

Syston and District

u3a

learn, laugh, live

AUG

2026

Vitality!

Official newsletter of the Syston and District u3a

CHARITY No 1180152

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Hi Everyone,

Well, the sun is still shining but now I have had enough of this hot weather. A few days ago I had to take my son-in-law into Leicester for an eye appointment and it started to rain and the air smelt so sweet it was lovely. As you may know we do not have a Publicity Officer at the moment and I hope that we can fill this position asap. If anyone is interested in filling the vacancy please email me at sadu3achair@gmail.com. I hope to see you all soon and stay hydrated in this hot weather.

Clive

WE WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW

HAVE A QUERY? WANT TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE?

Occasionally, some members (or potential members) may prefer to speak to someone about an aspect of our u3a, rather than locating an email address or looking on our website.

So, we now have a contact number for Syston & District u3a, which is:



0300 102 1381

At the moment, this number goes through to Steve Kenney's (Webmaster) mobile phone, and if he is unable to answer the query, then he can advise who to contact.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

It's coming up to that time again.

This year's renewal notices will be sent out at the beginning of September.

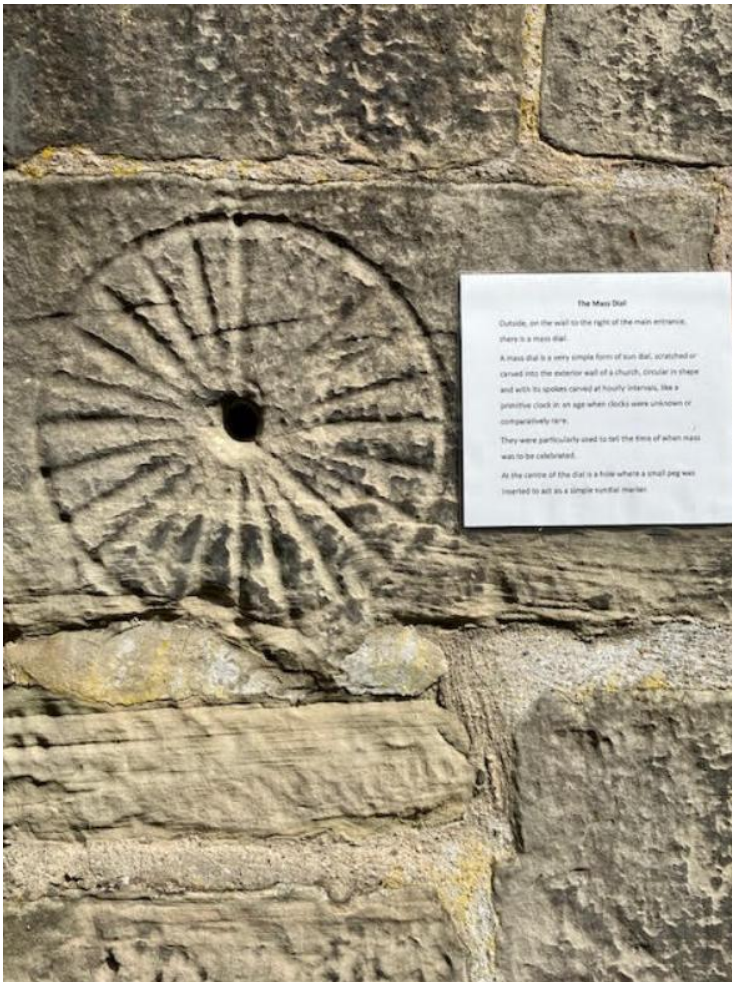
Please check your spam/junk folder if you do not receive one.

GROUP NEWS

NEW GROUP IDEAS

If you have any ideas for a new group, please contact Barbara Sargeant our groups co-ordinator sadu3agroups@gmail.com or speak to her at one of our monthly general meetings. Alternatively contact her assistant Angie Baker email sadu3agroupsasst@gmail.com Acting as a group organiser doesn't have to be onerous, it doesn't have to be down to just one person, and it doesn't mean you have to organise everything the group does.

POSSIBLE NEW GROUP – CHURCH ARCHITECTURE



Whilst out with our Photography group I saw this very interesting feature on the side of the Church in Thornton. It is a Mass Dial; a simple form of sun dial used in an age when clocks were unknown or rare. By putting a small peg in the hole, the time could be read. I wonder if anyone has an interest in **Church architecture**? Maybe a few of us could get together and discover more about this fascinating subject.

Please email me sadu3agroups@gmail.com if this is something you would like to follow up on. We have lots of local churches just waiting for us to discover.

2ND TAI CHI GROUP

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Proposed 2nd Group Tai Chi



Due to Popularity

A 2nd Tai Chi Group
will meet at the Syston Community Centre
Brookside Room

Each **THURSDAY** for one hour at 2.30pm.

This new group will be dependant on
numbers, the more the merrier

If you are interested please contact Barbara
sadu3agroups@gmail.com

As you may be aware there is a vibrant weekly Tai Chi group within our u3a on a Wednesday. Due to the number of people on the waiting list and other members who have an interest on a different day or time it is possible that a second group can be formed. This will be WEEKLY on a Thursday at Syston Community Centre for 1 hour and has some car parking available. To start this new group, it is

dependent on additional interest joining this group. I will hand over to Barbara those on my waiting list as at least 10 more interested members are required to proceed. For any group to exist there must be one, two or more members who are willing to create and keep an up-to-date register and accept payment from those members attending. Very easy in practice and Barbara Sergeant will help with support and advice.

Tai Chi is based on an ancient form of Chinese warrior training and on defence instead of attack. No special skill or fitness level required to enjoy this weekly session to strengthen areas of the body which have become weakened due to our lifestyle. Enjoy those playful movements which are part of childhood in an adult way and benefit mind and body. This group is taken by a highly qualified professional who also imparts fascinating information about Tai Chi, it's workings, origins and is a patient teacher who prefers ensuring moves are completed correctly before extending the form further. An hour of calm, peaceful movement which enhances flexibility, balance and aids tranquillity of thought and physical relaxation.

Be daring and have a go!



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Proposed
New Group

Jazz Appreciation

Are you a fan of Jazz?
We have a member who is keen
to start a Jazz appreciation group.

The group will meet twice a month
on Wednesday mornings.

Meeting at the members home
in Syston

Please register your interest by emailing
sadu3agroups@gmail.com



New Proposed Group

Indoor Carpet Bowls

After the success of the
One Off Event

Venue Syston Community
Centre



It will be on a Friday Morning

The room is booked for the 18th September.

12 people maximum - **If you are interested please**

email Barbara - sadu3agroups@gmail.com

email Angie - sadu3agroupsassist@gmail.com

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

The group looked at the use of Swithland Slate for headstones, along with how it was transported. This led on to the history of local Salt Paths, which provided some of the routes. Salt Paths were so named because the main commodity transported along them was originally salt – which was produced from the salt water of the fens. We learned that the current haulier practise of trying to secure a return load for extra income goes back way beyond the lorry era. In the medieval period wool moved to the ports at Boston and Kings Lynn with salt and imported goods forming the return loads. Later, Swithland slate was moved into Lincolnshire to Grantham. It is suggested that the carters of the day were moving 3 products between Leicestershire, Grantham and the Fens – slate, salt and malt. The Grantham area was a prime barley growing location. The drainage program in the Fens meant a demand for beer for the navvies. Beer was safer to drink than natural water and provided extra calories for the heavy work of digging drainage channels.

LIBRARY BOOK GROUP

The Library Book Group is currently meeting at Syston Community Centre on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 10am.

New members welcome. We are also happy to include occasional, or one-off visitors if we are reading a book you have enjoyed or would like to try.

We embrace a broad range of reading with something for everyone to enjoy... the emphasis is on enthusiastic chat, shared discoveries, trying new ideas and lots of warmth and laughter. No one has to finish a book if they're not enjoying it or even start! It's ok to read something else or watch the film instead.

All of our choices are available from county or city libraries, either as a book or as a free download. Often our choices are available for less than £1 on Kindle.

Our next 6 months of reading are listed below – they are a little different to usual as this time 3 of our titles are

non-fiction

August 26th. "Raising Hare" by Chloe Dalton

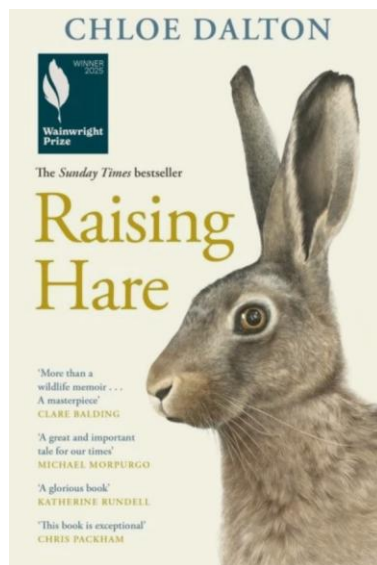
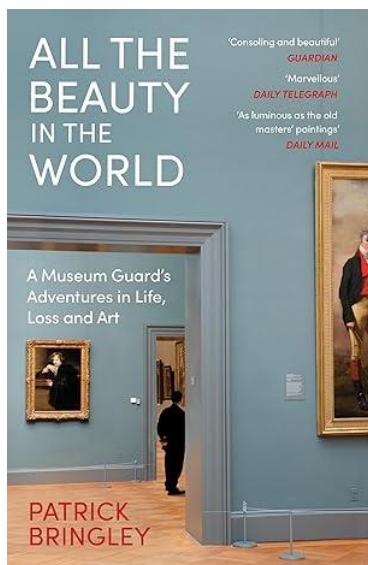
September 23rd. "Six Little Words" by Sally Page

October 28th. "The Mercy Step" by Marcia Hutchinson

November 25th. "The Enchanted April" by Elizabeth van Arnim

December 30th. "All the Beauty in the World" by Patrick Bringley

January 27th. "Harvest" by Jim Crace



CROSS STITCH GROUP

We meet on the 1st Friday of the month at Syston Community Centre, from 10 until 12.

Six of our original members still attend every month, some are starting their 2nd project.

We have gained 2 new members over the last couple of months but have room for more!

Cross stitch can be quite therapeutic and relaxing. If you have never tried it before I have plenty of small projects you can try. Come and give it a go! Contact me via the U3A website.

Gwyn Garner.

SUNDAYS FOR SOLOS GROUP



The Sundays for Solos group has been out and about enjoying the sunshine. In June, we hired a canal boat and crew from the Baldwin Trust and took a trip from Thurmaston Marina up to Cossington Lock and back. It was beautiful and relaxing! In July, some of us drove out to Wymondham Windmill where we enjoyed an excellent Sunday Lunch, followed by a visit to Thistleton Herb Nursery, where, of course, we all bought plants!

And we have already got our tickets for the Rutland Garden Show on 16th August. We went last year and had a great day out, so we are looking forward to our return visit.

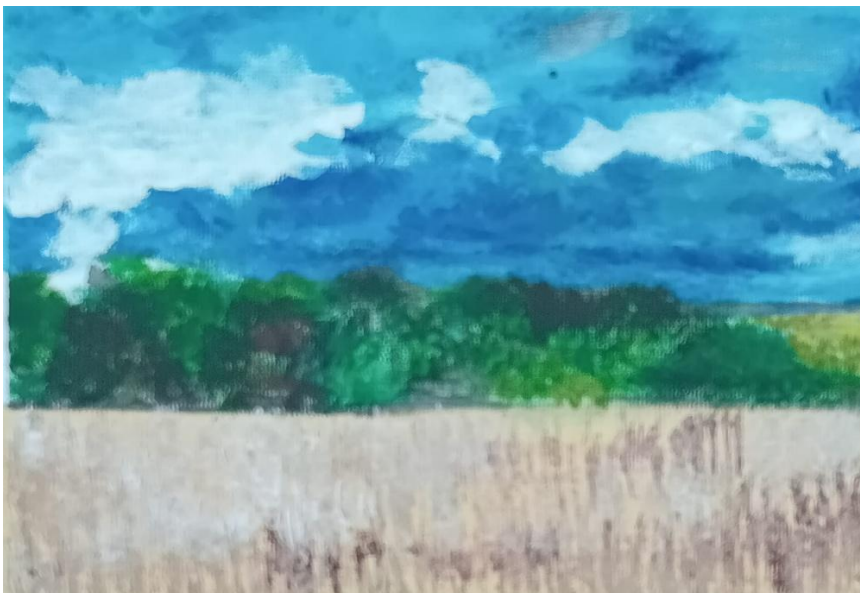
Wymondham Mill photo © Copyright [Ashley Dace](#) and licensed for [reuse](#) under this [Creative Commons Licence](#).

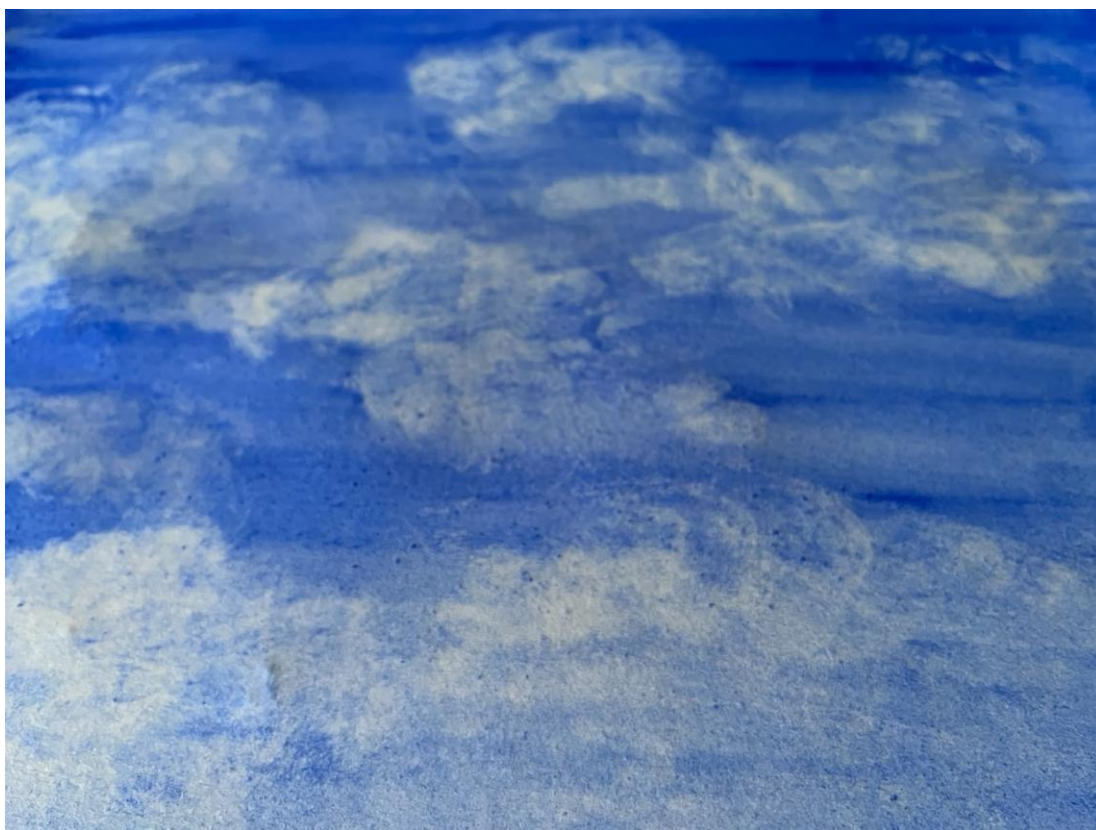
SILK PAINTING GROUP

The Silk Painting Group began in May and so far, has met on three occasions. We started with a full house of twelve members and that's continued, which is very encouraging. Most of the members are new to silk painting but have approached the subject with great enthusiasm. Everyone has had a go at producing their own pieces from start to finish, including the taxing technique of gutta work. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to be at the last session, so I'm looking forward to seeing the finished results when we meet in August. I'll take some photos to include in the next newsletter.

ART GROUP

The art group have been working on cloud formations and fire with some very different results. They have been worked in several different mediums including water colour, paste pencils, acrylic and some in mixed media. Here are some examples.





BOOK GROUP

Our book group meets at The Britannia Inn Queniborough and recently we have welcomed another two members. In June we read *The Glassmaker* by Tracy Chevalier, which was set in Venice and Murano particularly, it was quite interesting, especially for those who had visited Venice and recognised some of the settings. Although it was interesting to learn about the process of glass making it was felt that there was maybe a bit too much repetition about this. The timeline was difficult to follow as people living there didn't age as fast as people in the rest of the world, very strange, that said, the storyline was quite interesting.

In July we read *Bonjour Sophie* by Elizabeth Buchan. This covered the life of a young girl whose mother, a resistance fighter, escaped war torn Paris and whose father, also a resistance fighter, died in France. They are put with a vicar and in his wife in a small village in England and after her mother dies, she spends her formative years at a boarding school. Eventually she manages to travel to Paris to find out what happened to her father and makes a life there. This book led to a long discussion, and we all agreed that it was interesting, thought provoking and a very enjoyable read.

YOGA GROUP

Dates for Yoga and Meditation session in August are
Tuesday 11th August and Wednesday 19th August at 10.00am in Syston Community Centre.

FAMILY HISTORY GROUP

The group continued to look at brick walls and queries. Sometimes we come across documents that raises queries. We looked at the baptism of a child in the early 19th century whose mother was in her early 50's. Yes, this is possible – but when the lady concerned has an unmarried daughter of childbearing age, it creates uncertainty. Added to that, there is another baptism where the same lady is recorded as the mother a couple of years later, and the same daughter did give birth to a documented illegitimate child a couple of years after that. She went on to marry but sadly was widowed after only a couple of years.

By the 1841 census two of the three children had died in their teens and the other was married. Their burial places don't help. One died whilst working "in service", so was buried in the church for that location. By 1841 all the living parties were in the same location, the same one where the other young lady was buried. Who she was living with at the time of her death is not known. That wouldn't be conclusive anyway, it was quite common for grandparents to raise their daughter's illegitimate children.

At the moment there is simply no firm evidence to clarify who the mother of the one child who survived and married was. Leaving the question of whether the documented mother is a 5x Great Grandmother or 6x. Is the other potential mother actually a great grandmother, not an aunt?

WALKING GROUP



The highest point of our walk was the Trig Station on Hickling Standard. We then walked back down to Hickling basin and the Old Wharf tearooms for our lunch.

LITTER PICKING GROUP

Syston and District U3A litter pickers out this morning, 15 bags of rubbish collected from Wanlip road, Syston.

Next month we are meeting 10am on Whiles Lane, Birstall.



EVENTS – PAST, PRESENT & PLANNED



THURMASTON FAYRE

Barbara Sargeant and Jill Kempton-Hayes strutting their stuff at the u3a “stand” at Thurmaston Fayre on Elizabeth Park. You can see the full performance on our facebook group pages.

Nice moves ladies!!

The music involved was the Bee Gees in their “staying alive” period.



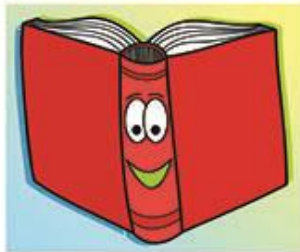
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One Off Event

Desert Island Discs

(We have found another Island)

Venue Syston Community



Centre



Choose your record,
think about a luxury item and a book
then we will do the rest.

There will be cakes, coffee, tea and good
music to listen and dance to.

**It will be held Friday Morning
August 21st at 10am**

20 people maximum - **If you are interested please**
email Angie Baker - sadu3aevents@gmail.com
email Barbara - sadu3agroups@gmail.com



Photo from the Carpet bowls event that was successful enough to spark a planned new group.

WHAT'S ON NEXT

GENERAL MEETINGS

In the Brookside Room at the Community Centre – talks usually start 10.30am
Tea/coffee and mingling from 10.00am



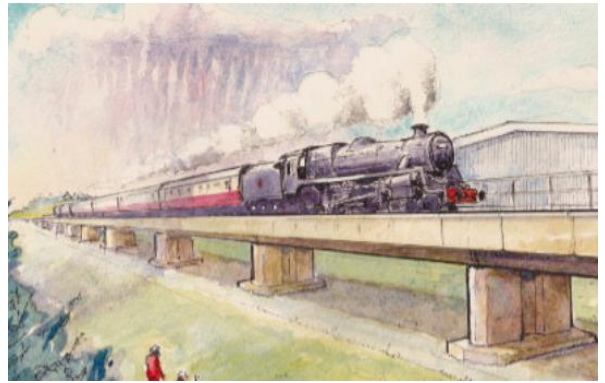
Wed Aug 12th @ 10.30 AM

We are Charnwood Eco Hub, a new Community Interest Company set up by friends Sarah Goode and Emma Ward. We are both passionate about the planet, and have both been involved in environmental projects locally for some time.

We identified a need to bring together local environmental organisations and initiatives and to raise awareness of them amongst local residents, in order to help them to reduce their own carbon footprint and live more sustainably.

Wed Sept 9th @ 10.30 AM

Tom Ingall introduces The Great Central Railway -
The presentation is mostly slides with short videos/animations included. It starts by setting the scene with a brief history of the railway from construction up to the preservation era, then covers the reunification process from 2009 to date, with detail on the three main construction works completed so far, the present situation and future developments.



Wed, Oct 14 at 10:30 AM

BRIDGESCAPES OF SCOTLAND

👍 Going

A journey celebrating Scotland's bridge and bridge-building heritage. A talk by Bruce Keith.



Wed Nov 11th @ 10.30 AM

Lynda Hill talks about Project Linus UK,
which provides love, a sense of security, warmth and comfort to children, who are sick, disabled, disadvantaged or distressed by donating gifts of NEW, **HOMEMADE, WASHABLE** quilts and blankets, lovingly made by UK volunteer knitters and quilters.

NATIONAL U3A ITEMS

u3a TALKS



The Scottish colourists on Iona

Dudley Clark takes us to the beautiful island of Iona to see how light and colour inspired the work of Scottish artists.

Thursday 20 August at 2pm

Free – online via Zoom



Wild, edible autumn seeds

Join Hedgewitch Kat to discover the fascinating world of wild edible autumn seeds, from identification and folklore to practical uses.

Friday 4 September at 10am

Free – online via Zoom



Triumph to trauma

Triumph to trauma

Triumph to Trauma (940 to 1042) – Danes before Normans: the Conquest before The Conquest!

Discover how the Danish conquest, Cnut and Emma of Normandy shaped England before the Norman Conquest.

Monday 7 September at 2pm

Free – online via Zoom

Book [here](#)

Book [here](#)

Book [here](#)

More talks can be found [here](#)

Subject Networks provide a platform for u3a members to connect and come together around their interests. Here are a few.



Flight Inspirations Aviation Group

Don and Barbara run monthly events from varied speakers and keep you updated with articles about advances in aviation.



Craft

Join the Craft u3a Facebook group, where members share ideas and what their groups have been up to.



What is a Subject Network? Networks are groups of u3a members who share ideas and resources, build relationships, and access more learning opportunities around the subject.

Who can join them? Any u3a member can join a national u3a subject network, whether you attend an interest group at your local u3a in that subject or not.

More can be found [here](#)

Let's Talk Tech

The u3a Let's Talk Tech Subject Network educates u3a members about Technology through its Facebook Group and regular Zoom meetings.

NOT u3a BUT YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED



I went to Launde Abbey fairly recently one Saturday afternoon, and as well as being a nice drive and a beautiful venue, they have places to sit, and also a very nice cafe in the courtyard. Members might like to be reminded about this 'hidden gem' in lovely countryside. Felicity Austin

Photo -Mat Fascione / Launde Abbey in Leicestershire / [CC BY-SA 2.0](#)

Loughborough by the Sea

📅 Mon, 17th Aug 2026 – Sun, 23rd Aug 2026

📍 Loughborough Market Place

The popular Loughborough by the Sea event returns to Loughborough town centre

The event, which is free to attend, has been expanded for 2026 to last a whole week, running from Monday, 17 August, to Sunday, 23 August.

Every day that week, between 10am and 4pm, Loughborough's Market Place will be transformed into a vibrant beach-themed destination.

Organised by the markets team at Charnwood Borough Council, in partnership with Love Loughborough BID and I Need a Fun Fair, Loughborough by the Sea provides something for everyone.



29 August @ 10:00 am – 31 August @ 5:00 pm

Stapleford Miniature Railway Open Weekend

Stapleford Miniature Railway The Old Forge, Stapleford, Melton Mowbray, United Kingdom

The Stapleford Miniature Railway will have its Open Weekend from August 29th to 31st, 2026. This event will take place at the Stapleford estate near Melton Mowbray, featuring a variety of attractions including classic cars, motorcycles, and vintage tractors, along with the famous miniature railway. Admission is free, and the event is a great opportunity to enjoy the scenic beauty of the area while supporting a local



12 September @ 12:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Heritage Open Day

St John's Church Thorpe End, Melton Mowbray, United Kingdom

Come and discover this beautiful historic church as we open the doors for our first Heritage Open Day. Free guided tours of the church are running at 1:00 pm and 3:00 pm.

Free



LOUGHBOROUGH MODEL RAILWAY SHOW

22nd August - 23rd August

Model railway Show with 32 layouts, traders and demonstration stands. Thomas and friends layout for children to have a go. Free...



BOSWORTH MEDIEVAL FESTIVAL

22nd August - 23rd August

This two-day event attracts thousands of visitors, re-enactors and traders from across the UK. The event features battle re-enactments by...

FROM OUR MEMBERS

Gooseberries



Gooseberries (*Ribes uva-crispa*) in the author's garden. As children we called them goosegogs: today's children are unaware of their existence, a forgotten fruit condemned to the history books.

They are an almost forgotten member of the currant family whose fruits are called berries, consisting of a softer outer coat enveloping multiple seeds.

No one is sure how they gained the 'goose' part of their name. Many English names are derived from French, Dutch or German.

French: **la groseille à maquereau**, literally mackerel currants. Their only use in French cuisine is to make a sauce to accompany fish!

Dutch: **kruisbes**

German: **stachelbeere**

We will just have to accept that the origin of the English name has been lost to antiquity.

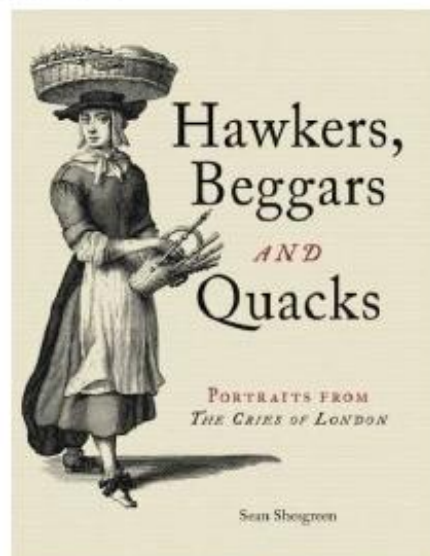


A costermonger and his barrow

In Victorian times, fruit was sold by costermongers who purchased their wares from wholesale markets such as Covent Garden, transporting them by large wheeled barrows to their 'pitch' for sale to the general public. Apples were the most popular fruit, followed by cherries and then gooseberries.

Most costermongers seem to have been men, you need to be strong to push around a heavy barrow.

An alternative means of sale was to carrying your wares in a basket, carried on your head as you walked around 'crying' (shouting out or singing) to attract customers. Such traders were known as hawkers.



Many hawkers were women selling popular fruit or fish, the latter be known as fish-wives. The lady in the picture above is selling cherries.

Gooseberries and slang

In medieval times "Old Gooseberry" referred to The Devil. Why? – Hell knows.

You will be familiar with the term "playing gooseberry" a phrase created in Victorian times to describe a chaperone appointed to keep a watchful eye and listening ear when an unmarried middle class young lady was in the company of an eligible bachelor. She, the chaperone, pretended to read, or if outside in a garden, pretend (play at) picking gooseberries. Shortening the phrase gave us playing gooseberry. Don't mention this to young people

as today a 'threesome' has an entirely different meaning!

Since we have wandered into the area of sexual connotations I will extend the examination of the metaphorical use of the said fruit.

Gooseberries (well two of them) referred to a gentleman's equipment which there is no need to name.

A gooseberry bush was slang for pubic hair, giving rise to the phrase "born under a gooseberry bush"

Gooseberries banned in USA!

The 1912 Plant Quarantine Act banned the growth of gooseberries, black currants and red currants in the USA. The ban was to protect the pine forests that produced the lumber required for housebuilding because of the accidental introduction of the fungus called white pine blister rust from China. The spores from the fungus will infect gooseberries and other currants which can then pass on the fungus to other white pine trees.

The ban was only rescinded in 1966, though some states have retained the ban.

Other types of Gooseberries



Cape gooseberry (*Physalis peruviana*) isn't a gooseberry, despite its tangy taste, and doesn't come from South Africa but from Peru.



Chinese gooseberry (*Actinidia chinensis*) is not in the currant (*Ribes*) family so it is not a true gooseberry but we are not going to let that spoil a good story

In 1904, a New Zealander, named Mary Isabel Fraser brought seeds back from China, where they were successfully planted in 1906 and produced their first fruit in 1910

British and American servicemen stationed in New Zealand during World War II grew fond of the fruit, leading to the idea of exporting the fruit to Europe and in particular the USA.

This presented a marketing problem. Gooseberries were illegal in the US and China was on the wrong side in the Cold War.

In 1959 the name Kiwi Fruit was registered, dropping all connections to gooseberries and China and sales took off in the 1970s

Kiwis come in two common varieties: green and yellow.



Green Kiwi in cross section



These are my favourite. They have rebranded 'yellow' to 'gold' and the yellow variety is sweeter.

PPC July 2026

Many thanks to Pierre Castille for the article – it brought back memories including some other old sayings. I couldn't resist adding my own take on the gooseberry.

The Gooseberry: A Small Fruit With a Surprisingly Large Story

Gooseberries may look modest enough on the branch, but they have played an outsized role in British life — not just in gardens and kitchens, but in folklore, family stories and even the language we still use today. For a fruit that many modern children wouldn't recognise, the gooseberry has left a remarkable cultural footprint.

A fruit once familiar to every household

For much of the 19th and early 20th centuries, gooseberries were part of the seasonal rhythm of ordinary life. Cottage gardens and allotments almost always had a prickly gooseberry bush tucked somewhere near the fence. Children knew the sharp tang of an unripe berry, the scratches you got from reaching too far into the foliage, and the annual ritual of turning the first crop into pies, jams and the classic gooseberry fool.

This familiarity made the gooseberry a perfect prop for adults who preferred not to explain the facts of life too directly. When a child asked where babies came from, the traditional answer was that they were **found under a gooseberry bush**. It was a gentle, rural fiction — as British as the French stork story — and it worked precisely because every child knew what a gooseberry bush looked like. The tale appears in Victorian children's books, Edwardian humour columns and family oral tradition, always delivered with a straight face and received with wide-eyed acceptance.

Gooseberries in rural tradition

Beyond euphemisms and idioms, gooseberries were woven into local customs. Gooseberry shows flourished in the Midlands and the North from the late 18th century, where growers competed for the heaviest berry. Some varieties were bred specifically for size rather than flavour, producing fruits that looked almost comic in their proportions. In Yorkshire and Lancashire, gooseberries were linked with Whitsun and early summer feasts, appearing in puddings and preserves long before citrus fruits were widely available.

A fruit slipping from memory

All of this makes the modern situation rather striking. Many children today have never tasted a gooseberry, and some wouldn't recognise one if you handed it to them. Supermarkets rarely stock them, gardens no longer routinely grow them, and the fruit has quietly slipped out of everyday life. For younger generations raised on strawberries, blueberries and seedless grapes, the gooseberry has become almost exotic — a fruit their grandparents mention but they've never encountered.

This fading familiarity explains why the old stories and expressions can sound puzzling now. If you've never seen a gooseberry bush, the idea of babies being found under one loses its charm. And "playing gooseberry" becomes an idiom detached from its original, very literal image.

A reminder of how quickly everyday knowledge changes

The gooseberry's decline is a small but telling example of how cultural memory shifts. A fruit that once symbolised **fertility, privacy, summer abundance** and **domestic humour** can, within a couple of generations, become something children barely know. It's a reminder that even the most ordinary plants can carry rich stories — and that those stories fade if the plants themselves disappear from daily life. It has been a character in our folklore, a prop in our family tales, and even a participant in the delicate dance of courtship. Not bad for a prickly little bush.

POETRY CORNER

Goblin Market (extract)

by Christina Rossetti

Morning and evening
Maids heard the goblins cry:
'Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:
Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump unpecked cherries,
Melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,
Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
Crab-apples, dewberries,
Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries;—
All ripe together
In summer weather,—
Morns that pass by,
Fair eves that fly;
Come buy, come buy:
Our grapes fresh from the vine,
Pomegranates full and fine,
Dates and sharp bullaces,
Rare pears and greengages,
Damsons and bilberries,
Taste them and try:
Currants and gooseberries,
Bright-fire-like barberries,
Figs to fill your mouth,
Citrons from the South,
Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;
Come buy, come buy.'

Edward Lear's *Nonsense Alphabet* (1871):

G

G was once a little gooseberry,
Goosey,
Boosey,
Novsy,
Goosey,
Tarty,
Little Gooseberry!

Under the Gooseberry Bush

"Where did I come from?" the small children cried,
And Victorian mothers turned sideways and sighed.
"Why, under the leaves where the sun doesn't shine,
On a prickly old branch of the gooseberry vine!
We found you wrapped up in a blanket of green,
The plumpest young dumpling that ever was seen."
Now the gardens are tidy, the folklore is dead,
And "playing the gooseberry" rarely is said—
That awkward third wheel on a bench in the park,
Left trailing behind as the evening turns dark.
For the supermarket shelf has no place for the thorn,
And children buy berries all smooth and reborn.
They know not the scratch, nor the sour-sweet surprise,
Of the wild hairy globe hidden safe from their eyes.

The Gooseberry Clubs of the North

Ribes uva-crispa: untamed in the hedge,
With a spine at each node and a sawtooth-ribbed edge.
Yet the weavers and miners of Lancashire clay
Took the wild, sour beast and coaxed sweetness away.
With a draught of cold water and secrets of dung,
They measured each prize on the apothecary's scale,
For the heaviest berry, plump, heavy, and strung
Like a prize-winning pig at the midsummer sale.
From 'London' to 'Roaring Lion', 'Teaser' and 'Crown',
They bred out the wildness to win a renown.
Though the mildew came calling and stripped back the green,
Still the stubborn old bush remains monarch unseen:
Built for northern grey skies and a sharp, frosts-bitten spring,
The rough, hairy king of the cottage-court ring.

Traditional English Folk Proverb:

"If you would have gooseberries large and fine,
Prune out the wood in the wintertime;
Leave room for the sun, leave room for the gale,
And gather your fruit in a wooden pail."



And finally.....

"At the Midsummer meetings of the Northern Gooseberry Societies, the growers weigh their fruit with as much solemnity as if they were weighing gold dust... A single berry of the 'Roaring Lion' variety has been known to weigh upwards of thirty-one pennyweights."

— The Gardener's Chronicle & Agricultural Gazette (1844)

"To play gooseberry: To act as an unwanted third person to a pair of lovers. Derived from the notion that picking gooseberries is a solitary, prickly, and thankless occupation best done while others enjoy themselves."

— Ebenezer Cobham Brewer, *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (1894)

"In no part of the world is the gooseberry grown in such perfection as in Lancashire and Cheshire... The enthusiastic rivalry among the cottage growers at the annual 'Gooseberry Shows' has produced berries of a magnitude unknown in any other country."

— John Claudius Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (1822)

"The gooseberry is a thoroughly English fruit. It loves our cool, moist climate, and under the diligent care of the northern artisan, it has been developed from a small, sour wildling into a giant of the garden."

— Robert Hogg, *The Fruit Manual: A Guide to the Fruits and Fruit Trees of Great Britain* (1860)

"To obtain berries of extraordinary weight, the grower leaves but three or four upon a bush, feeding the roots with liquid manure, and even hanging small pans of water beneath each berry so that the fruit may absorb the moisture through its eye."

— The Journal of Horticulture, Cottage Gardener, and Country Gentleman (1868)

"To Play Gooseberry: To accompany two lovers as a third party, to avoid impropriety. The third person is supposed to be occupied in picking gooseberries, so as not to see what the lovers are doing."

— John Camden Hotten, *The Slang Dictionary* (1864)

"Doing gooseberry-picker to two young people who had rather be alone is about as pleasant a task as walking bare-foot over brambles."

— The Monthly Magazine (1832)

"A garden without a row of gooseberry bushes is like a kitchen without a salt-cellar; it lacks that sharp, honest ingredient which gives zest to all the rest."

— William Cobbett, *The English Gardener* (1829)

"The gooseberry is the fruit of the cottager, providing a luxury of pie and preserve to those who have neither hothouse nor orchard."

— Rev. Charles A. Johns, *Gardening for the Cottage* (1850)

