the folktale.

Two young orphans placed in the care of their uncle are abandoned in Wayland wood and left

to die under an oak tree, enabling the 'wicked' uncle to claim their inheritance for himself. The legend is depicted on both the town sign in Watton and Griston's village sign, which is where the wicked uncle is supposed to have lived.

Set during the religiously tumultuous 16th century, the story does have a basis in truth. The so-called 'wicked' uncle did exist as did the little boy, who tragically died before he turned ten. The uncle was a Catholic recusant, the little boy a Protestant, as were the majority of the local population. And when the little boy died and the 'wicked' uncle inherited his nephew's lands and house, it was rather too easy for the wicked Catholic uncle to be blamed. The first account of the tale was registered with a stationer in Norwich on 15th October 1595; other ballads and pamphlets were to follow in the coming centuries. But it is the Victorians, fuelled by their melodramatic sensibilities, who took the tale to new heights, with picture books, pantomimes, postcards and ornaments. Here at M4W, we have an edition of the renowned children's illustrator Randolph Caldecott's book 'The Babes in the Wood', published by Frederick Warne in 1879. Local Watton business owner Samuel Adcock produced popular 'Babes' ceramic jugs, with their date of production between 1840-1850. You can see a set on display at the museum alongside a set by ceramic specialists Port Merion. The oak under which the children are said to have died was felled in the Great Storm of 1879, and people are said to have travelled from near and far to claim a fragment of the famous tree, including the navvies who were working on the local railway who would often ask the gamekeepers

for permission to take a piece of the tree home as a memento. A recent addition to the museum is a performance of the traditional ballad 'Babes in the Wood' performed by Phantasmagoria.

The tale of the Babes in the Wood has travelled far from its humble origins in a Norfolk wood. Many later adaptations of the tale, including the Walt Disney animation released in 1932, chose to dispense with the more tragic elements of the tale and gave it a happy ending. However, the real tragedy of the story is the maligning of a man for all ages, whose only crime was to worship as his conscious dictated, not as the state proscribed. And the death of a young child before his time. To learn more about the real story behind the legend of 'The Babes in the Wood', please call in.

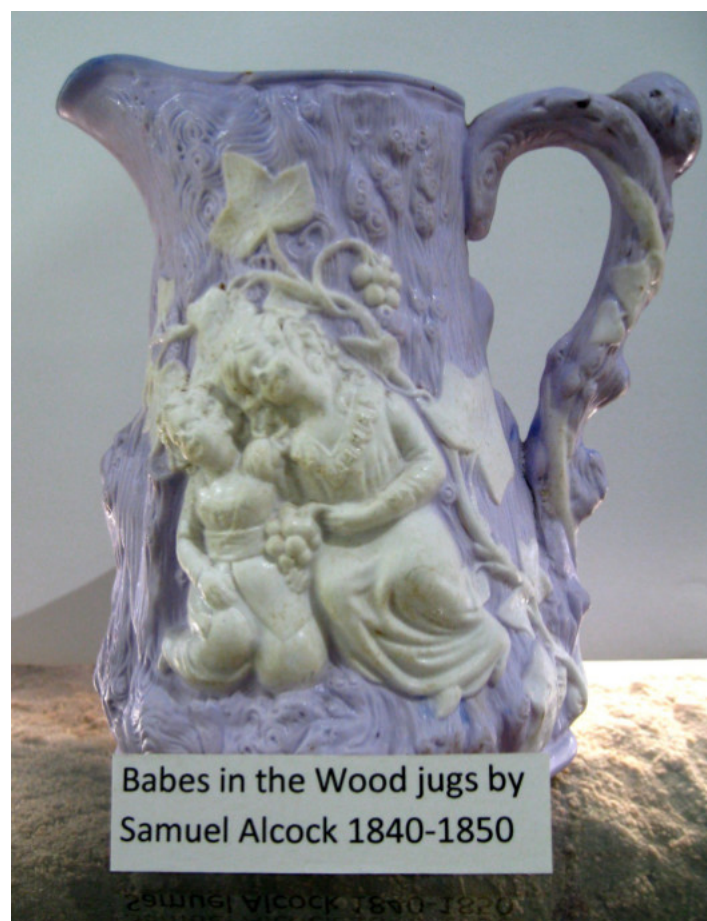
Witches Trail 1st November

Thank you to all those volunteers who entered into the spirit and helped at the museum during the Halloween Witches Trail along the high street on the 1st November. After what we thought was a quiet start to the day we saw a whopping 237 people through the doors, we hope to welcome you all again soon.

Watton Festive Market 30th November 1pm-5pm

The museum will be open on the afternoon of the 30th of November. We are offering free

refreshments that day, with homemade seasonal cakes, clean loos and a warm space. We hope you can join us. If you are looking for a unique gift, why not see what we have in our antique and keepsake case? Lots of interesting finds at affordable prices. We also have copies of Andy Reid's books about Watton and Ashill on sale, alongside George Jessup's 'Watton through the ages'. We wish all a very happy, healthy and peaceful Christmas and hope to see you all very soon.



Babes in the Wood jugs by Samuel Adcock 1840-1850

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The Breckland Birder

AKA Paul Newport

A summary of observations for October 2025

August through to November is the most eagerly awaited for time of year in the birding calendar. August sees the first indications of bird migration and September sees the greatest movement of departing summer visitors. October however sees incredible movements of birds, many summer visitors remain but in lesser numbers, however, the main feature of bird migration is Thrush passage with Scandinavian species abandoning their breeding grounds to find good feeding and warmth further south, including here on my local Brecks patch. Bird species we are talking about here are Redwings, Fieldfare, Song Thrushes, and Blackbirds, it is these species which can provide spectacular overhead passage both by day and by night. I have seen thousands of these Thrushes pass over in a single morning, often, many will drop into berry laden hedgerows to plunder the berries before moving on. Other bird families to be looking for in October includes Pipits, notably Meadow Pipits which winter with us from their breeding grounds in upland Britain. The arrival of Finches from Scandinavia can present in spectacular numbers with Bramblings, Siskins, Redpoll, and Crossbills being the sought after species by birders.

Further afield to the south-west, most especially in the Scilly Isles, and following Atlantic storms, the islands play host to rarities from the Americas including stunning Warblers along with other storm driven species.

Closer to home on my Breckland patch the following is a highlight of observations and species seen throughout October 2025.

On the 2 October at Little Cressingham I had a very successful local field trip. I visited the Watton Brook valley on the Great Cressingham Road, as soon as I arrived I saw 5 Red Kites perched together in a dead Oak, of these, two were juvenile birds. Nearby, I saw my first winter Thrush species of the autumn, two Redwings, a beautiful but small Thrush with a striking head pattern and a reddish patch on its flanks which gives the bird its name. Using my scope to check the distant valley I could see 5 Meadow Pipits on fencing along Watton Brook, these were probably newly arrived migrants from Northern Britain. Stonechats were also present in the valley. At least 10 Carrion Crows were noisily calling in woodland, it appeared they were directing their anger at a raptor species, my suspicions proved correct, a Goshawk flew from the wood, these noisy Crows kept a keen eye on the Goshawk as they appear on its menu at times. Lastly, a small flock of 4 Crossbills (including

two males) dropped into Watton Brook to drink, as they flew off the brick red plumage and stunning crimson rump of the male Crossbills was seen.

The 5 of October was a windy day, however, the remnants of storm Amy which passed through on 4 October had left its mark with plenty of debris laying around including some sizeable branches. This morning I visited a game strip at Little Cressingham which I know would be reliable for Finch species, here, I saw an estimated 70+ Chaffinches and 80+ Linnets which were attracted to weed seeds for feeding. Overhead 3 Crossbills passed over calling.

On the morning of 8 October. I revisited the large game strip at Little Cressingham where Chaffinches were increasing with 97+ birds present, an added bonus was a single ♀ Brambling (top right), a Northern European Finch which is a winter visitor here. Overhead, another Breckland speciality seen, a singing Woodlark.

On the 9 October, an early morning visit to The Arms area saw 2 Woodlarks (included a singing ♂) and 3 Crossbills sitting in the very tops of tall conifers near the Clermont estate.

A very productive visit to Thompson Water on the 12 October saw 142+ Mallard on the water and 3 singing Cetti's Warblers heard in reedbed scrub. A Green Sandpiper was seen and 4 Woodlarks were overhead. Two Ravens passed overhead and a male Marsh Harrier was seen. Summer visitors were still in evidence with a single Chiffchaff in woodland and a House Martin over the water. Also seen in the water was two Otters and distantly, roaring Red Deer stags were heard.

On 13 October, a dawn visit to The Arms at Little Cressingham began with an overflying Goshawk. Several winter Thrushes were passing overhead and a single Great White Egret headed north.

On 14 October at least 3 Woodlarks were seen in The Arms area along with a single Chiffchaff in a nearby hedgerow. 4 Crossbills low overhead and calling headed west.

On the evening of 16 October I visited The Arms and saw two Ravens directly overhead at Little Cressingham and lighted in the tops of tall pines where exceptional views of this huge crow were had.

18 October. An early morning visit to Cranberry Rough on 18 October began with a calling Goshawk at dawn. Two Ravens passed over and two Marsh Harriers also seen. Finch species dominated with 60+ Siskins, two Redpoll, and 37+ Crossbills seen (right middle). This is turning into a great autumn for Crossbills.

The 19 October at The Arms was a good morning for watching passage Fieldfare and Redwings with some dropping into hedgerows to feed upon Hawthorn berries. Impressive numbers of Finches seen at a large game strip included 250+ Chaffinches, 100+ Linnets, and at least 7 Bramblings too with one a particularly brightly coloured ♂ with orange scapulars and breast.

An early morning visit to Thompson Water on 20 October produced a Great White Egret was wading in the shallows, this is a beautiful, large,



white Egret which appears very stately and elegant as it moves stealthily in its search for food. An excellent count of 242+ Mallard on the water was rather impressive. In a small area of Birch woodland and Hawthorn scrub an arrival of winter Thrushes was evident with 60+ Redwings, Fieldfare, and 6+ Blackbirds, all of which probably had Northern European origins.

Picture of Great White Egret at Thompson Water here

An interesting visit to Hilborough on 21 October where I decided upon a walk around the churchyard and to enjoy the views over parkland. Looking through the tall trees within the park I saw a Peregrine on a branch feeding upon a Pigeon. Although distant I had superb views through my telescope of this impressive raptor.

Early morning on 22 October I visited open expanses of rolling farmland at Foulden. I parked up alongside the Foulden Road to check the large fields when I saw a disorganised and rapid departure of many Wood Pigeons from woodland, I straight away knew a raptor was present, my suspicions were confirmed when a Goshawk flew at speed from the woodland, singled out a Wood Pigeon, chased it and easily caught the Pigeon, a hearty breakfast. Also seen here was 150+ Skylarks, Woodlark, a ♀ Stonechat, and many Redwings (lower right) which were attracted to Hawthorn and Buckthorn to feed upon berries.

On 27 October at Thompson Water increasing numbers of Mallard were seen with 250+ birds present, also a very respectable count of 64 Gadwall. Also present was a Great White Egret



wading in the shallows searching for food. Following sunset on 31 October I saw my final bird of the month, a Woodcock which overflew a road in Barford, a very mysterious and beautiful bird.



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RAISING FUNDS FOR VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS

SATURDAY 29TH NOVEMBER
12 MIDDAY TO 4PM

CARBROOKE VILLAGE HALL
BAR OPEN

Digital and Creative Media Centre

On Friday 31 October 2025, the Wayland Partnership and Wayland Chamber of Commerce launched their plans for the Wayland Digital and Creative Media Centre. At a lunchtime event at Dragon Hall in Norwich, councillors and members of the business, digital and creative communities came together to pledge support for an initiative that will help to realise the potential of Wayland and the surrounding areas.

Situated in Watton town centre, the Wayland Digital Creative and Media Centre (DCMC) will be a hub for training, innovation, e-gaming, podcasting, business development and leisure. The existing Wayland House will be transformed into a centre for digital skills development: whether an ambitious game-developer looking to build a business or someone switching on a computer for the first time. At the event, more than 70 representatives from Norfolk business, culture, education and local government had the opportunity to take a virtual tour of the DCMC with the project's architect, and experience gaming areas and podcast studio via virtual reality headsets. They also heard from Robin Milton, one of the gaming industry's most influential people, about the potential that exists for careers in gaming within Wayland. Neil Darwin of Deyton Bell, project consultants, and Cllr Fabian Eagle from Norfolk County Council, also provided assessments about the huge impact DCMC will have for the region.

David Dent is a scientist and respected leader in life-science businesses. He is the chair of Wayland Chamber of Commerce and the driving force behind the DCMC project.

"The Digital Creative and Media Centre promises to be a safe, modern space where people of all ages can gather and engage in digital and creative activities, training courses and workshops, to help

them realise their potential," David explains. "The DCMC will be equipped with exceptional technology to provide the connectivity necessary to help Wayland collaborate with other communities and businesses throughout the UK."

"Wayland, its young people, its community and its economy, has great promise, but we need to harness that promise by providing practical resources and connected spaces," continues David. "The Digital and Creative Media Centre will provide a central hub where people can come together and develop new skills and careers, benefiting individuals, our community and the wider region."

"We have the space. We have the plan. We have a core team of people ready to bring this groundbreaking initiative to fruition. Today's event was about rallying support and advocacy in order to generate the funding needed to turn this plan into reality and make our business model available for replication throughout the region and UK," David Dent concludes.

Robin Milton (bottom right), of Fairer Games, commented: "The Digital and Creative Media Centre offers the opportunity for a vibrant and creative community space which is forward looking and designed in partnership with the local community. Its acknowledgement of the potential for digital interactive spaces and esports events alongside business and public facilities will undoubtedly create a resilient and forward-looking centre for Wayland."

Councillor Fabian Eagle, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth at Norfolk County Council, stated: "This is an exciting opportunity for Watton and the surrounding area not only in profile but allowing people with digital skills to work in their home area and attract people with those skills to the Wayland area. Norfolk County Council was pleased to support the feasibility and business case with a £125,000 grant in 2023."

Anyone wishing to get involved with the Wayland Digital Creative and Media Centre or interested in finding out about investment opportunities, should contact chair@waylandchamber.co.uk.

Pictured right: David Smith, architect, with images of the new centre.



David Dent (Chair of Wayland Chamber), Cllr Fabian Eagle, Cllr Kay Mason Billig and Bronwen Tyler (Wayland Partnership)



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Watton Town Council Updates, News, and Events

Watton Fireworks 2025

The annual Food Festival, Funfair and Fireworks was fantastically successful again this year. We raised a fantastic £562.34 in the donation buckets, this will go towards next year’s event running costs.

We would like to extend a massive thank you to Cranswick Country Foods for their ongoing support and sponsorship of this event, without them we wouldn’t be able to put on such a fantastic event.

Also, a big thank you to the team behind the event: Lorren Woodgett, Sue Dent, Steve Bryce, Stan Hebborn, Tina Kiddell, Keith Gilbert, Tina Cruz, and Paul Chubbock. Without all hands on deck we wouldn’t be able to pull it off!

We can’t wait to do it all again next year!



Photo credits to Justin Dack

WATTON FOOD HUB CALENDAR

DECEMBER 2025

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

TUESDAYS

- Food Hub Open 12:30-14:30

THURSDAYS

- Food Hub Open 09:30-12:00

3 DECEMBER

- Food Hub Open 16:30-18:30

17 DECEMBER

- Food Hub Open 16:30-18:30

THE FOOD HUB WILL REOPEN 6 JANUARY 2026

Town Council Updates

Middle Street Consultation is continuing, from consultation with key stakeholders and local businesses Norfolk County Council passed on some questions to Watton Town Council that have been addressed. NCC is preparing to carry out the full public consultation of plans for Market Square from the beginning of December 2025.

It was resolved to accept the updated cost of to the Town Council of £6517 towards the proposed trod along the Norwich Road from east of the Lidl site to the bus shelter. The remaining 50% of the cost will be funded through the Norfolk County Council Parish Partnership scheme.

It was resolved to accept the Parish Partnership offer of £694.94 to install a dropped curb at the Bridle Road Play Area. Other works have been identified that may need to be undertaken to ensure the path which will lead off the dropped curb is wide enough to be Disability Discrimination Act compliant. Costs to make the path compliant will be explored.

It was resolved to accept the working for the Town Council Grant Policy. The applying organisation should be a registered charity and/or be either based wholly in Watton, or able to demonstrate that its activities benefit Watton residents.

As a result of Councillors stepping down, the Council acknowledged that there are two vacancies on the Town Council. Breckland Council has been informed and will begin the process to fill the vacancies.

The Clerk has had a meeting with Officers of Breckland Council and it is sounding more positive that the three Breckland owned car parks in the town may be able to be transferred to the Town Council at nil consideration. However, to protect all parties it is likely a legal opinion will be sought before progressing further.

Watton Community Centre

Wow, it’s been a busy month at the Community Centre on Harvey Street. As well as all our regular users, the Food Hub and the Halloween Tuesday, we had a visit from New-U who brought along racks of pre-loved clothing with everything for just £1, they also had a selection of children’s clothes with 3 FREE for £1. They were also taking donations of clothes which earned ‘points’ to spend in the New-U Norwich shop. New-U are aiming to come one Thursday a month & will be with us again on 4 December and then the 8th January 2026.

The Community Law Service also held a drop in in November and they will be coming along on the morning of 4 December, AND the Food Hub is open so a great day to pop in.

We are very pleased to now be the home for a ‘self-service’ blood pressure monitor provided by the Community Health & Wellbeing Team that is based at the Watton Medical Practice. It will be available for you to use whenever the Food Hub is open.

We’ve also launched ‘Soup’s On’, which does what it says on the tin! Between 12 and 2pm on a Tuesday we are serving hot, home-made soup & bread. There is no charge but donations are welcome, no need to book.

More details about what’s going on and how to hire rooms at the Centre are available on our website www.wattoncommunitycentre.co.uk.



Remembrance 2025

This year’s remembrance events started with a service at St. Mary’s Church commonwealth War Graves on Saturday 8th November, this was a well attended service.

Sunday saw the annual Remembrance service take place at the War Memorial, the event has grown over the years. It was attended by numerous uniformed groups from Watton, as well as Veterans, and other groups from the town. The parade that followed led down to the Methodist Church, where a follow up service was held.

Tuesday 11th, Armistice Day, commemorates the end of World War I and honoured those who served in the military. The annual service in Chaston Place was well attended and traffic was stopped to observe the two minutes silence at 11am.

Watton Remembers those who fought for us. Thank you to all those that stopped and took the time to remember them with us.



A word from the Mayor

As we come towards the end of 2025, October half term saw the last of our family fun days at the Charlotte Harvey Community Centre which (or should that be witch as it was Halloween themed) was enjoyed by lots of families who have enjoyed the free activities and snacks, we look forward to seeing them again in February at half term.

The food and fireworks festival was even bigger and better than ever this year with an enormous effort made by council staff and volunteers that makes this event so successful, I'd like to take this opportunity to say a heartfelt thank you for all their efforts. November is of course when we remember those who lost their lives in war or were affected by the conflicts. I attended the remembrance services at Wretham for the Polish and Czechoslovak war graves, the service at St Mary's church commonwealth war graves, the town remembrance service at the war memorial in town with the parade along the high street to the Methodist church where the service this year was held, I was extremely proud to lay a wreath at the memorial on behalf of the town council and local people.

The final remembrance service was on Armistice day at Chaston Place.

All services were well attended; I was particularly impressed by the number of young people attending and of how professionally our wonderful Army and RAF cadets performed.

There were also lots of other groups and organisations present (I can't name them all in case I forget any) It made me realise what a wonderful community we have and how much is going on in Watton.

That brings me to some exciting news; I attended a presentation at the Dragon Hall in Norwich by the Wayland Chamber of Commerce to launch the plans for a new Digital-Creative-Media-Centre to be built where Wayland Hall is at present. A cinema and cafe are also planned alongside the Technology based activities.

The Watton food hub at the Charlotte Harvey Community Centre is now offering soup and a roll lunch every Tuesday 12-2 when the centre is open, the lunch is free but donations are always welcome.

Our last big event of the year is the festive market on Sunday the 30th of November, the event on the high street runs from 1pm to 5pm with the lights switch on at 4pm

As in previous years Santa will be there with a (free) gift for children (I hope they've been good) and hopefully, the weather will be kinder to us than last year when we were unable to hold the event on the high street due to the high winds and torrential rain. Safety must be paramount.

Finally, I would like to wish you all a very happy Christmas.

Councillor Gillian Turrant
Watton Town Mayor.



Watton Town Council Office Opening Hours

Over the Christmas period, our Office - located in Wayland Hall, Middle Street - will be closed from 24/12/25 - 05/01/26.

Merry Christmas, and Happy New Year!



Community Fun Days 2025

October’s Fun Day was a spooky affair, with face painting, crafts and planting spring bulbs. We were so impressed to see everyone dressed up for the occasion!

It’s been another fantastic year of Community Fun Days down at the Community Centre. The staff and volunteers have worked hard to ensure there was plenty of activities and crafts on offer for the families of Watton. A big thank you to this year’s sponsors, The Watton and Wayland Times, H. Brett and Sons Stonemasons, and Love Watton!

We’re looking forward to welcoming you back to the Community Centre in 2026 for more FREE fun!



85 And Still Swimming!

John Fish resident at Kingsley Healthcare Home Buckingham Lodge in Watton took to water quite literally like a fish on a reminiscence trip to Breckland Leisure Centre & Waterworld, Croxton Road in Thetford.

The 85-year-old former County Swimmer was in his element returning to the pool in Thetford where he used to train regularly.

The activity was supported by staff from the home who after seeing Johns wish on the Wishing Tree were only too eager to put their heads together and make his wish come true with Hospitality Host Sam Wright and Homes Administrator Millie Sadd only being too happy to be part the day. "It's so heart-warming to be part of such a wonderful memory" said Millie.

With the help of his family, staff discovered that John, originally from Shoreditch, London had been swimming since he was a child from around 12 years of age, before becoming more passionate about the sport as an adult entering in local swimming Galas and then swimming for the County winning many medals and trophies along the way.

Luckily John's speedos still fitted and despite his aging mobility, he proved that age was just a number as all his swimming techniques came flooding back to him.

John is well remembered in town especially for his devotion to the Thetford Dolphins, a competitive swimming club who train at the pool six days a week competing in County and Regional Galas across Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire.

A fellow swimmer Andrew Colman who now swims for the Dartmoor Darts Aquatic Team, a Devon based Club was very happy to see John again, recalling how John "was fast, 2 lengths in 45 seconds and he was 83 years old then"

Brothers Matt and Luke Axford, trainers at the Breckland Leisure centre also remembered John fondly, recalling how passionate he was when swimming in the Lanes at the Thetford pool, whilst they would be standing on the side as on duty Life guards.

For National Restart a Heart Day (RSAH) an annual initiative led by Resuscitation Council UK (RCUK) the brothers delivered a Free mini session at the centre encouraging visitors to try their hands at lifesaving CPR skills and were amazed to see the 85-year-old get down on his hands and knees and start delivering CPR to the practise dummy.

The special activity was arranged by the Homes Manager Claire Brooks "who promised to go again next time as it looked so much fun" and Community Engagement Coordinator Marcia Hughes stating that she felt it was "a real privilege to be part of a team and company that had such a positive impact on their residents' lives"

Below: (Middle) John Fish



Above: Millie Sadd, John Fish and Sam Wright in the pool.
Below: Sam Wright, John Fish and Marcia Hughes outside Breckland Waterworld



Christmas kindness By Miss Mardle

What would you like for Christmas
people are asking me,
I know exactly what I want
and it's absolutely free.

I don't want a brand new mobile
I don't want gadgets at all
I just want what the carol says
Goodwill and peace to all.

Please don't concentrate on shopping lists
or how much you should spend
instead make time for a cuppa
and a natter with a friend.

Take time to feel the magic
not the chaos and fuss.
Listen to Judy Garland and
Have yourself a merry little Christmas.




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Remembrance 2025



St. Mary's churchyard has a number of Commonwealth War Graves within its boundaries and every year young people from the Army and RAF Cadets place Poppy Crosses on the graves. It is a short, but very moving service that means a so much because while Remembrance is centred around Memorials to the Fallen, and rightly so, this is the last resting place of some Watton men, and others who came here with the RAF to serve their King, Country and Commonwealth and paid the ultimate price. We Will Remember Them.



The main Service of Remembrance was held this year at the Methodist Church in the High Street. These two windows were decorated by Watton Evening WI and I am grateful to them for supplying these pictures.

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Days by Coach 2025

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Thursday 4th December **Fakenham Christmas Trees**
Adult £15 Child £10

Sunday 14th December **Christmas Lunch** Adult £45

Saturday 20th December **Christmas Lights Tour & Chip Supper** Adult £30 Child £15

Saturday 10th January **Lakeside Sales** Adult £35 Child £20

Saturday 28th February **Freeport Designer Outlet Braintree**
Adult £35 Child £20

Holidays 2025

Turkey & Tinsel Bognor Regis 5-8th December

Shows 2025

Abba Voyage & Westfields Shopping Centre 1st Nov. **SOLD OUT**
Thursford Christmas Spectacular

Friday 12th December 2pm Show **SOLD OUT**

Cromer Pier Christmas Show 16th December
2.30pm Show Adult £45

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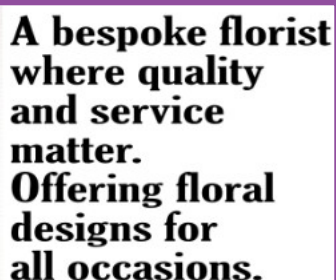
If you are interested in patchwork/quilting or needle craft in general we are a small friendly group who meet twice a month in Thompson Village Hall. We meet on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month from 7pm to 9pm. Our annual fee is £25 with a fee of £3 per meeting to cover refreshments.

I don't think any of us are experts at what we do but we all help each other with any problems. We chat, we laugh, we put the world to right and generally have pleasant, relaxed evenings.

We also have in house workshops where we try to learn something new. Our last project was making a sampler quilt. Most of us went away and made a brightly coloured square. We then put them together and ended up with a quilt.

Why not pop in for a cuppa on and see who and what we are or see us at the Christmas Festival in Watton on the 30th November or contact me. Rosemary Scott 07766957949.

**This month is our
“Blast me!! Thas
Christmas already??
Them nice folk at Flora
and More have given us a
lovely seasonably floral
prize!” Codeword.**



26, High Street Watton
 floraandmoreflorist@outlook.com
01953 665 222

The prize this month is a lovely seasonal Poinsettia and a Amaryllis Bulb with pot and compost from Flora and More.

Each number in the Codeword grid represents a different letter of the alphabet. In this puzzle, 7 represents T and 26 represents F; also fill in a T every time the figure 7 appears and an F every time the figure 26 appears.

Now, using your knowledge of the English language, work out which letters should go in the missing squares.

As you discover the letters, fill in other squares with the same number in the main grid and the control grid.

Consecutive squares are not necessarily just one word.

Finally, when you have all the numbers in the control grid, decode the following codeword(s):

14, 21, 18, 26, 14, 21, 18, 26, 1, 25, 22, 23, 18, 19, 22, 7, 22, 24, 23, 9, 9, 14, 21

(Yes I know that's a lot, don't swear at me, this is a funny one!)
Send the Codeword you think is the answer along with your name and contact details in an envelope marked 'Competition' to Julian, Care of Adcocks, 32 High Street, Watton or by email to wattontimes@gmail.com

All correct entries received BEFORE midnight on the 12th of the month of the paper, will be put into a draw, and the first entry drawn will win the prize detailed above.

There will also be a Mug & Coaster set for the Runner Up. **Last month's winner's name and the solution to last month's Codeword are on Page 6. Entry is open to everyone, but in relation to all aspects of the competition's conduct and results, the Editor's decision shall be final.**

2		1		26 H		10		6		25		9		1
21	14 I	4	18	23		1	5	19	12	22	18	14	19	3
1		20		20		9		3		18		6		7
9	19	19	21	1	3	14	3	17		1	24	14	12	22
1		21				17				24		10		21
21	8	2	1	9	12	26		14	3	16	9	19	25	21
21		24		2		18		24		24				1
	13	1	3	3	14	16	1	24	9	19	20	1	11	
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14 I	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26 H

Great Hockham Gardening Club

Our speaker for September was Karon Sanders (right) who spoke to us on the fundamentals of propagation. As far as I am concerned, an occupation that requires work, then more work hacking it back when it turns out to be five times the size you thought it would be. I jest! Although there may be a tad of truth in the above, the one thing that lifts the heart is when something seemingly dead resurrects into a living entity.

As in all good guides, Karon started with the safety considerations and the correct kit for the job: disposable gloves, never use a knife from the kitchen and if at all possible, buy only the best tools. I have to say that I have found this true throughout my life as a metal mangle: cheap kit usually turns out to be the most expensive.

Then the source material. First of all, again, buy good stuff. Cheap seeds can often be substandard. If they don't germinate, complain. Be careful buying online, you don't really know where they come from. Be careful what species of plant you propagate: if it's not going to be kept in a pot it will have to be planted out. Check that the plant you have chosen will thrive in the soil type and location intended: rhododendrons don't like alkali, clematis don't like acid and wildflowers don't like clay. Hygiene is essential. Good compost is also

essential. Always sieve the compost as some cheaper brands can contain unwanted inclusions – like bits of glass. The other day I actually did find a bit of glass, so do watch out. Cuttings should always be around the outside of



the pot. This never made much sense to me; why restrict the developing roots? But, Karon explained, when new roots come up against a hard surface, they will branch and produce a better system. Most important, always label everything with the name and date.

Karon concluded by showing us some of what I would describe as 'new-fangled'. There are multi-spectrum lights, which, we were told, were not to provide light of a different wavelength, but to extend the day by a couple of hours morning and evening. Other propagating equipment was discussed including propagators, heated mats, aerial misters and the like.

From a personal point of view my propagating efforts are variable. We grow our own tomatoes; a few get a little too ripe and go on the compost – where we then end up with dozens of little plants

from the seeds. Avocado stones also seem to do well. On the wild side we have a fully mature oak tree just outside the garden which has many acorns. Some of these take root in our garden. I look at these little living entities and imagine the magnificent tree they could become. But... one has popped up right where next year's runner beans are destined to be. It has been relocated.

My prowess at intentional propagation? I had a need for something to fill a gap in the garden, something to give balance, something that was bomb proof, so bomb proof that most people's efforts would be directed on how to kill it. My choice was blackberry, what sensible people call bramble. I sourced three plants from a particularly vigorous clump, being careful to get as much root as I could. I planted them, then followed up by regular watering. They all croaked. I have to wonder whether I possess some kind of gift, a kiss of death on anything I touch.

With regard to Prue's efforts, the exact opposite. A chain saw seems to be the best way of controlling the floral content of our garden, while the veggie areas have all performed beyond

expectation. You know things have gone well when there is general relief when the last of a particular crop is finally consumed. Not related, but I thought it might help: things that you learn that you should have known decades ago: don't put kitchen knives in the dishwasher. I thought this was about the handles, but no. The process reacts with the carbon in the blade and blunts them. I was told this by the very nice man in ProCook in Chantry Place. For those of you who draw strength from a G & T, why not grow a lemon? Some years ago, we grew a lemon tree (below) that was very pretty, but grew so big that all the lemons were impossible to eat, so we were forced to make marmalade - definitely dish of the day. The problem was that it had to be bought inside every autumn to avoid the frost. These were high times, but you would only keep one that big in a fool's garden.

Our next meeting is on the 10th of December. This will be our Christmas Party. Instead of our usual demented quiz, this year will be bingo. Hockham village hall at 14:00. Bah humbug! Members only. (Sorry). Edward.



A Very Happy, Peaceful Christmas and New Year To All Readers

The January 2026 Paper will be available from around December 30th

Lucky Jacks' Casino Games With £500 Jackpot!!

www.gambleaware.org



Next door to Cookies Diner serving Hot Drinks and Food. 44-46 High Street, Watton

The Wayland Group of Parishes Worship in December

Sunday 7th December
10.30am United Holy Communion
Holy Cross, Caston

Tuesday 9th December
2.00pm WI Carol Service
Holy Cross, Caston

Friday 12th December
2.00pm Thompson School
Christingle
St Martin's, Thompson

Sunday 14th December
10.30am United Holy Communion
Holy Trinity, Gt Hockham
6.00pm Breckles & Stow Bedon
Carol Service
St Botolph's, Stow Bedon

Sunday 21st December
10.30am United Holy Communion -
St Peter & St Paul, Griston
6.30pm Carols by Candlelight
Holy Cross, Caston

Wednesday 24th December
5.00pm Christingle and Nativity
Tableaux - Holy Cross, Caston
11.30pm Midnight Mass - St Martin's,
Thompson

Thursday 25th December
10.30am United Holy Communion
Holy Trinity, Gt Hockham

Sunday 28th December
10.30am United Holy Communion
St Botolph's, Stow Bedon

Wayland Group Parish Churches

St Margaret's, Breckles
Holy Cross, Caston
Holy Trinity, Gt Hockham
St Peter & St Paul, Griston
St Botolph's, Stow Bedon
St Martin's, Thompson

Church Services In The Ashill Group

Friday 19 December, 6.30pm,
Candlelit Carols at St Peter's, Merton

Saturday 20 December, 2pm,
Carols at St George's, Saham Toney

Sunday 21 December, 4pm,
Candlelit Carols at St Nicholas', Ashill

Sunday 21 December, 6pm,
Candlelit Carols, St John the
Evangelist's, Ovington,

Christmas Eve, 6pm,
First Mass of Christmas, Ovington

Christmas Eve, 11.30 pm,
Midnight Mass, Saham Toney

Christmas Day, 9.30am
Christmas Holy Communion, Ashill

Sunday 28 December, 10.30 am,
Holy Communion for the Feast of St
John the Evangelist, Ovington
(no service at Ashill or Saham Toney)

Sunday 4 January 9.30 am,
Holy Communion for the Feast of the
Epiphany, Merton.

Sunday services continue,
9.30 at Ashill; 10.30 at Ovington; 10.30
at Saham Toney.
9.30am at Merton
See websites for more details.

St Mary's Church
Church Road, Watton, IP25 6DQ
www.stmaryswatton.org
Weekly Wednesday Services at 10am

Worship in December
Sun 7th 10am Holy Communion
Sun 14th 8am BCP Holy Communion
10am Carol Service
Sun 21st 10am Holy Communion
Tues 23rd 3pm Christingle
Wed 24th 11.30pm Midnight Mass
Thur 25th 10am Christmas Day Service
Sun 28th 10am 4th Sunday
Sun 30th 10am Café Church

Polish Catholic Community
St Mary's Church, Watton, IP25 6DQ
Every Thursday and Saturday at 6pm – 8pm

Watton Methodist Church News

57 High Street, Watton IP25 6AB
wattonmethodist.chessck.co.uk

Sunday Service times

10.30am in Church
6.30pm in the Large Vestry
2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays

Coffee Morning
in The Methodist Centre
Every Wednesday 9.30am to 11.30am
Alongside the Country Market

Tuesdays@2 in The Methodist Centre
9th December at 2pm
Festive Concert by the Singing for Pleasure
Group, Followed by
Christmas Afternoon Tea & Carol Singing
All proceeds for the Anthony Nolan Trust

The Methodist Centre has 2 halls available to
hire either on a regular basis or one-offs. Hire
includes WiFi, hearing loops, facilities for the
disabled, kitchen for light catering. For details
of very moderate rates and availability phone
01953 881451

We offer you a warm welcome at Purpose Church

The Watton Sports Centre,
Dereham Road, Watton, IP25 6EZ
purposechurch.org.uk

Sundays: 10.30am morning service
Thursday: 10.00am Community coffee
and chat

If there is something you would like
us to pray for, please let us know.

More information contact Nick
07940049933: nicknundy@gmail.com

What's On! at St Mary's Church, Watton In December

Church Road, Watton, IP25 6DQ
www.stmaryswatton.org
wattonchurch@gmail.com
01953 881252

Mon 1st, 8th, 15th 9.30am – 11am
Storybags: FREE Children & baby
playgroup, meeting every Monday, term
time, for plenty of free play, a chance to meet
others, & some fun to finish off all together.
Tues 2nd 5pm – 6pm Prayer & Praise: Sing
your favourite worship songs & pray with &
for the community. 1st Tues of month.
Wed 3rd 1.30pm – 4pm (location in
Watton) Bereavement Group: Contact
Linda Benton on 07803 017340 or
linbenton2978@gmail.com for details. 1st
Wed of month.

**All Nations
Church, Watton**
We meet every Sunday
at 10:30am at the Youth
and Community Centre
on Harvey Street.
We would love to have
you with us.

Christmas at ANC
7th December –
Christmas Community
Café

14th December – Advent
Worship Service with
the theme "I am the
way, the truth and the
life"

21st December – Carol
Service (4PM)

28th December –
Informal Worship
Meeting

If you would like to get in
touch or find out more
then please email
hello@ancwatton.co.uk

Or call Harry on
07999 564055
If you are interested in
an introduction to the
Christian faith and a
chance to ask any
questions you have then
please get in contact to
join our next Alpha
course.



The Season of Advent . . .

As a priest, I believe in a God of love, healing, compassion, peace, and reconciliation, that the Church exists for all, including those who are not members of it.

Many come to church in times of need, sorrow, joy and thanksgiving, to receive what they can through the loving ministry of people of faith, to discover God's presence, comfort and peace in their lives.

But whether we have a faith or not, are interested to know more, or enjoy the moment for what it holds for us before it is gone, this time of the year speaks to us of hope, promise, relationship, goodwill and love.

The season of Advent, that leads to Christmas, offers the opportunity to engage with the meaning of Christmas and allow ourselves to reflect on the reason for the season as we embrace traditions and memories of past Christmas school nativity plays, carol singing, visiting Santa and those with whom we have spent (and may continue to spend) Christmas Day.

Advent points to this beginning when God, taking on human flesh, comes to earth, being born in poverty to become a homeless refugee, in order to identify with the suffering, the poor and vulnerable, as well as the powerful and influential.

Christmas celebrates God's gift of life being shared and offered for all people. The exchange of our presents, greetings and celebrations with family and friends, are reminders of God allowing us to see the image of the divine every time we look into one another's eyes and notice friend and stranger.

We are all familiar with the story of the birth of Christ and all who were part of it, the ordinary people who did extraordinary things through the invitation, encouragement and will of God. The Epiphany - the visit of the Magi, the Wise Men, symbolises the sharing of the light of God shining into the darkest places of people's hearts and lives. It offers hope and reassurance that nobody would ever feel abandoned or rejected, if we love our neighbours generously, courageously, compassionately and without condition, wherever they are in the world.

May the peace of the Christ child bring hope to you and the world this Christmas.
Vanessa
Reverend Vanessa is the rector for the Wayland parishes of Breckles, Caston, Great Hockham, Griston, Thompson, and Stow Bedon. She is available for baptisms, weddings, funerals and pastoral visiting.

You can contact her on 07984 318885 or by email at vanessadlayfield@gmail.com

Watton Relief In Need Charity

The Trustees will be meeting to consider applications from residents of Watton for financial support this Christmas Application forms for assistance are available as detailed below. The Charity is an amalgamation of charities set up years ago to support those in need in the town of Watton,

The Trustees have a duty to distribute the income of the Charity "to relieve residents of Watton who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress". The Charity may also make grants of money, or pay for items, services or facilities to help reduce the need. In certain circumstances the Charity may offer similar support to organisations serving the residents of Watton.

The Trustees are keen to consider applications from any age group, providing they are residents in the Town of Watton .

It is important to note that residents in the parish of Carbrooke, living in many of the housing developments in Norwich Road are not eligible under the terms of the Charities legally binding 'Scheme of Arrangement'

No preference is given to any section of the community. Applicants will be required to give full personal financial details and provide

any other information before a decision can be made by the Trustees.

All information given is treated in the strictest confidence.

Application forms are available from:- Wayland Hall, Middle Street, Watton or Wayland House, High Street, Watton

Completed forms can be returned to either of the above contact points in a sealed envelope.

Dance Away

Queens Hall, Watton IP25 6DA
Ballroom, Latin & Sequence. Bar & Raffle

Next Dances: Dec 6th

Letter to the Editor

Breckland Birder

I was really disappointed to read of the low number of bird's spotted at St. Mary's Churchyard Watton by Paul Newport in September.

Whilst I have not spent much time there, I only live a short distance across from the Church and backing onto the open farmland.

When I sit in the garden with my husband enjoying a well earned cuppa we regularly see several each of blue tits and great tits, a couple of coal tits and a small flock of long-tailed tits passing through after a short stop for a snack. We still have at least 7 young blackbirds that have decided to stay with us since leaving their nests and a couple of adults who come to our table for suet pellets and dried mealworms. They then swoop round the side of the bungalow to pinch the last of the grapes. We've also been lucky enough to spot a chaffinch, a thrush and a woodpecker on the odd occasion. It's not uncommon to count upward of 22 sparrows, 2 Robins and 3 dunnocks popping in for their breakfast, lunch and a quick bath. We have seen at least 3 wrens who warm my heart when the males sing and make me laugh when they tell me off for getting too close to 'their' part of the garden. I must admit to getting a bit over excited when the local pheasant drops by and saunters around while I'm washing up. Such a handsome bird.

So, I can understand the assumption that there wasn't a great bird presence on that particular day of spotting but, when the buzzards, kites and sparrowhawk are up, you can rest assured the garden shrubberies and farm hedgerows are hiding a multitude of our feathered friends. W Martin.

Ed: I asked Paul if he wanted to comment and he replied "It goes without saying that far more bird species are present than those I saw on my visit. My visit was only a short one as I passed through and I wanted to show the good numbers of raptors overhead. If I spent some time at this locality I would have seen more, also, my early afternoon visit did not see the most activity, early mornings are best. I am also conscious of the amount of space allotted for my contribution, I therefore provide an account of the highlights seen throughout that particular month. Paul"

Thompson Community Hall

Our main event for December is the Village Tree Lighting and Carol Singing. If you would like to join us you are very welcome. We begin at 6pm at the church, lighting the tree there and the star on the tower, and singing some carols. We then make our way to light trees around the village, each one provided by a village organisation. We have the Millennium Green tree at Well Corner, the Parish Council Tree at the crossroads and then the Community Hall tree, before enjoying light refreshments and mulled wine or a non alcoholic drink in the hall.

Unfortunately we have no film night in December because we were not offered a range of suitable films. The first Friday in January is too close to the Bank Holiday so we will begin screening again in February.

2026 book sales. We now have our book store shed up and running and our team from the three charities are spending time sorting them into categories ready for the sales in 2026. The dates for these are March 14th, July 18th and November 21st. We will take book donations on Tuesdays 10-12 or Wednesdays 10-12 or by arrangement. Contact: booksale@thompsoncommunityhall.co.uk or phone 01953 488508

We would like to thank everyone for their support of the Community Hall in 2024. We will be advertising our 2026 programme of events soon.

A very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to everyone.

Breckland Alliance Clinical Research

Did you know that you don't need to go to a hospital or university to take part in medical research? In fact, hundreds of local people have already played a part in shaping the future of healthcare simply by visiting their GP surgery. The Breckland Alliance Research Team is based across three local GP practices: Watton Medical Practice in Watton, and School Lane Surgery and Grove Surgery in Thetford. Working together as the Breckland Alliance.

Our team includes a Senior Research Nurse Manager, Research Nurses, Research Physician Associate, Clinical Practitioner, Research Administrator and Research Engagement Coordinator, all supported by several GPs across the three sites who lead on individual studies, whilst still seeing patients.

Our long-term goal is making research more inclusive, accessible, and reassuring to address hesitations within the community.

Our Research Journey

Although School Lane, Grove and Watton participated in research before 2016, the Breckland Alliance began working as a

collaborative research team in 2019. Since then, they have recruited over 6,400 patients for studies across Thetford, Watton, and surrounding areas.

What Kind of Studies Do We Run?

- Commercial studies, sponsored by pharmaceutical or medical device companies, involve new treatments and close monitoring of participants.
- Non-commercial studies, led by NHS hospitals, universities, or trial centres, are usually less intensive and may include surveys or observational research.

Who Runs the Research?

The Breckland Alliance Research Team works closely with the Regional Research Delivery Network (RRDN) and National Institute for Health and Research (NIHR) and delivers studies for commercial research companies. This means patients have access to a wide range of studies covering many different health conditions, all while staying close to home.

What Conditions Do We Cover?

The studies we're running change all the time as research evolves and older projects are completed. Currently, we're involved in studies related to:

- Menstrual migraines
- COPD and Asthma
- Cholesterol
- Diabetes

We're proud of the contribution our community has already made to healthcare research, and we remain committed to creating even more opportunities in the future. For example, some of our patients participated in RSV vaccine studies, helping pave the way for the vaccine to be rolled out nationally in 2024.

Some studies involve filling out a questionnaire or taking part in a focus group. Others might simply observe how well your current treatment is working. Every study is different, and participation is always voluntary.

Why Get Involved?

Clinical research helps improve healthcare for everyone. By taking part, you're contributing to the development of:

- New medicines
- Innovative medical devices
- Better ways of diagnosing or managing conditions

Research studies are important because they contribute to knowledge and progress on diseases and disorders. Patients who take part in research feel that they receive good quality care and are seen more often.

If you would like to help and take part in a study, please visit our website:

www.brecklandallianceresearch.co.uk

ANZAC Reflections

The Letter in the Bottle

By Chris O'Connor

Each year on April 25th, Australians pause to honour the thousands of men and women who have died in the wars we've fought since joining the British in the Boer War, all those years ago. It's a day of remembrance - ANZAC Day - when communities gather, lay wreaths, and reflect on those who never came home.

At the outbreak of World War I, Australia was still a young nation with a small population. Yet thousands volunteered to serve. Among them was Private Malcolm Neville, who enlisted in early 1916. His war records show he was discharged after just a month due to poor eyesight—but determined to serve, he re-enlisted a week later with another regiment.

Before leaving Australian shores, Neville wrote a heartfelt letter to his mother. He sealed it inside a wine bottle and cast it into the sea. The letter was signed:

"Somewhere at sea, August 15th, 1916."

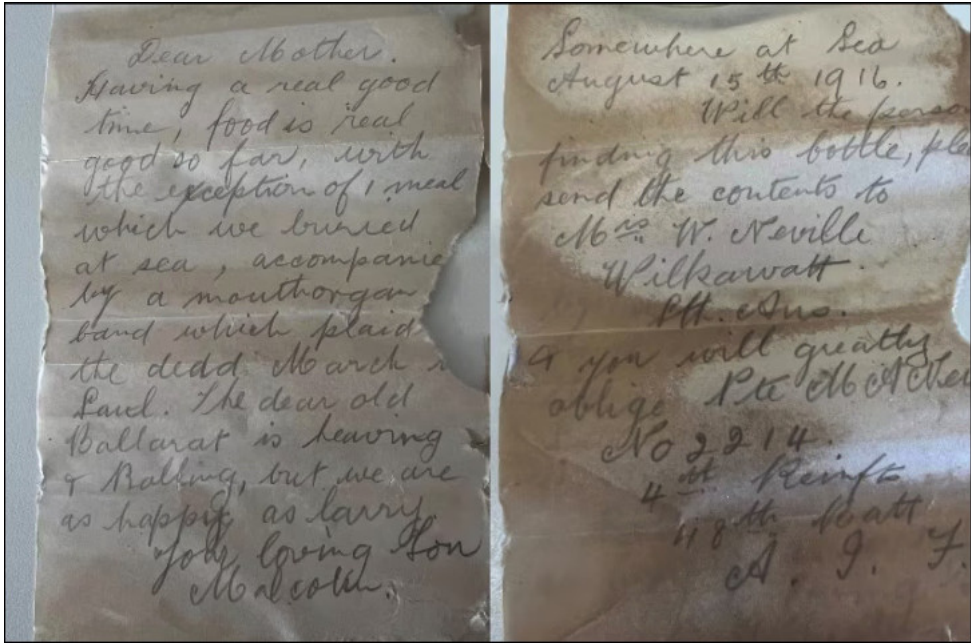
Just one month later, Private Neville was killed—swallowed by the horror of war in Europe. He was 28 years old.

In his letter, Neville told his mother the food onboard had been "really good," except for one final meal—buried at sea.

Amazingly, more than 100 years later, the bottle was discovered on the beach at Esperance, in southern Western Australia—and by someone with family connections to Neville. It's believed the bottle washed ashore years ago but was protected by the sand.

Since its discovery, the bottle has been traced to Neville's great-nephew. It will be kept by the family and preserved by the Australian War Memorial.

A message in a bottle. A voice from the past. Proof that memory endures. May Private Neville and his comrades rest in peace in Flanders Fields.



Norfolk Wildlife Trust Breckland Local Group

Last month Chris Durdin attracted a good turnout for his Norfolk Cranes Story. Everyone was very complimentary and found his talk extremely interesting.

If you want to see cranes, RSPB Lakenheath in winter is an ideal time and place.

On Wednesday 10th December 7.30pm at The

Methodist Centre, High Street, Watton. IP25 6AB, we have Aaron Brett-Miller talking about Life in UK Nature Reserves and Wildlife Sanctuaries abroad.

Norfolk born and bred, Aaron has done a variety of work, including gardening, volunteering with conservation groups, giving talks in schools, NT ranger at Blakeney, acting and taking guided tours in South Africa and Peru.

Seems highly qualified to keep us entertained! As always cost is £3 non members £2 members. There will be a raffle and seasonal refreshments.



A Celebrants Role

By Karen Weir
A funeral celebrants role. I have discovered that not everybody knows what a celebrant does. Firstly, celebrants are there to help and support the family of the bereaved. That's where it starts. A lot of people think it's just writing the eulogy, then reading it.
It's so much more than that.
It starts with meeting the family. Talking them through what's going to happen, seeing how they are dealing with the bereavement, supporting them so they have no fear of what's going to happen at the funeral service. Asking if they have any ideas or expectations.
Then it's my job to find out about the person who has died. This is done by asking questions, trying to get to know that person. What they liked, where they grew up, early life. This then helps me to create a fuller picture of that person.
There's music to choose, poems to suggest. A celebrant can add religious hymns or prayers into a service. It's a service which is chosen by the family to reflect their loved one.
It's also about working the funeral director. It's teamwork. Both celebrant and funeral director make sure the families needs are being met. Having a good working relationships with the funeral director and the crematorium is absolutely key.
A celebrant will write the eulogy using the information from the family. There is an order of service to plan if one is needed but you're not obliged to have one. Keeping in touch with the family, giving ongoing support and making sure the service is as they want it and reflects their loved one. Being able to listen is important too. Making sure the funeral director has all the details

ready for the funeral is also a celebrants job. On the day it's leading the service, wherever that may be taking place. Continuing to care for the family and friends of the deceased.
Unattended cremations are becoming more popular. But having a celebration of your loved one's life can be done after this, anywhere that brings happy memories or was a beloved place for your loved one. This kind of celebration can also be led by a celebrant.
I have been asked quite a lot by people how I am doing, what made me choose to go down this path. And I love to talk about the reason why and bringing the subject out into the open. If you want to know why, just ask me when you see me! This leads me on to 'living memorials'. This is you telling me your story. I use your words. You can decide what is said, and how. And this again saves your family thinking about which stories they want to tell and you could use this to say all your goodbyes and personal messages.
But what I think would be even better is if you sit as a family, going through stories and photos when you do this. It brings everyone together and you can have a happy time reminiscing about this and that, many 'oh my goodness do you remember this....' moments will no doubt be there. It's a varied and responsible role.
I end with a reading for you all.

A special person, a special face
A special someone we cannot replace
To hear your voice, to see your smile
To sit and talk with you a while
To be together in the same old way
Would be our greatest wish today
In our hearts you will always stay
Loved and remembered every day.

The Purple Community at the Inner Wheel

Our October meeting took a different format from usual as we invited friends to join us to hear a talk by Laura, a representative of the Purple Community Fund. This is a charity set up to help a poor community in the Philippines, supporting them with providing medical facilities, work opportunities and education and food for the children. We have been collecting ring-pulls from drinks cans for quite a time now as these are used by the ladies there to make an extraordinary range of jewellery, handbags, Christmas decorations and Laura was even wearing a dress using them. She had brought along a lot of stock and went home with considerably less as our members and guests were all clutching their purchases after a very enjoyable evening.
Inner Wheel worldwide is also supporting Orange the World which I mentioned last month. This is a United Nations initiative to eliminate violence and abuse against women and girls across the world. A group of us will be walking at 10.30 on Wednesday, 26th November, from the pink house opposite Tesco down the High Street, wearing or carrying something orange to draw attention to this horrific situation. We will finish at the weekly coffee morning at the Methodist Centre. Anyone wishing to join us, with or without anything orange, will be very welcome.
We will have our usual stall at the Christmas Market on the High Street on 30th November and hope the weather will cooperate this year. We are busy

packing up our parcels so there will be a present for everyone who gives us £1, all going to charity of course. Fingers crossed for a mild, dry day so there will be a good crowd enjoying themselves.
We start rehearsals next week for our Christmas lunchtime concert which is on Wednesday, 10th December at 11am. Tickets will be on sale at Adcocks at £7 to include your turkey roll and mincepies and there will be a raffle for a Christmas hamper. Darrin will be coming to help us all sing popular Christmas songs and carols and there will be Winter Wonderland themed poems and stories. Get your tickets early as this concert is always very popular and our thanks to Adcocks for being such good "ticket agents".
Jenny Simons(Club Correspondent)



Watton & Saham Flood Action Group

The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs has released that over £10 million in water company fines will be directed to restore local waterways through 51 projects aimed at cleaning up rivers, lakes and seas.
Anglian Water, South West Water, Thames Water, Yorkshire Water and United Utilities were forced to pay millions after causing pollution incidents between April 2022 and October 2023.
Through the Water Restoration Fund, the money from fines will fund active measures such as rewilding, restoring floodplains and assessments of water quality. There are 10 projects in the East of England which range from £85,674 to Great Ouse Blue Connections who are developing plans for wetland restoration to £1,185,957 for the Upper Witham River and Floodplain Restoration Project.
The River Witham is damaged by pollution incidents and historic modification. In summer and autumn of next year, the Wild Trout Trust will be restoring 880 metres of river and four hectares of riparian land – their biggest project to date, realigning the river channel, bypassing a weir, and reconnecting the floodplain.
Healthy riverways are vital to ecosystems and help protect us from flooding. In 2022, Watton Brook was classified as moderate due to water industry pollution (sewage and ammonia) and



agricultural pollution.
For queries regarding local flood action please contact our chairman: liz.whitcher@yahoo.co.uk
Written by Tomos Hutchings

Methodist Centre Tuesdays@2



Some of the Tuesdays@2 Group showing the Christmas tree decorations made at the November session. Our next meeting, at the Methodist Centre on the High Street, will be a Festive Concert by the Singing for Pleasure Group followed by Christmas Afternoon Tea and Carol Singing, on Tuesday 9th December @ 2pm. All proceeds are for the Anthony Nolan Trust. We look forward to welcoming new faces.

Ashill Memory Cafe

By the time you read this we may have already celebrated our 1 year anniversary of the Ashill Memory cafe. Where has that time gone? The months seemed to have whizzed by and we've fitted in such a lot of activities and entertainment for our members.
Suffice to say, judging by the number of people we now support in Ashill and surrounding villages, this is a much needed and worthwhile cause.
When you start up a club you never know how it's going to go and I would be lying if I said I wasn't apprehensive about all the admin etc that had to be done to be able to open the memory cafe. There is a lot! But thankfully all the way along I've had fantastic support from

all our volunteers and sponsors that have helped shape the service we can now provide. At present we have 27 members and 10 volunteers (with 3 more potentially starting in the new year)
Our aim was always to provide a friendly and comfortable environment where people could come to access information, get advice, companionship and just be with others that are in the same boat as they are. From the feedback I believe we are managing to do all these things. There are a lot of people who, unfortunately don't have family / friends supporting them and through our club we aim to bridge that gap.
Looking back on the year we've done a lot ! From pub quizzes , 10 pin bowling , afternoon tea , chair exercises , bingo sessions, craft sessions etc etc. You get the drift!
You won't be bored if you join the team ! We have also been entertained with a variety of

musical acts. All brilliant in their own way:- Ian Clews , Richard Winch , Elvis (aka Simon Goldsmith) and of course the fab "Pot of gold Shanty crew".
We have had an array of health care professionals join us too:- Admiral nurse , Community Dementia Support Advisors and Community Enablers as well as Breckland Welfare representatives (to name but a few)who have been able to support in their own individual ways.
Our hope for the future which I think we would all agree on as volunteers, is to keep doing the good work we are doing , keep enjoying being part of what essentially feels like our own little family and keep providing for those in need.
Thank you as always to everyone who supports us but mostly to the volunteers as we know without you all we couldn't run the club.
See you in the new year
Gill Foster(Chair)

HOME CHURCH

info@homechurchwatton.com

UPCOMING

EVENTS

SUN

SERVICE 10.30 - 12.00

Sunday Service

FRI

FRIENDSHIP 10.00 - 12.00

TUES

BIG HOUSE 10.00 - 12.00

Mother and Toddler Group

WED - THURS

HOME GROUPS

Wednesday evening Thursday afternoon

1ST & 3RD

PRAYER MEETING 11

Wednesday of the month

GET IN TOUCH

homechurchwatton.com

The Royal Electric Picture Palace

1913 - Watton's First Flicker of Electric Wonder

One of my greatest joys is when, after years of keeping my eyes open and gathering fragments of forgotten detail, enough pieces finally come together to tell a story that might otherwise be lost to time. This is one such story.

It may surprise you, as it did me, to discover that the townsfolk of Watton, were able to enjoy to the most up-to-date form of mass entertainment even in the year before the onset of the First World War, thanks to Mr Frederick Garner who owned and ran a Motor Cycle and Carriage Works in Norwich Road near to the railway station and opposite the Picture Palace.

The arrival and opening of The Royal Electric Picture Palace, as the cinema was called, was first announced in the trade magazine, "The Kinematograph And Lantern Weekly". That periodical published, on June 19th 1913, a short article under "Theatres Opening" that described the event:

"Watton, an isolated place of 2,000 inhabitants is practically self-contained, and the opening of the Royal Picture Palace by Mr. Fred Garner last Wednesday, elicited much enthusiasm on the part of the townsfolk, who are highly delighted at having a permanent place of entertainment in their midst."

At the inaugural performance, many influential residents were present, Watton has hitherto known no other illumination save that of gas and oil lamps, and in consequence, the electric light used to illuminate the interior and exterior of the picture palace has caused no small amount of comment."

In today's world, where electric lighting is taken for granted, it's difficult to imagine the impact such an event must have had. The opening took place close to the longest day of the year - perhaps not by coincidence - when the lingering twilight of June might have softened the effect of electric light outside. But inside the Picture Palace, the experience must have been extraordinary.

Thanks to that lingering twilight, the journey to the cinema need not have been made in the complete darkness that usually enveloped the town - broken only by the faint pools of light cast by the gas and oil lamps. What were they going to watch?

The Downham Market Gazette of Saturday September 20th gives us a good report on what was seen and what attendances were like:

"Visitors to the Wayland Show were agreeably surprised to find such a pleasing and up-to-date place of amusement provided for them on Wednesday, when that interesting local legend, "The Babes in the Wood." was dramatised in colour; and a splendid picture was presented, together with the Merton pageant, "King Henry VIII." to admiring crowds. During the past week some fine views were shown of the "Siege of Mafeking."

The humorous element is well to the front in such films as "Mrs. Tweedledum, Suffragette," and "Alkali Ike in Jayville" The seamy side of life was exemplified in "Two Little Pals." "The Miser" was a picture full of pathos and feeling, in which the father, who first discards his son, yet in the end finds

paternal affection overcomes his greed.

A great deal can be learnt from these latest places of amusement, and in "One Life for Another" we see "that blood is thicker than water;" and the scene is true to life. Some interesting films are promised for this weekend, including "The Babes in the Wood."

Fred Garner must have been happy that his investment was starting to pay off.

I have an image showing the cinema hut (bottom right) as it once stood alongside Betty Hogg's Lane the footpath that runs from Norwich Road, opposite Bretts Stonemason, through to Priory Road. As the photo shows, the building later became the British Legion Club, and you can clearly see the ticket window where patrons would have queued for entry. Wanting to bring the scene more vividly to life, I approached Rosalie Gibb—the talented artist and author behind the occasional Did You Know features in the paper—and asked if she might create an artist's impression of the cinema based on the available details. I must say, she did a wonderful job, and I'm very grateful to Rosie for this evocative image.

Thanks to the discovery of a lease from 1915, it is now possible to say what the inside of the Palace was like. The document was found in the boxes of deeds and leases etc. that the solicitors Ward Gethin Archer kindly allowed me to save when they moved to Dereham, and we can say with confidence what made the Royal Electric Picture Palace so popular.

The lease was made April 24th, 1915 between Frederick Garner, Coach Builder, of Norwich Road, and Gordon Arthur Fickling (Pictured bottom left), a Market Gardener, whose nursery business was Belle Vue Nurseries just past Loch Neaton on the Dereham Road.

Gordon Fickling was to pay rent broken down as £7 per year for the building and £45 per year for machinery, fixtures, and fittings. This was a total of £52 per year to be payable at £4 per month, the first being due on 31st May. I think we can say the cinema was ready to go based on the schedule of fixtures and fittings contained in the lease:

Seating was made up of 72 Pegamoid tip-up chairs – Pegamoid being a synthetic leather fabric, 18 plush tip-up chairs (most expensive seats at front perhaps?), nine rows of Pegamoid tip-up forms, four rows of wooden forms (the cheap seats?). This made up seating for perhaps 130 people, and there was also a Piano with electric light and stool.

Also included were three exit lamps, a desk, an accumulator and one lamp in the office, a flagpole and flag, one stove. Also in the Palace itself, there were eight electric lamps and three switches along with curtains to windows and door, two pails, one door mat, sheet and drapery. Outside lighting appears to be two brackets and six holders.

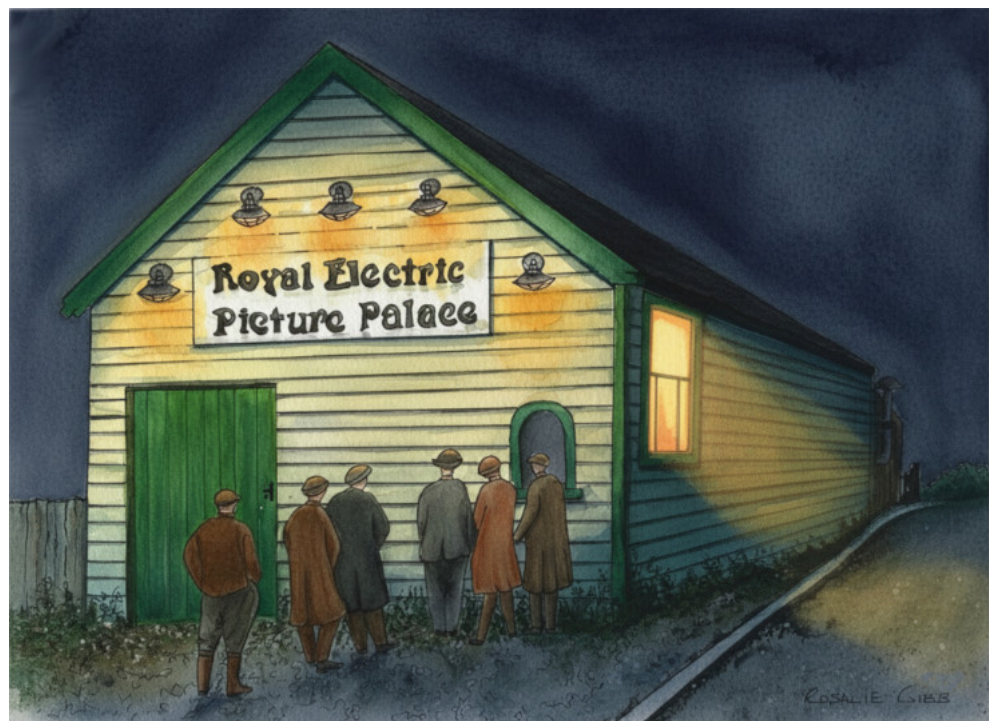
Obviously there must have been a projector of some description and the schedule lists the following items: Iron Operating Box with Wallundaw Ark with 2 spool boxes Switch Board and all switches. Eight winding spools and one electric lamp.

It seems the 'Iron Operating Box' was the projector mechanism and the 'Wallundaw Ark' was an arc lamp commonly used as a very bright form of illumination – though I am unable to find any mention of this make. The 2 spool boxes would have carried the film being shown and the 8 winding spools were for rewinding the film before returning it to the suppliers. All of this was no doubt in the projection room.

George Jessup told me that Gordon Fickling had been one of the first projectionists together with Joe Swan, and the projector or "Cinematograph engine" as it was described in the lease, was housed towards the rear of the hall in a suspended wooden room. This was accessed by a ladder that was removed once the projectionist was installed, so that it would not obscure the view for the audience.

One night, when Jack Roberts, Joe Swan's assistant, was in the box, the ladder was removed without his knowledge. When he left the box without looking, he fell several feet to the floor causing a broken collar bone!

The Palace in its entirety was powered by a sixty volt dynamo driven by a 'Crypto Engine', housed in what was called the Engine House (likely at the rear of the building as can be seen in the photo) which also



housed one switch and a water tank. I think we can take a good guess at what the Crypto Engine and Dynamo looked like from the Autocar advert from 1913 sourced from Grace's Guide To British Industrial History website. All the switches mentioned would have been knife switches such as are often seen in Frankenstein films. What a sight it must have all presented!

Of course, at this time, the shows were a mix of 'magic lantern' slide shows and silent films, both accompanied by Alice Spencer the cinema's regular

pianist. Judging by the advertisements in the papers, the Palace only opened infrequently after the start of the War and interestingly, the lease was made in 1915 - not quite 2 years after opening. Perhaps war was responsible? Did Fred Garner have war work to do or was he called up? If you can shed any light I should be pleased to hear from you.

In any event in late 1933 a new 'Talkies' cinema opened in Wayland Hall, which now houses the Museum 4 Watton, and they have a booklet researched and written by George Collins that tells the story of the Hall.

And then in 1937, a second, purpose built cinema called 'The Regal' opened which quickly became the main home to the 'flicks' of the day. But even the building of that wasn't without some controversy as reported by the Lynn Advertiser on Friday 25 September 1936

WATTON. A SECOND CINEMA At a meeting of the Wayland R.D.C. on Monday plans were passed for the erection of a new cinema on Norwich-rd.. Watton, for the Rostock Circuit cinema company. Miss L. M. Reeve said that Watton already had a locally-run cinema, and it seemed unfair that other people should be allowed to come in and cut out the local effort. Could not the council take some action to prevent it? - The Chairman pointed out that, as long as the plans conformed with the bye-laws, the district council could not prevent the building being erected;

and if the legal requirements were met the magistrates could not refuse to licence it.

As for the poor old Royal Electric Picture Palace, Eileen Ward remembered in the January 2017 edition of The Wayland News, "... in its early days it was Watton's first cinema owned by Fred Garner who had an engineering business on the opposite side of the road. Later it was used by Watton Town Band as a practice room, then the British Legion and finally as a vegetable packing depot. The pathway next to it was known as 'Picture Palace Lane' and followed down what is Priory Road now, as far as Wayland

Wood. At one time it was called 'Betty Hogg's Lane' but [I have] no idea who Betty Hogg was."

All that remains today is an unnamed footpath - and the echo of Watton's first electric wonder.

Article by Julian horn



Watton Evening WI

The November meeting of Watton Evening WI was it's Annual Meeting when we remind ourselves of the year past and confirm the finances. We also elect our committee and President for the coming year.

Pat Holdcroft, who for many years has been a loyal member of the committee has stood down whilst the present committee members were re-elected and are joined by Suzanne Cairns.

Watton Evening WI has joined in many community events this year, VE Day, Carnival and the Festive Market and has been involved with making poppies for the wonderful display at the Methodist Church in the High Street for Remembrance Sunday.

A wide variety of subjects at meetings such as craft workshops, murder mysteries, Bollywood dancing, a night at the Movies, a visit to Narborough museum and discussions on CPR and Defibrillator training has offered members much to think about and do. A visit to the Southern Comfort Steamboat at Hoveton saw the wide variety of bird life and land views the Broads have to offer.

Our various clubs, Craft Group, Lunch Club and Book Club have met regularly throughout the year and this winter a Games afternoon will also be available.

During December we will be meeting twice, first at the Sport Centre for an afternoon of fun and refreshments whilst at our regular meeting we will discover the History of Christmas and, of course, have one or two fun games.

In the new year we will again be meeting on the second Thursday of each month in the Methodist Centre, High Street, Watton at 7.30pm when visitors and new members will be very welcome to join us.

For further details please contact Margaret Herbert 01953 882269.

Swaffham & District u3a

A BUMPER MONTHLY MEETING

A record number of 125 members, some of them new, attend November's talk. The room was buzzing with the sound of people meeting friends and enjoying a cup of tea before the talk commenced.

RAF AND NATO

The speaker this month was Charles Howard-Vyse, who recently retired from a successful international career in the Royal Air Force. Charles talked about his career in the RAF and with NATO including insights into the changing face of defence in Europe and beyond in these current turbulent times. Charles pointed out the NATO is not a fighting force but a political organisation which has the power to recruit the help from fellow members whenever it is felt necessary.

Members will enjoy a Christmas Party on 4th December. As well as copious amounts of food, the musical entertainment will be provided from within our membership.

There will be no meeting in January. We start again on 5th February 2026 when our speaker will be Henry Kilvert who will be talking about the work of YANA – You Are Not Alone – Rural Mental Health Support.

Anyone is welcome to join the u3a. The only criterion to join is that you are no longer in full-time employment and have the time to take part in the activities on offer. We meet at Holme Hale Village Hall on the first Thursday of each month. Doors open at 9.45am for socialising and the meeting starts promptly at 10.30am finishing by 12 noon. Further details on all the activities covered by Swaffham & District u3a are available on our website: <https://swaffham.u3asite.uk/>

Wayland Men's Shed

Charity No. 1213606

I would firstly like to congratulate Steve Worth (on the left in the picture right), one of our members who managed to complete a challenging one mile walk for every day of October. This was no mean feat for Steve as he suffers from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) the name for a group of lung conditions that cause breathing difficulties. I know what a tremendous achievement this was for him as I joined him for one of his walks and saw how he struggled with his breathing. He was raising awareness and funds for Pancreatic Cancer UK. He is still collecting his sponsorship but did raise £154 from a raffle of a hamper generously donated by Tesco.

Several members of the shed attended the ceremony at the War memorial on Sunday 9th November and a wreath was presented on behalf of all members of the Men's Shed by one of our members who had served in the Royal Marines. Our computer workshop is busy with a number of projects. They are repairing donated computers and printers, making them available for anyone who is a deserving cause or at a small cost to cover replacement parts. Any machines that cannot be repaired are scrapped and any proceeds used to support the running of the shed. Please contact us and speak to one of the team if you have need of a computer or printer and think that we could help. The Shanty group will be entertaining the residents of Dorrington House on 19th November and also have more appearances in the coming months.

On the social front, a coach will be taking 40 members of the shed to Cromer on 3rd December to enjoy a day there with a visit to the Cromer Pier show. Also, in December we will be having our annual Christmas meal at Broom Hall.

That is all for this edition but I hope to report further in the next one.

If you want any further information on Wayland Men's Shed please visit our Website www.waylandmensshed.co.uk or contact :

Malcolm Trayhorn, Chairman & Social Secretary
Tel: 07729993163



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- **Friday: Barclays (with two community bankers available)**

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Please note: All community bankers take a dedicated lunch break from 1pm to 2pm each day.

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A Young Writer: Magic Floor Productions 'It finds you'

Last month I was invited to Wayland Academy to watch a play, written by local Norfolk children based on their experiences with county lines and promote awareness of how drugs find you, not the other way around. The title 'It finds you' is a direct quote from just one of the children they interviewed.

The play is about a boy who is struggling and is approached by dealers who pretend to befriend and gain his trust – so they can use

him. Drug dealers in Norfolk have been known to use children as young as 7 years old for their own means. The music was chosen by children, and it had many youthful elements that allowed the pupils to relate to the story instead of being too serious like other awareness strategies. 'It finds you' was supported by Breckland District Council, as well as having local centres and police involvement to make the play authentic and powerful. Magic Floor Productions has said, 'We know that it's happening in the local area and is on our doorstep. We want kids and parents to be aware of it and theatre is still a great medium in today's throwaway society of memes and TikTok's. We absolutely love doing it as we know just one performance can keep a family together, keep kids safer, and even

save a life. It is very humbling to be able to tell the children's stories.'

I left Wayland Academy in 2018, so it was nice to see some familiar faces and to see the improvements to the hall. Pupils poured into the assembly with anticipation as they did not know what to expect. However I must say, the pupils watched intently and I witnessed a range of emotions. Hopefully they went home thinking about how 'It finds you'.

Thank you to community early help worker, Michelle for my invitation and to the Matthew Project who also attended. I was joined by my colleague Jo, Watton Food Hub Supervisor who found the play inspiring and emotive. And of course, many thanks to Magic Floor Productions for supporting the efforts against county lines. Written by Tomos Hutchings

Munich 1958

This month's speaker, at the West Norfolk Aviation Society, was our very own David Allen, a veteran stalwart of the WNAS, retired teacher and airline operations officer. His talk was a recap of the Munich Air Disaster on the 06 February 1958. For the younger amongst us this was disaster that befell the returning Manchester United(MU) football team from a successful European Cup(aka Champions League) quarter final in Hungary. This was the first time a UK team, managed by MU legend Sir Matt Busby, had been successful in Europe and the team were the superstars of the time, known because of



their young average age, as Busby's Babes. This flight was making a refuelling stop at Munich and the aircraft an Airspeed Ambassador (nee Elizabethan), a twin piston engined (propellers) airliner of the time, operated by British European Airways. The flight contained the team, support staff and journalists. After a successful refuelling, the aircraft made 3 attempts to take off, the last of which ended with the aircraft careering off the end of the runway into a tree, a house and a shed, and breaking apart. 23

of the 44 people on board died including 8 of the creme of British football talent. So we come to the suspected cause, which when simplified, broke down into: was it ice on the wing (Germany Investigator Theory), or slush in front of the wheels causing

retardation so great the aircraft was not able to get airborne? It all probability it was a combination of events as these things always are, including the above plus an urge to get going, pressure from a running out air traffic time slot, two captains on the flight deck (too many chiefs?), mechanical issues (which had caused the first two attempts to be abandoned). In truth, we will never know for sure as back then there were no voice or data recorders, so only witness information and supposition could be used.

What is not in doubt is that many lives, dreams and careers were destroyed that day which lives on in infamy. David passed on many small details that were not common knowledge but which space precludes me from adding. So thanks to David for an interesting and informative evening. For details of our Society and our meetings, please Google us!

Watton Hockey Club

BINGO NIGHT

Watton Sports Centre
December 11th 2025
Doors open 6.30pm
Eyes down 7.30pm

Everyone welcome

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Deadline is 4pm on the 12th of the month preceding publication and that is the last date and time that copy will be considered for inclusion. Arrival of your copy before deadline does not guarantee inclusion. You can contact Julian by telephone on 01953) 571 990 or by email to: wattontimes@gmail.com

All views expressed in articles in the Watton & Wayland Times are those of the contributors and not necessarily the views of the Editor or Printers. While every care and effort has been taken to ensure accuracy, neither of them accept responsibility for errors or omissions.

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December - What's On at The Queens Hall Norwich Road, Watton

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Pilates - 4th, 11th and 18th: 18:15 - 19:30
Line Dancing - 3rd, 10th and 17th: 19:00 - 21:00
CLM Fitness Dance Classes - 2nd and 16th 18:45 - 19:45
Antiques Fair - 14th
Ju Jitsu - 5th and 19th, 17:30.
Medium - 12th, 19:00
Mind, Body and Soul - 13th, 10:00 - 15:00
Inner Wheel Lunchtime Concert - 10th, 11:00 - 13:00

For more information check out the website queenshall-watton.co.uk

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

HOLY CROSS CHURCH CASTON

SUNDAY, 21st DECEMBER 2025
6.30 pm

followed by mince pies and mulled wine
PARKING AT CHURCH FARM
EVERYONE WELCOME

Richmond Park Golf Club Ladies Section



Pictured are Some of our Trophy winners who were available on the day. From left to right Maureen Flack, Granny Trophy, Julie Ellis, Rose Bowl & Captain's Cup with Hilary Sutton, Anne Bell, Handicap Trophy, Captain Rosie Sutterby, Secretary's Salver, Claire Carney, Heather Piper Trophy (for most improved player) and Cherrie Lawn, Cherrie Cup. With winter bearing down on us the Ladies are entering a quieter period of play, competition wise, following our trophy presentation after the AGM. Some hardy souls still play 18 holes despite the elements with those longer in the tooth venturing out to play 9. New players are always welcome.

The North Pole Roll® Christmas Fayre rolls into Saham Toney on 7 December



Wells Cole Community Centre will transform into a festive wonderland on Sunday 7 December (11.00am-4.00pm) for The North Pole Roll® Christmas Fayre - a family day packed with local makers, seasonal food and drink, and two magical photo experiences with Santa. Shoppers can browse Christmas craft and gift stalls, enjoy hot chocolate and mulled wine, or a little tippie from the licensed bar, and try limited-edition festive treats from local bakers and caterers. A tombola and charity raffle will raise funds for East Anglia's Children's Hospices (EACH, charity no. 1069284), while all event proceeds support Saham Toney Village Hall (Wells Cole Community Centre, charity no. 272488). A highlight is the Magical Grotto sponsored by Homeworks Estate Agents, Dereham: children can meet Santa and Mrs Claus, receive a small gift, and get a digital photo, with optional on-the-day prints and keepsakes (baubles, mugs, keyrings and more). For four-legged family members there's the Mrs Santa Paws experience - a festive portrait on the wintry sofa set, with the same on-site printing options. Families with both

children and dogs can book the two experiences back-to-back. At midday, the event will also unveil "The North Pole Roll" - a brand-new festive hot baguette created with Watton's newest bakery. Only 100 will be available, and one may even hide a "Golden Ticket" for a special prize. The fayre is proudly supported by Platinum Sponsor Kronch Dog Food and a growing network of local backers. Sponsorship opportunities remain (from £25 Community Supporter to Bronze, Silver and Gold tiers), with all supporters recognised on the event's "Tree of Thanks". Organiser Sharon Mackie said: "This is a day to bring everyone together - families, neighbours and their four-pawed friends - while raising funds for our hall and EACH. Come for the stalls, stay for the magic, and make some Christmas memories." **BOOKING:** Advance booking is open now for Santa's Grotto and Mrs Santa Paws via: <https://qrco.de/NorthPoleRoll> **ENQUIRIES, STALLS & SPONSORSHIP PLEASE RING:** Sharon 07565 969826



RBL Poppies Dereham

Finished display at RBL Garden Dereham. Thanks also to Dragonfly Watton & Watton Library for collecting the donations of wool. Jean Chubbock



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