



Bystanders Can Be Lifesavers

Watton Evening WI has now arranged a series of free CPR training sessions to be held on Saturday February 7th at the Methodist Centre, High Street, Watton. Numbers are, of course, limited so please contact Ruth Stapleton, Watton Evening WI Secretary, to book your place as soon as possible. Tel. 01953 883190

A Happy New Year . . .

To readers, advertisers and everyone who contributes to the paper's content, production and distribution - especially the paper girls and boys - thank you.

You may remember that I mentioned last month how the support the paper has been getting has allowed me to experiment with different aspects of the paper. This month's experiment is bigger than usual . . . literally.

I have noticed (nothing to do with my advancing years and retreating eyesight) that the paper is not as easy to read as I thought it was and I think it may help if I can increase the font size a bit.

The change does come at a cost of course. I need more time as I learn how layout is affected as each article will need around fifteen per cent more space than before, so please get your copy in early - I laid this page out four days before this month's deadline.

I may have to add pages - 4 at a time - and that can be expensive or I can compensate by reduced picture sizes or number of pictures per article to keep us on the financial straight and narrow. But first I want to know, is this a welcome move? Please let me know by email, word of mouth or letter.

So, on with the new look and the New Year - I sincerely wish you the best possible. Julian



Rotary Club Salutes Booksellers Of Thompson

Anybody who regularly drives along the Thetford Road past Thompson cannot fail to be aware of the posters that appear 3 times a year promoting the Grand Second-Hand Book Sale at Thompson Community Hall.

The book sale is the brainchild of Keith Mace and Caroline Archer, who have been running the charitable event for 10 years. In October Watton Rotary Club were delighted to recognise their efforts by awarding them our annual Group Community Award at a club meeting. Every year we make two awards for exceptional service to the people of Watton and surrounding areas; an individual award and a group award. We hope to present the individual award at a later date but were delighted to present this

year's group award to Caroline and Keith.

They have organised the Grand Second-Hand Book Sale for 10 years, with all proceeds going to charity. For 3 years the book sale was held in Griston Church, but it outgrew the space available and moved to Thompson Village Hall, where it has been held for the past 7 years. Hundreds of books, both fiction and non-fiction are donated from various sources, enabling the book sale to be held 3 times a year.

The Grand Second-Hand Book Sale raises money for Griston Church, Thompson Church and Thompson Community Hall. To date some £30,000 has been raised, with many volunteers selling a huge number of books of all types and sizes. In fact not only

are books sold at the event, but also delicious cakes, plants and other items.

After 10 years at the helm, Caroline and Keith stepped down after November's Sale, but it is hoped the book sales will continue for many years to come. In presenting the Group Community Award, Rotary Club President Andrew Barwood said 'The Grand Second-Hand Book Sale has been very popular for a long time, an important social event besides raising funds for local causes. Immense thanks are due to Caroline and Keith and their hardworking team of volunteers.'

Photo by Dr Michael Harvey, and shows our President, Andrew Barwood, presenting the award to Keith Mace and Caroline Archer.

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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Watton Evening WI

It has been another busy month for our WI as we have had lots of events going on! The first was the tombola stall at the Festive Market in Watton on 30th November when some of our hardy ladies braved the cold to sell tickets! There were lots of prizes to be won and lots of people attended.

Then we had the Christmas event which was held at Watton Sports and Recreational Centre where we were offered a superb buffet and a fun time which was enjoyed by all. We all went home with a raffle prize too!

The following week we had our final meeting of the year and we all contributed to a party buffet which was very tasty. We delved into the meaning of many Christmas traditions and how they were started, such as the greenery of Christmas (Holly, Ivy and Mistletoe), the Christmas tree with the fairy on top, Panto and Santa Claus!



We also played games, and of course there was the Secret Santa too! Our next meeting will be on 8th January and we look forward to welcoming new members, so if you are interested please come along to

our meeting which starts at 7.30pm and is held at the Methodist Church Hall in Watton High Street. If you would like more information please contact our president Margaret Herbert on 01953 882269.

Managing Reedbeds for Bitterns

Thirty years ago, RSPB Lakenheath Fen was created to provide a sanctuary for the increasingly rare Bittern, a beautifully patterned and very well camouflaged species of heron. At the time, only 11 booming males were left in the UK (in 1997) and they were close to becoming extinct on our isles without help. This was because there was very little good-quality reedbed habitat available for them- they need reedbeds to be managed on rotation so that there are always reeds of a variety of ages and densities to suit their different needs.

Bitterns will use newly cut areas to forage for food in. In common with other heron species their diet is very varied- they will eat fish, frogs, toads, insects (especially large ones), small birds, newts and rodents. They also need denser, drier areas to nest and roost in. Adding channels and pools of open water near these drier areas provide foraging space for mother Bitterns, who will take on all of the care and rearing of their chicks. Because they raise them single-handedly, when they have eggs to incubate or young chicks to keep an eye on, they don't like to go far from

their nest site.

This variety of habitat only comes about through active management of the reedbed- if areas of reed are left without intervention, within a few years they dry out as tree saplings (especially willow) grow within them and dry the soil out. Old, dead reeds from previous years also build up and as the conditions become drier, they suit other plants such as nettles and brambles more which can slowly take over. When the habitat is lost, not just Bitterns but other reedbed specialists like Bearded tits also lose out, and the area would no longer be suitable for Marsh harriers, Harvest mice or Reed warblers.

At Lakenheath Fen we contribute to this management every winter- once the nesting season for birds is finished, can be sure we will not disturb any birds unable to leave the area while we work. As I write this in December, work is ongoing and will be into January and February. Our weekly work parties do most of the labour, made up of volunteers and our two wardens Henry and Haydn. They go into areas of reed and remove willow and other woody vegetation (sometimes poplar and alder too) to keep the reedbed open. Ideally, they target these saplings when they are young as it saves a lot of work compared to waiting to tackle a larger tree years later! Often, with a larger

specimen it will grow back so return visits are needed. We also pay a local contractor to clear ditches and sluices with heavier machinery like an excavator.

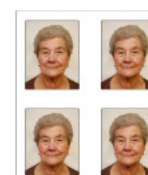
We use some of this cut wood from work parties to construct log piles in our woodland areas to benefit bugs and smaller birds, as well as toads and newts, who all may use them to find food and shelter. However, recently we have begun to sell surplus wood (we can only make so many log piles!) to visitors to help raise funds for the reserve. This wood spends at least a year being seasoned in an old barn on site, before being sold as kindling or larger logs. This wood is local and very sustainable- it grows back almost as quickly as we can cut it! If you have a log fire or wood-burner at home, you can pick up small or large bags of logs or kindling from the Visitor Centre during opening hours for £6-£12. We also offer a discount for reusing your hessian sack from us too, as it saves us buying more.

With best wishes for a happy and healthy year ahead- hopefully with some time for you to spend outdoors and amongst nature when you can.

Heidi Jones (Visitor Experience Officer) and the rest of the team at RSPB Lakenheath Fen.

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The Wayland Partnership News

We had a successful day at the Watton Christmas Market, despite our gazebo being blown over by a gust of wind and severely damaged. All our plans for pretty lights and an attractive stall went with it! Fortunately, the weather stayed fine and we managed with an open stall, selling out of tombola prizes very quickly. It was a lovely afternoon and great to see so many people out in the High Street enjoying the festivities. Many thanks to Lorren and the team for organising the event. A great success.

Our exciting news for January is that Andy Reid author of A Market Town through Time: Watton, Norfolk, is to give a talk on the history of Watton as a fundraiser for the Partnership, on January 29th at the Methodist Centre, 6.30 for 7pm. Tickets are £7 a head and can be booked or obtained from Wayland House. Contact details below. We will be offering a cuppa and some cake during the evening. If you are new to the town, Watton has a fascinating history and this an opportunity to learn more about the place where you live and maybe understand a bit more about what shaped it. Did you know we had a cinema and where it was? What about the railway, now long gone? Or the huge markets which took place each week? Further back, do you know how old some of the properties in the High Street really are and what they were used for? If you are a long term resident, everyone enjoys a bit of memory lane or maybe finding out about things you never knew from the distant past. Andy will have books on sale at the event. We look forward to seeing you on 29th.

While on the subject of history, we now have several of the village histories back in print and are working to complete the rest. We also have copies of the Impact of World War One in hardback and soft back available.

And in March, date to be confirmed, we will have some fascinating film shows by Julian Horn on RAF Watton

DRAGONFLY

We will have a couple of weeks at the beginning of January when we will close the gallery for stocktaking and take down the Christmas displays. We have plans for new exhibitions and an art competition, as well as working with the junior school to display the work of their pupils. More details will be available soon.

We will be planning new workshops. If there is a craft skill you would like to learn please contact us and we can see what we can put on or we can point you in the direction of someone who can help you.

A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR AND A HEALTHY AND PROSPEROUS 2026 TO EVERYONE IN WAYLAND

CONTACT DETAILS.

Wayland House email: officeawaylandpartnership@gmail.com
Phone: 01953 880204
Dragonfly Gallery email: dragonflygallerywayland@gmail.com
Phone: 01953 880205 or 880204



‘Chitting’ potatoes in egg cartons (Picture from RHS)

the shed/garage and finding all those tools we replaced when we couldn't find the originals. We can clean, sharpen and oil both lots! Now try to arrange the tools. Posh people have shadow boards so that it's immediately obvious what's out. These people are the ones who will already have everything ready for spring anyway. A few large hooks will deal with a lot of tools and if you inherited an old cabinet the drawers and cupboards will come into their own. Failing all that put up a shelf if you have room and try to keep it tidy. So now it's all clean and tidy but looks a bit flat. Now is a good time to take stock and plan for some planting for winter. Look around while you're out and about and see what you envy in other people's gardens. There are some quite spectacular plants now. A small tree is winter-flowering cherry (Prunus x subhirtella 'Autumnalis'). It's a lovely shape and very small. I believe the ultimate size is 6 x 3m but how long it takes to get there I don't know – probably 10 years (which is the normal time-scale given for ultimate sizes). Other trees at their best in January tend to have eye-catching bark such as the Tibetan cherry (Prunus serrula) which looks as though it's been polished. It's a lovely conker colour but is best for a larger garden as it gets to 6 x 5m and needs to be fairly mature before the bark gets a good shine.



Acer griseum (above) is another tree grown for its bark. The common name is paperbark maple. This is better for a small garden, slowly reaching to 5 x 4m. Like most maples its leaves have brilliant autumn colour then once they're gone the bark develops shaggy chestnut coloured flakes that curl back from the grey-ish bark. Although good for a small garden it is a woodland tree so is happier with others, rather than on its own. A very popular shrub grown for its shape is the corkscrew hazel (Corylus avellana 'Contorta') with the

wonderful twisted stems. Grow this at the back of the border where it will shine in winter but it's boring when in full leaf. Keep it pruned as if it's happy it will grow like Topsy. It will be fine in a large pot and this will keep it under control. There are dogwoods (Cornus varieties) for coloured stems but again, need room.

There are plants that flower such as the winter-flowering jasmine (Jasminum nudiflorum) that will clothe fences but try it through evergreen shrubs where you will get the pretty yellow flowers but the boring leaves later in the year will disappear in the other foliage. Mahonias will flower from now until March and the recommended one is Mahonia x media 'Lionel Fortescue'. It is upright with a strong scent. It should be pruned at 2 x 2m to take out some of the oldest stems close to the ground. Then, of course, is good old Viburnum tinus with its pink or white flowers. Clematis 'Freckles' and 'Winter Beauty' flower well through the winter but need a bit of shelter. New varieties come along just about every year so it's worth checking out the growers when you have a bit of time. They will be at the main shows as well. I would avoid 'Armandii' as although it flowers beautifully in winter it needs severe pruning. I did hear of one person who gave up with the secateurs and attacked his with a chainsaw. Closer to the ground there are bulbs that flower now: snowdrops, early daffodils, Iris unguicularis will start now in milder conditions and carry on until spring.

If you get stir-crazy like I do there are things you can be doing to get the optimism going. Plant sweet peas in pots. I know the received wisdom is to do this in October but you can carry on virtually until outdoor planting. Get the spuds ordered and start chitting them. All you need are egg cartons and somewhere cool and light (frost free) then when it comes to March or April they should have sturdy dark green shoots. Check out seed catalogues and see if you can plant some veg seeds indoors. If you have a propagator you could experiment even more. This is fun if a propagator came via Santa. Try to keep the seed sowing within bounds as you don't want to be throwing away leggy seedlings next month and neither do you want to be looking at a small amount of space and a forest of seedlings.

So maybe January isn't so bad after all. But do remember, unless there's at least a foot of snow on the ground you'll still need to keep weeding.

In Your Garden With Lotta Potts

A very happy New Year to all.

Dates to remember:

1st New Year's Day. Look forward to a new season

5th Twelfth Night if you are strict. The end of the Christmas festivities and remove all decorations. Or:

6th Epiphany First Monday. Plough Monday, traditional start of the agricultural year when ploughmen returned to the fields. I'd never heard of this before until reading a book of special days. I know, I know!

25th Burns Night someone has to grow the neeps and tatties

Last weekend Big Garden Birdwatch. RSPB asks us to look and note the birds in our gardens. Every year the little blighters leave on the previous Thursday and no counting gets done.

There really isn't much exciting to offer for January. It all depends on the weather. If it's wet or icy or snowy stay off the grass and the borders. That's a bit restricting but if you have paths and drives that need to be used good exercise is to clear them. Don't do my favourite trick and clear snow from one used bit on to another one. Snow should be cleared off evergreen hedges and bushes to prevent the weight breaking the branches. This is easier if you cut the hedges so they are narrower at the top, sloping to the bottom – hence the term 'batter'. Sweep it off the greenhouse roof as well to preserve the glass. Stand well clear while you do this if you don't want to end up on You've Been Framed. If it's ice then grit is the best option. If you use salt it can wash into the grass and borders and do no good whatsoever to the plants there. Even the ones that are hibernating nicely can be damaged by salt as it will wash into the roots.

So if the weather is kind and dry there are things that can be done outside. Maintenance is one. Has the shed lost its roof or felt? Have you got large puddles where no puddles were before? Now's the time to fix that lot and if possible treat timber with preservative. Keep any preservative off plants, even the dormant ones. You never know what can happen should wood preservative soak into the crown of a nearby plant.

If you have wooden garden furniture this needs to be treated annually as well so maybe kill two birds with one pot of preservative. Canes and wooden plant supports can be treated as well by just doing the ends that go in the soil. If you fancy it the idea is to get an old galvanised bucket or tin can and half fill with preservative. Stand the canes and supports in it overnight so they soak up as much of the treatment as possible. This will get rid of any wildlife that crawled in there to get through the winter. Banging the ends that went in the soil on a hard surface will dislodge some of them but dipping the same ends will shift the rest. Don't do it if your motto is live and let live. If that looks familiar I admit it is a repeat but well worth considering. I will get round to it one January day or maybe even February if outdoor work is a no-no in January.

Gardeners who are well-organised will know exactly where everything is and will also have cleaned, oiled and sharpened all their tools before Christmas. The rest of us can spend a happy hour or two clearing out



What's On at Watton Library

Here at Watton Library people are often surprised to hear we offer such a range of free events and services, not just books (although we do of course offer a great selection of totally free books to read for 3 weeks at a time!).

We try to let people know what's going on by posting on our Facebook Page and putting up flyers, but we thought we might be missing those of you who prefer to read papers instead. We thought we'd write a piece to try to get the word out about the free events we'll be hosting in the next few months.

We'd like to highlight in particular an event we're putting on next year 'Toasty Toes' on Monday the 9th of February 10.30-12.30. We've already felt the cold start to creep in these past few months, and to help combat this we'll be inviting a few friends from different organisations to come and give advice and information to older people about keeping warm and well this winter. We've also been given brand new pairs of slippers to give out for free to help keep warm. Pop along to have a friendly chat and a cuppa with us (and maybe most importantly a new pair of slippers!)

We also hold regular free events weekly and monthly:

Every Monday at 2.30pm we have our Knit and Natter group who merrily knit, crochet

and create to their hearts' content for however long they fancy!

On Wednesdays at 10.30am our Bounce and Rhyme baby group takes place with much singing and bubble-blowing, with a Stay and Play hour afterwards at 11am for parents and carers to chat while babies and toddlers play. Our lovely Family Hubs representative Michelle is often here at this time to offer advice and information to parents.

At 2pm on the same day is our Just a Cuppa hour where you can come and have a relaxed cuppa and a chat over some colouring, puzzles and boardgames.

Fortnightly on Thursdays between 1 and 3pm we have a digital support volunteer who provides drop-in support with technology. The remaining dates for 2025 are: 20th November, 4th December and 18th December.

On the first Thursday of each month at 3pm is our Adult Autism Friendly Meet Up which provides a safe, quiet space for people with autism to chat and play games.

On the second Thursday of the month at 5.30pm our Neurodivergent Youth Group runs which is a friendly and fun group for neurodivergent young people (11-17 years) to socialise whilst playing games and crafting. Parents, family and carers are welcome to join and support.

Finally, on the first Saturday of the month at 2pm we host our Lego Club for children which provides a monthly theme to foster creativity!



Next year at the library we'll be hosting multiple one-off events for both adults and children, with dates to be confirmed closer to the time:

We're hoping to have visits from Dora the Pets as Therapy support dog over February half term to listen to children ages 5-11 read. Reading sessions with Dora are designed to help children improve their confidence with their reading but can also just be a great way to encourage children to keep up their reading throughout the half term. These sessions will be bookable.

Also in February half term we'll be running Digifest events which aim to build motor skills and encourage interest in technology and coding in Primary school-aged children.

At the start of the year, we'll be delivering BookTrust Storytimes for families with young children. BookTrust Storytime is a fun, easy way to entertain your under 5s with stories and activities at your local library for free.

Look out for some children's seasonal craft events to come too!

We are also happy to do nursery and school visits on-site or in the library, just get in touch via phone or email.

Please let us know if there are any other events you'd like to see at your local library, feedback is always appreciated to help us deliver a well-rounded offer to the community.

For more information on events closer to the time or other enquiries, please speak to a member of staff in branch, email us on watton.lib@libraries.norfolk.gov.uk, call 01953 881671 or you can visit our Facebook Page:

www.facebook.com/WattonLibraryNorfolk
We hope to see you there!

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At their recent November production of 'A Fly in the Ointment', the Wayland Players took the opportunity to honour the achievement of one of their long standing Friends and former active member of the group.

Peter Brown of Broom Hill Farm, Merton, now in his eighties, designed and built the raised seating which are made viewing stage productions in the Queens Hall so much more enjoyable. Audiences probably give little thought to what they are sitting on but the wooden system, which is dismantlable and is stored under the stage when not in use, is nothing short of brilliant. Peter made the system in the early years of the Hall, and his carpentry skills have stood the test of time as the system is as good now as when it was new.

Peter and his wife, Ruth (left), were present when a plaque recording Peter's achievement was unveiled on the Friday evening of the play. (Peter even brought his own tools to check that this inept female had tightened up the screws to his satisfaction!) Jenny Mann, The Wayland Players

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West Norfolk Aviation Society

The meeting this month was that dirge of all societies and charities the Annual General Meeting(AGM). The meeting kicked off at 19:30 with a short statement from our chairman Chris Halliday who went over the year and professed it a success and looked forward to next year. There followed the normal course of AGM's the world over with

discussion around officials and subscriptions. To save the reader from falling off their chair from boredom suffice to say all positions were filled and the main headlines were to increase the subs to £20 pa after it being held at the current rate for very many years. This was all carried without any dissent. Also the Press Officer role was confirmed as yours truly! The AGM was closed at 2050 and a welcome break to eat the delicious food & snacks that is part of our evening meeting at the Mundford Bowls Club.

After the snacks and much light hearted discussion between friends a small quiz was undertaken organised by our chairman on a vaguely aviation theme. I was one of the successful prizewinners and I choose the "Battle of Britain Memorabilia" which contained a pair of 'Thermal Boots as worn by Sir Douglas Bader during the Battle (allegedly)", think about it.... My prize winning question was knowing the answer to the question: "In western Europe the F104 Starfighter was a very popular combat aircraft in the 70's and 80's, by popular myth what was the easiest way to obtain an example?" If you know the answer to this you are at least as old as I am and probably have a military background. In the meantime space dictates that I will have to leave you guessing but I will reveal the answer in my next report. Happy New year to everyone from WNAS. For details of our Society and our meetings, please Google us! Mark Burch, WNAS Scribe

January Sale

A little bit of nonsense from Miss Mardle

We're at it again, me mongrel and me we're queueing for the Harrods's sale. we've been here since three, I really need a wee and it's blowing a blooming gale.

We're going up market, me mongrel and me he spotted a new bed online, he tilted his head at four poster bed. What can I say he's a clever canine.

We're second in line, me mongrel and me behind a couple from Crewe they've come for a browse they've had several rows, said they've nothing better to do.

We're through the front door, me mongrel and me we're running at full speed there's a pug in pursuit says he's got enough loot to buy the four poster he needs.

We nobbled the pug, me mongrel and me we tripped him in fragrance and grooming the owner cried out we didn't hang about we could see they were both blooming fuming.

We've paid for the bed, me mongrel and me they're delivering today around noon, we bought pillows and sheets we're now back on the street. He'll be snoozing in style very soon.

Last Month's Codeword Result

Last month's winner was drawn by Jess from Flora & More who supplied the prize which was a lovely seasonal Poinsettia and an Amaryllis Bulb with pot and compost. The answer was:

IS THIS THE WAY TO AMARYLLIS

The winner this month was A Green and the Runner Up was D Freeman To explain how the winners were drawn; all correct entries were recorded in a table 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, Paul was given the pack, which he shuffled as he 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 is there was no winner assigned to that card, it was discarded and another card drawn.

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

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For the next Codeword grid and more details of this month's competition please see page 15.

Norfolk Wildlife Trust Breckland Local Group

Firstly, Happy New Year to you all and thank you for your support in 2025. We kick off on Wednesday 14th January at 7.30pm, with a talk by sometime Rock singer Garth Coupland about "Spiders, Small Superheroes". Garth is a keen naturalist and an entertaining speaker. As usual the venue is The Methodist Centre, High Street, Watton. IP25 6AB. Cost is £2members, £3 non-members. Refreshments and a raffle also on offer. No booking required.

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Wayland Wood. A woodland under threat

By Paul Newport AKA The Breckland Birder

The people of Watton are, and justifiably so, proud of the history of their local area, they are also proud to be living in the unique Breckland landscape which holds important and threatened wildlife, and they are proud to be living very close to site which has nationally, and indeed internationally renowned folklore, the legend of 'The Babes in the Wood', which of course is associated with Wayland Wood.

I am writing to you to bring to your attention an inconceivable plan to build 300 homes up to the boundary of Wayland Wood, I immediately thought when I first heard this that how could anyone with a conscience even consider building so close to a vitally important broadleaved woodland which has been in existence for thousands of years, such a plan would forever alter the aesthetic appeal, the character of the wood, and would forever threaten the wildlife and plant life which calls Wayland Wood home. Such important matters I highlight here would essentially be lost to all intents and purposes, at the stroke of a pen. This plan highlights the insensitivity of developers and it shows these people, and indeed the landowner who is selling the land, that they are driven by greed. Anyone with an ounce of conscience would question the location of this planned development.

Since 1970 we have lost 60 per cent of wildlife, losses which have been directly attributable to human activity, this is a very sad reflection of our treatment of wildlife and their habitats, this is a shameful statistic. And so it continues, we think we can ride roughshod over the countryside without thinking of the impact upon nature, about the impact upon the aesthetic appeal, and indeed, the impact upon our mental health. The human race needs wildlife for its own survival and with the United Kingdom being the most nature depleted country in Europe, it goes without saying we should hold our heads in shame.

Picture of Wayland Wood here

Wayland Wood is a site of significant importance to bird species. The Woodcock is an enigmatic wader species which is a woodland floor dweller, it also nests on the woodland floor, additionally, the male Woodcock performs a display over its territory known as 'roding'. The Woodcock has undergone a 35 per cent reduction in numbers since 2000, clearly, this under threat bird species will be susceptible to further declines as a result of the impact of development and increased population which in turn has associative factors like noise and light pollution. Both resident bird species and summer visitors also use the wood. Tawny Owls, Thrush species, Woodpeckers, Nuthatches, and Treecreepers all reside in Wayland Wood throughout the year and in spring and summer the wood welcomes summer visitors including like Blackcaps, Garden Warblers, Chiffchaffs, Willow Warblers and Spotted Flycatchers. Warbler species often nest close to

the ground, clearly, increased human activity will impact upon the numbers of these birds.

Bats are currently well represented in Wayland Wood with Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Brown Long-eared Bat, Bechsteins and Leisler's Bats, all being present. Bats are afforded special protection, it is indeed the case that their habitats are protected by law. It is a crime to disturb bats and their habitats, it is therefore clear that this proposed development plan will have a significant impact upon these important mammals. Any future development would not only present physical barriers to Bats, the question of light pollution is a vital one as such pollution would impact upon the hunting behaviour of bats, even a substantial buffer zone could be subject to light pollution which in turn affects bats hunting strategies.

On the evening of Friday 5th December I attended a council meeting in Queens Hall Watton where the planned development and its negative impact upon Wayland Wood was a major concern for contributing speakers. Many valid points were raised and recorded as evidence of those concerns. A written contribution by the developer was read out, the statement included an acknowledgment by the developer of their awareness of the importance of Wayland Wood and the need for engagement with the Norfolk Wildlife Trust on how to safeguard the wood and its wildlife. I raised the need for the developer to be present at future meetings in order that, firstly, he/they can gauge the strong feelings the people of Watton have for this ill conceived plan and the impact upon the wood and its wildlife, an impact which will forever have a negative upon the character of the wood along with the impact upon the aesthetic appeal, and of course the life which calls Wayland Wood home. If this plan goes ahead the developer must be made to do all that is necessary to safeguard the wood, this includes significant buffer zones, and measures to prevent both noise and light pollution, and to listen to, and put into practice all of our concerns.



some fun to finish off all together.

Tues 13th 2pm – 4pm Tuesday Club: Join us for a social afternoon of games & laughter here at St Mary's. Confectionary prizes to be won! Donation gratefully received for refreshments. All welcome!

Fri 16th 2pm – 4pm Community Cinema: Showing 'Downton Abbey – The Finale'. Doors open at 1:15pm for 2pm start. £5 ticket on the door inc. hot drink & cake.

Wed 21st 1pm – 2.30pm Ecumenical Ladies' Prayer Group: At Home Church, Dereham Rd, Watton. Fellowship followed by prayer time. Please bring a packed lunch, hot drinks provided.

Thurs 22nd 10am – 3pm Open Church: St Mary's open to all to visit, pray, explore and discover what we offer the community. Friendly volunteers on hand to help with any enquiries.

2pm – 2.30pm Prayer Gathering: Led by Rev Dave Cossey. Come join us as God's people to lift up both our community & the wider world in a time of informal prayer. 2nd & 4th Thurs of month.

Fri 23rd 2pm – 4pm Craft Group: Enjoy refreshments & company whilst crafting. £1 donation.

December's Winners of the 200 Club!

1st prize £50: Leigh Cannon, No.144

2nd prizes £25 each: Lorraine Eldridge (for Annabelle), No. 132, Sally Wood, No. 197

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

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

Saturday 21st March Thriplow Daffodil Festival Adult £32 Child £20

Saturday 11th April Afternoon Tea at Poppylands 1940s Tearoom & Wroxham Adult £45 Child £25

Sunday 26th April Holt Sunday Market & Sheringham Adult £20 Child £10

Holidays 2026

North Wales 27th July – 1st August

Turkey & Tinsel Bournemouth 27th – 30th November

Shows 2026

Cromer Pier Summer Show 5th August 2.30pm Show Adult £50

ABBA Voyage 26th September 3pm Show £125

Thursford Christmas Spectacular December 2pm Show £TBC

Cromer Pier Christmas Show 15th Dec. 2.30pm Show Adult £50

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What's On! at St Mary's Church, Watton - January

Church Road, Watton, IP25 6DQ

www.stmaryswatton.org wattonchurch@gmail.com
01953 881252

Sat 3rd 10am – 12noon Saturday Chat: Join us on the 1st Sat of month for our coffee morning. Come with friends or alone and make new ones!

Tues 6th 5pm – 6pm Prayer & Praise: Sing your favourite worship songs & pray with & for the community. 1st Tues of month.

Wed 7th 1.30pm – 4pm (location in Watton)

Bereavement Group: Contact Linda Benton on 07803 017340 or linbenton2978@gmail.com for details. 1st Wed of month.

Thurs 8th 2pm – 2.30pm Prayer Gathering - Led by Rev Dave Cossey. Come join us as God's people to lift up both our community & the wider world in a time of informal prayer. 2nd & 4th Thurs of month.

Mon 12th, 19th, 26th 9.30am – 11am Storybags: FREE Children & baby playgroup, meeting every Monday, term time, for plenty of free play, a chance to meet others, &



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£5 Million For New Special Educational Needs School in Downham Market

Having lobbied the Secretary of State for Education and other Government Ministers on the urgent need for a new special educational needs school in Downham Market since the election, I was thrilled with the recent announcement that the Government will be investing £5 million in funding to make this proposal a reality.

Located at Ryston End in Downham Market, the funding seeks to address long-identified gaps in provision for children with additional educational needs in the West of the county and would cater for up to 100 pupils.

Norfolk County Council will receive the £5 million in funding from the Government for the Ryston End proposal, and a further £8 million in funding for a project located in the East around Great Yarmouth.

The Council will be given the choice to create new permanent facilities or use the money to fund additional places in mainstream settings. I have confirmed that I would prefer for the site at Ryston End to be utilised, given the distinct lack of special educational needs services in the West of the County and the long travel distances for families.

As one of only two MPs to employ a SEND Specialist Caseworker, I am acutely aware of how much the SEND system is in crisis.

This funding shows the Government's commitment to solving the SEND crisis and ensuring children and young people with SEND get the education and support they need. The new special educational needs school will help repair the broken system and be a modern and supportive setting for children and young people with SEND and their families.

The Ryston End site was once the Sixth Form linked to Downham Market High School but has sat empty and boarded up for a number of years.

This announcement follows the four SEND Roundtables I held in the Autumn for both families and schools, in addition to two SEND surveys. The results of the surveys will form a forthcoming report which will focus on the impact of rurality on SEND and outline further recommendations to the Government to help fix the SEND crisis.

This funding forms part of a landmark £3 billion government investment to make sure more children can go to a brilliant school closer to home and enable children with additional needs to achieve and thrive.

Should you or someone you know need SEND support, please get in touch: terry.jermy.mp@parliament.uk

Grand Second Hand Book Sales

Happy New Year! Thank you so much for supporting our book sale on the 22nd/23rd November last year, our last sale with Caroline and Keith in charge of books. We had a wonderful two days, as we hope you did, and made lots of money for our three village charities: Griston and Thompson churches, and Thompson Community Hall. We would like to say a big thank you to Keith and Caroline, who, along with the volunteers from Griston and Thompson churches and TCH have made the book sales the amazing cross-community success they are today. In the ten years since the first book sale was hosted by Keith and Caroline from the original Griston church venue, an astonishing £30,000 has been raised. Who would have thought that those early days in Griston church would lead to the book sale extravaganzas we hold today? The great news for all you bookworms, cheese scone lovers, and home-made cake enjoyers is that we are not finished! We can't wait to see you all again in March 2026 when our first book sale of the year will be on Saturday, 14th 10am - 4pm. We will have plants, cakes, books and light lunches available for you to enjoy—more details to follow. We have been lucky enough to welcome more wonderfully willing volunteers to the sorting shed and would like to extend our warmest thanks to these new recruits. 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. You can also contact Bridget Park on 07919 097239 or Jacqueline on 07980272299. Thank you for your continued support.

The Wayland Quilters

We had a wonderful time at the Watton Christmas Market. To publicise our group we decided to have a stall to show people what we do and possibly raise some much needed cash for our expenses. We decided to all go home and make a few fabric items to sell or put on a tombola. We also decided to have a children's lucky dip. We were amazed at the quantity of pieces we made. On Sunday we had in excess of 100 hand made tombola prizes and although I didn't count them there must have been in excess of 50 pieces to sell. We managed to raise £285 pounds and had so much fun. The atmosphere was amazing. Our next get together will be at 7pm on Tuesday January 13th 2026 at Thompson Community Hall.

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Watton & Saham Flood Action Group

Response to the Regulation 18 Local Plan Consultation

This consultation is about several sites which landowners have put forward to Breckland District Council as places where homes may be built over the life of the Local Plan from when it is adopted until 2042. These amount to a total of 1705. Breckland will consider the responses to this consultation and make their decisions on what to take forward to the 'Presubmission stage' and further public consultation will take place on this from June-September 2026. After considering the results of this consultation, the timetable proposes that the Local Plan will go to the Secretary of State for examination in December 2026. That may lead to modifications such that the Plan may not be adopted until some time in 2027.

So we are quite a long time away from actual planning applications coming forward for approval. I was at the public meeting called by the Town Council on Friday 5th December in the Queen's Hall about the site described in the Plan as WAT3 North of Thetford Road. The specific concerns of residents were the impact on the wildlife of Wayland Wood. I share these concerns and will be writing my own personal submission in relation to that.

This article is to let you all know that the Watton & Saham Flood Action Group is making a representation about other factors that we are objecting to about this site. The options in the consultation are support, object and neutral. This is what we have said about our objections to this site to Breckland. "Because of key drainage features that must be protected to prevent flooding elsewhere and because there is a history in Watton of building over these causing flooding elsewhere. There is a drainage ditch behind the properties in Priory Road in the field of the proposed site and

this then is culverted (piped underground) and discharges into the drainage ditch across the centre of the Wayland Fields development which discharges into the watercourse on the west side of the roundabout.

There is another Anglian Water/Highways surface water sewer that runs from roughly Griston Road underground in the same field to join the same culverted system. This protects properties to the east of Watton. Whether the surface water drainage system for the new site goes into this culvert or to the ditch to the south of Thetford Road by Barn Ruche, the amount of water going into this system and then into the watercourses that run from the Thetford Road roundabout to the pond at Cranswick then under the B1108 to the Watton Brook is likely to cause flooding elsewhere as the water from WAT 4 West of Thetford Road will also be discharged into this watercourse. The culvert under the B1108 is far too small to take the amount of water in storms and in the summer storm of 2016, the water was so deep in the Cranswick lorry park that a driver had to be rescued from his cab by boat!!! We ask that the LLFA be consulted about this accumulation of surface water for disposal. If these sites are chosen, then we ask that S106 funding be required from all these developers to fund a new culvert under the B1108.

All the sewerage from the 1705 proposed homes will end up in the new sewer which is already marked for the sewerage from a development with planning permission for 180 homes off Mallard Road. We ask you to consult Anglian Water about the capacity of the new sewer to take the effluent from these sites.

Your Strategic Flood Risk Assessment noted that Watton had one of the highest reported foul sewer flooding incidents in the District as many residents know well. If, by the time these sites come to the point of outline planning permission, Anglian Water is still not a statutory consultee then we ask that S106 funds be required from these developers to ensure that there are no downstream sewer flooding issues from them as stated in INF06g waste management. Under ENV10 section on Flood Risk, you state that you consider all sources of flooding. This will include, not only those areas identified by the

Environment Agency, but also Norfolk County Council (Lead Local Flood Authority LLFA) and local intelligence to identify a more complete record of flood prone areas. This is our local intelligence." We are also objecting on the same grounds of drainage ditches that need protection and too much surface water for disposal to cope with for the large Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) to the north of Norwich Road and WAT2 on the ex-RAF site off Shackleton Road.

RECLAIM THE RAIN

'Reclaim the Rain' is a pioneering joint project between Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils which will develop innovative ways to reduce flooding in small rural communities. The £6.4 million project is funded by Defra and the Environment Agency as part of their Flood and Coastal Resilience and Innovation Programme and runs until March 2027.

Reclaim the Rain aims to promote resilience to both flooding and drought in six selected small rural communities across both counties that will act as case studies. The three communities in Norfolk are Watton, Thompson and Woodton near Bungay. There are 3 aspects to the work in Watton.

The first involved all 3 schools which have suffered flooding in the past. With additional funding from the Department for Education, features have been installed that have stopped the flooding and created a lovely environment for the children in the playgrounds. There are more details of this in the article in the October 2025 edition of the W&W Times.

The second is the proposed construction of a reservoir on a farmer's land which will take the excess surface water during high rainfall events from a watercourse that leads to flooding in the Bridleway and then into Brandon Road and neighbouring streets. This is at the stage of the necessary archaeological work and when all the steps to meet the planning permission requirements have been met and a detailed design confirmed, then construction can begin.

The third stage which will affect all of us in



Wayland, is to stop some of the water from the roofs in the High Street from cascading onto the road by installing special planters which slow the water down while watering the plants in them. Also to take water from the road and the Highways drains into rain gardens and tree pits on the pavement particularly on the wide pavement at the west end of the street.

Before you read this, the team will have carried out consultation with key stakeholders whose permission is necessary - Norfolk County Council Highways, Anglian Water, Breckland District Council, the Lead Local Flood authority, the Town Council and the Wayland Partnership on whose land it is hoped to build an underground water tank for the contractor's bowser to fill up for watering planters elsewhere in the town. Once these permissions/agreements have been finalised the businesses in the High Street will be consulted as they are also key stakeholders.

They will already have received a letter about the proposals. At a later date, the general public will be shown an exhibition of what is planned. This exhibition will be aimed for early in the New Year. It is hoped that these installations will improve the look of the north side of the High Street in particular, where most of them will be placed. All construction has to be completed by March 2027.

Watton & Saham Flood Action Group were key in getting Watton to be part of this project and we want to wish you all a Happy New Year. Liz Whitcher Chair,

liz.whitcher@yahoo.co.uk



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Watton Town Council Updates, News, and Events

Watton Town Crier

I am Mike Wabe, and I am your Town Crier. If you don't know me, you may well have heard me! With the coming of modern communications such as radio, television and the Internet, you might think that the Town Crier would become extinct. Not so, and today there are about 250 Town Criers around the country, and we are in great demand for civic ceremonies, charity functions, tourism events, weddings and commercial advertising, where our colourful livery, imposing presence and historical significance are greatly valued.

I do the job because I enjoy keeping an ancient tradition alive, and consider it an honour and a privilege to serve Watton and the surrounding community. I was proud and privileged to be one of just 9 Criers accorded the honour of delivering the Accession Proclamation of King Charles III, which I delivered in a ceremony outside the Town Hall.

If you need an unusual, colourful and LOUD way to promote and event, add a little extra "oomph" to your wedding or provide an unusual surprise to someone on a special day, then I can do all these things and more. You can be sure that I will attract attention!

If you have a shop openings or product launches, I will attract the media as well as the public. My presence will provide a splash of colour and noise.

Do you have a son or daughter who is getting married? I can provide a "wake-up" cry to a bride or a bridegroom. No one sleeps when I'm about! I can also deliver a proclamation at the church as the happy couple exit and/or when they arrive at their Reception venue. I can announce a betrothal and/or imminent wedding, much like the reading of the banns, but with way more pizzazz!

On a special day, receiving a card and flowers is very nice of course, but why not surprise someone with something very different on their special day? I will write and deliver a special proclamation and provide it printed on parchment-type paper as a memento.

Do you have a new addition to the family? The birth and/or christening of a new baby is always a very special occasion, so why not make it even more memorable? I will compose a specially written proclamation for you and deliver it at a time and place of your choosing. I will provide you with the proclamation printed on parchment-type paper as a memento.

This is something that I REALLY enjoy! Historically, Town Criers checked the quality of the ale sold in inns, and may even have acted as a sort of early Weights and Measures Inspector. An ale tasting event is a colourful and intriguing magnet to attract attention for that opening of a new/refurbished pub or the unveiling of a new beer, or even the launch of a beer festival. Having a Town Crier to "officially" kick the event off by sampling the brew always makes for good photographs.

All that said, it is vitally important to support charity and fund raising events. I am always willing to help, but unless you tell me about it, I can't.

Every event is different, and every proclamation is different. It can take me anything from an hour or two, to a day or so to compose a proclamation that best suits your event. Writing a proclamation is a skilled task and, no matter how good your belief that your copywriting skills are, writing a proclamation is most definitely best left to me.

Have a look at my website – www.towncriermike.co.uk. You can email me either via the Contact Me page on the website, or directly at towncriermike@gmail.com.



Town Council Updates

A Watton and Saham Flood Action Group (WASFAG) meeting was held on 17/11/25. A lot of information relating to flooding and climate change is available and it is of note that Breckland Council has recently published emergency planning information for ward members (shared with Town Councillors). It is hoped that when time allows information will be published on the WASFAG website.

Norfolk County Council is proposing to make various roads in Watton 20mph speed zone limits. The roads are Washington Drive and those off Washington Drive on the former RAF site along the Norwich Road.

There has been an issue with mushrooms growing in the bark safety surface at the Sports Centre play area. At present the play area has been closed due to Health and Safety concerns. It was resolved to keep the play area closed until plans have been agreed. A meeting will be arranged with Watton Sports Association which owns the land on which the play equipment is sited and quotes will be sought for possible alternative safety surfaces.

It was resolved to request transfer of all the Breckland Council owned green spaces in the town to the ownership of Watton Town Council. Breckland are to produce a hard copy map of all areas on offer.

Public consultation is soon to commence on the proposals for Middle Street pedestrianisation. NCC has advised that some businesses have raised concerned about access and

deliveries, as well as concerns about loss of parking. To address these issues, detailed information is needed to understand the current delivery arrangements for all businesses in the area. This will allow the development of solutions that meet the needs of as many businesses as possible.

On December 5th a public meeting was facilitated by the Town Council so concerns regarding site WAT3 on the draft Breckland Local Plan could be heard. There was a desire from local people who attended the public meeting that WAT3 should not be brought forward as an allocated site due to it being adjacent to Wayland Wood SSSI. The proposed development of the site would lead to habitat disturbance particularly from lighting and noise, increased recreational use of Wayland Wood and greater traffic movement; all of which would be harmful to the ancient woodland. SSSI's have been protected within sections 15 and 16 of the NPPF and need to remain so. Damage to such sites should be avoided. A development within or adjacent to a SSSI should not have any adverse affect on the site. Duties to protect SSSI's appear to be being weakened with the proposals in the new Planning & Infrastructure Bill to bring in a 'Nature Restoration Fund', but it should be recognised that in many cases the fund cannot mitigate against irreversible damage that will be caused if development is permitted in the wrong place. Many believe a development next to Wayland Wood would be the wrong place.

WATTON FOOD HUB CALENDAR

JANUARY 2026

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

7 JANUARY - Food Hub Open 16:30-18:30
21 JANUARY - Food Hub Open 16:30-18:30

Watton Festive Market



Local Council Responsibilities

A Town Council is a statutory body and is the most local level of government. It has an important role in promoting the town, representing its interests and supporting the work of different groups in the community.

Town Councils have a number of formal powers. Many provide allotments, and look after playing fields, village greens and other types of leisure facilities. They have a hand in maintaining or guarding rights of way, bus shelters, public seats and sometimes street lighting. Councils are often concerned with the provision of halls and community buildings.

The Town Council can do these things by actually providing them itself or by funding other organisations, such as a charity, to do them through grants or contracts.

There are three tiers of government, each with different responsibilities (sometimes called powers and duties in Council speak).

Watton Town Council is responsible for:

- Allotments at St Mary's Church and Thetford Road
- Bus shelters in the High Street
- Cemetery at Church Road
- Clock Tower
- Grants to organisations which operate within Watton
- Wednesday weekly market
- Play areas at Bridle Road, Lovell Gardens, Watton Sports Centre, and Hares Green
- Open spaces at Jubilee Garden, Memorial Garden, Shire Horse Way, and Heritage Park.
- Compile responses to Planning and Local Authority consultations
- Public toilets
- The Town Council as Trustee of the Charlotte Harvey Trust manages the Community Centre in Harvey Street

Breckland District Council is responsible for:

- Car parks owned by the District Council
- Electoral services
- Environmental Services e.g. noise, pest control, etc.
- Licensing
- Help and support for businesses
- Housing services
- Planning services
- Recycling, food waste and residual waste collections
- Restaurants and takeaway inspections
- Some street lighting
- Sports and leisure
- Street cleaning and dealing with fly tipping

Norfolk County Council is responsible for:

- Education and schools
- Fire Service
- Highways, including potholes, gritting
- Libraries, recreation, arts and museums
- Public rights of way
- Social Services and Youth Services
- Some Street Lighting
- Strategic planning and some planning applications (mainly mineral extraction and waste disposal sites)
- Trading Standards
- Transport
- Waste Recycling Centres



A word from the Mayor

The end of November and beginning of December was quite a busy time starting with the local Air Cadet 864 Squadron award evening, I was pleased to be asked to present the best cadet award. I always feel very proud of the cadets when they are at events or representing our town.

The 30th of November saw the weather behave for the Festive market this year, despite it being very cold and a bit breezy it was a lovely bright day and most importantly it was dry! I spoke to lots of people including the stall holders who said they were enjoying the day.

I would like to thank everyone who took part; stall holders, entertainers, members of the public and all the wonderful volunteers who make the day possible. It was wonderful to have the company of two boys, George and Jack who joined in with the countdown to the Christmas lights switch on.

My husband and I were invited to the USA air force base at RAF Lakenheath for their Tri-wing Yuletide reception and tree lighting event, a lovely evening with lots of festive entertainment.

The council responded to requests from members of the public over concerns regarding possible sites for future building sites, predominantly the site next to the historic Wayland wood by arranging a public meeting at the Queens Hall on the 5th of December.

Plans were discussed and objections were raised. As a council we have taken comments from the meeting, formalised at the last council meeting and have forwarded the public comments / objections to Breckland council. Members of the public were also encouraged to send their comments/objections to Breckland themselves as this could have a greater impact. The plans come from Breckland council are in line with government directives to build more housing throughout the country.

Watton town council are only able to make comments or objections in relation to the local plan which they can and have done.



On a lighter note, I was invited to the 1st Watton Rainbows for a lovely tea party they held as one of the tasks they need to gain a badge. I also presented the badges they have worked so hard to achieve this year. Well done to them all.

Finally, I would like to wish everyone a very happy Christmas and send best wishes for the New Year.



Wayland Men's Shed

Charity No.1213606

I am very pleased to announce that Wayland Men's Shed have been awarded funding from Norfolk Community Foundation through the 'Connecting Older People Fund' to contribute towards the continued running costs of the Wayland Men's Shed, including the regular workshops, social groups, events and outings. This is a clear recognition of the valuable service and support that we are providing for men in our community. We are very grateful to the foundation and will be reporting how this



has made a difference in future reports.

I can already report that we are making a difference to so many lives, not only the members but also their friends and families. Every week I witness the gathering together of members who so enjoy the camaraderie of others whilst playing games or just chatting over a cuppa and a biscuit or two. The various sub-groups continue to grow in popularity and further enhance the well-being of members. Twenty-one members attended the music appreciation group on Wednesday 10th where the theme was religion. There were entries listened to that included everything from Ozzy Osbourne to the Vauxhall male voice choir. The winner this time was 'I will follow him' from Sister Act. This was followed by a Christmas themed quiz. You have to be there to witness the fun and enjoyment that we all get out of this event.

This is replicated by the Shanty group, who performed for the Women's Institute at the North Pickenham community hub on Tuesday 9th December. Other "Gigs" are due to take place on Saturday 13th December at East Harling bowls club and then Wednesday 17th December for the Watton Society at the Methodist Church in the High Street.

Eight members of the photography group, "The Shutterists", visited Center Parcs (left) at Elveden Forest on Wednesday 10th December to see and take pictures of the amazing light show as well as the Santa parade.



The workshops continue to keep busy those members with an interest in woodworking projects or computer/printer repairs as reported in the last edition.

The social outing to the Cromer pier show on Wednesday 3rd December was a great success with 40 members and guests enjoying a smashing day out. The show was excellent and we all came out with spirits lifted and smiles on our faces. Our annual Christmas Dinner was held at Broom Hall (above) again this year on Thursday 11th December with seventy-three members and guests attending. It was a very successful evening and enjoyed by all.

It just remains for me to say a big thank you to all those who have supported us this year, to the committee who have ensured the smooth running of the Shed and especially to Julian Horn for his continued support in reporting our news.

Wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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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Museum 4 Watton

Happy New Year!

Wednesday to Saturday 10am-4pm

If you are at a loose end this Christmas holiday, why don't you give fossil hunting a go? We are lucky enough to live in an area quite literally littered with fossils, and they are really not difficult to spot. At M4W, we have lots of examples of fossils millions of years old, which have been found locally, by people out on walks or simply gardening. The chalk bedrock across Norfolk, including Breckland, is rich in these fossils.

Belemnites



Belemnite

The most common fossils found in gardens in the Wayland area are Belemnites; in Norfolk, they are colloquially called thunderbolts or 'Devil's Fingers'. These fossils resemble bullets and are the bullet-shaped guard of extinct, squid-like marine animals belonging to the phylum Mollusca and the class Cephalopoda. These animals lived during the Jurassic and Cretaceous eras, which cover a time span of about 135 million years, with the Cretaceous period ending around 66 million years ago. They were free-swimming, carnivorous marine animals with a soft body like a modern squid, but unlike the modern squid, they had a hard, internal bullet-shaped skeleton called

a rostrum. This rostrum helped to provide the creature with stability as it swam around. The fossils formed when the remains of the animal were buried by sediment that solidified into rock. Belemnites are exceptionally common in Norfolk chalk, and large concentrations are referred to by geologists as belemnite battlefields. Belemnites take their name from the Greek word belemon, meaning dart or javelin.

Gryphaea



Gryphea

These are the fossilised shells of an extinct oyster-like bivalves from the Jurassic/Cretaceous era. These fossils are common in Norfolk and are found in marine deposits that were once ancient sea floors. Nicknamed the devil's toenails, they are recognisable by their distinctive curved hook shells that resemble a ram's horn or an overgrown toenail. In England, they are often found in riverbeds, quarries, and coastal areas. Their strong calcite shells have been preserved well due to their thickness and stability in soft mud, providing scientists with insights into past sea levels, climates and marine life evolution.

Echinoids

Dating back 450 million years, Echinoids are easy to find in the Breckland area. They are marine animals belonging to the phylum Echinodermata and the class Echinoidea and closely resemble starfish and sea urchins. You will often find them calcified in flint.

They have a hard shell (referred to as a test) covered with small knobs (tubercles) to which spines are attached in living echinoids. The test and spines are the parts normally found as fossils. Found in clays and limestones in southern and eastern England, including areas where glacial deposits (boulder clay) have transported them from their original beds. Echinoid tests come in a variety of shapes; they can be globular or flattened, rounded or heart-shaped. The most important function of the test was to support and protect the soft body inside. The spines, held in place by soft tissue covering the test during life, usually became detached and fossilised separately. Occasionally, when fossilisation was rapid, the spines and test are found preserved together. The Echinoids take their name from the Greek words for spiny skin, a very conspicuous feature of many living echinoids. Since ancient times, they have been revered as objects of religious or superstitious power. In Norfolk, they are called fairy loaves, and once found, were often kept as good luck charms by local people.

Sponges

The fossil record of sponges dates back to the Precambrian (600 million years ago).

Many sponges are found in the Cretaceous Lower Greensand and Chalk formations of England. Fossil sponges vary in size from one centimetre to more than one metre and also come in a variety of shapes. These include: vase-shaped (Ventriculites), spherical (Porosphaera), pear-shaped (Siphonia) and branching (Doryderma). The smooth spherical 'cannon-shot' flints that can be found across Norfolk are actually naturally formed flints that have been weathered and rolled in water. Without sponges, we wouldn't have flint! The mineral silica, which is mainly what flint is made of, comes from tiny needle-like spicules found in marine sponges. Seventy to ninety million years ago, billions and billions of these ancient silica-producing sponges were dissolved in seawater. Once exposed to dry land, the silica solidified to form flint. Many sponges are preserved as flint nodules, which are often circular or have complex internal shapes that reveal their sponge origin. At the museum, we have carefully cut one open so you can see the fossilised sponge inside.

If you have found fossils and would like them identified, please bring them into the museum.



Fossil sponge in situ.

Thank you to all the volunteers who helped serve refreshments during Watton's Festive market. We had over 150 visitors, many of whom enjoyed hot drinks and a slice of home-made cake. We hope to see you all in the new year. We close for Christmas on the 20th December at 4 pm & re-open on the 2nd January 2026.



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Great Hockham Gardening Club

For our November meeting we were fortunate to have as our speaker, Simon Harrap (pictured). The web says of him: "Simon has had a long career as a tour guide for the British bird-tour company, 'Birdquest', taking groups to South and East Asia, Madagascar and Southern Africa. Between times he has written several books, including Tits, Nuthatches & Treecreepers, Where to Watch Birds in Britain, RSPB Pocket Guide to British Birds, Harrap's Wildflowers, Flowers of the Norfolk Coast, Flowers of the Norfolk Broads and, with his wife Anne, Orchids of Britain and Ireland: A Field and Site Guide.' Simon Runs the wildlife centre, 'Natural Surroundings', on an eight-acre site near Holt." It sounds like it might be a good place for the club to visit during next summer. We were fortunate on two counts: Simon was able to step in at short notice when our original booking had to call off due to unforeseen circumstances and because the talk was most informative and entertaining. Entitled 'The Wild Flowers of Norfolk' Simon's talk was accompanied by some beautiful images of the flowers in our area... sorry, areas; see below.

As usual, although I love the infinite variety of nature, I have never stopped to consider that treating Norfolk as a single environment might not be a good idea. There seem to be several ways of subdividing Norfolk into different habitats, Simon chose to work with following seven: The Broads, saline, heathland, arable 'weeds', coastal areas, salt marsh, and, of course, Breckland. Simon covered each habitat in detail accompanied by some excellent images. Also, each species was accompanied by a UK distribution map. To me the maps were of particular interest as it emphasised the extreme rarity of some species. Who would have thought that there was one species only found in the Mundford area. For me to attempt a report on each of the wildflowers mentioned could lead to little more than a list. Furthermore, without the maps most of the context would be lost. Suffice it to say that Simon gave us not only an interesting presentation, but much to contemplate with regard to endangered species. Treated in isolation, wildflowers are

many and varied and the numerous examples we saw were very beautiful. In the following days I cast my thoughts back to seeing wildflowers not as rare individuals, but as the very common like buttercups, daises and poppies (top to bottom on right). My greatest pleasure is seeing them in in massed groups, in context, as part the stunning beauty of the natural Norfolk landscape. Roll on summer.

I may have previously mentioned the many species of grasses that grace our immediate locale and have once again, cut our assemblage for the last time this year. So, I thought I might share with you my thoughts on grass mowers. Up to the beginning of this year we have only ever had the petrol variety, but as the year progressed the topic of mowers entered our conversations more and more. We were considering going electric. I had my doubts, but in the end, I was persuaded.

So how did things pan out?

Cost. They are more expensive than petrol, and if you have a bit of kit that works, why pay out. Well, the main reason we wanted a change was that it was a bit big for our downsized garden and as there was still life in the old one, we were able to trade it in, thereby reducing the outlay.

Handling? I had to admit that the petrol mower was heavy and seemed to be getting heavier as the years progressed. But, you might say, no matter how heavy a petrol one, with self-propelled it should make no difference, you just engage the drive, off it trundles and you follow it. But self-propelled does not include reverse and power steering, so it's the sharp corners and dead ends when you have to lug it backwards that cause the problem. The electric types are mostly plastic and with an electric motor, much lighter. But - as I am stacking up the years, and Prue wants to be able to use it, I thought it best to have the self-propelled version. It turns out that although being much lighter, not having to push is a great help, and tight manoeuvring is much easier. Then there is starting the engine: there were times when this was becoming something of a trial. So, do you stop the engine to empty the grass box or when you have to have a prostate break? Electric? Press a button and it goes... the mower that is.

Man enough for the job? As my concerns were about being able to actually do the job, I chose a model that was towards the more powerful end of the range. I have no experience as to how a smaller electric mower would have coped. Does ours have the guts of a petrol one? Well, no. But if you think it should, I think that's a little unfair. If you are cutting a lot of rough grass, then I think electric may not be for you. For us it will do 95% with the strimmer doing the little bits of really thick stuff. Finally, believe it or not, ours will still do most of the shredding for the compost heap, an essential.

Duration? I thought one battery would be enough to do the whole area; it wasn't, so we bought the second battery. But there you go; petrol effectively goes forever. With electric, when the battery goes flat, recharging can take several hours, so doing the whole



job could take, perhaps, days. But if you have a smaller area one battery may be enough. Better to buy one, and then another if needed than to have the second one never used. Now, with the second battery, I can usually do the lot in one go. But... this depends on the thickness and wetness of the grass - and whether or not you engage the self-propelled option.

Conclusion. With just about everything there are pluses and minuses. Remember, this is what we have found for our particular situation. Different people will have different circumstances and requirements. For us, at our time of life, with the smaller garden, we think it was the right choice. If you're thinking of changing, I hope this helps. Edward.



Historic First for the Town of Watton!

Town Celebrates First Squirrel Scouts Investment Ceremony

Last month marked a special milestone for our town as the very first Squirrel Scouts were officially invested in a heartwarming ceremony. The Squirrel Scouts, boys and girls aged just 4 and 5, are the youngest members of the Scouting family, and this new group marks an exciting chapter for local Scouting.

The celebration also welcomed a dedicated team of volunteers who will run the sessions and guide the children on their Scouting journey. Each child and volunteer made their Promise and proudly received their neckerchiefs, symbolising their place in the worldwide Scouting movement.

The Town Mayor Gillian Tarrant attended the event, offering congratulations and sharing in the excitement of this historic occasion. After the formalities, everyone enjoyed delicious cakes together, making for a sweet ending to a memorable evening.

“We’re thrilled to see Squirrel Scouts starting in our town. It’s a fantastic way for young children to learn new skills, make friends, and begin their Scouting adventure,” said Nicki, one of the volunteers.

What Are Squirrel Scouts? ...

Squirrel Scouts is a programme designed for boys & girls aged 4 and 5, giving them a fun and safe space to learn through play, explore the outdoors, and develop confidence and teamwork skills. It’s an important first step in the Scouting journey, helping young children build friendships and discover new experiences that will stay with them for life.



Want to Get Involved? ...

Families interested in joining Squirrel Scouts can register to join the waiting list at: www.scouts.org.uk/groups

And adults or young people aged 14-18 years old interested in volunteering to help run sessions can get in touch by emailing p.thurston@norfolkscouts.org.uk

Scouting offers fun, friendship, and adventure for all ages—come and be part of something amazing!

CODEWORD

This month is our “Blast me!! Thas one of them there SURPRIZE Codewords.”

The prize this month is . . . Well I don’t have one . . . Yet. So that’s going to be a SURPRIZE to both of us!!

If you enter, please answer the question . . .

Each number in the Codeword grid represents a different letter of the alphabet. In the lower ‘control’ grid I have given you two letters to start with, copy each of those letters to all the matching numbered squares on the big puzzle grid.

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):

5, 14, 4, 25, 5, 1, 7, 23, 21, 2, 1, 7, 23, 20, 3, 8 ?

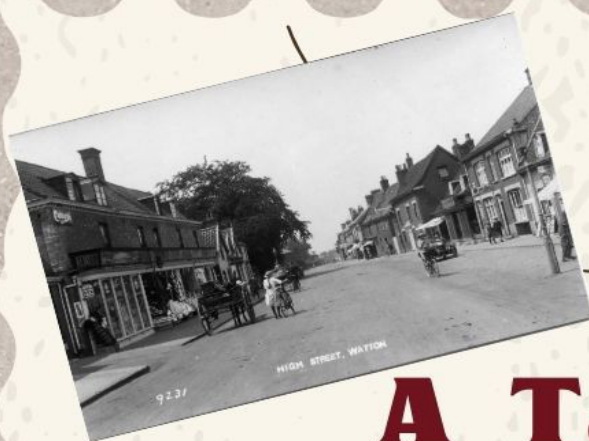
Send the Codeword you think is the answer along with your name and contact details in an envelope marked ‘Competition’ to Julian, Care of Adcocks, 32 High Street, Watton or by email to wattontimes@gmail.com

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 whatever it is.

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.

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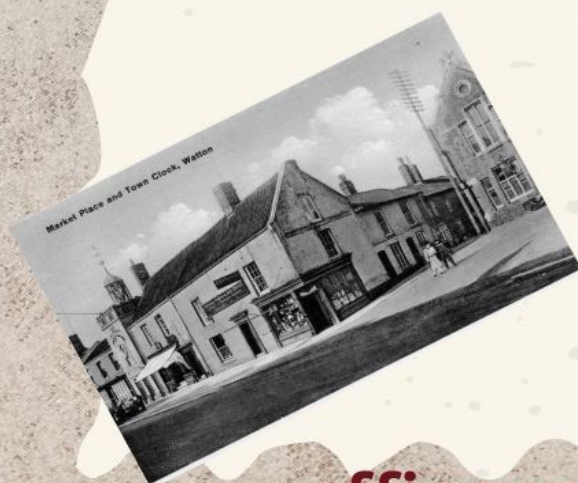
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A Trip Down Memory Lane From Yvonne Harrold

The Watton I grew up in was very different to the town as it is now. As the years go by edges get blurred and one wonders if what one remembers is as it was or as one had been told, but for myself this is what I remember. I came to Watton as a four and a half year old to live, in 1937, with my adoptive mother, Miss Evangeline Cracknell, who I was to know as "Auntie". At that time we lived at No.3 Dereham Road. This was the terrace just beyond what is now the Chapel used by The Assemblies of God and at that time it was a thriving Congregational Church.

I remember going to a packed Chapel for the Sunday School Anniversary. On the left hand side going out of town there was the row of houses we lived in - Mr Partridge's the large house at the corner, a cottage, then the row of older houses still standing, then nothing until Loch House and the Loch Neaton itself. To my remembrances this was a handsome park with a bandstand, bowling green and a great place for picnics. We slid about on it in wellies in the winter when it was frozen over and it was used by the townsfolk for swimming. On the right hand side was the Live and Let Live Public House, nurses house, and an infant school in Church Walk.

No.3 Dereham Road was a very simple cottage by today's standard - 2 up, 2 down as they say. The front door was rarely used. There was a small garden in the front. The sitting room had two easy chairs, a table and chairs and sideboard. The kitchen had the old wall oven - never used by my Aunt that I can remember. She cooked on an oil stove with an oven on the top. Cooking was not her speciality, but I never remember being hungry. I particularly remember the oil stove as I was told, as many children are, not to walk backwards - and I did, right into the hot stove and had bad burns on the backs of my legs! I learned, as I usually did, the 'hard way'. I remember being bathed in a tin bath in front of the kitchen fire, warm nightie ready on the wooden clothes horse. It can match up to present day bathrooms very well to a child's mind. Other washing was done in the shed across the yard, which was really a communal passage for all other neighbours in the row. I seem to remember my Aunt had a table outside the back door, and in the summer washing was done outside. Water came from the well, also communal. We weren't so constantly washing ourselves and clothes in those days, but I don't remember being offended by other people's aromas - after all we all smelt the same with our carbolice soap or sunlight soap for clothes. Very posh to have perfumed soap for Christmas! The toilet was at the end of the garden, which in like most terraced houses was long and narrow. As a child I never remember Auntie gardening. I think she must have had a neighbour who did it or waited until I was in bed. EARLY! 7pm was very late. Oh the agony of hearing the other children outside playing on hot summer evenings. Returning to the toilet, it was a standard wooden two holer (one large, one small for me). It had a vault of some kind that went to a collecting tank that was periodically emptied, I believe. To a small child it looked bottomless - very frightening. I clutch the sides hard as I sat there to be sure I didn't fall in. I used to help tear the paper into squares, sew the string through the corner that hung on the nail ready. I remember the awful teatime when I was sent down for my last call - I had a chamber pot for night time under the bed, and there was

the most horrendous thunderstorm. I screamed and screamed until I was rescued. They thought I had at least fallen in.

Next door but one in the middle of the row was a tailors shop. Mr Caddy was of the old school, and really did sit cross legged in his shop window sewing his suits. The Caddy family lived at No.1 and was a large boisterous family. Their home was full of suits in various stages of being finished, pressed or just waiting for another fitting. Enid was nearest to my age, about two or three years older I believe, but my playmate until she went up to the big school. The only time I remember being sent to bed was through Enid. I loved my tummy - particularly pineapple squares. For a special treat, I believe it was a birthday, I was told to ask Enid for tea. We had been playing, and I knew what we were to have to eat, so I went out of the door and hid for a while and came back with the tale that Enid couldn't come as her mummy was taking her out. Unfortunately my Auntie met Mrs Caddy and said she was sorry Enid couldn't come to tea. She stormed in. I knew I was in trouble - Bed and No Tea! And I had to listen to Enid being pressed to have more! The stair door was left open!

The stairs led up a narrow winding staircase to the two bedrooms and mine was facing the back and had it's own fireplace, lovely in the winter when I was in bed with mumps. Firelight flickering on the ceiling and upon the rose patterned wallpaper was magical to a small girl who had never had her own room before. While I lived there I became the proud owner of my first tricycle - secondhand of course. Not one of the tiny things one sees nowadays, but with three good sized wheels and a basket on the front. I was too short to reach to turn the pedals but insisted on walking it out when we went to the shops! When I didn't take my other pride and joy - my dolls pram - my fifth birthday present. Mr Harvey senior who lived in Dereham Road always teased me. "I see you're giving your tricycle a nice walk, Yvonne!" We would sometimes walk down Church Walk with Chummy our dog. It was a favourite walking place for townspeople.

Market day was busier than nowadays with the stalls all through Middle Street, and in the Market Place, by Wayland Hall and down the High Street. Of course there were cars, my Aunt drove one. I can't remember where she parked it. It certainly wasn't outside on the road and there was no space behind the Dereham Road house. She taught as Headmistress at Little Cressingham School and took me with her every day, and also her dog Chummy. In later years when I was District Nursing I would meet up with older Watton residents who remember us hanging our heads out of the windows as we went to and fro from school.

Coming down into the High Street on the left hand side of the Dereham Road corner was Fells, the cycle shop (pictured above in the 1950s). A little further on Amys the hardware, and further still the Co-op, before what is now The Willows, then a thatched cottage. On the other side next to The Bull Inn was Mr Delph in Horsboroughs, the chemist (they had a shop each side of the road) then Whalebelly, the butchers, then Harvey's stationer, printer and toyshop. The magic of "going upstairs" to see what was there for Christmas - the only time we ever went upstairs. International Stores, Lloyds Bank, then Durrants ladies and gents outfitters, then Barclays Bank. Just past the Crown Hotel there was another butchers, I believe Ashill Meat Company, Amys cigarettes and tobacco. Then there was Kendalls, later to be Rusts, groceries and draperies. Beechwood Avenue or Worms Yard



WTN 3

HIGH STREET, WATTON

A TUCK CARD

as we called it. Yes, I believe Mr Worms was a local Vet. Further on the Methodist Church and Schoolroom, Alms Houses. The High Street was continuous on that side - a wall and fence behind which were a farm and gardens opened for Hospital Day and Wayland Show. Then down to the Alms Houses and the school. Infants in the flint faced building that was Eirlys Johnson's until her recent move, the Junior School and Seniors at the back. Opposite on the corner of Saham Road was the Gas Station and home of the Gas Manager. The shops on the corner (now the Dry Cleaners) and Adcocks, grocers where we shopped.

Auntie's great friend Auntie Myrtle used to work for the Adcocks in their house in Norwich Road. I believe that is probably why we went to their shop. I know I was asked if I'd been a good girl and I of course always said 'yes', and was then told I could choose a biscuit from one of the open tins tipped enticingly in front of the counter while Auntie had he groceries parcelled up. Corners of sugar in paper and packets of butter and cheese in white paper beautifully presented after being carefully weighed. Then back up the High Street, past Mr Downs, the cobbler and saddle maker in his thatched house - he was to mend my satchel for me in later years. Past Midnight Moore's, so called because he would do his first batch if bread to sell in the shop. Then his second batch was for delivery round the villages and it would be very late when he reached some of them! There was usually a cat sitting in the little shop window among the sweets! I seem to remember another sweet shop opposite the Chapel next to Eyres, the electricity shop or did that come later? The steps by what is now the Pet shop were there then. I well remember insisting on jumping up and down each one while Auntie pushed my dolls pram!

Of course The Green Man public house was where Barclays Bank is now. Then came Jack Cross bicycle shop - his father's then - it was a thriving cycle repair shop as well. The Post Office and Edwards Newsagent, Smiths the Barbers ? A Dentist, Harness Maker, then McLarens the drapers. We used to go through to a little room at the back to buy ladies clothes. Mr Symonds used to go round the villages with orders you could try on and pay later weekly. Then Woods, the Opticians. Then Sherman's the Butchers, Pearsons (three sisters) wool and fancy draper, then Carters the sweet shop. The joy of having a whole penny to spend - my bribery to stop biting my nails. And how much you could buy! I especially like Alphabet sweets and sweethearts with messages on them or sherbet and liquorice laces, or even sweet cigarettes. No hang ups in those days! Or aniseed balls. Then the other Horsboroughs with the owner in charge! Then Butchers, the other hardware on the corner of the Market

Place. In the middle block Hiltons the shoe shop and Mr Milburn's wool shop, later to be the source of much embarrassment to me.

Wartime meant sanitary towels were in very short supply so when the bush telegraph said that Milburns had some in I was sent to buy my supply. As a very shy teenager I would have to hang about if Mr Millstead came through to serve me - and bless him he used to say "Did you want to see my wife?" With much relief I would say "yes please" - or else would have to buy yet another reel of cotton! The Chemist was as bad. If Mr Horsburgh was there, he was never so tactful! Donny Moore's bakery was on the Dereham Road corner. The smell of home cooked bread and you could stand and watch him getting the bread out of his big ovens if the yard door was open next to Cranes shoe shop.

In the Middle Street was Mrs Bridges, I believe her name was - I really remember her little shop girl whose name was Lavender - shortened by her employers to "Lavvy". "I'll just get Lavvy to fetch that for you!" Poor child, she must have had so much teasing. They sold dog biscuits and goodness knows what else in a dusty dingy shop, but she did charm my warts away! Going back home to Dereham Road we passed the fish and chip shop, Wests, and could buy wet fish - freshly caught at Lowestoft and brought round by train that day. In Dereham Road was Week's, the greengrocer and florists, who many years later was to make my bride's bouquet. Past Khyber House in the row before we got home was Mr Jones, a little ladies hairdressers. I hated going there. Before we went I'd say "Please don't let her cut my hair so short". But Auntie would get talking to her and then when I was perched on the stool on the chair to make me tall enough, off and off, it would be snipped to be finished off with the dreaded clippers to tidy up the back - didn't they always pull and scratch. Then waiting while my Aunt had her bob and maybe a Marcel Wave. Then home to tea and early to bed again!

Long, happy days - never remember the pouring rain, snow and ice, do we, or the fact that in Europe war was threatening. The year I was seven years old, I was told we were moving to a new house. Not too exciting for me as my life had always been on the move. As long as I was still staying with the familiar people that was all I cared. We moved to 3 Green Oak Road, or Nomonska, as it was called. Apparently an Indian word of welcome - memories for my Aunt of the time she spent there in the twenties as a Missionary. A NEW 3 bed semi. Large garden, garage, and bliss, a downstairs indoor toilet - upstairs bathroom! We moved in apparently on September 3rd, 1939, the day war broke out. Life was never the same again.

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

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Car Boot Sale Sunday 11th, 10.00-14.00

Antiques Fair Sunday 18th

Disco Saturday evening 31st

It is now possible to book events on the website
For more information check out the website queenshall-watton.co.uk

Watton Methodist Church

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

Is resting in January - Back on 4th February

Tuesdays@2 in The Methodist Centre

Is also resting in January - Back on 10th February when we'll be making a gift for Valentines Day

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

All Saints Church, Threxton

No Service in January

The Wayland Group of Parishes Worship in January

Sunday 4th January Thompson

Sunday 11th January Breckles

Sunday 18th January Caston
Sunday 25th January Gt Hockham

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

Ashill Group Services - January

4th 9.30am Holy Communion Merton (Epiphany)
11th 10.30am Holy Communion Saham Toney
18th 10.30am Holy Communion: Ovington
18th 10.30am Covenant Service: Saham Hills
Methodist Church (with the Church of England congregation, so no service at St George's)
25th 9.30am Holy Communion: Ashill
25th 10.30am Holy Communion: Saham Toney

There are normally lay-led services on Sundays when there is not Holy Communion:
9.30am at Ashill; 10.30am at Saham Toney
10.30am at Ovington

We offer you a warm welcome at Purpose Church

The 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

Happy New Year!

I have just returned from a lovely walk around Lynford Lake with my husband Jonathan and our Labrador Berkeley. And, as I often do when I walk, and particularly at this time of year, I find myself reflecting on the paths I've taken as well as the path that lie ahead, how I'll walk it and with whom.

As a Christian, the "with whom" is important to me. Sometimes I go walking with friends too, believing that the God I follow calls me to community – reminding me that my faith is not a solitary endeavour but a shared pilgrimage. Like travellers on a winding trail, we can lean on one another, for strength, encouragement, and joy in spending time together.

One of my favourite places to walk is in the woodland because, along the way, I discover not only the healing power of nature but also the profound resilience that comes from walking side by side through challenges. As I navigate rough terrain and unpredictable weather, I learn to embrace the journey with courage and hope, finding beauty and strength in unexpected places. Life's journey is often filled with uncertainty and hardship, isn't it? But have the assurance that we never walk alone, that walking in faith together means leaning into this calling — supporting one another, sharing burdens, and celebrating victories, large and small.

As we step into 2026, let us commit to being people that walk together. Whether that be through small group gatherings, worship services, acts of kindness, or shared moments of joy, we are called to strengthen one another, to face the challenges of the year with courage, trusting that God walks with us every step of the way.

May this January be the start of a meaningful journey for us all — a journey of faith, love, and togetherness. And as we walk with God and with each other, I pray that we'll step forward together in hope, peace, and unity.

Happy New Year! Vanessa. x

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

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The Inner Wheel

Inner Wheel has had a busy few weeks in the run up to Christmas. We started with our November meeting where we welcomed Tracy Benn, a lady from the Salvation Army who gave us a very interesting talk about the origins of the Salvation Army with its formation by William Booth, up to its current work in 134 countries. She also brought along a selection of hats from the past and our members enjoyed trying them on. We were very surprised to find a hard hat among them which they wore to protect themselves from stones which were occasionally thrown ! We gave her £200 which we understand will be partially spent on their Christmas toy appeal. We also sent £200 to St. Martins Housing Trust in Norwich who help the homeless so it's a charity we usually support at Christmas. We also sent £50 to the Purple Community Fund who I have written about recently. We have been selling items made with recycled drink can ring pulls, made by a poor community in the Philippines. They have recently been hit by floods which have destroyed many of their houses and a fire destroyed their community centre so they asked if we could help by donating some money for Christmas boxes for the families to cheer them up. Some of you may have noticed us walking down the High Street one Wednesday morning dressed in orange. This was to draw attention to a Unesco initiative which is supported by Inner Wheel worldwide to eliminate violence against women. We all ended up enjoying a coffee at the weekly coffee morning at the Methodist Centre.

Many of you will have seen us at the Festive Market selling our pretty parcels as we nearly sold out and made £375, selling all of them at £1 each, all going to charity of course. At least the weather was kind to us this year and it was great seeing all the community out and about enjoying themselves.

Our Christmas concert brought an audience of over 80 people to the Queens Hall where Darrin joined us in singing



songs and carols with a Winter Wonderland theme and some of the ladies read poems. After the entertainment everyone enjoyed a turkey roll and a mince pie and a good chat with friends.

By the time you read this Christmas will be over so may I, on behalf of all the ladies in Inner Wheel, wish you a Happy, Healthy 2026. Jenny Simons (Club Correspondent)

Dance Away Queens Hall, Watton IP25 6DA
Ballroom, Latin & Sequence. Bar & Raffle
Next Dances: January 10th, February 7th, March 7th

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Watton & Wayland Times

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You can contact Julian by telephone on 01953 571990 or 07864720480 or by email to: wattontimes@gmail.com

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Watton (Loch Neaton) Outdoor and Short Mat Bowls Club



As a finale to the outdoor season, we ran our Annual General Meeting on November 15th where members reviewed the year, discussed some necessary changes, and elected the new Committee for 2026. Most notable are Colin Hay assuming the role of Club Secretary, Peter Faraway as Club Captain, and Elaine Aberdeen as Assistant Secretary. The committee would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mike Mitchell for his years of service to the Club as green keeper, and his guidance regarding the processes and equipment needed in the maintenance of the green, and to Colin Hill for his Captaincy during difficult circumstances. Colin takes on the role as Vice-Captain for 2026. With the formalities over, in a complete change suggested by members, after a buffet lunch, provided by the Sports Centre, we moved to the highlight of the afternoon - presentation of the various trophies. Not wishing to bore our readers with lists of winners; however, our Singles Champions for 2025 are Ladies: Shirley Ball and Mens: Bob Davies.

However, bowling still continues – our sister club - Loch Neaton Short Mat Bowls Club welcomes both experienced players, and beginners, on Tuesdays at 14:00. We're not a league / competitive club, just playing socially to enjoy a friendly afternoon. Costs are £10.00 membership for new members, plus rink fee £3.00 per game. Membership is included for our outdoor players, who move indoors for the winter. Further details from our Secretary, secretary.wattonbowlsclub@gmail.com or have a look at our website www.wattonbowlsclub.co.uk. See you soon!

Pictured on the page are . . .

Top Left: Ladies Champion Shirley Ball with Club Chairman Len Green

Top Right: Mens Champion Bob Davies with Club Chairman Len Green

Lower: Left to right, Anita Green, Robin Green (behind), Elaine Aberdeen, Annette Walters, Judy Willis, Shirley Ball and Bob Davies

01953 488508 and leave a message.

Meanwhile, if you would like to get out of the house to a friendly, warm environment, we have our regular weekly coffee mornings with home-made cheese scones on Tuesdays 10-12noon. Thompson has a wonderful choice of footpaths so why not blow the winter cobwebs away and get rid of the Christmas excesses before joining us for a hot drink. Our book sales, which support the three local charities of Thompson Community Hall, Thompson's church and Griston's church, will be continuing in 2026 with the first on March 14th so put the date in your diary. We take donations of books at the hall. Best times are Tuesdays 10 - 12 Noon and Wednesdays 10-12noon. If these times are not convenient, contact us and we will arrange something with you.

Thompson Community Hall

Along with our regular events, we have a couple of good things happening in the Community Hall for you to enjoy to brighten January.

On January 9th we have our film night and are screening Downton, the Grand Finale. £5 each with free popcorn and ice cream sales. No need to book.

On January 24th we have the famous Mens Shed Shantymen performing after a 2-course supper. There is nothing like joining in and singing along to lift the spirits. Tickets £20 include the meal and performance. To book please contact us on info@thompsoncommunityhall.co.uk or phone



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