

System and District

u3a

learn, laugh, live

FEB
2024

Vitality!

Official newsletter of the System and District u3a

CHARITY No 1180152

FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Hi Everyone,

I hope everyone is well and managed to stay warm through the cold spell.

John Constantine's talk at the January meeting about 'Magicians who've died performing' I thought was funny and interesting. His tricks at the end were very clever and I haven't got a clue how they were done.

In a few months' time it will be time for our AGM and though we have no officers resigning we do still have positions vacant on our committee. The vacancies are Vice-chair and 2 vacant positions as Committee Member. These last 2 positions have no office but your views on the topics under discussion will be invaluable. If you wish to apply or want further information please email me on sadu3achair@gmail.com or see me at the next members meeting.

Our next Members meeting will be on February 14th when Paul Reynolds will talk to us about 'His Fire Service Experiences'.

Hope to see you there.

Clive

WE WANT TO LET YOU KNOW

Well, my thanks for the contributions from members for last years Newsletters came back to bite me. Only a few items were forthcoming for the February edition. I hope we can get back on track next month. Please don't be shy, let me know what the groups you are involved with have been up to. Even if a group is full at the moment, you never know when that might change. Your photos and articles provide a bit of colour and variety. You can send me items at any time, you don't need to wait for the "call out" email.

sadu3aed@gmail.com is the place to send anything for inclusion.

GROUP NEWS

OUR 2 ART GROUPS

The Syston u3a original art group grew to capacity during 2023 including a waiting list we could not cater for. So, two of our very experienced and talented members took the brave step and set up a new Art Group for 2024 which solved two problems. It reduced the number in the original group solving the waiting list and now both groups can offer places to new members.

Art Group 1 has a mixture of talents and we help each other to try and improve, so whether you are a good artist, can paint but would like to improve, be a complete beginner or just enjoy doing your own thing there is a place for you and you would be made very welcome.

We bring water colour, acrylics, pastels etc. and paint or draw whatever we like but we also have David Clarke as tutor who teaches us different styles and effects in the different mediums, enjoys teaching complete beginners *how to's* from day one, runs everyone through core techniques to ensure best practice and improved results, and sets project challenges to help everyone engage their creativity.



Art Group 1 in full flow



David Clarke Art Group 1 unofficial Tutor

The New Art Group 2 We held our first art group 2 meeting on the 15th January. We had a good turnout although it was freezing cold outside it was lovely and warm inside. The group comprises people of all levels of experience from complete beginners upwards.

Our aim is to help people, demonstrating and practicing a variety of techniques, to gain confidence in a friendly relaxed atmosphere.

Both groups operate on alternate Monday mornings 10-12am.
So, if you are interested please contact:

For Art Group 1 please contact

Pat Glover patchglover61@gmail.com

For Art Group 2 please contact

Helen Disley helendidley105@msn.com

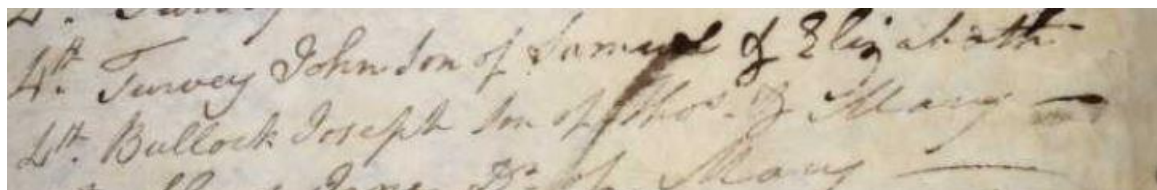
or **Marion Robinson** brookestudio8@gmail.com

FAMILY HISTORY GROUP

We began the year with a questions and brick walls session. We also welcomed a new member who had hit a problem with deciphering this 1851 census extract.

Name and Surname of each Person who abode in the house, on the Night of the 30th March, 1851	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age of	Rank, Profession, or Occupation	Where Born
Joseph Bullough	Head	Mar	43	Maat Panda	Worcestershire Persa
Harriette Do	Wife	Mar	36		Nottingham
Thomas Do	Son	Un	11	Do Do	Yorkshire Leeds
Ann Do	Daughter	Un	7		Do Bradford
Rosetta Do	Daughter	Un	5		Do Do
Charles Do	Son	Un	2		Do Bradford
Mary Do	Daughter	Un	8M		Do Pudsey
			45	Plumbe Worker	Ireland Dublin

It also illustrates another common issue faced by family historians, spelling of names. Here Joseph and his family are recorded as Bullough, but other records show him as Bullock. The family are in Bradford, the birthplaces of their children show they have been in Yorkshire for several years, but neither Joseph nor his wife was born in that county. There's no problem with Harriet's birthplace of Nottingham, but what about Joseph? The county is Worcestershire, but Persa, Rersa, or Dersa doesn't make sense, although is it a u at the end? No, that makes no more sense either. Time to think outside the box, an enumerator (the men who collected the census data) in Yorkshire would probably have had no detailed knowledge of place names in Worcestershire. He would also have been dealing with an accent he wasn't familiar with. One of the group came up with a possible location – Pershore



Name	Joseph Bullock
Gender	Male
Event Type	Baptism
Baptism Date	4 Mar 1808
Baptism Place	Pershore (Pershore with Pinvin, Wick and Birlingham), Worcestershire, England
Father	John Bullock
Mother	Mary Bullock

Here is an extract from the parish register along with a transcript for Joseph Bullock in Pershore in 1808. That raises another issue. The transcript has the father as John, but it looks more like the abbreviation Thos = Thomas. Another common problem – transcripts are not always correct. It's always best to look at the original record or a scan, where that is possible. In this case there is another baptism a couple of years later with Thomas written in full.

If you enjoy problem solving and ferreting out information, family history research is an ideal opportunity to do that. Don't worry if you have very little information to get you started, the group will help you get going and support you in trying to break through the brick walls you come across. If you'd like to know more do get in touch email: sadu3afamilyhistory@gmail.com

UKULELE GROUP



'In memory of Stu Ashby'
Syston's Happy Ukulele Band.
Grosvenor Fundraiser.

UPDATE

Follow up from Syston's Happy Ukulele Band providing the entertainment for a local fundraiser on Sunday 17th December 2023.

Steph - events manager of The Grosvenor Lounge, Syston, informed us of a local lady called Stacey Ashby and her 2 young boys who had been recently bereaved through the sad and sudden passing away of Stu Ashby who was both a dearly loved husband to Stacey, a dearly loved Dad to their 2 boys, a beloved son to his dearest Mum and a friend to many and to many a friend. Our sincere and loving sympathy to Stu's family and friends.



On Thursday 18th January 2024 the fundraising total of **£500**



which was raised during the afternoon of 17th December 2023 was presented to Stacey by Steph – events manager of The Grosvenor Lounge. A few members of Syston's Happy Ukulele Band were there to witness the presentation. Stacey would like it known that she is so grateful for what Syston as a community have done and to say thank you so much to the locals who attended this event and supported this event and raised the £500, many thanks to Lloyd at Intasound for donating 2 ukuleles to their boys, many thanks to Syston's Happy Ukulele Band for providing the entertainment and many

thanks to all concerned at The Grosvenor for making this event possible and taking responsibility for collecting and counting and presenting monies

Stacey is currently having treatment for cancer and she told us that she won't be the first or the last to be in this situation where a spouse has died of cancer whilst the other also has a cancer diagnosis and likewise her boys won't be the first or the last to have lost a parent to cancer whilst the other parent also has a diagnosis of cancer. Stacey is keen to raise awareness of this and when the time is right Stacey is considering setting up some sort of Foundation or Support Group in memory of Stu to provide comfort and support for others in the same situation.

This is admirable and just goes to show what a special & lovely lady Stacey is.



On Saturday 20th January 2024 *Syston's Happy Ukulele Band* entertained the audience at Queniborough Members Club.

Such an enjoyable evening was had by all and a couple of particularly lively members of QMC were shaking some rather impressive moves with much enthusiasm during the rock and roll songs, especially so during

The Hop!

During the interval we joined in with a game of bingo and several of us were lucky enough to win some yummy prizes.

We continued strumming and singing well into the night and received a rousing round of applause after each song and that was lovely.

On Friday 26th January 2024 *Syston's Happy Ukulele Band* met at Syston Working Men's Club, which is the weekly venue for our band practice.

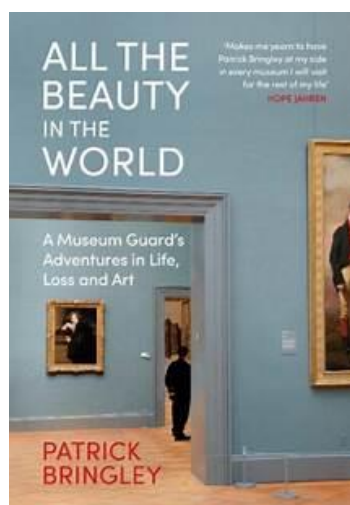
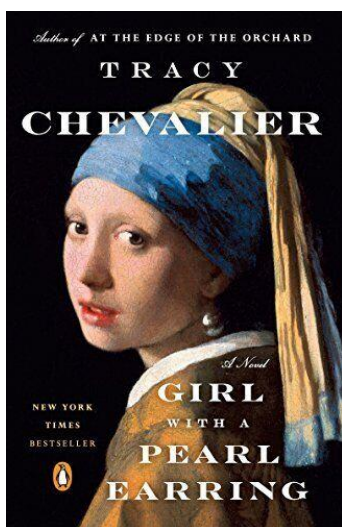
Carl who runs The Working Men's Club and his staff look after us so well, they are such lovely people and so hard working. Syston has recently suffered terrible flooding twice and on both occasions Syston Working Men's Club has been severely flooded which has involved a lot of disruption and clearing up for Carl and his team. Both times they worked tirelessly to get the Club up and running for the locals, which includes us. We are so grateful to them and as a goodwill gesture for their hospitality and kindness towards us, Syston Happy Ukulele Band Members had a private collection so Carl and his team could spoil themselves and have a meal out together and have some fun.

Queniborough Members Club on hearing of Syston Working Men's Club plight were kind enough to send a donation directly to Carl and his team which resulted in the grand total of £255 being gifted to such very worthy folk. Carl and his team seemed genuinely thrilled and moved by this gesture and it was our pleasure to do this for them.



ART APPRECIATION GROUP

Our exploration of the links between art and literature at the last meeting was very informative. Again each person brought their own slant to the subject and opened new avenues of thought.



We are very depleted by holidays in February so are not holding a meeting but will be back again on Wednesday March 6th at 2pm in the Community Centre. The subject matter is yet to be decided. Please contact Michael Wherton or Christine Gale via the website if you would like to join us.

CREATIVE WRITING GROUP

No sooner do we gain a new member, or members, than we seem to find ourselves losing members to illness, or caring responsibilities, or some other issue. So, this is a call out to anyone who might be interested in restarting creative writing or giving it a go. At the moment, we bring along items to share, with a theme given for those who might need one. We provide as little or as much feedback as a group member wants, and we won't pull your offering to pieces – for the most part we find people are writing for pleasure. We currently meet on the fourth Thursday afternoon each month, at Syston library. But, if there are members who are interested in joining the group, but don't find that suitable, we would be willing to consider changing the when and where we meet. If you are interested in the group please get in touch, you can use my editor email to do that sadu3aed@gmail.com

EVENTS – PAST, PRESENT & PLANNED

We are hoping to have between 3 to 6 events during 2024. If anyone has any ideas to put forward, please have a chat with the Events Coordinator, Chris Ringrose 07753 618821.

Please note that anyone organising an event for u3a members, even if it is an informal one, should make the Events Coordinator aware of the details so that u3a insurance is in place where applicable.

WHAT'S ON NEXT

GENERAL MEETINGS

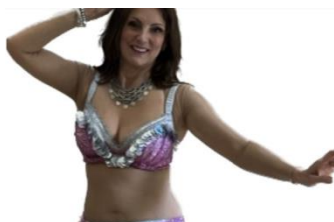
In the Brookside Room at the Community Centre – talks usually start 10.30am
Tea/coffee and mingling from 10.00am

February 14th, 2024: Paul Reynolds

Paul Reynolds (retired fire fighter) and now a volunteer at Bradgate Park, talks about his fire service experiences over many years with the local service (incidents, humour etc).



March 13th, 2024



Roxanne Dinsdale - exotic dancer - a revisit to us by Roxanne

My second talk is all about : ***“My life dancing with snake and fire!”***

(please note there is no fire lit during this talk and no snakes!!)

The talk starts with a demonstration of dance. Then funny anecdotes about how I got into Belly Dancing
Then all about what to do when fire eating and what to do when training a snake!!

April 10th, 2024

Dr Ann Featherstone returns with a talk on:

Mashed potato sandwiches and bottle top tinsel:

Rose Buckner's post-war world of home-making - A fascinating look at homemaking, parenting, and cooking in times of austerity as shown by Rose Buckner, who wrote about it in her book and columns for the Sunday People newspaper.



NATIONAL U3A ITEMS

u3a TALKS



'Flight Inspirations' Aviation Network Meeting: Apollo Missions 11 and 13

This meeting of the Aviation Network will look at the significance of Apollo missions 11 and 13.

Tues 6 Feb at 10am
Free – online via zoom



'Safe bind, safe find': locks and keys

An account of locks and keys from Sumer to Silicon Valley, by Richard of Penicuik u3a

Wed 14 Feb at 2pm

Free – Online via zoom



David Hockney and the Theatre

Through sound and video, art historian Peter Webb brings Hockney's theatre to life

Fri 23 Feb at 2pm

Free – Online via Zoom

Book [here](#)

Book [here](#)

Book [here](#)

The Third Age Trust is delighted to announce it has received the Investing in Volunteers accreditation.



Within the Third Age Trust, there are nearly 400 Trust Volunteers. Roles include helping on the advice line, assisting u3a interest groups as a Subject Adviser, working on the u3a website project Siteworks and running the u3a management system Beacon.

This accreditation is the result of months of work by staff and Trust Volunteers. Part of the process involved interviewing Volunteers and staff members, to gain an understanding of the volunteer experience at the Third Age Trust.

Susannah Hodge, Training and Regional Support Manager at the Trust, says, "I am delighted that the dedication of Trust Volunteers, Trustees and staff has been recognised by achieving this accreditation. Trust Volunteers are vital to the Trust and this is the continuation of our journey in ensuring that they are well supported, valued, and have a positive volunteering experience. We will continue to build on this accreditation this year."

The report identified that many Volunteers valued their ability to make an impact. An anonymous Volunteer quoted in the report says, "Volunteering for the Trust really embodies what the movement is all about, what the founders meant it to be. That kind of self-help, doing things for each other, and ourselves. It's great to be a part of that."

Elsewhere in the report, Trust Volunteers spoke about the benefit of being able to connect with each other. A member quoted in the report says, "Getting together with other Volunteers is one of the highlights. It's wonderful to hear what others are doing. Such fertile ground for getting and sharing ideas."

Thank you to the Trust Volunteers who contribute so much to the u3a movement. This accreditation is just one part of our ongoing commitment to ensuring Trust Volunteers are well-supported.

Read more about what this accreditation means on [the Investing in Volunteers website](#).

NOT u3a BUT YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED

Building a UNESCO Global Geopark in Charnwood Forest

Where the Boatmen Dwell Exhibition



Tue, 06th Feb 2024 - Sat, 27th Apr 2024 on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays
Loughborough Library, Local and Family History Centre

Where the Boatmen Dwell, an exhibition showing the canal side cottages the families who lived there in 19th Century and the lives they led as well as the history of the canal itself.



Wed, 07th Feb 2024, 19:30 - 21:00 Charnwood Museum

Dr Jack Matthews, Geoheritage Conservation and Interpretation Officer at Charnwood Forest Geopark will talk on building a UNESCO Global Geopark in Charnwood Forest

Dr Jack Matthews was part of the team to successfully lobby UNESCO to establish an International Geodiversity day in 2021

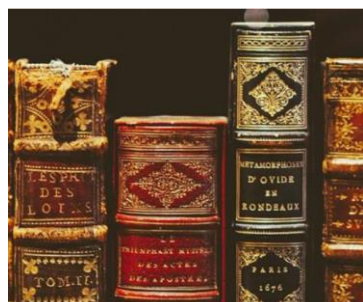
Members £2

Non- members £4

All welcome - please book a place on the Charnwood Museum website

Light refreshments from 7pm

More information: <https://www.charnwoodmuseum.co.uk/events>



Curious About Leicester

Discover Leicester in this self-guided heritage walk with an optional treasure hunt. Have fun (re-)discovering Leicester, spotting things you've never noticed before, with two quirky treasure hunt style heritage walks - a fun and affordable way to...

27 Jan 2024 to 30 Mar 2024

Where: Leicester City Centre, Gallowtree Gate, Leicester, LE1 5GD

GANGSHOW TICKETS 2024



TICKETS ON SALE FROM

**10AM SATURDAY 3RD
FEBRUARY 2024**

WWW.TICKETSOURCE.CO.UK/78TH-
LEICESTER-1ST-THURMASTON-SCOUTS



Synagogue Open Days

The Leicester Synagogue and Heritage Centre holds regular Open Days, where we invite the public to come and visit us. On these days, the Heritage Centre will be open for prebooked visits from 13:00-16:00.

Open Days are free and provide the opportunity to look around our beautiful Synagogue and to find out more about the cultural and religious heritage of the Jewish Community in Leicester.

In addition to our displays and handling collections, our Ambassadors and volunteers will be on hand to welcome you and provide information about the building and its history. More at – <https://jewish-leicester.co.uk>



Cosmic Valentine

Looking for an unusual, incredible and memorable Valentine celebration? The National Space Centre is hosting a very special evening dedicated to love.

10 Feb 2024 Open 19:00 - 23:30

Where: National Space Centre, Exploration Drive, Leicester, LE4 5NS

Contact details: 0116 261 0261



Snowdrop weekend

Snowdrop event in a unique Victorian secret walled garden in the grounds of a historic and unique museum. Located in the centre of Wigston Magna. Guided tours of the museum also available.

17 Feb 2024 Open 14:00 - 17:00

18 Feb 2024 Open 14:00 - 17:00

Where: Wigston Framework Knitters Museum, 42-44 Bushloe End, Wigston, LE18 2BA

Contact details: 0116 288 3396



Charnwood

Flood Recovery Funding for residents and businesses

Applications now open

charnwood.gov.uk/FloodFunding



FROM OUR MEMBERS

THE BIG GARDEN BIRD WATCH

I suspect several of the birdwatching group members will have taken part in the RSPB event of the weekend just gone. It involved spending an hour watching and recording the birds that visited your garden. This annual survey provides valuable information about our bird population and how it has and is changing.

I decided to take part this year, I really can't explain why I haven't done it before. I'm a country girl born and bred and spent a lovely childhood on many walks with my father. He gave names to the flowers and wildlife we saw, and the birdsong we heard. I won't pretend I remember them all, but every now and then I manage to dredge things from the memory banks.

So, I donned my anorak on Saturday afternoon and watched. I don't have a bird table; my next-door neighbours four outdoor cats present too much of a danger. I have a gravelled area between the rear of the house and the lawn, my first step onto the gravel sent a cock pheasant flying from the lawn with a loud protest at being disturbed. He arrived a few weeks ago. A lone mature fellow, he has decided to occupy the back gardens along my stretch of the road. I hear him more often than I see him. The garden no longer back onto fields as it once did, a new housing estate now sits between it and open land. My father insists that pheasants would rather run a mile than fly, but as most of the gardens have six-foot fences, Mr Pheasant has no choice on the matter.





I expected to record house sparrows. I used to hardly set foot outside the door without hearing a gaggle of them jangling in the shrubbery. That is no longer the case, their numbers have diminished over the years, it was a few moments before five of them landed. Then I spotted a jenny wren on the fence. I have a particular soft spot for wrens, they may have nondescript dull brown/beige plumage, but these tiny birds are perpetual motion personified.

There is one bird that I cannot find it in me to like, the magpie. This thief and marauder of other birds' nests is one bird I would gladly see gone. We had none of the noisy beggars in my neighbourhood until a few years ago. They strut around the lawn as if they own the place. However, I believe they might have met their match last year. A pair of blackbirds nested in the hedge at the far end of the garden. They were true to their feisty selves and defended the nest, dive bombing the would-be robbers and sounding the alarm. Whether they were the same pair that turned up during my watch, I can't be sure.



Three wood pigeons landed on the roof apex, two males trying to outdo each other and impress a female. "Love" is definitely in the air amongst the bird population, though the pigeons don't



actually wait for spring. Blue tits on the other hand do. I was surprised when five of them landed in the shrubs together. They clearly have yet to decide who to pair up with. I heard others of their kind in nearby gardens, I await the results of the birdwatch to see whether their numbers are on the rise nationally, they certainly are around me. Three chaffinches whizzed past me; the female passed my face so closely that I almost felt the beat of her wings. Again two males were in pursuit of a lady. They only landed briefly before they were off again.



I almost miscounted the starlings that landed on the TV ariel. I thought there were three, until three flew off leaving one lagging behind. They have nested in my front guttering for a couple of years, creating quite a racket over rearing their brood, last year causing my pair of rescue cats (indoor by their own choice) to sit on the bedroom window sill chattering with frustration. One expected visitor did eventually turn up, the robin I have often seen sitting on the fence between me and my neighbours (the ones without cats). He often sits watching when either I or my neighbours are in the garden.



I heard another visitor before I saw him, the song thrush came singing in my back hedge. I had to peer closely to pick him out against the ivy that has scrambled over and amongst the otherwise still bare branches. I might have missed him earlier in the day, but I chose my hour in the late afternoon, and he decided to sing a little earlier than usual.

I was disappointed that there were no goldfinches feeding on my neighbour's conifer that overhangs the fence between us, I have seen them recently. Sad that I only saw one species of finch and one of the tit family. No crow landed on my chimney pot or TV ariel, something I often see. It took me quite a while to work out that a sound I kept hearing was a crow taking off from the ariel causing it to rattle against the chimney stack.

I submitted my results, a total of twenty-seven birds of eleven different species. Slightly below the average of twenty-nine shown on the RSPB website. I await the results with interest, there will no doubt be some species doing better than they were, and others still in decline, but the stark figures are that we have lost an estimated thirty-eight million birds in the last sixty years. I was lucky to see a song thrush, their numbers are down 80% since the garden birdwatch began in 1979.

THE BOUQUET OF FLOWERS

It had been a complete shock to see a delivery man at the door with an armful of flowers. It was so large that she barely saw his face in the handover process. She searched for the usual envelope and card amongst the profusion of blooms and greenery, she couldn't find one. She even went back and checked the front porch in case it had fallen out in the handover, there was nothing there either. There was no one else who could have sent her flowers but husband Jack. He hadn't sent her flowers since the early stages of their married life, but bouquets had regularly arrived at her home or workplace in the months before they became Mr and Mrs. Her female colleagues told her that she had a real catch of a boyfriend there. "Make sure you hang on to that one" they said. They were really envious when Helen announced that she would be leaving her job when she married. Jack had persuaded her that as he had a successful business, there was no need for her to work. It was a tedious job inspecting knitwear to weed out any with flaws, so it had taken very little persuasion.

She cast her mind back to the missing card, perhaps it had just been forgotten by the florist or fallen out in the van, or it could have been dropped on the driveway, but she couldn't go out to look, she couldn't. She again convinced herself that the bouquet could only have been organised by Jack. She arranged the flowers and set them on the hall table. Perhaps Jack wanted to cheer her up. He could be so very thoughtful, but not always, and not just lately. Maybe the flowers were a way of saying sorry. Maybe things would change. The idea lifted her spirits.

She hadn't left the house for months. The only people she had seen in that time had been those delivering groceries, or the myriad of other items ordered online. She had effectively been trapped in her own home, or rather Jack's home. She had simply moved into the house he had already bought a few years earlier. What was the point of searching for another house, when this one was a good one, he had argued. It would mean they would have to delay getting married if they went down that road. The process of house buying, renovation and moving all took time.

She had once enjoyed touring the local shopping centre, but now if she set foot outside the front porch she was gripped by an overwhelming fear. Her heart seemed as if it was ready to burst from her chest, a searing pain spread across her breast as if someone had plunged a knife in and was twisting it. She felt as if she couldn't breathe. She became light-headed, her legs felt as if they would no longer bear her weight, and, if she didn't retreat to the safety of the hall, she would be physically sick.

The first few times the panic enveloped her Jack was at home, he had wrapped her in his arms, stroked her hair and murmured sympathetically. It was all right, it didn't matter if she couldn't bring herself to leave the house. He would help her do the shopping on the internet; you could buy anything that way these days. So she stopped trying to go outside. She would sit beside him in his home office whilst he whizzed from one screen to another, clicked on this and that, and announced that whatever it was would arrive at the door in a couple of days or so. The process changed so subtly over time that she had never realised, until now, that she wasn't actually involved in doing the shopping at all, it was just Jack. Even when new clothes were ordered, it was he who pointed to items saying, "Let's get that for you." She had once thought to ask him to

show her how to use the computer, but then she had watched him and thrust the thought away. She couldn't follow what he was doing, nothing made sense. She just about managed to cope with the TV remote control, but a computer was so much more complicated. She couldn't possibly get to grips with one. Her father had described her as a very pretty girl, with cotton wool for brains, and she had to admit he was right.

Jack was right too, when he said she was useless at almost everything except cooking and cleaning. Even then she sometimes forgot which day she was supposed to clean what, and cooked something that wasn't scheduled for that day. Only yesterday he was angry that she cooked shepherd's pie when he was expecting steak and kidney pudding. "What the hell is this!?" he demanded "Stupid woman, you can't even cook what you're supposed to!" He threw his plate and its' contents against the wall and stormed off, slamming the front door behind him, and leaving her in tears. He reappeared several hours later, acting as if nothing had happened.

He came home for lunch, unless he had a business meeting. It was important to him to check that she was okay, he said. She heard his car pull up and then his key in the lock. She reached the hall just as he had shut the door behind him. She found him staring at the floral arrangement as if he couldn't believe what he was seeing. He strode over to the table, picked it up and threw it onto the hall tiles. He then became aware of Helen standing there, he turned on her, his expression dark and ugly, burning with more anger than she had ever seen. Fear rose within her and she instinctively flew into the kitchen, initially went to the back door, but as soon as she started to turn the key, panic began to overtake her, she couldn't go outside, she just couldn't. She looked around in desperation, then cowered under the breakfast bar, like a rabbit trapped above ground with a fox approaching.

When she regained some semblance of consciousness, she remembered being dragged from her hiding place by her hair; the blows that reigned down on her; the fire in his eyes as he demanded to know where the flowers had come from. He launched into a tirade of insults. She was an ungrateful bitch. Hadn't he provided everything for her, and how had she repaid him? She had gone behind his back and then flaunted the fact in his face. She had protested that she couldn't leave the house, so how could she have gone behind his back, but he didn't listen. He just continued hitting and hitting and hitting again. She sank to the floor, sobbing and pleading with him to stop, but instead she felt the hard soles of his shoes as he kicked and stamped on her over and over and over again. She had no idea how long she had been lying there. Fear rose from the pit of her stomach, where was Jack, was he still in the house? She focused her mind a little more. No, she remembered hearing him slam the front door and drive off at speed, gravel on the driveway flying off the garage doors, that was just before she blacked out completely. Wait, he could have come back, she lay very still, listening very intently. The only thing she heard was the ticking of the kitchen clock. She drifted back into unconsciousness.

When she stirred again she realised the phone was ringing, no one answered it, Jack wasn't there. The answer machine clicked in. "Hello, this is Fantasy Flowers with a message for Mrs. Moss. We delivered some flowers to you earlier on today and we now realise you may be wondering where they came from. The delivery was actually meant for 17 Milner Road rather than 17 Milner Close. We only realised when the gentleman from Milner Close rang asking why the flowers for his wife hadn't been delivered. Our delivery man was a casual, he should have checked your name with you before giving you the flowers, if he had, he would have realised the mistake. The card with the flowers must have puzzled you, but I guess you just thought cards had got mixed up. We had to do a bit of detective work to sort out that he had delivered them to you. Sorry for the mistake, but of course we want you to keep the flowers and we hope you enjoy them."

Helen was bemused, card with the flowers, what card? She was struggling to focus her mind as she became more and more conscious of the pain. There seemed to be no part of her body that didn't throb or ache. Then she became aware that she was lying in something wet. Despite the pain she gritted her teeth and moved

slightly, only then did she see that it was her own blood pooling around her. Card, what card? she asked herself as she lost consciousness again.

Out in the front driveway, an envelope lay on the gravel, just around the side of the front porch, fluttering slightly in the wind. Mrs M Marshall, 17 Milner Close was the address on the front. The card inside read “To my darling wife Mary, Happy Valentines Day. With all my love Alan.”

DECLUTTER DEN

Do you have anything sitting in a cupboard, or on a shelf, that you no longer want? Might one of our members or groups be able to make use of it?

A single column stand/table.
Table top 45cm x 56cm (18" x 22")
Height adjustable from 75cm to 95cm (2' 6" to 3'2").
Made by Unicol Oxford.
Email Colin Holgate : bass1251@live.co.uk



If you have something that you are prepared to give away – **strictly no items for sale!** Let me know and I'll put it in declutter den and hopefully we can help each other free up some space, whilst giving others something they have a use for, even if we don't. Email: sadu3aed@gmail.com

POETRY CORNER

I LOVED YOU FIRST by Christina Rossetti

I loved you first: but afterwards your love,
Outsoaring mine, sang such a loftier song
As drowned the friendly cooings of my dove.
Which owes the other most? My love was long,
And yours one moment seemed to wax more strong;
I loved and guessed at you, you construed me
And loved me for what might or might not be—
Nay, weights and measures do us both a wrong.
For verily love knows not 'mine' or 'thine';
With separate 'I' and 'thou' free love has done,
For one is both and both are one in love:
Rich love knows nought of 'thine that is not mine';
Both have the strength and both the length thereof,
Both of us, of the love which makes us one.

WILD NIGHTS by Emily Dickinson

Wild nights - Wild nights!
Were I with thee
Wild nights should be
Our luxury!

Futile - the winds -
To a Heart in port -
Done with the Compass -
Done with the Chart!

Rowing in Eden -
Ah - the Sea!
Might I but moor - tonight -
In thee.

HOW DO I LOVE THEE by Elizabeth Barrett
Browning

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of being and ideal grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for right.
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

SHE WALKS IN BEAUTY by Lord Byron

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace,
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express,
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent
A mind at peace with all below
A heart whose love is innocent!

WHEN YOU ARE OLD by William Butler Yeats

When you are old and grey and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

IF YOU CALL ME I WILL COME by Sarojini Naidu

If you call me I will come
Swifter, O my Love,
Than a trembling forest deer
Or a panting dove,
Swifter than a snake that flies
To the charmer's thrall . . .
If you call me I will come
Fearless what befall.
If you call me, I will come
Swifter than desire,
Swifter than the lightning's feet
Shod with plumes of fire.
Life's dark tides may roll between,
Or Death's deep chasms divide —
If you call me I will come
Fearless what betide.

And finally.....

It is believed that the first-ever Valentine's Day card was originated in France, when Charles, the Duke of Orleans, sent love letters to his wife from the prison in 1415. And the French village called "Valentine" turns into the epicenter of romance between 12th and 14th February. One can see the beautiful yards, trees, and homes decorated with love cards, roses, and proposals for marriage flakes. It probably has the most beautiful Valentine's Day traditions in the world.

In the Philippines, Valentine's Day is the time when many young couples marry in an event sponsored by the government as a form of public service. Among the most amazing Valentine's Day celebrations around the world, this one is a gala event in the country and a special day for young people.

In Wales, Valentine's Day is celebrated in the most unique way. The country celebrates its day of love on Jan 25, which is called the "day of San Dwynwen." On the day, lovers exchange unique and beautifully handcrafted wooden spoons to each other. This tradition has been practiced since the 16th century.

Like any other country, Bulgaria celebrates Valentine's Day in its own style. On 14 February, San Trifon Zartan is celebrated in Bulgaria, which means "day of winemakers". Young and old couples celebrate their love with a glass of wonderful local wine.

If you're looking for some very romantic and unusual celebration of valentine's day around the world, then Romanians won't disappoint you. The day is celebrated on 24th Feb as the day when young couples get engaged. It is basically a mix of Valentine's Day and the celebration of spring season. Young men and women go to the forests to pick colorful flowers, while other couples wash their faces with snow as a sign of good luck.

"Dia dos Namorados" festival, which is also known as "Lovers day", is celebrated in Brazil. There's a usual exchange of chocolates, cards, flowers, and one can witness music festivals and dance performances. Gifting is not reserved for couples during the festival, family dinners are common on the day.

In Slovenia, St Valentine is one of the patron saints of spring. It is believed that on February 14, plants start to regenerate as this day marks the first day of working in the fields for the New Year. There is another popular belief that birds 'propose' to each other on this day. In order to witness this occasion, one must walk barefoot through fields that are often still frozen.

In Japan, women make the first move on Valentine's Day. They give men gifts instead of the other way around, a popular gift being honmei-choco, a homemade chocolate. Men return the gesture on March 14. Known as White Day, men give women white chocolate and other white gifts as a sign of their affection.

