

System and District

u3a

learn, laugh, live

APR
2024

Vitality!

Official newsletter of the System and District u3a

CHARITY No 1180152

FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Hi Everyone,

The daffodils are in full bloom, my Magnolia tree is full of blossom and everywhere is looking a lot brighter.

At our last Member Meeting Roxanne told us about her life of belly dancing with fire and snakes which was both funny and interesting. After the talk she asked how much it would be to hire the hall and a few days later she emailed Steve to ask if anyone would be interested in a belly dancing workshop. We do not have any details of when or the price. If you would like further information, I will forward your email to her so she can contact you with the relevant information. Please email me at sadu3achair@gmail.com or alternatively see me at the April meeting.

I was sad to hear of the passing of Brian Austin who was a member of several of our groups and will be sadly missed. Our thoughts and sympathy go to his wife Felicity and the family at this very difficult time.

See you soon.

Clive

WE WANT TO LET YOU KNOW

System and District U3A need your eyes and ears.

That's all we require of you. Nothing difficult which demands time and effort as we all are members to have fun (and learn a bit too).

To maintain and extend the large variety of Group activities, we have to promote our aims and objectives to all those who live **outside** Syston as well. We are 'Syston **AND** District'. **If you see or hear of a Fete, Fair or any local Public gathering where we could be present, please contact me directly by Email to sadu3apublicity@gmail.com or give details either to Barbara or Gill.**

Your support really does make a difference and ensures we continue to offer opportunities to others who will benefit and (possibly) have new groups forming.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Jill

GROUP NEWS

WALKING GROUP

The walk this month was led by Rob Crosby with a map supplied by Dave Palmer, so far so good.



We started from the Stilton Cheese pub in Somerby ready to head to Pickwell then on to Cold Overton and back.

Challenge number one was visibility ... mist ... so thick we could barely see the path in the distance. We entered the first field through a metal gate which alarmed a horse which then alarmed a second horse. As you can see from the picture, the horse was friendly and just wanted a pat, however, can you see the beautiful countryside in the distance? No, neither could we! We walked on through thick sticky mud, over so many stiles we lost count and after trying to avoid hoof prints so deep you could lose your boot in, we reached a field where Rob had to use his compass to find the way up the hill to our next exit. We didn't even realise there was a hill in front of us! The mist hardly cleared all the way. We did manage to complete the walk, fortunately without any mishaps! Arriving back at the pub, muddy but happy. Many thanks to Rob for guiding us safely back!

MAHJONG GROUP

Funny game Mahjong. The compass points get messed up and the order of play is unnatural. Fundamentally it's a Chinese game of Four Winds, the points of a compass are used to identify players positions in the order (clockwise) NWSE. Our natural instinct is to play any game in a clockwise order. In Mahjong the game is played in an anti-clockwise order. A four-sided wall is built with the playing tiles and when it's a players turn to take a tile from the wall it is in a clockwise direction. Told you it was a funny game.

While producing a second edition of our rule booklet we contacted the U3A national adviser. This was for clarification of a detail, they liked the booklet and considered that it could be used as a teaching aid. Leading on from that we have taken part in a zoom meeting with U3A (National) with a view to becoming a Mahjong adviser. Early days yet though.

SADU3A is now firmly on the U3A (National) radar. Tick in the box for Syston.

Mahjong, great game, great group, lovely people, and fun. For those that want to start playing, contact the group leader, you will get all the help and guidance that you want from experienced players, always with care and thought.

FEELING CRAFTY GROUP

At the 'Feeling Crafty' group we have been preparing for Easter. We made 30 Easter cards which were sent to local care/nursing homes that have requested under The charity 'postcards for kindness' to be sent cards or postcards. Then in our next group we tried making some tissue paper daffodils. We made some lovely ones last spring which we donated to our local Vista charity shop for their window display. They got lots of compliments about how realistic they looked, but I couldn't remember exactly how we made them. So eventually we managed to make a few basic ones with the help of u-tube. Always a good source of inspiration if you get stuck!

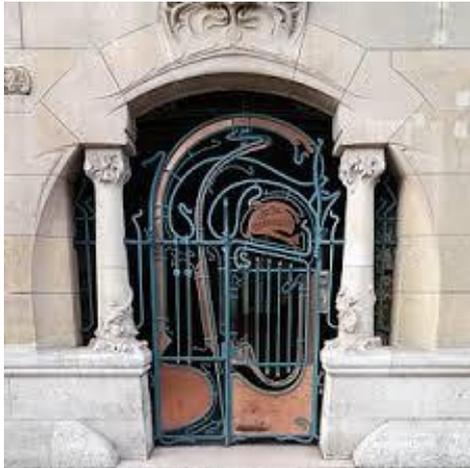


ART APPRECIATION GROUP

At our last meeting we were looking at the wide subject of Ceramics with a presentation by Mel. He wants to explore the different areas in more detail and we look forward to further talks.



Chris gave us a potted history of Art Nouveau. A short lived but very influential period in applied arts.



Our next meeting is on **Weds April 3rd at 2pm** in the Syston Community Centre.
Michael is discussing the Art of Railway Posters and Tracy has a mystery item.



Please contact Michael Wherton or Christine Gale via the website if you would like to join us.

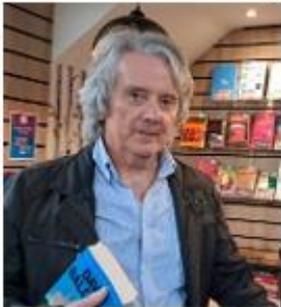
UKULELE GROUP

On Wednesday, March 13th, a small group of Syston's Happy Ukulele Band, led by Len Abraham, one of the leaders of the group, were invited to entertain the customers and staff at the opening of Age UK's new bookshop in Syston.

Space was very limited, so we only had room for 6 players.

At the opening time of 4pm, there were so many customers in the shop that we had to start playing outside on the street, much to the amusement of people passing by, but it certainly drummed up interest in the opening!

Once we had room, we squeezed back into the shop and played a good number of upbeat songs to



entertain everybody, including the managing director of Age UK himself, Tony Donovan, who was very impressed, together with local manager, Dawn and volunteer Lena.

Tony Donovan, Age UK MD



Some members of staff, enjoying our music!

It was also excellent publicity for Syston & District U3a, as we also appeared on Age UK's Leicestershire & Rutland Facebook page, which has almost 4,000 people looking at the page at any one time. Syston Town News was also reporting there, so hopefully, we will gain more publicity in the next edition!

The bookshop has a high-quality selection of preloved books of all genres, vinyl's, CDs, DVDs and puzzles with all proceeds supporting Age UK to provide support for local older people

Opening hours are: Monday - Saturday 9:00am – 4:30pm, Sunday 11:00am - 4:00pm.

PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP



The Photo Group had their first meeting of the year (February), at Syston Community Centre, where we created various scenes from tiny 'little people' figures and various props brought in by members.

These 'little people' figures were only around 10mm in height, so very small and a lot of creative thought had to be put into the scenes, together with the correct settings on cameras and phones

to get the subjects in focus. A few photos are shown here from the many taken.

We had a very sociable morning, chatting and learning about our various cameras and phones.

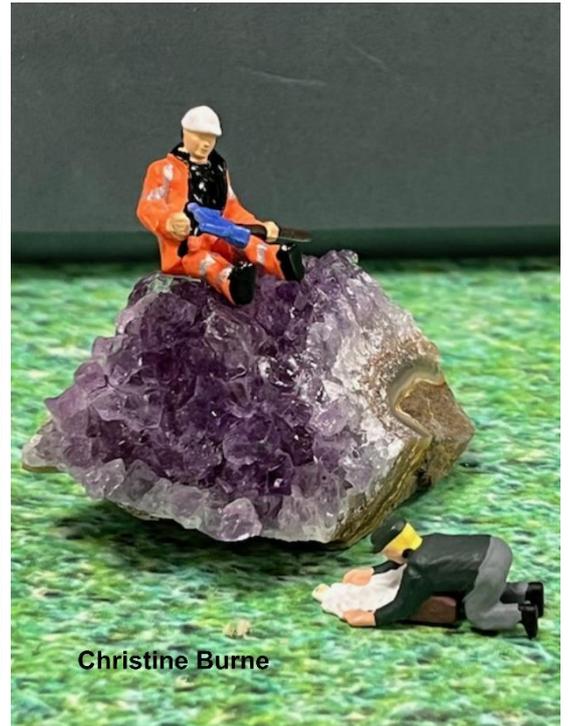
Our next meeting is Thursday March 28th, at Leicester University Botanical Gardens (weather permitting!).



Helen Marshall



Barbara Sargeant



Christine Burne

EVENTS – PAST, PRESENT & PLANNED

JEWELLERY MAKING



Do you love jewellery and are you interested in making a unique piece of your own, that you will be able to take home with you at the end of the workshop, or even wear when you leave? (See below for photos) Jeweller, Christine Pearson, is going to run a 2 hour workshop on Friday 10th May, between 1000 - 1200, in the Old School Room, Syston Community Centre. The cost is £26.50 per person, and for this you will have the choice of making either a pendant or a pair of earrings, using enamels to decorate them and choosing from different fittings. Christine will bring 2 portable kilns so that you will be able to take your jewellery home with you on the day.

We are limited in the numbers that can do this, so if you are interested please contact me with your membership numbers and email or phone number.

Full payment will be required a couple of weeks before the workshop.

If interested contact: Ghislaine Wood – email: woodlet7@yahoo.co.uk

A TRIP TO LEICESTER CURVE THEATRE TO SEE....



Sheila Driver is organising a trip on Thursday, 4th July, 2.15pm at a cost of £31.50 per member (stall seat).

Travel there under own transport.

To book a seat please contact sheiladriver@hotmail.com by Thursday 11 April; with your name and membership number.

Full payment will be needed by April 20th
Details of payment will be sent to those who reserve a seat
Please don't send any payments until then !
It's a brilliant musical !

BURLESQUE EVENT

Burlesque is derived from Italian, meaning to ridicule, mock or be satirical. Originally an art form popular in Victorian London between 1830-1890, Burlesque was first staged in New York in 1840's by a troupe of chorus girls led by Lydia Thompson. New York is still regarded as the capital of Burlesque. Shows would mock and

satirize popular Operas, plays and social issues of the time, much like Music Hall and Cabaret performances much later. By late 1920's Burlesque was an artistic way to be provocative, seductive and tease popularised by artists including Gypsy Rose Lee, Dita Von Tesse (Queen of Burlesque) and Sally Rand to name but a few. By 1950's Bettie Page was a classic performer of this style and of its time.

All of us undertook to bump, grind, shimmy and bounce with a wink and a smile. Thank you to Doe Demure and all of those gloriously wonderful ladies (no men were brave enough) who chose to learn something new and have fun too.



MARCH GM SPEAKER



Roxanne, exotic dancer performed for us at the general meeting this Wednesday. She entertained us with hilarious anecdotes of her life of dancing, performing with her pet snake, and her hair-raising experiences of fire-eating. There's a clip of her dancing on our Facebook page, if you missed it!

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

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.



May 8th, 2024

David Bell returns to give us an amusing talk on *'Down the Garden Path' - a humorous look at the privy!*



June 12th, 2024

Mick Clowes - an illustrated talk on The Melton & Oakham Waterways – past present and future



NATIONAL U3A ITEMS

u3a TALKS



The Road to Clean Water: Beginnings of a sewage system in Victorian London

The great stink of the Thames in 1858 convinced parliament to clean it up so Londoners could drink clean water. Enter Joseph Bazalgette.

Wednesday 17 April at 10am

Free – online via Zoom



From despair to delight: the sonnets of Gerard Manley Hopkins

This is the second of a series of talks illustrating how the creative arts can enhance our wellbeing, by Christopher Dorwick of Orrell Park & District u3a.

Thursday 18 April at 2pm

Free – online via Zoom



A Remarkable Woman: The Arts and Crafts Designs of May Morris

Presented by Helen Elletson, curator of Research and Development at the William Morris Society.

Thursday 11 April at 2pm

Free – online via Zoom

Book [here](#)

Book [here](#)

Book [here](#)

Living with purpose: The key to longevity, happiness and global change



Tuesday 16 April, 2-3pm

George Lee, Newcastle Centre for Innovation on Ageing

George will talk about the importance of having a purpose, and how it relates to longevity, happiness and global change. She'll start by looking at the latest research findings about purpose and longevity, and draw out what this might mean for your life. We look forward to seeing you there.

[Register here](#)

NOT U3a BUT YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED

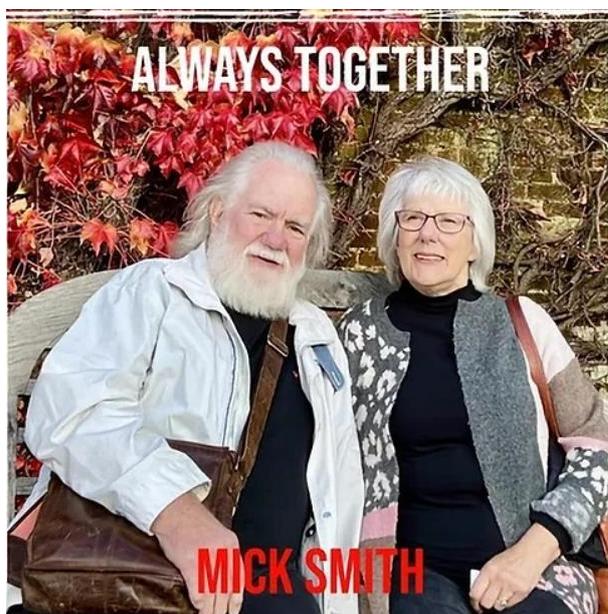
A love song, 'Always Together'

The link between music and Alzheimer's is well known, with those living with the condition often remembering music long after their loved ones are forgotten.

When Mick Smith, 81, a country singer from Syston, a former Radio Leicester presenter, and a member of Syston & District U3a in the Syston Happy Ukulele Band, was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, in 2021, he wrote a song for his wife, so he'll never forget how much he loves her.

Mick performs at dementia support group, the Thrummy Drummers and he wrote the song, 'Always Together', for his wife of nearly 60 years, Diana, in the week he was officially diagnosed.

More than a tribute 'Always Together' is a testament to the couple's unshakeable bond. Mick has openly acknowledged the crucial role his wife plays in his life. He stated that without her unwavering presence and support, he would



find it hard to carry on. His words and melody encapsulate the essence of their love story, reflecting the spirit of a man who, despite a formidable diagnosis, continues to cherish his love and companionship.

All profits from 'Always Together' will support Alzheimer's Research Charity, a cause close to Mick and Diana's heart. Mick was helped with the production by Dan Chisholm, Producer, who helped bring this song to life.

Join Mick on this heartfelt journey, where love, music, and gratitude intertwine to create something truly meaningful, by visiting his website, dedicated to raising money for the Charity. To date, they have raised over £600 for the charity. Home | Always Together (micksmithalwaystogether.com)

Article by Steve Kenney (u3a Syston Happy Ukulele Band)

Do you support people who may be lonely?

Develop your skills to help others manage loneliness and build meaningful connections. Book a free **Supporting Connections** workshop today.



My name is Rupesh Chauhan, and I am the Community Education Coordinator for the British Red Cross in Leicestershire, Coventry and Tamworth.

Just wanted to share with you our new and exciting new workshop called Supporting Connections.

Supporting Connections is a **free workshop** delivered by the British Red Cross. It's aimed at organisations, professionals and volunteers who work with people who might be experiencing loneliness. You'll learn how to better support people in your community, enabling them to build positive connections to help ease feelings of loneliness. *Take a look at our video to find out more!* [Supporting Connections: Free skills workshop for adults \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

In the workshop, you'll explore and discuss how you can see the signs of loneliness, developing your skills to support people through it. You'll deepen your understanding of the barriers that can stand in the way of connection and build your confidence to help others as they push through them. This workshop is open to anyone who wants to help others build meaningful connections, but it's designed especially for those who work in communities with people who may already be feeling the effects of loneliness.

If this workshop is something you feel would benefit you, use the link below to find a suitable date and time for you to book a session!

<https://outlook.office365.com/owa/calendar/CommunityEducationLeicester@brcsbrms.onmicrosoft.com/bookings/>

VOLUNTER CENTRE CHAIRMAN'S WORK RECOGNISED BY COUNTY SHERIFF

At the conclusion of the Centre's monthly Community Lunch at Beedles Lake Golf Club, Paul Lomas, Chairman of Syston and District Volunteer Centre, was taken by surprise as he was presented with the High Sheriff of Leicestershire's personal award for outstanding voluntary Community service.



The current High Sheriff, Mrs Henrietta Chubb JP, an imposing figure in her long line navy button-through tunic, broad-brimmed hat with white ostrich feather, spoke of Paul's wide range of voluntary work within the local Syston Community which had stimulated the special Award. She was accompanied at the event by Deputy Lord Lieutenant, Colonel Murray Colville,

The role of the High Sheriff is not widely understood, with many present on the day confessing that they had no idea that such a post existed. Memories of the legendary Sheriff of Nottingham, and his battles with Robin Hood, came to mind.

The modern County Sheriff's principal role, as defined by the oath of office, is to "*faithfully support the judiciary and all who maintain the King's peace, administer justice and protect and support their fellow citizens*" including the police and other law enforcement agencies, the emergency services, local authorities, and church and faith groups. The role is unpaid and no expenses are reimbursed. For this reason, there is no set framework of duties and each of the current 55 modern High Sheriffs is encouraged to shape the year of office as he/she sees fit.

During her year in office, Henrietta has chosen to concentrate on offering encouragement to those supporting the charitable and voluntary sectors - particularly those involved with crime reduction and social cohesion - and actively encouraging crime prevention.

The origins of the Office date back to Saxon times, when the 'Shire Reeve' was responsible to the Sovereign for the maintenance of law and order within the shire or county and for the collection and return of taxes due to the Crown.

OPEN INVITATION TO TRY THE GAME OF BOWLS

Anyone of any age, interested in trying out the game of bowls and having fun, is invited to the Syston Bowling Club Open Day in Central Park on Saturday 20th April from 2.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. Flat footwear (without heels) is all that is required. Two wheelchairs are available for the less mobile members of the community, who need not feel anxious about trying out this fine game which suits everyone.

Free coaching will be offered through the medium of fun events on the green which will make for attractive spectating for anyone simply requiring an enjoyable afternoon in the Park. The Club Bar and kitchen will be open to all, offering light refreshments and a full Bar service at very competitive prices.

Taking part in the event carries no obligation but, for those who might be interested in taking the game further, a 50% discount is offered for the first year of membership.

Further details, if required, can be obtained from Club Development Director, Colin Grimes, at systonbowling@btinternet.com

The Great British Dog Walk for Hearing Dogs for Deaf People is back!

Sign up to The Great British Dog Walk on 2024 at Belvoir Castle and join hundreds of others on a sponsored walk to raise funds to transform the lives of deaf adults and children.

A sponsored walk to transform deaf people's lives

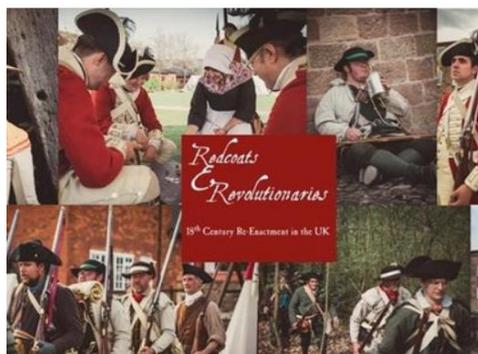
Hearing loss is rising. This invisible disability has devastating impacts on people's safety and mental health. Take part in this 3km or 8km sponsored dog walk and raise funds to train more incredible hearing dogs who alert to life-saving and important sounds and break down social barriers for deaf people.

Sign up today and you'll receive a FREE dog bandana, and every penny you raise will help deaf people to leave loneliness behind and reconnect with life.

This is a great opportunity to explore the beautiful Belvoir Castle Estate along with other dog lovers and their four-legged friends! There will be have-a-go dog agility and other fun games to enjoy before and after the walk. So get your Great British Dog Walk tickets and we look forward to seeing you there!

The group walk starts at 11am – after the fun dog show which starts at 10.30am. If you would prefer not to walk with the main group, then please come and start when you are ready at any time whilst registration is open.

<https://www.hearingdogs.org.uk/support/events/gbdw-2024-belvoir-castle/>



Redcoats & Revolutionaries - 18th century re-enactment group

Belgrave Hall and Gardens is delighted to host Redcoats & Revolutionaries.

"Redcoats & Revolutionaries is a Re-Enactment and Living History society that recreates aspects of the late 18th Century with a focus on the American War of Independence...

6 Apr 2024 *Open 11:00 - 16:00*

Where: Belgrave Hall And Gardens, Belgrave, Church Road, Leicester, LE4 5PE

Contact details: 0116 229 8181



Leicestershire and Rutland One Act Play Festival

The annual Leicestershire and Rutland One Act Play festival is a competition for local amateur theatre groups performing one act of a play. A great opportunity to see local groups and hear professional critique of the performance, learn more about...

12 Apr 2024 *Open 19:30 - 22:00*

13 Apr 2024 *Open 14:30 - 22:00*

Where: The Little Theatre, Dover Street, Leicester, LE1 6PW

Contact details: 0116 255 1302

FROM OUR MEMBERS

Birds, flight and feathers – part 2

People have, since the dawn of recorded time, had a close relationship with birds.



The bas relief sculpture of Ancient Egyptian god Horus, a falcon headed man, at the temple of Edfu on the Nile in Upper Egypt.

When I was a child, most homes had a pet budgerigar. An early memory is being taken by my grandparents to one of their friends who had an African grey parrot. Over tea someone rang the doorbell causing the parrot to interrupt conversation by saying loudly “Not the bloody vicar again.” A small boy was told never to repeat that word and the parrot was silenced by a blanket over its cage.



African sacred ibis photographed in the Okavango Delta

If you ask people to name the most characteristic features of birds most of them will talk about their ability to fly, their possession of a beak and their reproduction by using hard shelled eggs. Birds are the only animals that have beaks. All other animals that have bones (vertebrates) have

jaws with teeth. Beaks are made from keratin, the same stuff that makes our finger and toenails. It is light, an aid to flight, but not very strong. Jaws and teeth are very much stronger, think of a dog crunching a bone. Birds crunch hard food by using stones in a special part of their digestive tract called a crop.

Recently, another theory has been put forward why beaks have developed. Teeth take a long time to develop in an embryo. Crocodile eggs take 80 to 90 days to hatch whereas robin eggs take only 12 to 14 days. Producing young quickly increases their chance of survival as less time is spent protecting them.

Birds are not the only animals that fly.



Small tortoiseshell butterfly on Buddleia

Biologists have found winged insect fossils that are 325 Million years old. The ability to fly confers a huge advantage as it allows a creature to look for food over a much wider area and it is also good for escaping from predators. If we wind the clock back some 220 Million years we would see large winged creatures flying above the landscape.



Artist's impression of Pteranodon

Pterosaurs were not dinosaurs, though they evolved from the same ancestors. Their wings were made from stretched skin like material. Some were impressively large, their wingspan matching a small aeroplane. None have survived. Pterosaurs share a problem with bats, the fourth group of flying animals. If their flight membrane is damaged the animal can no longer fly. A bird's flying surface is made of feathers that can be preened back into shape if they are damaged.



Two of the author's grandchildren with a T. rex skeleton at Wollaton Hall, August 2022

Why? You may ask, have a changed the subject to Dinosaurs? Both you and I would have learnt that dinosaurs were huge and heavy animals that dragged their tails along the ground while emitting loud growling sounds and biting huge chunks out of each other. This was a vision created in Hollywood and children's comics.



Fossilised dinosaur footprint from Arizona

Dinosaur tracks are found in many places around the world. Unlike crocodile tracks which show tail dragging marks, no tail marks are found. Careful examination of the size and depth of the footprints allow those with an understanding of such matters to calculate the weight of an animal producing such an impression. Big dinosaurs are remarkably light. Examination of their fossil remains show that they had hollow bones contain large sacs of air. Dinosaurs were quite nimble.



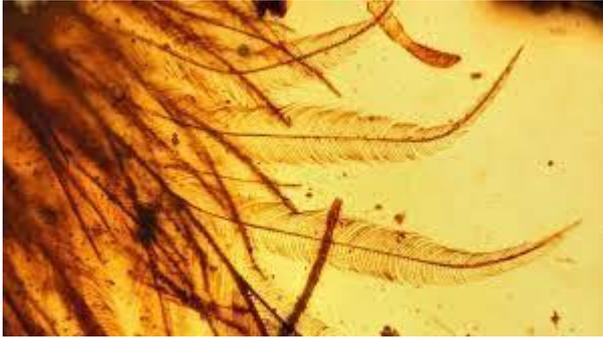
Tyrannosaurus rex skeleton model

Dinosaur skeletons show a number of distinctive features (shown in colour in this model) such as a four toed foot, neck ribs, wish bone and a particular style of upper leg joint.



Skeleton of Chicken

Examination of a bird skeleton reveals the same features. It's almost as if birds are dinosaurs! If only dinosaurs had feathers the relationship would be proven.



Fossilised dinosaur feathers in amber

Biologists now classify birds as dinosaurs. You learn something new every day!
If someone tells you that dinosaurs are extinct you can say "Only the non-avian dinosaurs are extinct": Clever you.

[Thanks Pierre Castille](#)

Wheels within wheels!

The British and US standard railroad gauge (distance between the rails) is 4 feet, 8.5 inches. That's an exceedingly odd number. **Why was that gauge used?**

Well, because that's the way they built them in England, and English engineers designed the first US railroads. **Why did the English build them like that?**

Because the first rail lines were built by the same people who built the wagon tramways, and that's the gauge they used. **So, why did 'they' use that gauge then?**

Because the people who built the tramways used the same jigs and tools that they had used for building wagons, which used that same wheel spacing. **Why did the wagons have that particular odd wheel spacing?**

Well, if they tried to use any other spacing, the wagon wheels would break more often on some of the old, long distance roads in England . You see, that's the spacing of the wheel ruts. **So who built those old rutted roads?**

Imperial Rome built the first long distance roads in Europe (including England) for their legions. Those roads have been used ever since. And what about the ruts in the roads? Roman war chariots formed the initial ruts, which everyone else had to match or run the risk of destroying their wagon wheels. Since the chariots were made for Imperial Rome , they were all alike in the matter of wheel spacing. Therefore the United States standard railroad gauge of 4 feet, 8.5 inches is derived from the original specifications for an Imperial Roman war chariot. Bureaucracies live forever!

So the next time you are handed a specification/procedure/process and wonder 'What horse's ass came up with this?', you may be exactly right. Imperial Roman army chariots were made just wide enough to accommodate the rear ends of two war horses.

Now, the twist to the story.

When you see a Space Shuttle sitting on its launch pad, there are two big booster rockets attached to the sides of the main fuel tank. These are solid rocket boosters, or SRBs. The SRBs are made in a factory in Utah . The engineers who designed the SRBs would have preferred to make them a bit fatter, but the SRBs had to be shipped by train from the factory to the launch site. The railroad line from the factory happens to run through a tunnel in the mountains, and the SRBs had to fit through that tunnel. The tunnel is slightly wider than the railroad track, and the railroad track, as you now know, is about as wide as two horses' behinds.

So, a major Space Shuttle design feature, of what is arguably the world's most advanced transportation system, was determined over two thousand years ago by the width of a horse's backside!

Thanks to Colin Grimes for sending me this.

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?

Cynthia Baker has some printer inks looking for a home -

We use Epson printers and use compatible makes of inks which give acceptable print outs of our paperwork at less cost.

We tend to bulk buy for cheapness but the previous two printers have broken just after we bought a load of inks for them

In a cupboard we have

3 x E-2634 Yellow 3 x E-2633 Magenta 1 x E-2632 Cyan 3 x E2631 Black and 2 x E-2621 Black
Also

4 x E-2994 Yellow 5 x E-2995 Magenta 3 x E-2992 Cyan 5 x E-2991 Black

These will fit a range of Epson printers and are free to anyone who can help me clear some cupboard space.

Cynthia can be contacted on 0775 345 2831



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

THE FIRST OF APRIL by Mortimer Collins

Now if to be an April-fool
Is to delight in the song of the thrush,
To long for the swallow in air's blue hollow,
And the nightingale's riotous music-gush,
And to paint a vision of cities Elysian
Out away in the sunset-flush —
Then I grasp my flagon and swear thereby,
We are April-fools, my Love and I.

And if to be an April-fool
Is to feel contempt for iron and gold,
For the shallow fame at which most men aim —
And to turn from worldlings cruel and cold
To God in his splendor, loving and tender,
And to bask in his presence manifold —
Then by all the stars in his infinite sky,
We are April-fools, my Love and I.

APRIL by Emily Dickinson

An altered look about the hills;
A Tyrian light the village fills;
A wider sunrise in the dawn;
A deeper twilight on the lawn;
A print of a vermilion foot;
A purple finger on the slope;
A flippant fly upon the pane;
A spider at his trade again;
An added strut in chanticleer;
A flower expected everywhere;
An axe shrill singing in the woods;
Fern-odors on untravelled roads, —
All this, and more I cannot tell,
A furtive look you know as well,
And Nicodemus' mystery
Receives its annual reply.

APRIL WEATHER by Edith Franklin Wyatt

If you could have a perfect day
To dream of when your life were done,
Would you choose one all clear, all gay,
If you could have a perfect day—
The airs above the wide green way
Sheer virgin blue with crystal sun,
If you could have a perfect day
To dream of when your life were done?

Or would you have it April's way
Haphazard rain, haphazard sun,
Divine and soraid, clear and gray,
Dyed like these hours' own craft and play,
All shot with stains of tears and clay,
Haphazard pain, haphazard fun—
If you could have a perfect day
To dream of when your life were done?

RAIN, RAIN, APRIL RAIN by Annette Wynne

Rain, rain, April rain,
Washing tree and window pane,
Tapping every spot of ground,
Lest some sleepy seed be found;
I can watch you and be gay
Though I cannot go to play.

Rain, rain, April rain,
Washer of the hill and plain,
Summer could not be so gay
If it did not rain to-day,
And it's fun to stay inside
And see you falling far and wide.

And finally..... April Fools Pranks from history

In January of 1749, London newspapers advertised an upcoming show, in it a man would squeeze his entire body into a wine bottle and then sing while inside it. It promised that “during his stay in the bottle, any person may handle it, and see plainly that it does not exceed a common Tavern Bottle.” The ad also said that the show would feature other tricks as well, including communicating with the dead.

The ad was believed to be the result of a bet between the Duke of Portland and the Earl of Chesterfield. The duke bet that he could advertise something impossible and still “find fools enough in London to fill a playhouse and pay handsomely for the privilege of being there.” Apparently, he was right. On the night of the show, every seat in the house was filled, but no performer ever showed up. Realizing they had been duped, the audience rioted.

On April 1, 1905, a German newspaper called the *Berliner Tageblatt* announced that thieves had dug a tunnel underneath the U.S. Federal Treasury in Washington, D.C., and stolen America’s silver and gold (this was before the U.S. built its Bullion Depository in Fort Knox, Kentucky).

The *Berliner Tageblatt* said the heist was the work of American robber barons, whose burglars dug the tunnel over three years and made away with over \$268 million. They further claimed that U.S. authorities were trying to hunt down the thieves while publicly covering up the fact that the country had been robbed. The story spread quickly through European newspapers before people realized that it was an April Fools' Day prank by Louis Viereck, a New York correspondent for the *Berliner Tageblatt* who published the joke article under a fake name.

One of the most famous April Fools' Day pranks of all time is the BBC’s famous “spaghetti harvest” segment. On April 1, 1957, a news broadcaster told his British audience that Ticino, a Swiss region near the Italian border, had had “an exceptionally heavy spaghetti crop” that year. The camera cut to footage of people picking spaghetti off of trees and bushes, then sitting down at a table to eat some of their “real, home-grown spaghetti.”

At the time, spaghetti wasn’t a well known dish in Britain. That doesn’t mean that no one realized the segment was a prank—some viewers were upset the BBC had aired a fictional segment during a serious news program. But other viewers reportedly asked about how they could grow their own spaghetti at home.

In 1969 *Rolling Stone* music critic Greil Marcus published a piece spoofing the trend of big-name rock stars forming “supergroups.” One such supergroup in the ‘60s was Cream: its guitarist Eric Clapton was already famous for playing with the Yardbirds, while drummer Ginger Baker and bassist Jack Bruce were already known for playing in the Graham Bond Organisation.

Marcus penned a gushing review to a non-existent bootleg album by the “Masked Marauders,” a secret supergroup he said was made up of Bob Dylan, Mick Jagger, John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison. The fake review garnered real interest in the album, and Marcus ended up writing and recording the songs he’d made up; then Warner Brothers bought the songs and released the album.

