

System and District

u3a

learn, laugh, live

JAN
2024

Vitality!

Official newsletter of the System and District u3a

CHARITY No 1180152

FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Hi Everyone,

I hope everyone had a lovely Christmas and New Year. It was very pleasing to see members stopping and enjoying a mince pie, a glass of mulled wine and a chat at our Dember meeting.

This time of the year we tend to reflect on how things gone. I think we did very well, with our membership back to pre-pandemic figures and most of the groups full and new ones starting up. We had some very interesting talks at our members meetings, and it is great to see everyone enjoying the social side of our u3a.

Can I thank all of the committee, support, group leaders and all our members for a great year and I am looking forward to the next 12 months.

Clive

WE WANT TO LET YOU KNOW

CHANGE OF PERSONNEL & A BIG THANK YOU

Many of you will be aware that John Winter has been involved with our website for a number of years. He was our webmaster for a time and spent many hours setting up both the new website and the membership database and finance modules that form the integrated package Simple Membership. He took on the role of system administrator. However, he wanted step back from this role. As a result, Dave Palmer is now our system admin, he can be contacted on the same email address as that used by John.

We owe many thanks to John for his sterling work. In recognition of that our chairman presented him with a token of our gratitude during the December singing group session. He is not quite done with Simple Membership as he will be in the background as a deputy for Dave should the need arise.

GROUP NEWS

FOUND AND LOST

What have we found you may ask? well, NEW GROUPS. Over the last 12 months we have members who have started new ventures.

Imaginarium, Art Appreciation, Rummikub, Meditation and Mindfulness, and Creative Art.

What have we lost you may ask ? Well, a few REALLY INTERESTING GROUPS who no longer had members who could continue running them for one reason or another.

History, Poetry, Dance, Gardening, and Table Tennis.

What can we do about it you may ask ? Do you have any ideas how we can restart the lapsed groups ? We have all the contacts i.e. the original group leader who can give all the support and knowledge needed. All we need is YOU !

Let us know if you are interested in forming ANY GROUP , be it large or small. Many groups are run by a couple of people, so you're not on your own.

NEW GROUP

PAINTING & DRAWING GROUP 2

A second Painting and Drawing group is planning to start up on the 15th January 2024. (The original group is full and currently has a waiting list.)

The group 2 will run alternate Monday mornings from January 15th at 10-12 in the School Room at the Community Centre. We are hoping to keep the cost around £2 per session.

If you want to improve your artistic skills or find out if you have any (sure you have!) come along. The aim is to get creative and enjoy yourself. 😊

We are hoping to have a table at the next members meeting where we can answer any questions and you can sign up.

If you wish to sign up now contact group organisers:

Marion Robinson brooksidestudio8@gmail.com

Helen Disley helendidley105 @msn.com

GENTLE YOGA GROUP 1

A series of gentle stretching and relaxing movements to help maintain balance, flexibility and positive thinking can be enjoyed at all our yoga sessions. Emphasising correct breathing, health, and mindfulness, we are focused on improving wellbeing and feel-good factors at all levels of ability (even if you are limited to a chair).

We pride ourselves on being a friendly, happy group of mixed ability who are just trying to improve our balance, coordination, concentration, and agility.

We meet at Syston Community Centre - No need to book, just register your name and u3a number and join us; no ability required apart from a need to take a break from the stress of everyday life and retain a sense of humour!

Simple Yoga Stretches

Just turn up with your mat, relax and enjoy. Help to spread a little peace and wellbeing. The aim is to flex, stretch and feel better about yourself. See you there!

Next meetings: 2024.... Wednesday 31 January and Wednesday 28 February 10.00am Syston Community Centre

Any queries contact phylvwilson@gmail.com

IMAGINARIUM GROUP

Roundup for December meeting.

Thanks to our poets who came up with some amazing additions to the modern version of 'Cargoes' How times have moved on, even since our 'dirty british coasters' were the vessels we saw most. Our discussion moved on to looking at the modern miracle of AI or Artificial Intelligence, as we saw what a simple instruction into an App did when asked to produce new verses fit for modern times. We also looked at an experiment in turning a paragraph of simple text into different writer's styles, so we can all become, for example, Winston Churchill, Charles Dickens, Emily Bronte, or Barak Obama.

So, the debating point – Does this mean that imagination is no longer required? Can we simply lean on the genius of others to produce literature, poetry, letters, or even exam essays.....? Will we ever again be able to trust that we're looking at original thinking?

Hopefully not, as Colin reminded us, that humans will always want to find new ways to express our thoughts and imaginings.

Ideas for topics to explore are always welcome, and a reminder that so far we've looked at the power of music, precious items, and poetry to stimulate memory and imagination. Time perhaps to look at favourite pieces of Artworks in all its forms? We did this in Art Appreciation recently and it was fascinating.

FAMILY HISTORY GROUP

The group did not meet this month, it being so close to Christmas. Following on from our DNA theme last month, some of you may have been given a DNA test kit as a gift. If you send it off, it will take a few weeks for the results to come through, but there are things you can do ahead of them arriving. Has someone in the family asked you to test to help them solve a mystery? We can explain why and how you can do other things to help them.

Our January meeting will be on Tuesday 16th at Syston Community Centre starting at 10.00am, but anyone with queries can contact me using the newsletter editor email or

sadu3familyhistory@gmail.com

UKULELE GROUP

It's been a busy few weeks for the Syston Happy Ukulele Band!

On **December 12th**, we entertained the Parkinsons Support Group at Syston Community Centre and we enjoyed tea and cakes in the interval. An enjoyable afternoon for all concerned. Then on the afternoon of **December 15th**, we had our first Christmas 'fuddle' at our usual meeting place, Syston Brookside Club. I hadn't come across that word before in this context (thought it meant



confused or drunk!). Apparently the word means "*A fuddle is a Yorkshire term relating to a communal buffet typically hosted within the workplace.*

Everyone is invited to bring a dish to share with their colleagues.". So that's what we did! Lots of laughter and food. Thanks

go to Joy and Maria (and anyone else that helped with this).

After we had finished our fuddle, some of us went onto entertain the residents and staff of **Sycamore Court** in Leicester, at their Christmas

Party. (*Sycamore Court provides a range of personal care and support for adults aged 18 to 65, with a range of learning disabilities.*). We played in a small room there and it was quite a squeeze as around 15 turned up, but it was very lively, with both staff and residents joining in the laughter. During the interval we were fed with all sorts of goodies and mulled wine.



On **Saturday the 16th December**, a few of us went busking in Syston, outside B&M, to raise funds for the Syston Volunteer Service (this was not a u3a event). The weather was very mild and we had a lot of people donating, with a couple of local lads joining in the bell ringing!

Then on **Sunday, 17 December**, led by our intrepid leaders, *Len Abraham with Dave Houseman on bass*, we entertained the audience at the **Grosvenor Lounge and Snooker Club**, in Syston.

This event was in memory of a local Syston man, named Stu Ashby, to help give comfort and support to his wife, Stacey, and their 2 young boys.

A couple of our members, Sara and Clive had approached the Grosvenor to put this event on and had managed to organise 2 small (*soprano*) ukuleles kindly donated by Lloyd of Intasound, a music shop in Leicester for the 2 boys. Lloyd has also offered 10% off to U3a members – just show proof of membership.



The 2 youngsters were presented with the ukuleles during the interval and then went onto play them with the band afterwards. *Many thanks to Sara and Clive for organising this.*

Thanks also go to the Steph, the events manager at the Grosvenor for hosting this event and, of course, all the locals that attended to help support Stacey and her 2 boys. *Our loving sympathy to Stacey, boys and extended family.*



Clive, one of the ukulele members, showing off one of his other talents



(Late news: we have also received a donation from a kind doner, Katie, of a Hamleys teddy bear for Stacey)

ART APPRECIATION GROUP

What a varied and interesting mixture of styles we chose to present at our last meeting! Everyone offered their favourite art works which ranged from Picasso to Holbein, Lowry to Frith and Klee. Also some lesser known artists such as Avril Paton and Artemesia Gentileschi. Tracy didn't have a particular favourite but told us how the Athena Poster shop in her home town was her introduction to art and led to her a life long interest.



I commented on how the Picasso painting of the guitar player reminded me of a book by Laurie Lee which describes a journey through Spain and the poverty he saw there. This led to a theme for the next meeting – Art and Literature. Often an artist is inspired by something they read or vice versa. Novels, poetry, film, painting, theatre, legends all feed off each. Hopefully this will be an interesting topic for us to explore

Our next meeting will be on **Weds 3rd January at 2pm at the Syston Community Centre.**

If you would like to join us please contact Christine Gale via the website.

CRAFT GROUP

The craft group meets on the first Wednesday in the month at 2pm at the Community Centre, we cover all needlecraft, sewing, knitting, crochet etc. If you have a project you would like to bring along, come along and join us, we're a small friendly group who knit, crochet etc have a chat and have a cuppa. These are some of the items completed recently. (The squirrel is a work in progress!) We also try to do something for charity, last year we knitted little bears, like the two shown here, for the Baldwin Trust to sell on their boats, we have also completed trauma teddies and smoothie hats etc.



BOOK GROUP

The book group met just before Christmas at the Britannia Inn in Queniborough where seven of us enjoyed a lovely lunch before going on to review our books. As we couldn't meet last month we discussed last month's book as well as this month's. First was *The Outsider*, an autobiography by Frederick Forsyth, this book was well received, mainly, I think, because many of us didn't take much notice of world politics when in our teens and early twenties and we learned a lot about the Biafran war, Berlin, north African troubles the Cuban crises, etc from his time working for Reuters. There was a lot that happened that the press were not allowed to print! He came across with humour, if a little arrogant, but led a very charmed life.

The second book was also well received, this was *The Story teller of Casablanca* by Fiona Volpy. A book of two stories which come together at the conclusion with a bit of a twist. It is based on the diaries of a young Jewish refugee who fled from France to Morocco during the Second World War, the second story interwoven into is of a woman who goes to live in Morocco, in the same house, with her husband many years later and finds the diary hidden in the house under the floor boards. She is fascinated by the story in the diary and wants to find out what happened to the girl. She also learned quilting and we learned about bear paw quilts made by slaves to help escaping slaves to find safe passage where they could find help. There was also a baby which gave a surprise ending to the book. A very enjoyable afternoon.

KURLING GROUP

Following our last Kurling session of the year, we all went to the Malt Shovel at Barkby for our Xmas lunch. We were looked after very well, and everyone said how nice the meal was. Thanks go to Joyce & Cynthia for organising.



WALKING GROUP

The plan for the December walk and Xmas Lunch was to meet at the White Horse pub in Birstall and have a walk through Watermead to the National Space Centre before returning for lunch. Unfortunately I had to cancel the walk at the last minute due to the entire area near the pub being under water !

Therefore, 22 of us, made up from both the walking groups, just met at the pub for lunch. Once again the food was very good but the seating arrangements could have been better, as although quite close, we could not all be together to chat. Sorry, forgot to take any photos !!

EVENTS – PAST, PRESENT & PLANNED

Have an iPad or iPhone but don't really make full use of it?



At a recent meeting for new members, it was apparent that some people would like to use their computers / ipads / iphones more in order to have better communications within the U3a etc.

Therefore, would you be interested in a workshop explaining the basics, showing you some things you can use it for, and attempting to answer any questions you may have?

If so, please get in touch (dpalmer192@btinternet.com or 07710 448253), and if there is sufficient interest, I'll organise a session, usually approx. 2 hours

It would help if I could have prior notice of any questions you may have so I can try to prepare the answers!

There might be a minimal charge to share the cost of any room hire.

Dave Palmer

Tree Top Mini Golf

Having had a good time at the driving range, the next challenge, planned for 30th January 2024, is Mini Adventure Golf with TreeTops on Shires Lane, Leicester, an easy walk from the St Peter's Lane Park & Ride Bus stop on the Birstall 303 route.

We are intending to get there just after it opens at 11am, to take advantage of the early bird special - one round costs £8.75 for over 60's, and if you tee off before 1pm you can play two rounds for the price of one. There are two courses - The Tropical Trail and Ancient Explorer, each with 18 holes and accessible to everyone. Each round takes approximately 40 minutes to complete, all clubs & balls provided, and there are free lockers for bags, coats etc. There are a couple of places to get a drink or a snack between your rounds in the premises itself or elsewhere in the Highcross.

There's also a 19th hole, where you could win a free game, if you've still got the strength. If you're interested, please let me know, with your names, membership number and email, or phone number if you don't have an email address.

Ghislaine Wood email: woodlet7@yahoo.co.uk

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



10th January 2024: John Constantine - That's Magic!

Magicians who've DIED... performing! An illustrated history of magicians whose last performance was fatal!

*Professional magician John Constantine returns with a **second illustrated talk, this time about magicians who have made fatal errors whilst performing.***

As before, John will include some live magic - hopefully without any similar errors.

February 14th, 2024: Paul Reynolds

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



March 13th, 2024

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

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

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

The talk starts with a demonstration of dance. Then funny anecdotes about how I got into Belly Dancing

Then all about what to do when fire eating and what to do when training a snake!!

NATIONAL U3A ITEMS

u3a TALKS



Toulouse-Lautrec and the Music Halls of Paris

Join Peter Webb for a talk on the world of Toulouse-Lautrec and eighteen-nineties Montmartre in Paris.

Thurs 18 Jan at 2pm

Free – Online via Zoom

Book [here](#)



Mosaic Art

Mosaic Art: a brief history and perspective from a contemporary mosaic artist.

Thurs 1 Feb at 10am

Free – Online via Zoom

Book [here](#)



Introduction to the Air Fryer, with Simple Recipes

Join Beverley Jarvis, Ashford Wye and district u3a and Third Age Matters columnist, for this live demo.

Thurs 8 Feb at 11.30am

Free – Online via Zoom

Book [here](#)

Their Finest Hour

Their Finest Hour is a nationwide project organised by Oxford University. It aims to record for posterity those memories handed down in families, of life during and after the events of 1939-1945. You don't need to have been there, but maybe your family talked about 'the war'. Maybe you have snapshots, or objects, that have significance in your family. Your family memories may be from military life or may be based in home life or in working life, but all are valued.

The best way to take part in 'Their Finest Hour' is to [sign up to the mailing list](#) so you get to know what's happening near you. In particular, on 25th May in the afternoon there will be a zoom session for all those on the mailing list to explain more about the project and ask questions.



Tuesday 16 January, 2-3pm Barry Claydon, u3a AI Subject Advisor

Are you ready for Artificial Intelligence to be everywhere and in everything?

You might be familiar with the Internet, satnav, and smartphones, but what else might be in store in 2024?

Join Barry for our first Future Lives online event for 2024 Register [here](#)

NOT u3a BUT YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED

A TASTE OF BRADGATE PARK

Join us as we take you on a chronological tour of Bradgate Park. This guided tour is a delightful blend of natural wonders from ancient geological formations, historic architecture buried beneath your feet, tales of treason, and our connection with Lady Jane Grey - the first real Queen of England!

Tour Highlights:

- **Geological Wonders:** Discover the fascinating geological features that shaped Bradgate Park. Learn about the unique formations, rocks, and landscapes that contribute to the park's distinctive character.
- **Historic Buildings:** Explore the remnants of Bradgate House, a Tudor-era mansion and hear tales of the Grey family, who once called this grand estate home.
- **Deer Encounters:** Immerse yourself in the natural beauty of Bradgate Park as you encounter its famous deer population.
- **Local History:** Uncover the layers of local history intertwined with Bradgate Park, from Stone Age settlements to Bradgate's WWII connections.
- **Arrival/Start Time:** Please arrive from 9:45 am for a 10am start. Your guide will meet you at the Newtown Linford Park entrance, but the metal gates
- **Duration:** The tour is expected to last approximately 2 hours, but please allow additional time should the tour run over.

More information and booking [here](#)

Make Your Own Masterpiece

Family Friendly

Workshops

13 January 2024

11:00 - 15:00

Free Event

Event Location

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

We are celebrating the [Open: The People's Exhibition](#) and encouraging visitors of all ages to drop in and take part in our free art workshops.

We'll be using collage and bricolage (something constructed or created from a diverse range of things) to create our own 2D and 3D masterpieces to take home.

2024 MODEL RAILWAY EXHIBITION

13th & 14th JANUARY, 2024
10:00am - 4:30pm (4pm on Sunday)

BIRSTALL SOCIAL CLUB, 16-18 WANLIP LANE, BIRSTALL, LEICESTER, LE4 4JS

WHAT3WORDS ///ahead.audio.labs

ADMISSION

Adults - £5.00 (16+)

Unaccompanied children - £4.00

Accompanied children go FREE!!! (Under 16s)

Parking is available nearby at the junction of Sibson Road and Wanlip Lane

We will accept payment for entry by card or contactless payment as well as cash.



Friday, 19 January

Upcycling for Everyone - A research workshop

Upcycling for Everyone, where we explore creative ways to upcycle in our everyday lives and contribute to the research on upcycling!

Join us for an exciting in-person event where we delve into the world of upcycling and contribute to upcycling research! This workshop is part of De Montfort University's (DMU) participatory upcycling research entitled, 'Upcycling for Everyone' more information [here](#)

Sara Shaw
Volunteer & Operations Manager
T: 0116 262 9739
E: sara@warningzone.org.uk



www.warningzone.org.uk



Volunteer with us!

As a charity, we rely on our indispensable band of volunteers who help us deliver our messages to thousands of local children each year. Join us and you too can help make a difference in our community and improve the life chances of young people.

“ As a retired primary school teacher I missed the contact with children. Warning Zone gives me the opportunity to use my skills in a really meaningful way, that can impact on children's lives and, hopefully, help them to weigh up the risks and make sensible judgements. It's also a fun place to be with lovely team mates!” **Sian, retired teacher**

FROM OUR MEMBERS

WHY NEW YEAR HASN'T ALWAYS BEEN NEW YEAR

As you read this we will be celebrating the new year, but until 1751 the 1st January was not in fact the official the new year in England. The country did not adopt the Gregorian calendar until 1752. England and its colonies still adhered to the old Julian calendar, oddly enough Scotland had already made the change some 150 years before in 1600, along with most of Europe it had adopted the calendar first introduced in 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII.

The Julian calendar had been introduced in 45 BC by Julius Caesar, although it too began on 1st January. In pre-Christian Rome under the Julian calendar, the day was dedicated to Janus, god of gateways and beginnings, for whom January is also named. Christian countries decided that as this date had no religious

significance, it was not an auspicious time to begin the year. This resulted in a hotchpotch of approaches across Europe. 25th December became the popular choice in 6th century England. From Roman times until the middle of the 18th century, the new year was celebrated in various parts of Christian Europe on 25 December, on 1 March, on 25 March and on the movable feast of Easter, but by the 14th century Lady Day 25th March (the date the Virgin Mary received the news that she was expecting) was firmly fixed as the legal new year in England. This was in some ways a throw back to much earlier times. The ancient Babylonian calendar was lunisolar, and around the year 2000 BC began observing a spring festival and the new year during the month of Nisan, around the time of the March equinox. Although Lady Day was adopted, the much of the population at large tended to celebrate new year on 1st January. To add to the confusion some medieval documents used the regnal year, the year of the reign of the then monarch.

Another issue with the 2 calendars was that they treated the problem of the 365 day year not quite equating with the actual span of a year differently. We now deal with this by use of the leap year, but the Julian calendar did not, so the 2 calendars were gradually becoming more and more out of sync. By the time England bit the bullet, we were 11 days out of line with the rest of Europe.

The main thing that appears to have delayed the adoption of the Gregorian calendar is down to Henry VIII and the break from the Roman Catholic church. Attempts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to adopt the new calendar met with fierce opposition from the Church of England, which denounced it as popish. The fact that they were using Lady Day, a firmly Roman Catholic festival, seems to have been conveniently overlooked. The prime mover in changing the situation was George Parker, second Earl of Macclesfield, a keen astronomer and a Fellow of the Royal Society. He was aided in his calculations by his friend James Bradley, the astronomer royal, and he gained the influential support of Philip Dormer Stanhope, the fourth Earl of Chesterfield.

In 1751 Chesterfield introduced 'an Act for Regulating the Commencement of the Year and for Correcting the Calendar now in Use', gracefully commending it, with Macclesfield in support. According to Chesterfield, Macclesfield spoke 'with infinite knowledge and all the clearness that so intricate a matter could admit of; but as his words, his periods, and his utterance were not near so good as mine, the preference was most unanimously, though most unjustly, given to me.'

The bill passed through Parliament easily enough and George II signed it in May. It provided for Wednesday, September 2nd, 1752, to be followed by Thursday the 14th and for New Year's Day to move from March 25th to January 1st, as already was the case in Scotland. The City of London flatly refused to pay taxes early, so the financial year was altered to start on April 6th, as it still does. The changes affected festivals, saint's days and birthdays, including that of Dr Johnson, as well as the dates of payments of wages, rents and interest, contracts for delivery of goods, military discharges and prison releases. It was all carefully explained in the media of the day under the slogan 'The New Style the True Style'.

The Act ordered that religious feast days be held on their traditional dates – for example, Christmas Day remained on 25 December. (Easter is a moveable feast: the Act specified how its date should be calculated.) It ordered that civil and market days – for example the quarter days on which rent was due, salaries paid and new labour contracts agreed – be moved forward in the calendar by eleven days so that no-one should gain or lose by the change and that markets match the agricultural season. It is for this reason that the UK personal tax year ends on 5 April, being eleven days on from the original quarter-day of 25 March. Although you will commonly find instances, even now, where commercial rents are due on 25th March, June, September and December.

The change was thoroughly unpopular with some people who regarded it as “popery”, and others who simply thought that eleven days had been taken out of their lives. Some mobs are said to have gathered demanding ‘Give us back our eleven days’!

The change was not universally adopted. There was variance in parish registers, some clergy continued to record the year from Lady Day to 24th March, others adopted the “new” date of 1st January. The use of Lady Day as the start of the year creates issues for family historians in recording births, marriages and burials. You can have children apparently born in say June, but buried in February of the same year, or couples marrying in April and having their first child baptised in February. Some parish registers continued on the old basis for many years after 1752.

The change in the legal year resolved a number of issues. Confusion in documents relating to trade between England and Europe had abounded before. It is also said that errors and misunderstandings arose with legal documents prior to the change, the incidence of which was lessened going forward. The changes also legally applied to the colonies, eliminating similar issues for the likes of America.

However, New Year is not celebrated everywhere in the world on the same date, even to this day. Other cultures observe their traditional or religious New Year's Day according to their own customs, typically because they use a lunar calendar or a lunisolar calendar. Chinese New Year, the Islamic New Year, Tamil New Year (Puthandu), and the Jewish New Year are among well-known examples. India, Nepal, and other countries also celebrate New Year on dates according to their own calendars that are movable in the Gregorian calendar.

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?



Have you received a Christmas gift that effectively replaces or upgrades an existing item? If the old item still functions, might someone else be able to make use of it? Rather than it going to landfill, why not be green and advertise it here?

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

New Year's Morning

By Helen Hunt Jackson

Only a night from old to new!
Only a night, and so much wrought!
The Old Year's heart all weary grew,
But said: "The New Year rest has brought."
The Old Year's hopes its heart laid down,
As in a grave; but, trusting, said:
"The blossoms of the New Year's crown
Bloom from the ashes of the dead."
The Old Year's heart was full of greed;
With selfishness it longed and ached,
And cried: "I have not half I need.
My thirst is bitter and unslaked.
But to the New Year's generous hand
All gifts in plenty shall return;
True love it shall understand;
By all my failures it shall learn.
I have been reckless; it shall be
Quiet and calm and pure of life.
I was a slave; it shall go free,
And find sweet peace where I leave strife."
Only a night from old to new!
Never a night such changes brought.
The Old Year had its work to do;
No New Year miracles are wrought.

Always a night from old to new!
Night and the healing balm of sleep!
Each morn is New Year's morn come true,
Morn of a festival to keep.
All nights are sacred nights to make
Confession and resolve and prayer;
All days are sacred days to wake
New gladness in the sunny air.
Only a night from old to new;
Only a sleep from night to morn.
The new is but the old come true;
Each sunrise sees a new year born.

This was the year that was not the year

By Brian Bilston

This was the year that was not the year
I repaired the bathroom tap
and emptied out the kitchen drawer
of a lifetime's worth of crap.

This was the year that was not the year
in which I launched a new career.
516 A West End hit eluded me
as did Time Person of the Year.

This was the year that was not the year
I became a household name.
Action figures were not sold of me.
I wasn't made a dame.

This was the year that was not the year
I spent less time on my phone.
Nights of passion did not happen
in boutique hotels in Rome.

This was the year that was the year
I didn't get that much done –
much the same as the year before,
much like the one to come.

The Year

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

What can be said in New Year rhymes,
That's not been said a thousand times?
The new years come, the old years go,
We know we dream, we dream we know.
We rise up laughing with the light,
We lie down weeping with the night.
We hug the world until it stings,
We curse it then and sigh for wings.
We live, we love, we woo, we wed,
We wreath our prides, we sheet our dead.
We laugh, we weep, we hope, we fear,
And that's the burden of a year.

And finally.....

Not only are onions a kitchen staple, they can also bring you good luck for the year ahead. In Greece it's tradition to hang an onion outside your door. Believed to symbolize fertility and growth (thanks to its ability to sprout on its own), the onion is hung on the door after church service on New Year's Day.

On New Year's Eve, Colombian households have a tradition, called *agüero*, of placing three potatoes under each family member's bed—one peeled, one not, and the last one only partially. At midnight each person grabs for one with eyes closed and depending on the potato they select, can either expect a year of good fortune, financial struggle, or a mix of both.

In many countries, Puerto Rico included, it's customary to start the year by cleaning everything—and we mean *everything*. The idea behind it is simple: out with the old, in with the new. In short, if you start the year fresh, it will continue that way.

To ward off evil spirits, families in Ireland make way for a healthy and prosperous New Year by banging loaves of Christmas bread against the walls and doors throughout the home.

Millions of Americans gather around their television sets (or on the streets of Times Square, despite freezing temps) to watch the ball drop at the stroke of midnight each year. Kicking off in 1907 to ring in January 1908, *New York Times* owner Adolph Ochs created the event to draw attention to the *Times*'s new headquarters, and it's been an annual spectacle and one of the most popular New Year's Eve celebrations ever since.

January 1 is also Haitian Independence Day. Because of that, there's an important New Year's traditional meal associated with the holiday. "We eat pumpkin soup, soup joumou, because it was a delicacy that enslaved Black people were not allowed to have. We often go to other people's houses and bring some of our soup and swap for some of theirs—everyone makes it a little different."

People in Japan kick off the New Year by eating a warm bowl of soba noodles. The tradition dates back to the Kamakura period and is tied to a Buddhist temple giving out the noodles to the poor. Because the long thin noodles are firm yet easy to bite, it is believed eating them symbolizes a literal break away from the old year.

In Mexico families gather to make New Year's Eve food—specifically tamales, which are corn dough stuffed with meat, cheese, and veggies all wrapped in husks—and then hand them out to loved ones on New Year's Eve. On New Year's Day, the warm pockets are often served with menudo, a traditional Mexican soup made from cow's stomach.

Throwing plates at your friends and family would usually indicate that something has gone very wrong. In Denmark, however, New Year's Eve traditions like this bring your loved ones the best luck. Tradition has it that the more broken kitchenware you accumulate on your door step, the better off you'll be.

