

System and District

**u3a**

learn, laugh, live

JUNE

2026

# Vitality!

Official newsletter of the System and District u3a

CHARITY No 1180152

## AGM REPORT

Our AGM this morning 10<sup>th</sup> June was brief and efficient, with all formal business completed in under ten minutes. Reports and accounts were approved, with the treasurer confirming that the membership fee will remain unchanged.

The committee elections were agreed smoothly -

Re-appointments: Clive Iliffe, Christine Gale, Barbara Sargeant, Steve Kenney.

New appointments: Cynthia Baker (Vice-Chair), Indigo Forest (Secretary), Angie Baker (Events Co-ordinator), Helen Marshall (Committee member).

Vacancies: Publicity; 3 Committee Members.

Departures: Julie Johnson (Committee Member) and Jill Kempton-Hayes (Publicity), both were thanked for their service and presented with bouquets.

The Chairman reminded those present that committee vacancies can be filled between AGM's and asked anyone interested in a vacancy to contact him.

With no motions submitted, the meeting closed promptly and the morning's GM programme continued.

## 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 System & 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.



## Jazz Appreciation

Are you a fan of Jazz?

We have a member who is keen to start a Jazz appreciation group.

The group will meet twice a month on Wednesday mornings.

Meeting at the members home in Syston

Please register your interest by emailing [sadu3agroups@gmail.com](mailto:sadu3agroups@gmail.com)



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# Potential New Group Wind and String

Do you have a guitar you used to play?  
Do you have a clarinet you used to play  
or any other wind instrument?  
Do you fancy getting together to make  
beautiful music?

We have a member who is keen to start a new  
group where everyone can play together for  
their enjoyment.

Please email me at the below address and I  
will pass on your details

[sadu3agroups@gmail.com](mailto:sadu3agroups@gmail.com)

## FAMILY HISTORY GROUP

Our session this month covered Civil Registration of Birth, Marriages, and Deaths in England & Wales. This began in 1837 just after Queen Victoria had come to the throne.

Have you looked at your own birth certificate lately? It may not actually state a surname for you. It wasn't until 1<sup>st</sup> April 1969 that parents were required to specify a last name. Before that the birth indexes presumed that the child of a married couple (or a couple who claimed to be married) went by their father's last name, and an illegitimate child went by the surname of their mother. The change was a recognition of the increasing number of couples that were co-habiting.

1969 also saw changes in death certificates, with the maiden name recorded for married or widowed ladies. Instead of recording the age of the deceased, their date and place of birth was requested - although I have seen cases where this wasn't known by the informant.

We will be covering the other 2 pillars of family history research in the coming months - census data and parish registers. However, this month we will be having a brick walls and queries session. Do you have something in your family history that has you stumped? Why not join us, we might be able to help you uncover the answers.

Please email [juliedjohnson@yahoo.com](mailto:juliedjohnson@yahoo.com) for more information.

## YOGA & MEDITATION GROUP

Group organiser Pushpa Pancholi reports that some new members have joined the group.

For June, there is change in the dates the yoga sessions are taking place, please see dates below:

Wed 17<sup>th</sup> June at 10.00am

Tues 23<sup>rd</sup> June at 10.00am.

Here are some of the group at a recent session.



## ART APPRECIATION GROUP

Our Group has looked at many topics over the time we have been going. We started off with the more well-known Artists and Art movements but have found so many new and varied topics. We have gone from Pop Art to Impressionism, Medieval Art to Dadaism, Baroque to Bauhaus.

Our members come up with many Artists which are new to others such as Kurt Jackson, Jill Walker, Pauline Boty and Wilhelmina Barns Graham. There is so much to learn and both researching material for a talk and listening to them expands our horizons and enriches our knowledge of this vast subject.



We also talk about other areas where Art impacts on daily life such as street art, advertising, album covers and architecture. We sometimes have a session where we pick a theme, such as Winter, Wildlife, Sky and Food. Everyone can show art works that they feel reflect the theme. We are not confined to painting but have looked at ceramics, sculpture, digital art and photography. At other times, members describe exhibitions they have visited such as last month's meeting where we looked at examples from the Ely Stained Glass Museum.

All in all, I find the group very stimulating and enjoyable. There are no experts and everyone has the opportunity to present, or not, as they wish. We don't all have the same tastes, of course, and the discussions we have are open to anyone's opinions.  
Chris Gale.

## SUNDAYS FOR SOLOS GROUP

The Sundays for Solos group has just paid a return visit to Stoneywell, the Arts and Crafts cottage, which was designed by Ernest Gimson as a family holiday home. This National Trust property is near Ulverscroft, not far from Newtown Linford. We had visited last year and agreed that we must go back when the rhododendrons were in flower. As you can see from the photo next page, we were not disappointed! We also had a lovely walk in the 11 acre wood, and we will return next year to see the bluebells, which had just gone over.

It was a very pleasant way to spend a Sunday.



## LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

We welcomed Tim Garner from the Syston Local History Society, who entertained us with a collection of Syston photographs. They ranged from the Victorian era through to more recent years. It was striking to see pictures of Melton Road and High Street with children playing in the middle of the road, no traffic in sight.

Whilst we may think we have quite a few pubs in the town currently, the photos showed us that in days gone by, there were even more of them. You could have easily done a pub crawl along High Street alone! There were also reminders of the old Syston railway station, with pictures of groups about to embark on works outings, or local children off on trips - some of them sponsored by local employers.

Long gone features such as local mills and old cottages and houses featured. Including a cottage that sat in the area on part of the current "turning circle" in front of the parish church tower. The village as it was then, had many more thatched residences than it does now. Pictures of the dying art of thatching were seen.

For those of the group born locally it was a trip down memory lane and beyond, even for those of us not born locally, it was an interesting insight into the changes in a village/town over time.

## FEELING CRAFT GROUP

Helen Disley reports - At today's craft group "Feeling Crafty" we made some roses. We used red fabric petals that were left over from a wedding scene in a theatrical production glued onto polystyrene egg shapes. The greenery is real and picked from my garden!



## BOOK GROUPS

This might strike a chord with our 2 book groups – I was sent something similar found online by a book group member but couldn't include it because of possible copyright constraints.

### AN ODE TO BOOKS

Roses are red,  
Bookmarks get lost,  
I promise one chapter—  
Then hours are tossed.



The kettle's gone cold,  
The laundry can wait,  
I'm chasing a plot twist,  
It's far too late.

My shelves are a mountain,  
My list never ends,  
Each story I open  
Introduces new friends.

So if you call round  
And I don't reply,  
I'm travelling worlds—  
No passport required.

My tea goes untouched,  
My chores go astray,  
A chapter's a doorway  
I can't keep away.

And when the tale's ended,  
I sigh with delight,  
Then reach for another  
To keep me up all night.

## ART GROUP

The art group had some of our paintings displayed at the British Legions exhibition on 16th May in Thurmaston, we also had a display there last year and it is really good to get the chance to display some of our work to a wider audience. Thank to Mick Whately and David Clarke for arranging this.



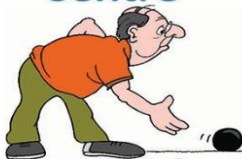
## EVENTS – PAST, PRESENT & PLANNED

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### One Off Event Indoor Carpet Bowls

Would you like to  
have a go?

Venue Syston Community  
Centre



It will be on a Friday Morning

Date to be confirmed when we know how many people  
are interested

12 people maximum - **If you are interested please**

email Angie Baker - [sadu3aevents@gmail.com](mailto:sadu3aevents@gmail.com)

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### One Off Event



Do You Fancy **another**  
Free Swim

at The Charnwood Leisure  
Centre



**One for the Diary!!**

Date Tuesday 7th July

30 people maximum, 9.30am until 10.30am

email Angie Baker - [sadu3aevents@gmail.com](mailto:sadu3aevents@gmail.com)

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### One Off Event The Canal Boat Trip



All went well on the 2nd June.  
The weather was good despite  
thunder showers forecasted.

Everyone enjoyed the trip, I am told a few had a go at  
driving the boat!!!



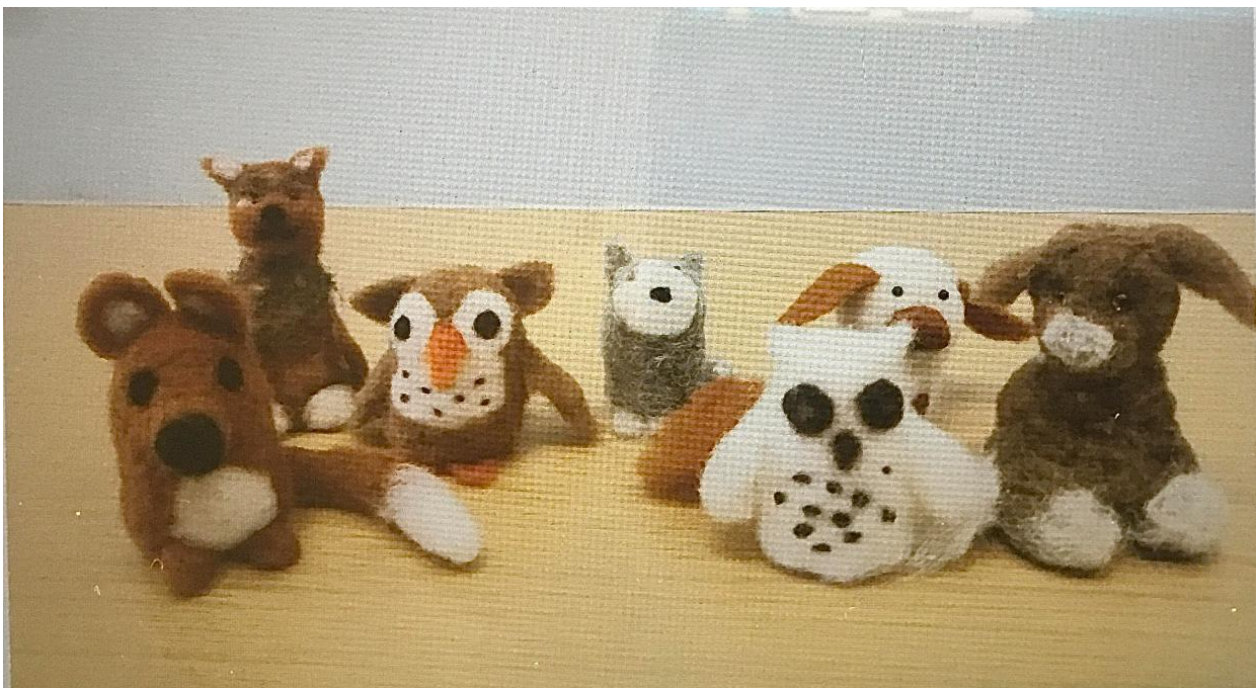
## NEEDLE FELTING WORKSHOP

Enclosed are a couple of photos I took of the Needle Felting workshop held at the Syston Community Centre on Friday.

Most participants hadn't done any felting before but soon got the hang of it. As you can see, we made some very cute foxes, dogs, cats and owls. There were a couple of Metamorphosis along the way....what started out as a bear turned into a dog and a snowman turned into an owl! But I think we all enjoyed the morning.

Many thanks to Angie for her help in organising this event

Helen DISLEY



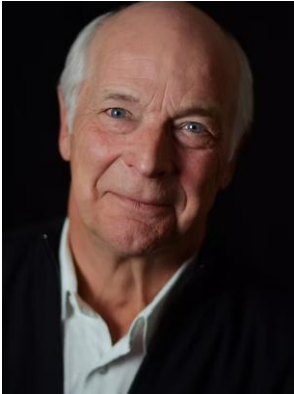
## WHAT'S ON NEXT

### GENERAL MEETINGS

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

**Wed 8 Jul @ 10.30 AM**

**My Extra Life – Mike Newbold**



Whether it's a television studio or film location, "on set" is an exciting place to be.

Being a supporting artist (the official name for an extra) is an interesting life, with no two days being the same.

They can be long days with lots of waiting around, sometimes in tough conditions on location.

It provides a modest income, some great adventures and some wonderful stories.

**Wed Aug 12<sup>th</sup> @ 10.30 AM**

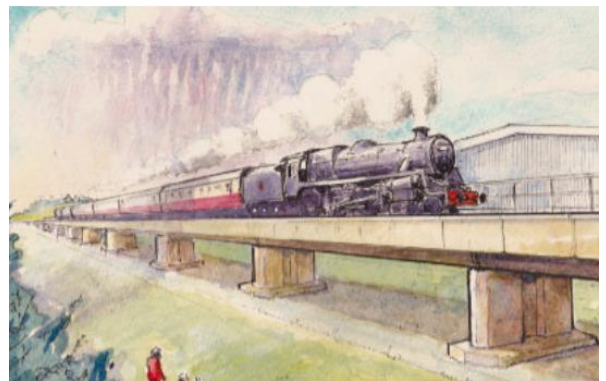


We are Charnwood Eco Hub, a new Community Interest Company set up by friends Sarah Goode and Emma Ward. We are both passionate about the planet, and have both been involved in environmental projects locally for some time.

We identified a need to bring together local environmental organisations and initiatives and to raise awareness of them amongst local residents, in order to help them to reduce their own carbon footprint and live more sustainably.

**Wed Sept 9<sup>th</sup> @ 10.30 AM**

Tom Ingall introduces The Great Central Railway - The presentation is mostly slides with short videos/animations included. It starts by setting the scene with a brief history of the railway from construction up to the preservation era, then covers the reunification process from 2009 to date, with detail on the three main construction works completed so far, the present situation and future developments.



## NATIONAL U3A ITEMS

### u3a TALKS



#### A history of Britain's roads: why we should feel proud

Discover the surprising stories behind Britain's roads, from radical legislation to quirky inventors, with Diana Laffin.

Friday 19 June at 10am

Free – online via Zoom



#### Mrs. Charles Dickens tells her story

u3a Festival Fringe

Annie Elliot gives a powerful reimagining of Catherine Dickens' silenced voice, revealing love, betrayal, and truth behind Charles Dickens' marriage.

Thursday 2 July at 2pm

Free – online via Zoom



#### AI News: Generative AI in academia and at home – practical lessons from inside the research community.

Professor Rose Luckin shares with us what is really happening with AI in Education and shares some tips for using AI at home.

Friday 10 July at 9.30am

Free – online via Zoom

Book [here](#)

Book [here](#)

Book [here](#)

More talks can be found [here](#)



We're delighted to launch an exclusive holiday programme for u3a members. These bespoke trips have been designed to create opportunities for members to come together from across the UK to learn, discover and explore.

Every getaway blends relaxed, well-organised travel with enriching and immersive experiences. Beyond traditional sightseeing, you can expect talks, workshops and shared adventures that build lasting friendships. We have teamed up with The UK Holiday

Group, a highly respected name in travel with over 40 years' expertise in creating exceptional excursions.

The first trip in the itinerary is [The Agatha Christie Story](#) - four days exploring the Devon coastline that inspired world-famous mysteries. Departing on 14 September, you'll spend four nights in a beautiful coastal hotel, with breakfast and dinner provided.

Later in the year, we have trips to Shakespeare's hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon, and a festive confectionary tour of York.

Click on the image for more information.

## WHY CREATIVE HOBBIES ARE GOOD FOR YOU

Whether you've recently picked up a paintbrush for the first time or you've been knitting for years, creative hobbies can make life richer, healthier, and more connected. Here's why making time for creativity is one of the best things you can do for your wellbeing.

### Creativity keeps your mind sharp

When you learn a new skill or work through a creative challenge, your brain forms new connections. Research consistently shows that engaging in creative activities helps maintain cognitive function, improve memory, and support mental agility.

It's not about being "good" at something. It's about the process of doing. The concentration required to learn a new stitch or mix the right colour on a palette is a genuine workout for your brain.

Full story [here](#)



## MISSING PIECES

Inspired by *Historic England's* project of the same name, u3a's new learning activity encourages members to contribute to the archive around listed buildings in their area.

u3a's project is UK wide, enabling members to take part in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland - although the way that members can participate varies dependent on the region the listed building is in. As part of the project, u3a has reached out to heritage charities across the UK - including *Historic England*, *Save Britain's Heritage*, *People's Collection Wales* and *Historic Environment Scotland*. More [here](#)

## NOT u3a BUT YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED


### HERITAGE SUNDAYS

Clustered around The Newarke and De Montfort University campus, just minutes from the city centre, are remarkable buildings that tell the story of Leicester from its Roman origins to its manufacturing heyday. On the last Sunday of month, May-Oct (excl. Sept), explore these historic places free of charge. Discover lovely outdoor spaces, including Castle Gardens Park and the tranquillity of some of the city's beautiful secret gardens. Learn more about these fascinating buildings and book on to the tours of the Magazine, Castle Great Hall and St Mary de Castro Church, led by local tour guide experts for a small fee. For more information about themed events visit: [dmu.ac.uk/museum](http://dmu.ac.uk/museum) or call 0116 207 8729



**JUNE 13-14 2026**      £6 Adults £4 Children  
**10 AM - 5PM DAILY**      Under 5's FREE  
 Weekend Camping Available £40 per Caravan/Tent

**Models and Miniature Vintage Steam Event**  
 13 June @ 10:00 am - 14 June @ 5:00 pm



**Garden Discovery Walk**  
 18 June @ 11:00 am - 12:30 pm | FREE

Just click on an image to take you to the website (if there is one) or more information and links to book a place.



**CRIME AND PUNISHMENT GUIDED TOURS**

12th July  
 A unique glimpse into Leicester's first Police Force. Join Mark Collins, one of our wonderful tour guides for a special...

[View details](#)



**THE GUILDHALL AND THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. MARTIN - THE HERRICK CONNECTIONS TOUR**

7th July - 22nd July  
 There has been historic links between the Guildhall and St. Martins Church since around 1350. The religious Guild of Corpus...

[View details](#)



**THORNTON OPEN GARDENS (NR MARKFIELD)**

21st June  
 Thornton village sits on a ridge overlooking its well-known reservoir. This event offers: - Gardens to visit, refreshments, stalls and...

[View details](#)



**FESTIVAL OF LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND ARCHAEOLOGY**

4th July - 2nd August  
 The Festival of Leicestershire and Rutland Archaeology returns, and this year the theme is archaeology and nature. Archaeology and nature...

[View details](#)



**LEICESTER BALLOON FESTIVAL**

19th June - 21st June  
 The weather is heating up! The excitement is building. Don't miss out on this spectacular family friendly event. A massive...

[View details](#)



**HIDDEN HISTORIES: MONKS & MONARCHS: THE HISTORY OF ABBEY PARK**

28th June  
 With tour guide Jim Butler Explore the Story of Abbey Park, from its founding as a Monastery in the 12th...

[View details](#)

## FROM OUR MEMBERS

### **A Short History of Getting the Washing Done**

*From riverbanks to the spin cycle — and the washing line in between*

Doing the washing is one of those ordinary domestic tasks we rarely stop to think about. Yet for most of human history, laundry was one of the hardest, most physically demanding jobs in the household. The story stretches from ancient riverbanks to the modern automatic — and along the way reveals a great deal about work, technology, and everyday life.

### **Ancient and medieval laundry: water, ash and muscle**

For thousands of years, washing meant soaking, beating, scrubbing and rinsing. In ancient civilisations, clothes were cleaned at riversides using abrasive sands, clay, or alkaline ash solutions. Medieval English households followed much the same pattern. Heavy linens were washed infrequently, using lye made from wood ash, and dried on hedges or grass — the original “lawn”.

Heating water was labour-intensive, so one batch had to serve several loads. The order mattered: whites and linens first, then everyday clothing, and finally the dirtiest workwear. This hierarchy lasted for centuries.

### **Early modern wash-houses: labour and community**

By the 16th–18th centuries, many towns and villages had communal wash-houses or shared coppers. Laundry was still brutally hard work, but it was also social. Women shared labour, news, and practical knowledge. Soap was expensive and often homemade; only in the 19th century did industrially produced soap become affordable.

The old logic of washing order remained. One copper of hot water had to do as many loads as possible, so the cleanest items always went in first.

### **Mangles, dolly tubs and washboards**

The late 18th and early 19th centuries brought the first “labour-saving” devices:

- mangles to squeeze water from clothes
- dolly tubs and posers to agitate washing
- washboard scrubbing for stubborn dirt

These tools reduced effort but didn't shorten washday. Monday remained the traditional day because it simply took that long.





### ⚙️ Early washing machines (mid-19th to early 20th century)

The first recognisable washing machines were hand-cranked drums. They agitated clothes but still required boiling water to be carried by hand. Early electric versions appeared in the 1900s but were expensive and sometimes hazardous. Most households continued with coppers, mangles and elbow-grease well into the 20th century.

### ⚡ The single-tub electric washer (1920s–1950s)

Before the twin-tub, many families used single-tub electric washing machines — a design now half-way between Victorian labour and modern convenience. These machines:

- heated their own water
- agitated the clothes
- required manual rinsing
- had a top-mounted mangle for wringing

Because the machine heated one batch of water, the old logic still applied. You washed in order:

1. Sheets and pillowcases
2. Light clothing
3. Towels
4. Overalls, socks and “grubbies”

The water was used until it was no longer fit for purpose — exactly as earlier generations had done with the copper.



### 🌀 The spin-dryer: a quiet revolution

Introduced widely in the 1950s, the spin-dryer transformed laundry. It removed far more water than a mangle, made indoor drying feasible, and reduced the physical strain of washday. Paired with a single-tub washer, it was the first time laundry felt genuinely manageable.

But the washing order still mattered, because the wash water was still reused.



### 🔗 The twin-tub (1950s–1970s)

The twin-tub combined washing and spinning in one unit, though clothes still had to be transferred manually. It was fast, economical, and beloved by many households well into the 1970s. And again, the order of washing remained essential: whites first, dirtiest last, making the most of each tubful of hot water.

Still no plumbing in – you had to connect to your kitchen sink taps and drain via the sink as well.

### 🧺 The Launderette: A New Kind of Washday (from 1949)

#### 🏠 The rise of the launderette

Britain's first launderette opened in 1949 in Queensway, London. By the 1960s, they were a familiar sight in towns and cities across the country. They filled a crucial gap:

- washing machines existed
- but many homes couldn't afford one
- or didn't have the plumbing or space
- and early machines were unreliable

The launderette offered modern washing power without the cost of ownership.



#### 👥 A social space as much as a practical one

Launderettes quickly developed their own culture. They were:

- warm in winter
- neutral ground for conversation
- places where students, pensioners, young families and shift-workers crossed paths
- somewhere to read, knit, chat, or simply watch the drums turn

Many people remember the distinctive hum of the machines, the smell of hot steam and detergent, and the ritual of folding clothes on the big central table.

#### 🚰 The end of the washing order

Because launderette machines used fresh water for each cycle, the old hierarchy of “whites first, dirtiest last” finally became unnecessary — though many people kept the habit out of instinct.

#### 🏠 Decline, but not disappearance

From the 1980s onwards, as automatic washers became standard in British homes, launderettes declined. But they never vanished entirely. Today they survive:

- in areas with small flats
- near universities

- in seaside towns
- and as specialist services for duvets and large items

They remain a small but enduring part of Britain's laundry landscape.

## Drying the washing: from hedges to heated drums

### The washing line

For centuries, drying meant spreading clothes on grass, hedges, bushes, or flat stones. The washing line — a simple rope between two posts — became common in the 18th and 19th centuries as gardens and yards became more enclosed.

By the mid-20th century, washing lines were so essential that housebuilding programmes routinely included permanent line posts. Many 1950s and 60s houses, including yours, were built with two or three concrete posts already installed, spaced to take a full family wash.

### Clothes props

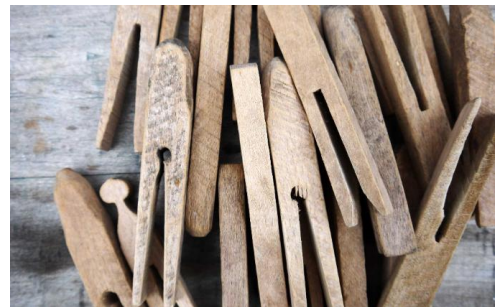
The classic wooden clothes prop (a long pole with a forked end) lifted the line to catch the breeze. Many households had several, and a well-placed prop could make the difference between a dry sheet and a damp disappointment.

### The rotary ailer (from the 1950s)

The rotary dryer — the familiar “whirligig” — arrived in the mid-20th century. It offered more drying space in a small footprint, turned with the wind, and suited the smaller gardens of post-war housing.

### Clothes pegs

Clothes pegs evolved from simple split sticks to the familiar spring-loaded peg. For much of the 19th and early 20th centuries, dolly pegs — one-piece wooden pegs carved by travelling peg-makers — were standard. Spring pegs became common after the 1920s, and plastic pegs arrived later in the century.



## Indoor drying: from pulley maids to heated rails

### The ceiling-mounted ailer

From the Victorian period onwards, many homes used a **pulley-maid** or ceiling-mounted drying rack above the kitchen range. It made use of rising heat, kept washing out of the way, and allowed large items to dry overnight.

These can still be bought, although households also use them for hanging up pots and pans.

## 🔥 Drying by the fire

Before central heating, indoor drying often meant:

- drying horses
- clothes screens
- fireguards adapted to hold small items
- chairs and banisters pressed into service

Slow, uneven, and sometimes risky — but essential in winter.



## 🏠 The airing cupboard

With the rise of hot-water cylinders, the airing cupboard became a standard feature of British homes. It provided a warm, enclosed space for drying and storing linens. The rise of the condensing central heating boiler has caused many households to lose this.

## 💡 Electric drying

From the 1970s onwards, electric options expanded:

- heated towel rails
- electric drying cabinets
- folding heated airers
- dehumidifier-assisted drying rooms

These offered indoor drying without relying on open fires or the tumble dryer.



## 🔥 The tumble dryer and the washer-dryer

### 🔥 The tumble dryer

The tumble dryer appeared in Britain in the 1950s but didn't become widespread until the 1970s and 80s. It offered fast drying in all weathers and relief from winter laundry bottlenecks. Early models were energy-hungry; later condenser and heat-pump models improved efficiency.

In contrast the US had models like the advert on the left as early as 1910. In the UK only institutional laundries had dryers

and they were steam driven. Domestic versions did not appear until the 1940's, more particularly the post-war period.

## 🏠 The washer-dryer

The washer-dryer combined washing and drying in one machine — ideal for small homes. It was never as efficient as two separate appliances, but it offered convenience and saved space. Although washer-dryer combinations are still sold, they've steadily fallen out of favour in the UK because they dry less effectively, take longer, and are less reliable than separate machines.

## **And yet... the washing line endures**

Despite all the technological change, the simple pleasure of pegging out washing on a fine day remains unchanged. It's economical, environmentally friendly, and quietly satisfying — and unlike our female forebears, we can enjoy it without having spent time boiling sheets in a copper.

## **POETRY CORNER**

### **The Clothes-Line by Strickland Gillilan**

*The clothes-line is a lovely thing,  
Just hung with bits of white;  
It dances in the summer breeze,  
And glistens in the light.*

*The shirts and sheets and aprons there  
Are banners in the sun;  
They flutter out their little tales  
Of labour just begun.*

*And when the wind has had its will  
And all is fresh and dry,  
The clothes-line seems a quiet hymn  
Of home and earth and sky.*

### **The Laundress (anon)**

#### **Washing day -Anna Laetitia Barbauld (Extracts)**

*The silent breakfast-meal is soon despatched,  
Uninterrupted, save by anxious looks  
Cast at the lowering sky...  
Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,  
Let the wind whistle through the crannies — no  
matter,  
For not a soul must stir abroad today;  
So fierce the busy demons of the tub  
And sweating housemaids ply the work of wrath.  
The youth with broomy stumps begins the toil;  
The housewife shoulders high her steamy load;  
The little children, frightened, cling and stare,  
And wonder why the world is turned to suds.  
Thus passes morning; then the linen spread  
On hedge and hawthorn gleams against the sun,  
A snowy field that flutters in the wind,  
And tells the village all is well again.*

*She bends above the foaming tub,  
Her arms are brown and bare;  
The steam about her rises up  
And trembles in the air.*

*Yet still she hums a little tune,  
As though her heart were light;  
For labour, when it serves the home,  
Has something of delight.*

### **The Washerwoman by Laurence Alma-Tadema**

*She sings above her washing-tub,  
And laughs the long day through;  
For though her hands are worn and rough,  
Her heart is kind and true.*

*Now from the tub the suds arise,  
A snowy, sparkling cloud;  
The housewife's arms are flushed and strong,  
Her motions quick and proud.  
The copper steams, the fire roars,  
The dolly rocks and turns;  
The very air is thick with heat,  
And every muscle burns.  
The children watch with solemn eyes,  
Awed by the mighty stir;  
For washday seems a world apart,  
A kingdom ruled by her.  
And when at last the garments shine,  
All rinsed and wrung and clean,  
The fluttering line becomes a flag  
Of triumph on the green.*

## Washday Tales from the Villages

### **The Monday Forecast**

*Old Mrs. Berridge swore she could predict the weather better than the BBC. Her method was simple: "If I hang the sheets out, it'll rain. If I don't, it won't." She was never wrong.*

### **The Copper That Knew Too Much**

*A neighbour once claimed her copper had a personality. "It behaves beautifully when visitors are here," she said, "but the moment I'm alone it boils over like a toddler denied a biscuit."*

### **The Line of Shame**

*One gentleman, newly retired, attempted to help by hanging the washing. He proudly displayed every item on the front line — including his wife's unmentionables. She moved the line to the back garden the very next day.*

### **The Cat and the Pillowcase**

*A village cat developed a habit of sleeping in warm laundry baskets. One Monday it climbed into a pillowcase and was carried out to the line. It was only when the pillowcase wriggled that the truth emerged.*

### **The Monday Priority**

*Mrs. Webb always said washday came before everything else. When the doctor called unexpectedly, she made him wait on the step until she'd finished rinsing. "He can't cure a half-done wash," she explained.*

### **The Early Riser**

*Mrs. Pym always put her washing out before anyone else, "to get ahead of the weather". Her neighbours said the weather simply waited until she'd finished.*



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