

Syston and District

u3a

learn, laugh, live

**MAY
2025**

Vitality!

Official newsletter of the Syston and District u3a

CHARITY No 1180152

FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Hi Everyone,

I hope those of who went to hear Andy Smith spoke about His Life in Music enjoyed it as much as I did. We also had some very nice songs.

You may have seen in your TAT magazine the piece about Syston u3a and also our video that Steve produced. If you haven't, please do and give us a LIKE. We have received some very nice comments about it from other u3a's.

Fast approaching is our AGM where there are a few vacancies we would like fill. These are Vice Chair and Committee Member. If you would like further information, please email me at sadu3achair@gmail.com or alternatively see me at the May meeting.

I hope to see you at our next meeting when Mike Lister will speak to us about 'All About Playing Cards'.

Clive

WE WANT TO LET YOU KNOW

Keep an eye out in emails for notices relating to our AGM which will be issued in May.

The AGM will be held at the start of the monthly meeting on 11th June. It usually only takes a short time, with the scheduled speaker following. The changes to our constitution mean we will only need to approve a couple of people that were co-opted onto the Executive Committee during the year, remaining on that committee going forward. We will hopefully get people coming forward for the vacancies outlined by Clive above, which may generate a vote.

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.

Is the group you want to join currently full? How about starting a second group? Barbara and Angie are happy to provide support and guidance on how to get going.

2ND KURLING GROUP

We had our first meeting of the Kurling 2 group.
Sixteen of us turned up and it was a great success.
Thanks to Dave Palmer for all of his help getting the new group underway.





LITTERPICKING GROUP



The u3a litter picking group formed in September 2024, and meets monthly on a Thursday morning. We have 7 in the group so, do have 3 vacancies currently.

The photo is of our very first litter pick back in October 2024 on Meadow Lane, Birstall. We try and litter pick different places within the Syston and District U3A areas each month. We have so, far litter picked Birstall Meadow lane, Syston Meadow Lane, Thurmaston, Checkland road

and some of the bypass, Barkby village, Rearsby village and last month Thurmaston village.

We return next month to Birstall to litter pick around the shopping parade area. We always try and find somewhere afterwards for a beverage and discuss where we want to litter pick the following month. Since we started, we have collected 58 bags of rubbish plus other detritus. If, it is not possible to leave collected bags of rubbish next to litter bins I complete an online Charnwood borough council request form so, the rubbish is collected, for this you do need to have the What 3 Words app, which navigates precisely where the rubbish can be found for collection. We have been really lucky so far and had fine weather. Anyone interested in joining us are very welcome. We do follow a risk assessment to ensure everyone is wearing the correct protective clothing and I have grabbers and hoops to loan out for the session.

FEELING CRAFTY GROUP

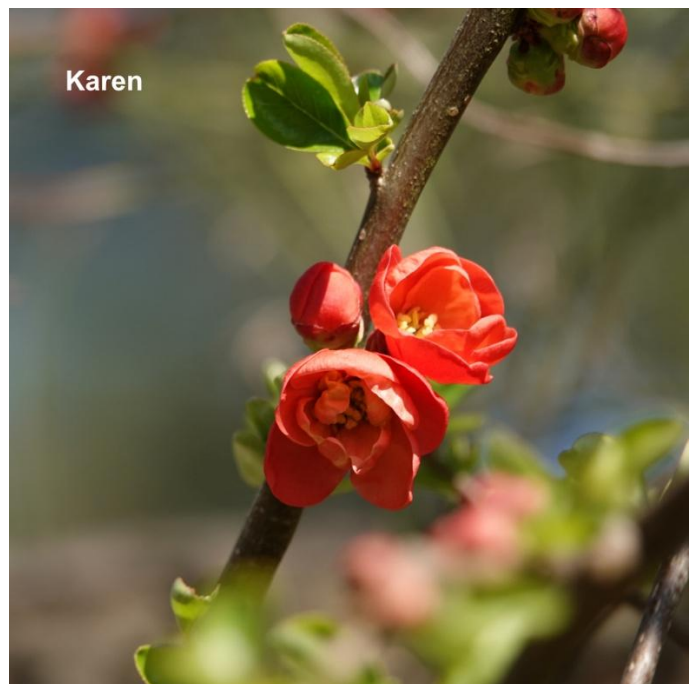
The 'Feeling Crafty' group recently made some paper roses from old book pages. Just used some glue, an old book and some wire for stems. Loved the results 🌹

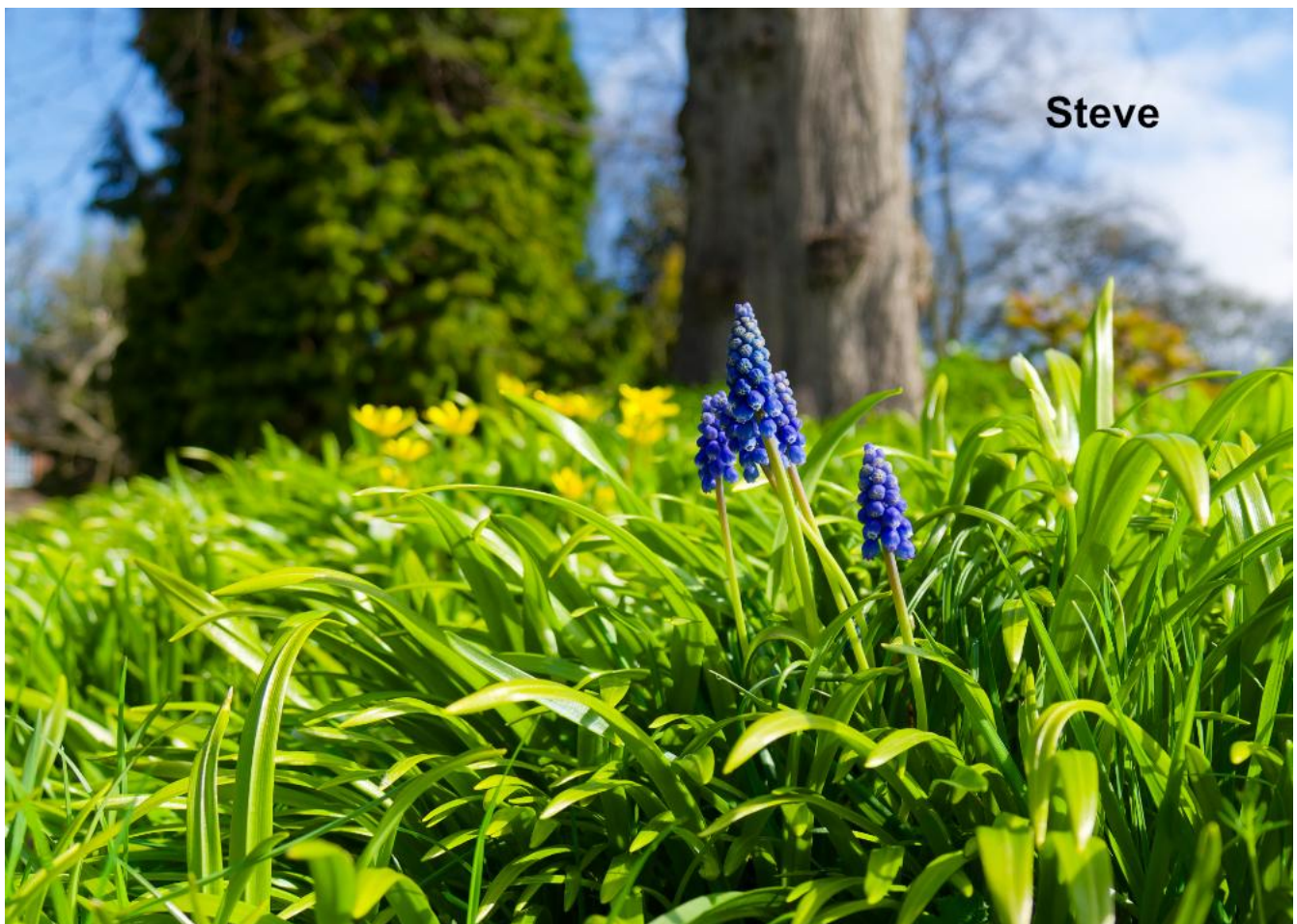


PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

On the last Thursday of March, 12 members of the photo group visited Leicester University Botanical Gardens and had a wander around the grounds there. The theme was 'buds' and 'red'.

It was a cold, but bright day, with lots of newly flowering spring buds, so we had a lot to explore there. After around 1.5hrs, some of us met up in a café in the Oadby shopping area for a natter and a drink. So, a pleasant morning, learning and having fun.







BIRDWATCHING AND WILDLIFE GROUP

On Friday 4th April our u3a Birdwatching & Wildlife group all went off to RSBB Frampton Marshes in Lincolnshire. This was one of our usual first Friday in the month outings and a very good one too. Frampton is a large area of marsh, with lagoons, adjacent to the East Anglian Wash. A real hot spot for all sorts of Wildfowl (Duck & Geese) and many springtime waders, Redshank, Ruff, Dunlin and Plovers, but the star birds here are the Avocet which breed in good numbers around the reserve. Starkly black & white in the sunshine, they look so delicate with their thin blue legs and fine up turned bills that they sweep through the water to catch food.

Walking the paths, trails and then stopping in the many hides that allowed us close views of the birds feeding near the water's edge. Collectively, we listed 36 different species for the day, including an unusual Whooper Swan, with its triangular yellow flash on its bill. However probably the trips best spectacle was the hundreds of (almost all black) Brent Geese flying around in formation and feeding on the surrounding fields. The site as a whole and especially the sea wall walk is very exposed and can be difficult in bad weather, but thankfully on this day, we enjoyed the very nice early spring sunshine and

only a light breeze. Before leaving we took advantage of the RSPB visitors centre restaurant for some welcome food and drinks, and to check out each other's sightings and bird photos.

The group still has a few spaces for anyone interested in joining us, our future planned outings that include, Rutland Water, Attenborough nature reserve, Thornton reservoir, Sherwood Forest and several Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust sites. Pat Wilkes





AMBLING GROUPS

Amblers 1 started their walk in Thrussington and took the footpath across the fields towards Thrussington Mill. We carried on towards Brooksby but turned around pretty quickly when we found a herd of cows waiting for us at the gate! We returned through the woods where the blossom was in full bloom then along the river to the Mill before we retraced our path to Thrussington and lunch at The Deli Cafe on The Green.

Amblers 2 paid a visit to the Outwoods near Loughborough to catch the bluebells in bloom. It is 110 acres of ancient woodland to the south of Loughborough and is one of the oldest surviving woodland sites in Charnwood.

There are variety of different routes and walks, including an easy access path with a bird feeding station. There is a 24 hour car park for visitors, a children's natural play area and a cafe. The north side of the ancient woodland is home to a display of beautiful bluebells during Spring every year. The Outwoods is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) by Natural England, which means it is protected by law to conserve its wildlife and geology. It is also part of the ancient Charnwood Forest and is the most easterly part of the National Forest.





UKELELE GROUP

On April 23rd, a few members of the u3a Syston Happy Ukulele Group entertained the audience at a meeting of Age Concern at Syston Methodist Church.

We performed 2 sets, with a break in between for tea and biscuits and one of our members got the crowd clapping and singing along to 'Sweet Caroline' – give Dallas a big hand!



EVENTS – PAST, PRESENT & PLANNED



ANYONE FOR SWIMMING?

Charnwood Leisure Centre have offered our u3a a one-off free swim session. Date to be arranged, but it will be 9.15-10.15am on a Tuesday morning. A maximum of 30 can be accommodated.

Anyone who is interested should contact either Angie Baker or Barbara Sargeant, their email addresses can be found in the Group News section.

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



May 14th, 2025

All About Playing Cards

Mike Lister gives a talk/presentation: "All About Playing Cards", covering history, mystery, facts and myths.

June 11th, 2025

Tea and the Empress of China

Speaker Michael Burton gives a talk/presentation on *Tea and the Empress of China*

China tea became a British obsession. It sparked a global battle of politics and big money which ran for two centuries, leading almost to the collapse of the world's greatest country.

China's saviour was an unknown no-nonsense princess who seized control at the crucial moment, shrewdly keeping the predatory trading powers at arm's length.

This is a story of spies, greyhound-like ships and a successful plan to "transplant China into India" – and all because of the British love of their "cuppa."



Don't forget that the AGM takes place at the start of this meeting.

NATIONAL U3A ITEMS

u3a TALKS

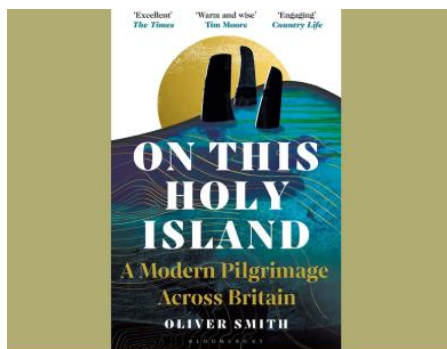


Setting up a New Windows 11 PC or Laptop

Join Mike Field from u3a Let's Talk Tech to see how to set up a new Windows 11 PC or laptop for optimum performance and online security.

Wednesday 7 May at 1pm

Free – online via Zoom



On This Holy Island

Join Oliver Smith, author of the book 'On This Holy Island' as he discusses how pilgrimage has shaped Britain across time.

Monday 19 May at 2pm

Free – online via Zoom



Mass Extinctions: Causes and Consequences

Look into the evolution of life on Earth and when mass extinctions have occurred and why, in this Science Network event with Peter Webb.

Thursday 22 May at 9.30am

Free – online via Zoom

Book [here](#)

Book [here](#)

Book [here](#)

If none of the trio of talks on the previous page appeals, you can find other options [here](#)



Standing (L-R): Chris Bulford, Pat Collard, Nicky Lee, Marian Luck, Ian Mathews, Barry Appleby, Colin Luker, George Cleland, John Lewis, Kathy Clegg, David Blanchflower, Sally Ingledew, Rob Rowberry and Valerie Cobain.

Seated (L-R): Gillian Russell, Susan Parker, Jenny Wilson, Sue Russell, Jean Cubbin and Jean Jackson.

The photo on the previous page is of the new u3a Council.

They came together in London last week to meet for the first time, to discuss how they will work together with the Board and engage with members in their regions and nations.

The Council will act as a conduit between u3a members and the Trust, feeding members' thoughts, ideas and concerns into the ongoing development of the u3a movement.

"I am honoured and excited to have been given the privilege to Chair the Council," says Sue Russell. "The Council Representatives are all enthusiastic but also thoughtful about their new roles. They will be actively seeking out the concerns of members and making sure that policy and strategy development follow the direction that members want, that their priorities are to the fore. They will also disseminate news and information from the Board to their regions and nations. In this way, Council Representatives are the conduit between the Board and the wider membership."

NOT u3a BUT YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED



Organiser 1940s Melton Mowbray

Venue Play Park, Mucky Lane, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, LE13 1GH

Dates 10 May 2025 to 11 May 2025

Open to the public, no booking required

1940s Melton Mowbray is bringing the spirit of 1940s Britain alive again here in Melton Mowbray at Play Park on the weekend of May 10th/11th from 10am-5pm. There will be a range of exciting events taking place all around the park and stretching into and through the main town centre.

With a packed schedule of entertainment throughout the weekend, including live music, singing and dancing, living history re-enactor groups from all around the country and with vintage military and civilian vehicles. All this together with a vintage fairground providing nostalgic fun for the whole family.

THIS YEARS PLANNED EVENTS INCLUDE:

- Live 1940s music & singers
- Vintage Military & Civilian Vehicles
- Allied & Axis re-enactment groups on display in order to represent a wider section of the military history
- Fashion show in St Marys Church
- Collectibles, vintage clothing & militaria
- Vintage Fair ground
- Ride on steam train
- A Battle of Britain Memorial Flight flypast



Step Back in Time: Great Central Railway's 1940s Weekend!

Join us for a memorable journey back to 1945 during our 1940s Weekend, from May 31 to June 1, 2025. This year, we mark the 80th anniversary of a pivotal moment in history as Britain emerged from the shadows of war into a brighter future. Celebrate...

31 May 2025

Where: Great Central Railway, Great Central Road, Loughborough, LE11 1RW

Contact details: 01509 230726



THURMASTON CELEBRATES 80th ANNIVERSARY OF **VE DAY**

Thursday 8 May 2025



**AT
THURMASTON
MEMORIAL
HALL**

9.00am
Flag raised at Memorial Hall

10.30am-12 midday
Coffee Morning and VE Day display at St. Michael's Church

6.00pm
Memorial Hall Field open for picnic

6.30pm
Church bells ring

7.00pm
Entertainment starts

9.15pm
Lights of Peace procession

9.30pm
Beacon lighting

LIVE MUSIC & ENTERTAINMENT BY:
 Thurmaston Scout & Guide Band,
 Singer - Charlotte Emily Beaver, Churchill Junior School Choir,
 The Starlets School of Performing Arts and TMW Productions

This event is being organised by Thurmaston Parish Council and supported by Thurmaston Branch Royal British Legion, Thurmaston Scouts & Guides and St Michael & All Angels who hope the community will come together to honour and celebrate this significant milestone in history. Bring along a picnic and enjoy an evening of entertainment by local performers.

FROM ANOTHER U3A AREA

11th U3A Peak District Family History Conference



Saturday 16 September 2023 at the Palace Hotel in Buxton

Presenters:

Mary Evans – ‘Chasing those Brickwalls!’

Dave Annal – Death & Taxes

Jackie Depelle – “Digging into the Parish Chest”

Dr Penny Walters – “Why the Welsh left Wales”

Tickets: £30. *Book early to avoid disappointment - it's always very popular.*

Includes talks, refreshments & 2-course finger buffet lunch.

More details <https://forms.gle/mXnsgpBhQpmafuNU6>

The Peak District Family History Network is actually a network of u3a Family History Groups.

You can find more about them [here](#)

FROM OUR MEMBERS

Kismet and Kin

We often stumble upon strange coincidences and hidden connections in life, but nothing prepared me for the tangled web I would uncover while laying my parents to rest. Their ashes now lie in the churchyard of Dunsby, the village where my mother grew up—yet, as I stood in that solemn place, I had no idea that the past was about to reach out to me in ways I never imagined.

My journey into family history had always led me down surprising paths, but the mystery of my three-times-great-grandmother, Esther Casswell, had long been a significant challenge. No baptism record, no clear confirmation of her parentage—just a theory, a hunch, and a growing hope that I would one day find proof. DNA testing held promise, but its success depended on who had tested before me. Then, a breakthrough: a woman married in the same church, in the same month and year, a possible sister of Esther. A strand of DNA, traced through descendants, confirmed what records could not. And then, in an unexpected twist, I discovered her baptism—hidden in plain sight, recorded under the name *Castle*, a simple error by a clergyman who misheard. With that, I discovered that the Casswell lineage stretched back generations, deep into the 16th century, firmly rooted in South Lincolnshire.

Yet, the most astonishing revelation came on the very day I laid my parents' ashes to rest. The chosen burial site, close to the church wall, seemed serene and fitting. It wasn't until much later, when arranging their memorial stone, that a photograph of the site revealed an old plaque on the wall. Inscribed upon it were the details of Richard Casswell, who had been buried beneath. A name, a family, a piece of history—completely entwined with my own. When I traced his life, I learned that Richard was my mother's *first cousin five times removed*, his resting place beside hers merely a twist of fate. And the connections didn't stop there. Richard had been a tenant farmer at Dunsby Fen Farm, just as my mother had grown up in a home on Dunsby Fen. His parents, Richard and Sarah, had moved to Dunsby in 1782, their lives woven into the very fabric of the community. Twelve of their fourteen children were baptized at the church—five of them buried there before reaching adulthood.

When I traced Richard and Sarah's marriage, the surprises continued. They wed at Gaddesby Church, where Sarah was born. The witness? Curtis Williamson, an unusual name, a flicker of familiarity. A connection emerged—my niece had encountered Curtis in her research of my late in-laws' families. It was no mere coincidence: he was the same man who had stood as witness to Richard and Sarah's wedding, having earlier married Sarah's oldest sister, Elizabeth also at Gaddesby. The two families—Casswell and Williamson—had intertwined across generations, tied together by land, marriage, and fate.

Elizabeth's youngest daughter, in turn, married Thomas, a younger son of Richard and Sarah. When his brother Richard passed in 1843, he was a bachelor, so it was Thomas who took over Dunsby Fen Farm.

As my niece put it, our respective family trees are metaphorically "leaning towards each other." The more I dug, the more I found—lives bound together not by chance, but by the quiet pull of lineage and legacy. And yet, I know there is still more waiting to be uncovered. The story doesn't end here; each clue leads to another thread in this vast, interconnected tapestry. What began as a simple act of laying my parents' ashes to rest has become an unfolding mystery, one that I will continue to piece together, layer by layer.

Labour Day: A Global Celebration of Workers' Rights with Deep UK Roots

Origins and Historical Context

Labour Day, also known as International Workers' Day, is celebrated on May 1st in many countries worldwide. The tradition emerged from the labour union movements of the 19th century, especially the fight for an eight-hour workday.

The Industrial Revolution and Early Labour Struggles

The Industrial Revolution (18th–19th centuries) transformed economies, but at a steep cost for workers. Factory labour often meant 12 to 16-hour days under harsh and unsafe conditions. As industrialization progressed, workers formed trade unions to demand better wages and working hours.

The Haymarket Affair and the Birth of May Day

One of the most defining moments in Labour Day's history was the Haymarket Affair in Chicago, USA. On May 1, 1886, workers across the United States went on strike for an eight-hour workday. The protests escalated, culminating in a rally at Haymarket Square on May 4. A bomb explosion led to violence, cementing the event as a symbol of the struggle for workers' rights. In 1889, the Second International, an organization of socialist and labour parties, declared May 1st as International Workers' Day, commemorating the Haymarket Affair. British trade unions embraced the date, using it to rally for labour reforms.

Labour Movements in the UK

While Labour Day in the UK isn't an official public holiday on May 1st, the country has a deep and impactful history of labour activism.

The 1926 General Strike

One of Britain's most significant labour movements was the General Strike of 1926, where over 1.7 million workers, including miners, railway employees, and dockers, protested wage cuts and poor conditions. Although the strike lasted nine days and was ultimately unsuccessful, it demonstrated the power of collective action.

The Three-Day Week (1974)

The early 1970s saw major economic struggles in the UK. Amid coal shortages and a miners' strike, Prime Minister Edward Heath introduced the Three-Day Week, limiting industrial electricity use. This period underscored the influence of trade unions in shaping national policies.

The Rise of Labour Laws

Labour movements contributed to key legislative victories that shaped UK working conditions:

- **The Factory Acts (19th century)** – Introduced regulations on working hours and child labour.
- **The Trade Union Act (1871)** – Legalized trade unions, allowing workers to organize.
- **The National Minimum Wage Act (1998)** – Established a minimum wage, ensuring fair pay.
- **The Working Time Regulations (1998)** – Capped the workweek at **48 hours** and mandated rest breaks.

Global Labour Day Traditions

Labour Day is observed differently around the world, reflecting local histories and struggles:

- **United States & Canada** – Labour Day is celebrated on the **first Monday of September**, distancing it from socialist associations.
- **Europe & Latin America** – Nations like **France, Germany, Spain, and Brazil** recognize **May 1st** as a national holiday with workers' marches.
- **China & Russia** – Major government-organized celebrations mark Labour Day.
- **Walpurgis Night (Germany & Scandinavia)** – A spring festival held on **April 30**, intertwined with workers' celebrations.
- **Lei Day (Hawaii, USA)** – Established in **1927**, Lei Day blends labour recognition with Hawaiian cultural festivities.

Labour Day Celebrations in the UK

Unlike many countries, the UK does not observe May 1st as an official Labour Day. Instead, the first Monday in May is designated as May Day Bank Holiday, blending traditional maypole dancing and Morris dancing with modern workers' rallies.

The Ongoing Fight for Workers' Rights

Despite major advancements, labour challenges persist. Issues such as gig economy exploitation, wage inequality, and workplace automation continue to shape discussions. Labour Day stands as a reminder of past struggles and the ongoing fight for fair working conditions worldwide.

DECLUTTER DEN

Are you determined to declutter and get rid of things that you haven't used in an age this year? Look no further than Declutter Den.

Norma Grimes has recently upgraded her TV, would anyone like her old one?

40" Bush TV DLED40FHDS. About 5 years' old. Perfect working order.



She can be contacted on 07582 413517 or by email norma.grimes@btinternet.com



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

MAY by Christina Rossetti

I cannot tell you how it was,
But this I know: it came to pass
Upon a bright and sunny day
When May was young; ah, pleasant May!
As yet the poppies were not born
Between the blades of tender corn;
The last egg had not hatched as yet,
Nor any bird foregone its mate.

I cannot tell you what it was,
But this I know: it did but pass.
It passed away with sunny May,
Like all sweet things it passed away,
And left me old, and cold, and gray.

MAY-DAY by Sara Teasdale

A delicate fabric of bird song
Floats in the air,
The smell of wet wild earth
Is everywhere.

Red small leaves of the maple
Are clenched like a hand,
Like girls at their first communion
The pear trees stand.

Oh I must pass nothing by
Without loving it much,
The raindrop try with my lips,
The grass with my touch;

For how can I be sure
I shall see again
The world on the first of May
Shining after the rain?

And finally.....

May Day in the UK

- **Maypole Dancing** – First recorded in England in the **14th century**, maypoles became a widespread tradition by the **16th century**. They were banned by Puritans in **1645** but revived under Charles II in **1660**.
- **Morris Dancing** – This folk dance dates back to at least the **15th century**, with references in court records from **1448**.
- **May Queen** – The tradition of crowning a May Queen emerged in the **19th century**, influenced by Victorian romanticism.
- **Jack-in-the-Green** – First documented in **the 18th century**, this leafy figure became a staple of May Day processions.
- **Oxford's Magdalen College Choir** – Since **the 17th century**, the choir has sung from Magdalen College Tower at dawn on May 1st.

