

# Vitality!

Official newsletter of the Syston and District u3a

CHARITY No 1180152

## FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Hi Everyone,

I hope everyone is well and managing to stay warm and hopefully we have seen the end of the storms.

Susan Alexander's talk on behalf of the Lions International about Knights of the Blind was very interesting and informative.

Our next Members meeting will be on February 11th when Mike Burton will talk to us about The Water Babies

Hope to see you there.

Stay safe and stay warm.

Clive

## WE WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW

### HAVE A QUERY? WANT TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE?

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

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



**0300 102 1381**

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

# 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](mailto:sadu3agroups@gmail.com) or speak to her at one of our monthly general meetings. Alternatively contact her assistant Angie Baker email [sadu3agroupsasst@gmail.com](mailto: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.



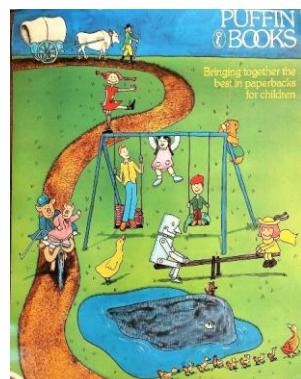
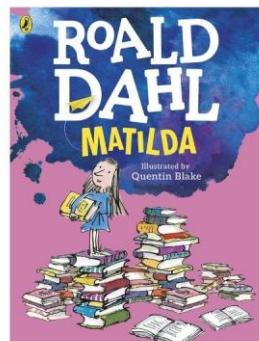
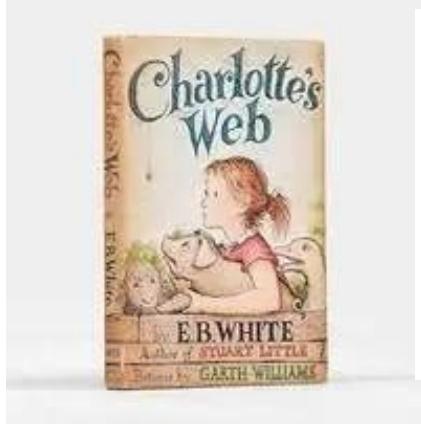
**Syston and District**

We are pleased to report a few spaces available in the groups listed below. If you would like more information about any vacancies please email [sadu3groups@gmail.com](mailto:sadu3groups@gmail.com) and we will get back to you.

BEADING - Monday AM  
FAMILY HISTORY - Tuesday AM  
BRIDGE - Tuesday PM  
MAHJONG - Tuesday AM  
RUMMIKUB {1} - Wednesday AM  
PLAY READING {2} - Thursday AM  
CREATIVE WRITING - Thursday PM \*  
DARTS - Thursday PM  
BOOK READING {1} - Thursday PM  
BOOK READING {2} - Wednesday AM  
LOCAL HISTORY - Thursday PM  
CROSS STITCH - Friday AM  
\*Open to change  
I hope you find something of interest.  
All groups are on our web page. Groups meet fortnightly or monthly.

## ART APPRECIATION GROUP

When we met in January Carolyn looked at the illustrators for the series of Puffin books. Since the 40's they have been a source of joy for children and the variety of style and subjects have been enormous. As well as her slide presentation she brought in a large selection of books for us to study.



Then we looked at a couple of exhibitions which had been on over Christmas. Both had artists who used literature as inspiration. One well known and the other not heard of by most of us.

Norwich Castle hosted Paula Rego's work which was not to everybody's taste. Her illustrations for a book of Nursery rhymes might have produced nightmares in children! But her Captain Hook from Peter Pan looked quite friendly by comparison



Then there was Mary Austin, a resident of Sileby for many years, who drew and painted all her life, but it was only after her death that the family found much of her work, and it was exhibited at the Sock gallery in Loughborough. She made pictures inspired by the likes of "Under Milk Wood" and "Moby Dick" But my favourite was the one she did of "Cider with Rosie".

We look forward to February's talks on Albert Goodwin and Winston Churchill.



## BOOK GROUP

This month the book group met as usual at the Britannia and we had a new year meal instead of the usual Christmas meal, this was very much enjoyed by all. As we didn't meet in December, we had two books to discuss, the first was *The Family Upstairs* by Lisa Jewell. This was a very confusing story at times about the relationships formed between two families when they came to be living together and were then joined two others. The relationships between the adults and also between the adults and children was somewhat convoluted at times but we mainly enjoyed it once we sorted it out. The second book, *The Story of a Heart* by Rachel Clarke, was, to say the least, very thought provoking. It is the true story about Max and Kiera and a heart transplant, Kiera was killed in a car accident and her heart was donated. Max had a failing heart and was in desperate need of a transplant. This book follows their story from just before the accident from the point of view of the people concerned, from the first responders to the transplant staff and the two families concerned. We found that were all affected by this story and most admitted it was a very emotional read and also, we learned a lot from it. Definitely worth a read. Our next book is *The Hidden Sister* by Lucinda Riley.

## LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

The newly re-formed Local History Group held its first meeting on 29 January, with an excellent turnout of 14 people and several others expressing interest but unable to attend on the day. Members agreed that meetings will take place on the **last Thursday of each month, 2.30–4.00pm**, in the **Jubilee Room** at Syston Community Centre. We also agreed to use **Leicestershire** as our working definition of “local”, giving us a wide and fascinating area to explore.

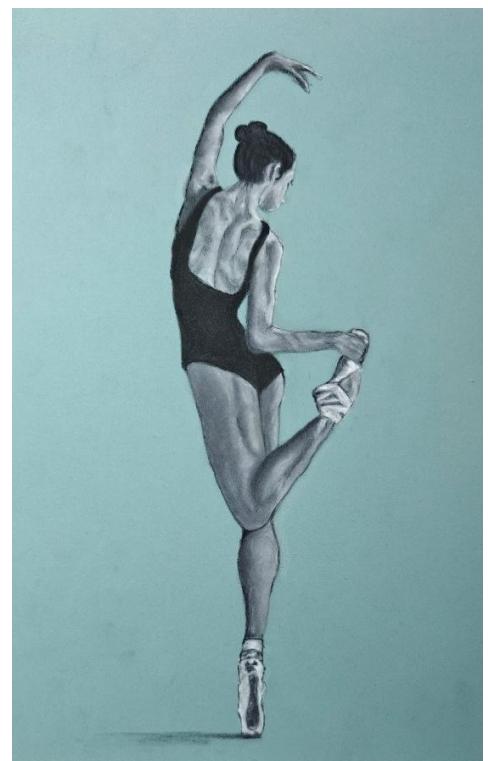
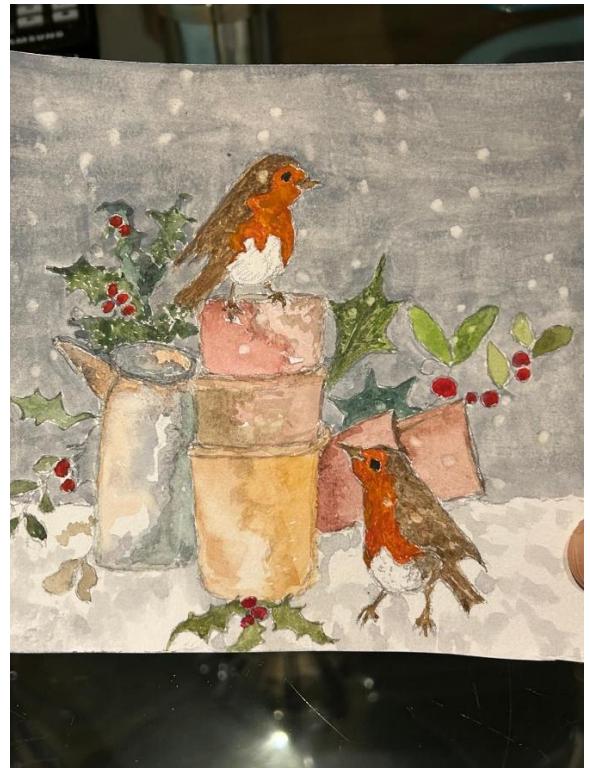
The group will be taking a flexible approach to content, combining short talks from members, u3a and occasional outside speakers (free wherever possible), and outings to places of local interest. This mix will allow us to draw on the knowledge and interests already within the group, while keeping costs low and ensuring that no one is excluded. Group Members are warmly encouraged to offer a short topic or suggest a speaker, but there is no pressure to take on anything they are not comfortable with.

To help the group settle in, the organiser will lead the first few sessions while future contributions are arranged. A list of potential topics has been circulated, and several members have already expressed interest in sharing material or pointing us towards possible speakers. Outings will be arranged later in the year if volunteers come forward to organise them.

There was a strong sense of enthusiasm and goodwill at the first meeting, and we look forward to building a friendly, inclusive group that explores the history of our area in an enjoyable and accessible way.

**More members are very welcome. If you wish to join us, please contact the group organiser email: [juliedjohnson@yahoo.com](mailto:juliedjohnson@yahoo.com)**

## ART GROUP



Thanks to Pat Glover for these examples of members work.



## SNOOKER GROUP

The Snooker group meet every week at The Grosvenor in Syston, and it has become a bit of a joke as to how many 'white' balls are potted by individuals each week.

To our complete surprise Jill Kempton-Hayes came along at the end of 2024 with a small trophy, suitably engraved, and presented it to Brian King, who had scored the most in one week by potting it 9 times!

Throughout 2025, people were diligently keeping count of how many 'whites' members had potted.

At one time I thought my name was going on the trophy, potting 5 whites in one day. However, then came along Richard Storer (Group Leader) and managed to sink 7. The photo shows Brian willingly presenting Richard with his 'Pot White'



# BIRDWATCHING & NATURE GROUP

## Program for 2026

Fri 6th Feb. **Swithland Reservoir**. All flat road walking along waterside east and over the dam. Lots of Ducks, Geese and Swans, plus Jays and Woodpeckers in the woods. Wrap up warm!

Fri 6th Mar. **Charnwood Lodge**. LRWT Site of Special Scientific Interest. Mostly a gentle stroll through the ancient woods, with a few ponds and rough grassland areas. It's possible we might disturb a couple of Woodcocks.

Fri 3rd Apr. **Langford Lowfields**. RSPB Reserve near Newark, Notts. Lakes, scrapes and reedbeds. I know it well and usually get a big bird-list here. Board walks, tracks and footpaths.

Fri 1st May. **Bradgate Park**. Easy open country walking, but mainly we'll try to see the Goshawks from the Raptor Watchpoint, as they are nesting nearby.

Fri 5th Jun. **Ulverscroft Nature Reserve**. LRWT site, quite hilly woodland, very good for summer birds. However, this is also a great place for Orchids. I have seen Common Spotted, Pyramidal, and Green-winged Orchids here before, but never managed to find the elusive Bee Orchid yet.

Fri 3rd Jul. **Nene Washes**. RSPB reserve, Lincs. Level walking on gravel tracks around all the reedbeds and fields. We may spot the Common Cranes that bred here last year, and also look out for any young birds, if they have been successful.

Fri 7th Aug. **Sherwood Forest/Budby**. Now managed by the RSPB. The area around the very busy visitors center soon quietens as we are going to walk through the old oak woodland. But the adjoining Budby reserve is flat and open, so we could all need sun hats. We'll list all the many summer birds and keep a look out for the odd Honey Buzzards that may be floating around.

Fri 4th Sep. **Rothley & Mountsorrel Marshes**. An easy local walking area, very good for Dragonflies, Damselflies Hawkers and Darters near all the water. Plus, birds of course.

Fri 2nd Oct. **Rutland Water**. We could try Lax Hill and the North shore, as it's an excellent time of the year for large rafts of Waterfowl.

Fri 6th Nov. **Cloud Wood**. Near E/Midlands Airport. Locally known for its many species of Bracket Fungus and mushrooms, especially, Scarlet elf cups, Fly Agaric and Common Ink caps. We can also take a look into the deepest quarry in Leicestershire, interesting!

Fri 4th Dec. **Syston Lakes**. A little-known small wetland area close to the Hobby Horse Pub. It usually hosts Fieldfares & Redwing that feed here in the winter and occasionally the lighter colored Mealy Redpoll put in an appearance.

We still have a few places available if any members wish to join us for some of these outings. Please contact me on 0789 4206535 or email [patwilkes2@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:patwilkes2@hotmail.co.uk).

## UKULELE GROUP

**SYSTON HAPPY UKULELE BAND (SHUBS)** raised £2,200 for LOROS – a magnificent effort by all the band members involved in this group.



**SHUBS** make no charge for performing at various venues. However, attendees at the various events choose to make donations all of which are then passed onto a Charity nominated by a band member.

**LOROS** has been the chosen Charity for 2025

Below is a list of the venues and other donations received.

Ashford House Care Home Rearsby  
Age Concern Syston Coffee Morning  
Rearsby WI  
Forge Court Syston  
Young at Heart Lunch Club  
Syston Christmas Light switch on  
Bunz and Roses Garden Centre Barkby  
Pharmacy Arms Syston  
New Chapter Bereavement Group Meeting  
The Grosvenor Syston  
Christmas Busking in Syston  
Sara and Clive Bolger Calendar Sale  
Band member Christmas Party  
Heather Holgate  
Other sundry donations from friends and family

Many thanks to our leaders, Len Abraham and Joy James in helping us achieve this.



You can find more information on our groups via this link [Groups | Syston & District](#)



## One Off Events

Do You have any ideas for a  
one off event for 2026

If you do and are  
willing to organise it  
I can give you all the  
help you need to set  
it up

Please contact me Angie Baker  
at the the below email address  
[sadu3aevents@gmail.com](mailto:sadu3aevents@gmail.com)



## One Off Events



**Anyone Interested  
in Silk Painting**

**Do You want to have a go?  
All Equipment and Materials**

**Will be Provided**

No Experience is Needed.

No Drawing Skills Required.

During the Workshop Participants  
will Learn How to Produce an A4 Size  
Landscape Painting in Silk, to take  
Home in a Frame.

**Friday 10th April is the Proposed Date**

**The price for the Workshop is £10  
Maximum of 8 places**

**There is also a demonstration in the  
monthly talk in March.**



**One Off Event**  
**Do You Like to chat about**  
**the old days?**  
**Was life simpler and better?**



**If you are interested in a  
Reminiscence Event  
please contact me at  
the below address**

Angie Baker - [sadu3groupsasst@gmail.com](mailto:sadu3groupsasst@gmail.com)

## 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



Wednesday, February 11, 2026 at 10:30 AM

### FEBRUARY - THE WATER BABIES

Syston Community Centre



Wed, Mar 11 at 10:30AM

### March: Silk Painting Demonstration

Oct

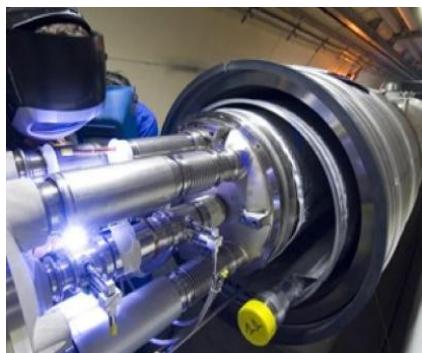
Wed, Apr 8 at 10:30 AM

APRIL - Severn Trent



## NATIONAL U3A ITEMS

### u3a TALKS



#### Smashing particles – behind the scenes at CERN

In this talk, Dr Octavio Dominguez CERN explores the European Laboratory for Particle Physics in Geneva.

Thursday 5 February at 2pm

Free – online via Zoom

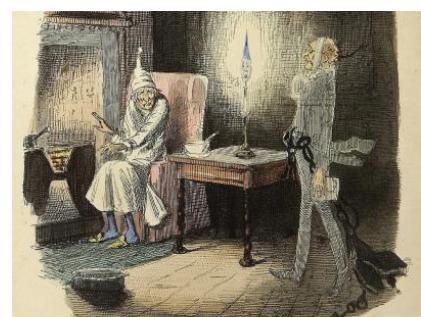


#### How do your medicines work? – pain relief

Mike Trevethick explains how common medicines for pain relief were discovered and the science of how they work in the body.

Wednesday 18 February at 10am

Free – online via Zoom



#### Gravy or grave? The ghost in literature

Ghosts are never just ghosts. In this illustrated talk, *Gravy or Grave?* traces their evolution in literature—from Gothic horrors to psychological hauntings—revealing how writers use the supernatural to explore fear, guilt, and human conscience.

Friday 20 February at 10am

Free – online via Zoom

Book [here](#)

Book [here](#)

Book [here](#)

More talks can be found [here](#)

## The Interest Groups Online Fair

If you've ever been curious about joining an online interest group—or even starting one of your own—the IGO Fair is the perfect opportunity to explore what's on offer. Taking place on 11, 12 and 13 February, the fair features 10 free online sessions, open to everyone and free to join whether you're already involved with Interest Groups Online (IGO) or completely new to it. You can book into sessions by clicking the buttons below.

Creative Writing – Wednesday 11 February at 10am

Exploring Progressive Rock – Wednesday 11 February at 11.30am

Sign Language – Wednesday 11 February at 1.30pm

Fusion Tai Chi Gong – Wednesday 11 February at 3pm

Local History – Thursday 12 February at 10am

Intermediate Recorders – Thursday 12 February at 11.30am

Dance Exercise – Thursday 12 February at 1.30pm

Setting up a new group – Thursday 12 February at 3pm

Canva – Friday 13 February at 10am

Early Women Doctors – Friday 13 February at 11.30am

## How to Join

It costs £12 to join for the year, equating to £1 per month. Membership runs from 1 April to 31 March of the next year. After 1 October, it costs £6 to join until 31 March next year. Membership and your groups are managed via the u3a Beacon Members Portal.

To become a member of *Interest Groups Online* you will need to fill out a short form and make your payment on the u3a Beacon Members Portal. As part of your subscription to *Interest Groups Online*, you can opt in to receive a free copy of the u3a magazine, *u3amatters*.

Please note, this membership is for *Interest Groups Online* only, it does **not** include membership to local u3as.

[Join us](#)

## NOT u3a BUT YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED



Loughborough will sparkle with creativity at a brand-new event taking place next month.

Loughborough Light Nights, organised by Charnwood Borough Council, will see the award-winning Queen's Park transformed into a glowing wonderland.

The event takes place over three days from Friday 6 to Sunday, 8 February 2026 from 5pm until 10pm each day and promises an unforgettable experience of illuminated art, live performances, and family-friendly fun.



# LEICESTER SOCIETY OF ARTISTS ANNUAL EXHIBITION

14th February - 12th April

Leicester Museum & Art Gallery, 53 New Walk, Leicester, LE1 7EA

[Book now](#)



# VALENTINES EVENING WITH THE SYSTON SWING BAND

14th February

Queniborough Village Hall, Rearsby Road, Leicester, LE7 3DH

[Book now](#)

 **SUNDAY 15 FEBRUARY 1:30PM - 2:30PM**

## A PEMBROKE! A PEMBROKE!

Two remarkable men whose lives were intertwined



**£7 Per Person**  
Pre-booking Essential

A Pembroke! A Pembroke! – Guide Talk

 Sunday 15th February, 1:30pm to 2:30pm

During the Wars of the Roses, two Earls of Pembroke played crucial roles in the dynastic battles between the houses of York and Lancaster. Discover more about these two remarkable men, along with some other famous holders of the title.

 **SUNDAY 22 FEBRUARY 1:30PM - 2:30PM**

## THE HOUSES OF WOODVILLE AND GREY



**£7 Per Person**  
Pre-booking Essential

The Houses of Woodville and Grey – Guide Talk

 Sunday 22nd February, 1:30pm to 2:30pm

Uncover the rise to power of two prominent families during the Wars of the Roses: the Houses of Woodville and Grey.

For more events at Bosworth Battlefield and to book either of the above click [here](#)

# FROM OUR MEMBERS

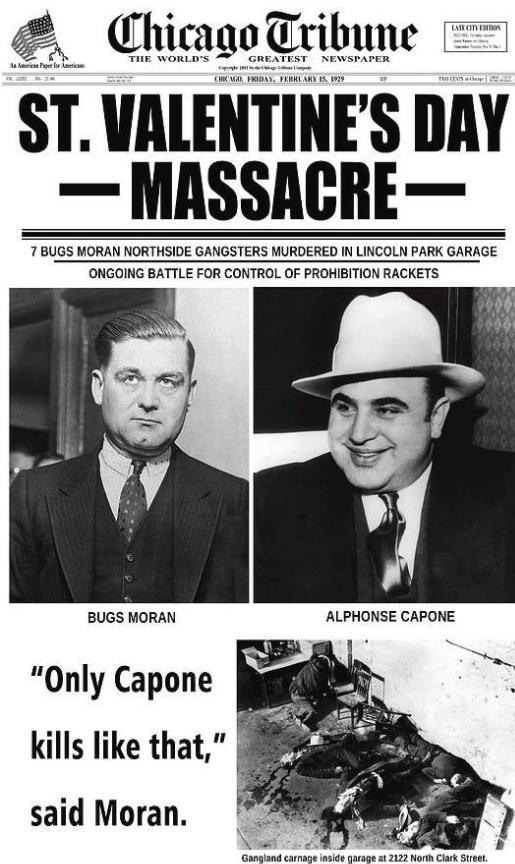
## A Brief History of Terrible Valentine's Days

*When 14 February had nothing to do with hearts and roses*

For most of us, Valentine's Day conjures up images of red roses, heart-shaped chocolates, and slightly embarrassed partners clutching supermarket bouquets. But the date itself has a long and surprisingly unlucky history. Long before it became a celebration of romance, 14 February played host to events that were anything but tender.

Here are four moments when Valentine's Day turned decidedly dark.

### The St Valentine's Day Massacre (1929)



Chicago, 14 February 1929. While sweethearts across America exchanged cards and chocolates, seven men connected to George "Bugs" Moran's North Side gang were lined up against the wall of a garage and shot dead by four men—two of them dressed as police officers. The killings were the bloody climax of a turf war between Moran and Al Capone, whose criminal empire dominated the city's bootlegging trade during Prohibition.

The massacre shocked the nation. Newspapers splashed the grisly details across their front pages, and the public's romantic notions of glamorous gangsters evaporated overnight. Capone himself was conveniently in Florida at the time, and although widely believed to have ordered the attack, he was never charged. The killings effectively broke Moran's power and cemented Capone's dominance, but they also marked a turning point in public tolerance for organised crime.

It remains one of the most infamous crimes in American history—and certainly the least romantic Valentine's Day on record.

### The Death of Captain James Cook (1779)

Half a world away and nearly 150 years earlier, another dramatic Valentine's Day unfolded in the Pacific. Captain James Cook, the celebrated navigator and explorer, met his end on 14 February 1779 on the island of Hawai'i.

Cook had initially been welcomed by the islanders, but relations deteriorated after a series of misunderstandings, cultural clashes, and escalating tensions. When a small boat from Cook's ship was stolen, he attempted to take a local chief hostage in retaliation—a tactic he had used elsewhere in the Pacific. This time, however, the plan backfired. A confrontation broke out on the beach, and Cook was killed in the ensuing chaos.

His death sent shockwaves through Britain. Cook had become a national hero, famed for his voyages of discovery, his detailed charts, and his efforts to combat scurvy. The news that he had been killed on a remote island felt almost mythic. Today, historians view the incident as a tragic collision of cultures, each acting according to its own logic and pressures.

It was a Valentine's Day that changed the course of Pacific history.



### **The Strasbourg Massacre (1349)**

Valentine's Day misfortune stretches back even further. In 1349, as the Black Death ravaged Europe, fear and suspicion ran rampant. In Strasbourg, rumours spread that the city's Jewish population had poisoned the wells—a baseless accusation repeated across the continent during the plague years.

On 14 February, long before the city's leaders could intervene, a mob rounded up hundreds of Jewish residents. Many were burned alive; others were forced to convert or flee. It was one of the earliest and most brutal episodes of anti-Jewish violence during the plague, and it stands as a stark reminder of how fear can fuel atrocity.

It is a sombre entry in the catalogue of Valentine's Day events, but an important one to remember.



*Contemporary drawing of Jews being burned to death during the Black Death persecutions Antiquitates Flandriae by Gilles Li Muisis (Royal Library of Belgium manuscript 1376/77).*

### **The Bombing of Dresden (1945)**

Fast-forward to the final months of the Second World War. On the night of 13 February 1945, Allied bombers began a devastating series of raids on the German city of Dresden. The attacks continued into the early hours of 14 February, creating a firestorm that destroyed much of the historic city centre and killed tens of thousands of civilians.

Dresden had been known as the “Florence on the Elbe” for its art, architecture, and cultural heritage. By the end of the raids, it lay in ruins. The bombing remains one of the most controversial Allied actions of the war, debated by historians, ethicists, and military strategists to this day.

For the people of Dresden, Valentine’s Day 1945 was a night of unimaginable terror.



### **A Date Not Always for Lovers**

These events span centuries and continents, but they share one thing: they all unfolded on a date we now associate with romance. It’s a reminder that history rarely respects our modern calendars. Valentine’s Day has been a backdrop for exploration, conflict, tragedy, and upheaval long before it became a celebration of love.

So, this year, when the shops fill with pink hearts and glittery cards, spare a thought for the many people throughout history whose 14 February was anything but romantic.

## **DECLUTTER DEN**

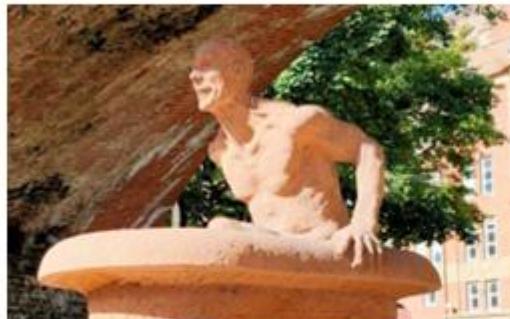
Are you determined to declutter and get rid of things that you haven’t used in an age this year? Look no further than Declutter Den.



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](mailto:sadu3aed@gmail.com)

## A Story with a Twist

A look at the development of the modern world from an engineering point of view.



A naked Archimedes emerging from his bath under a railway bridge in Manchester about to shout Eureka!

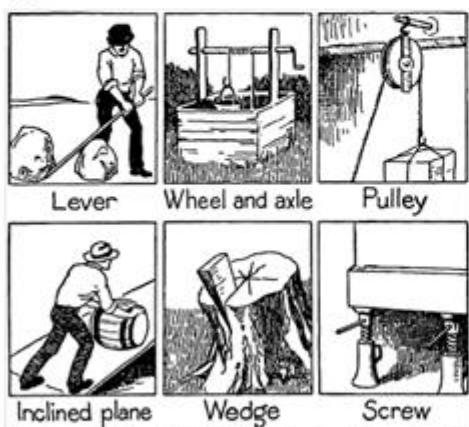
I expect that most people will know the story of Archimedes running through the streets of Syracuse, a sea-side town in Sicily, stark naked frightening old ladies by shouting Eureka! etc. etc...

After a bit of thought, you may recall that on noticing the water rising as he stepped in, he had realised something very important: not only did an object displace water but the water pushed back making the object appear lighter.

Archimedes (287 – 212 BC)

An Ancient Greek mathematician, physicist, engineer, astronomer and inventor.

Very very clever, on a par with Newton and Einstein, making an enormous contribution to modern life.



Simple machines that Archimedes studied and explained

Simple machines convert a small force pushed (or pulled) a large distance to push (or pull) a large force a small distance. They are very useful because they allow you to use your muscle power to lift things that are very heavy.



A block and tackle, a machine invented by Archimedes that would enable a normal person to lift 2 tonnes – on sale by B&Q (mail order) for £30



A canal lift bridge using levers to enable a person to raise a bridge so that a boat can pass along the canal

The builder of the lift bridge designed it using the rule of levers worked out by Archimedes.

An engineer needs to know how simple things work so that she or he can use the knowledge to solve engineering problems.

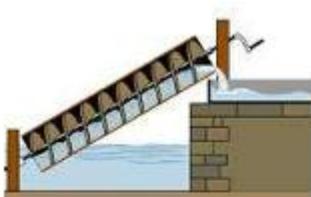
## Bilge Pumps

Archimedes was presented with a problem by the owner of a large ship. In those days ships were made from wooden planks fastened together and they had a tendency to leak. You could remove the water the hard way, with a bucket, could Archimedes come up with a better solution?



A model of Archimedes' solution to the problem using a screw - Available on Amazon for £12.49

An amazing invention, so good that we still use the idea more than two thousand years later! – We call this an Archimedean Screw, but if you don't like long words you could call it an augur.



It is such a good idea that we still use devices like this today. They are used for irrigation, lifting water from a river or water course to a field. They are particularly good at moving liquids that contain lumpy material, sewage for example at a sewage works, or for moving ready-mix concrete.



On sale (second hand) in the Netherlands for €51,800



A grain auger used to lift the grain into the storage silo

Once you have seen an auger, you will find them in all sorts of places.



This is a drill bit for making holes in concrete. The pointy end on the right is made of a very hard material for grinding away the concrete. The twisty part is for moving the dust out of the hole being bored. Without the dust removal the boring process would stop.



Nearer home, perhaps in your kitchen, you might find a machine that would meet Archimedes' approval. We call them mincing machines, Americans call them grinders. We call it minced beef, they call it ground beef. Two different cultures divided by a common language.

An Archimedean screw can work backward. If you put energy in by turning it, it will lift up water. However, if you let water flow downwards it will spin backwards providing energy for you to use.

A backward spinning screw, where the motion of the liquid causes the spin, is referred to as a turbine.



Using falling water to generate electricity in South Wales.

Each of the two screws is connected to a 75kW generator producing electricity from just a small fall in water level.

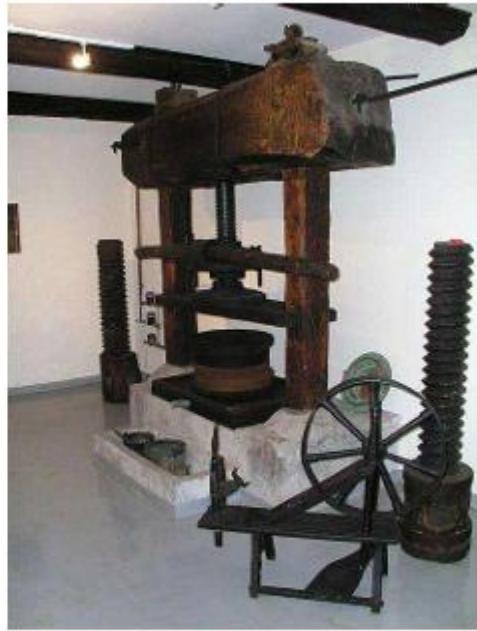
## Pressing on

I have already mentioned burgers. I shall continue with a description of the use of a screw to make wine. The original process of making wine was to place the harvested grape in a large vat and then for people to jump up and down on them, a process called *treading*.

Surely there must be a better way of pressing down on the grapes to extract the juice?



12 litre heavy duty fruit press - £71.98 from Machine Mart  
Commercial fruit presses are a lot larger



Very old fruit press using screws made of wood.

The screw thread is turned to press down on the top of the container of grapes to make grape juice for fermenting into wine. Olives would produce olive oil and oranges would make orange squash.

The screw in a press is a force magnifier. A smaller force moved a long way is converted to a much greater force moving a shorter distance.

The same screw mechanism can be used to move heavy things upwards – instead of calling it a press we call it a jack. It's the same thing but pushing in a different direction. You might have one in the boot of your car.



You have already noticed that the screw threads are much closer together than an Archimedean screw. This means you have to turn them more to achieve the same amount of movement – which increases the force but adds friction. The additional friction stops the press or screw unwinding itself when you stop turning. A good safety feature.

## A revolutionary press



In 1440 Johannes Gutenberg adapted a wine press to make something that changed the way the world works. Instead of forcing the juice out of fruit he made a press that squashed together metal, ink and paper.



A modern working replica of a Gutenberg Printing press

Prior to Guttenberg, a book was made by copying out the page by hand. A Bible would take more than a year to copy, were enormously expensive and most people could not read it because they were locked away as treasure and most people didn't know how to read.

Gutenberg's press could print at a rate of 120 pages per hour, and over time books became affordable and people were taught to read.

Prior to the invention of printing all your information came through the spoken word of the people around you. Now you could read about ideas from faraway places and distant times.

Writing and printing were as significant in the development of civilisation as the invention of agriculture and the wheel.

Time to drink a toast

To Archimedes and his screw!



Cheers!

The story will continue in a couple of months.

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Many thanks to Pierre Castille for this contribution – hopefully, part 2 next month.

# Drying Laundry Indoors: How a Dehumidifier Can Help

Drying clothes indoors is something many of us do, especially in winter when outdoor drying isn't an option. Radiators can leave rooms feeling damp, tumble dryers are expensive to run, and airing cupboards aren't as common as they used to be. One surprisingly effective alternative is to use a **dehumidifier** as part of your laundry-drying routine.

Here's how it works — and how to get the best results.

## Why a Dehumidifier Helps Clothes Dry Faster

When clothes dry, the moisture doesn't disappear — it evaporates into the air. If the room is already humid, the air becomes saturated and drying slows to a crawl. A dehumidifier solves this by:

- **Pulling moisture out of the air**
- **Keeping humidity low**
- **Creating a gentle flow of warm, dry air**

This creates a small "micro-climate" that encourages evaporation without needing high heat.

## How to Set It Up

You don't need a special room or expensive equipment. A simple setup works well:

### 1. Use a clothes horse or drying rack

Spread items out so air can circulate. Thick items like towels and jeans benefit from extra space.

### 2. Place the dehumidifier nearby

It doesn't need to blow directly on the clothes. Just being in the same small room or nook is enough.

### 3. Close the door if you can

This helps the dehumidifier work more efficiently by keeping the drying area contained.

### 4. Empty the water tank regularly

Laundry loads can produce a surprising amount of water.

## What to Expect

Most people find that:

- Light items (shirts, bedding, poly-cotton) dry in **2–4 hours**.
- Heavier items (towels, jeans, hoodies) take **longer**, but still dry faster than with radiators alone.
- The room feels **less damp** and more comfortable.
- Windows stay clear of condensation.

A dehumidifier is also much cheaper to run than a tumble dryer.

## Optional: Add a Fan for Heavy Items

A small fan can help with bulky fabrics that hold onto moisture, such as:

- Towels
- Jeans
- Thick jumpers
- Hoodies

You don't need a strong breeze — just gentle air movement to stop moisture "clinging" to the fabric. This is optional, and most loads won't need it.

### **Energy Use and Cost**

A typical home dehumidifier uses **200–300 watts**, which works out at roughly **6–8 pence per hour** at current electricity prices. Because it speeds up drying, it often works out cheaper than running a tumble dryer or leaving radiators on for hours.

A small fan, if used, costs around **1–2 pence per hour**.

### **Tips for Best Results**

- **Don't overload the rack** — more space means faster drying.
- **Turn thicker items halfway through.**
- **Use a smaller room if possible** — utility rooms, or spare rooms work well.
- **Keep doors and windows closed** while drying.

### **A Simple, Low-Cost Solution**

Using a dehumidifier for laundry is an easy, energy-efficient way to dry clothes indoors without creating damp or condensation. It's gentle on fabrics, inexpensive to run, and ideal for anyone who wants a practical alternative to tumble drying.

## **POETRY CORNER**

Following on from the theme of Valentine's disasters, some verses on how true love can go wrong -

### **The Banks of Sweet Primroses** **Traditional -author unknown**

As I walked out one midsummer morning,  
To view the fields and to take the air,  
Down by the banks of sweet primroses,  
I met a maiden beyond compare.

I said, "Fair maid, where are you going?  
And what's the occasion of all your grief?  
I'll make you as happy as any lady,  
If you will grant me but one relief."

"Stand off, stand off, you false deceiver,  
You are a false, deceitful man;  
It's you that's caused my poor heart to wander,  
And in your presence I'll not remain."

So I took off my hat and I bowed down lowly,  
Saying, "Fair young maid, I meant no harm."  
She turned her head and she smiled upon me—  
And that was the last that I saw of my dear.

Now all you maidens, take this a warning,  
And all you maidens that are left behind:  
Never place your affections on a young man lightly,  
For they are fickle and they change their mind.

BARBARA ALLEN – Traditional  
Author unknown

In Scarlet Town, where I was bound,  
There was a fair maid dwelling,  
Whom I had chosen to be my own,  
And her name it was Barbara Allen.

All in the merry month of May,  
When green leaves they was springing,  
This young man on his death-bed lay,  
For the love of Barbara Allen.

He sent his man unto her then,  
To the town where she was dwelling:  
'You must come to my master dear,  
If your name be Barbara Allen.'

'For death is printed in his face,  
And sorrow's in him dwelling,  
And you must come to my master dear,  
If your name be Barbara Allen.'

'If death be printed in his face,  
And sorrow's in him dwelling,  
Then little better shall he be  
For bonny Barbara Allen.'

So slowly, slowly she got up,  
And so slowly she came to him,  
And all she said when she came there,  
Young man, I think you are a dying.

He turnd his face unto her then:  
'If you be Barbara Allen,  
My dear,' said he, 'Come pitty me,  
As on my death-bed I am lying.'

'If on your death-bed you be lying,  
What is that to Barbara Allen?  
I cannot keep you from [your] death;  
So farewell,' said Barbara Allen.

He turnd his face unto the wall,  
And death came creeping to him:  
'Then adieu, adieu, and adieu to all,  
And adieu to Barbara Allen!'

And as she was walking on a day,  
She heard the bell a ringing,  
And it did seem to ring to her  
'Unworthy Barbara Allen.'

She turnd herself round about,  
And she spy'd the corps a coming:  
'Lay down, lay down the corps of clay,  
That I may look upon him.'

And all the while she looked on,  
So loudly she lay laughing,  
While all her friends cry'd [out] amain,  
'Unworthy Barbara Allen!'

When he was dead, and laid in grave,  
Then death came creeping to she:  
'O mother, mother, make my bed,  
For his death hath quite undone me.'

'A hard-hearted creature that I was,  
To slight one that lov'd me so dearly;  
I wish I had been more kinder to him,  
The time of his life when he was near me.'

So this maid she then did dye,  
And desired to be buried by him,  
And repented her self before she dy'd,  
That ever she did deny him.

## And finally.....

### Valentine's Day: A Catalogue of Calamities

February is traditionally the month of love, roses, and heartfelt declarations. It is also, as history repeatedly demonstrates, the month in which otherwise sensible people attempt grand romantic gestures that go spectacularly wrong. In the spirit of seasonal goodwill, we present a small collection of Valentine's misadventures — some local, some universal, all entirely harmless — to remind us that romance is rarely smooth, but can be entertaining.

## **The Floral Fiasco**

A local florist reports that Valentine's Day is the only time of year when people will confidently order flowers without knowing the recipient's favourite colour, favourite scent, or indeed whether they have hay fever. One memorable year, a man ordered a bouquet "as big as possible" to impress his partner. The bouquet was indeed enormous — so enormous that it could not fit through the front door. The couple admired it from the hallway for a week before donating it to a care home, where it blocked a corridor instead.

## **The Romantic Meal That Wasn't**

Another couple booked a candlelit dinner at a charming country pub, only to discover that the pub had double-booked and was also hosting a darts tournament. Nothing says romance like the soft glow of candles accompanied by the steady thud of tungsten hitting cork. The couple made the best of it, and now proudly tell people they celebrated Valentine's Day "in the presence of elite sporting talent."

## **The Canal Walk of Doom**

One pair decided on a peaceful Valentine's stroll along the canal, imagining swans, tranquillity, and gentle conversation. They had not checked the calendar. It was the day of the annual fishing competition. Instead of serenity, they were greeted by a mile of anglers, tackle boxes, and the occasional shout of "Mind the line!" They completed the walk, but romance was somewhat overshadowed by the fear of being accidentally hooked.

## **The Chocolate Incident**

A woman once bought her husband a box of luxury chocolates, wrapped them beautifully, and placed them on the mantelpiece. Unfortunately, she placed them there a week early. By the 14th, she had eaten every single one "to save him from temptation". She replaced them with a packet of biscuits and a note explaining that true love means sharing — even if the sharing is somewhat one-sided.

## **The Mystery Valentine**

One resident received a mysterious Valentine's card with the message: "*To the one who makes my heart race.*" She spent the day wondering who her secret admirer might be. The truth emerged later when she visited her neighbour, who sheepishly admitted the card had been meant for his greyhound. The dog, it must be said, took the mix-up in good humour.

## **A Brief Historical Note**

It is worth remembering that Valentine's Day has always been a little chaotic. The Romans celebrated mid-February with a festival involving goats, lotteries, and enthusiastic matchmaking. Compared to that, a misdirected card or a bouquet stuck in a doorway seems positively refined.

## **In Conclusion**

Whether your Valentine's Day involves roses, chocolates, a quiet evening, or a romantic meal accompanied by competitive darts, may it bring more laughter than calamity. And if things do go wrong, take comfort in knowing that history has produced far worse disasters.

