

Syston and District

**u3a**

learn, laugh, live

MAY  
2023

# Vitality!

Official newsletter of the Syston and District u3a

CHARITY No 1180152

## OUR OPEN DAY GROSVENOR LOUNGE 26 APRIL

Sorry Clive, but I'm relegating your piece to second spot. *Ed*



It's always a concern that a wet day might deter people from venturing out. Whilst it wasn't quite the hot sunny day that greeted our last Open Day in September 2021, it was a fine day, which undoubtedly aided the success of the event.

There were 17 tables representing 24 groups and 5 more groups had a presence. Only 5 out of the 34 currently active groups were not represented. The Grosvenor Lounge accommodated these comfortably, with enough room for people to circulate freely. Several people also took advantage of the bar facilities and excellent lunchtime snacks during their visit.

We had over 150 visitors in total, over 50 of those being non-members. 24 new members signed up on the day, with others likely to join online in the coming days. A total of 127 entries (though not 127 different people) added their names to the "expression of interest" forms for groups. These were a mixture of existing members looking to add to their groups, new members finding groups of potential interest, those who may join online before visiting groups, and those who may come along for taster sessions before committing themselves.

Overall, we think this was a very successful event and would like to thank everyone who helped with the organization and on the day.



*Someone had to lark about on at least one photo, and it was one of the mostly likely candidates who did!!*



*The Art Group display*

## FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Hi Everyone,

I hope I find everyone fit and well.

Last week we held a very successful Open Day that I hope you managed to attend. We had several new members join our u3a, but we also had around 130 people register an interest in joining a new group. Many thanks to Dave and Lyn Palmer for organising the event, the group leaders and to all the members who turned up to help.

A few weeks ago, I emailed everyone about the forthcoming AGM and the vacant positions on the committee. If you can help us fill these positions, please fill out the nomination form and return it to me.

I hope to see you at our next General Meeting on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> May when Peter Barratt will give us a talk on Alice Hawkins – The Making of her Statue.

See you soon. Clive

# WE WANT TO LET YOU KNOW

## JOINING A NEW GROUP

Many thanks to all for promoting, organising, and attending our Open Day last week. If you are interested in joining a group or coming along as a prospective u3a member for a taster, please contact the Group Organiser (all contact details on our website) Any queries from anyone please contact Sheila or Barbara (Group Coordinators)

## DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Our AGM is on 21<sup>st</sup> June before our normal General Meeting at the Community Centre. Please note this is not the usual second Wednesday of the month, but the third Wednesday. The AGM is not usually a lengthy affair. Please remember to get any nominations or motions for the meeting to our Chairman by 5<sup>th</sup> May, anything received after that deadline cannot be considered.

## THANK YOU FROM YOUR EDITOR

Many thanks for your response to my plea for more items for the Newsletter. I've had more group news and details of local events this month. Please keep this going. Photos and poems are welcome, as are articles and short stories (maximum 4 A4 pages).

# GROUP NEWS

## NEW GROUP - RUMMIKUB 3

A third Rummikub group has commenced on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday mornings at Syston Community Centre in the Jubilee room, 10am - 12 noon. We are currently 6 members, who divide room hire cost between ourselves and are hoping more of you will join us and enable the group to run permanently. Please contact Alma for full details on "sallywright1@sky.com" or leave message on 0116 2696577  
Next May meeting currently planned for 10th May.

## NEW GROUP – IMAGINARIUM

'Imaginarium'

What on earth is that I hear you ask?

It's just your imagination.....

Do you remember listening as a child to the tales told by older members of the family, or sitting with visiting friends to your home, hearing stories that captivated attention and imagination?

Has the art of storytelling been lost?

Some people enjoy writing things down, and that's wonderful. Others might like to express memories and imagination in other ways.

Here's some ideas for how we could share some storytelling....

The plaster crumbled around the window.

The man whistled so cheerfully you'd never guess he had a corpse in his suitcase.

The colour green reminded him of home.

She went slowly along the corridor, trying to find the source of the noise.

It might take a while to finish the task but she knew it had to be done. Unpleasant tasks always have to be done.

The owl swooped down and took the mouse, just as she knew it would.

His eyes were brown with a tiny fleck of gold at the edge.

Could we actually have an **Imaginarium** group for our u3a? Interested?

Contact me on [pat27wherton@gmail.com](mailto:pat27wherton@gmail.com)

## THE BOOK GROUP

The book group met on 20th April and as usual we turned up at the Britannia in Queniborough only to find it was closed! Not to be put off we settled down in a lovely sunny beer garden to discuss our book, The Dictionary of Lost Words. There was a mixed reaction to this book with around half saying they loved it and found it really interesting and the rest finding it was interesting in part but a little slow and, and dare I say, boring in other places, the end was also a little rushed and abrupt. Hopefully next month we'll be allowed back inside and have a drink to help the discussion along.

## UKULELE GROUP

On Thursday, 20 April, our ukulele group ventured further afield to the Pork Pie Library and Community Centre to entertain the 'Friendship Group'.

We had a good turnout of members (see photo), performing 2 half-hour slots with a break for tea and cakes at the interval. Lots of happy faces, dancing and clapping from the appreciative audience.

The Friendship Group donated £30 towards Mind charity on our behalf.

If you would like to see us in action, then click on the YouTube link here:

<https://youtu.be/TC-P71GAAWo>



## FAMILY HISTORY GROUP

We had a "bring along your queries and problems" session. We attempted to trace a few births and marriages using various family history sites, with partial success. Where we didn't fully succeed in the limited time available, we did manage to send people away with follow up options to carry on their research. Two cases highlighted the importance of sense checking what you find, especially what is on other people's trees. In both examples it should have been clear that the father couldn't be the biological father, as he'd died before the children concerned had been conceived. In addition, one case had not one, but two, sets of census data clearly showing the child was the granddaughter of the widowed head of the household. Further delving revealed a baptism and a birth registration, both showing that the oldest daughter was the mother.

We will potentially have an influx of new members following on from the Open Day. They are likely to be a mixture of those wishing to start their family history journey, through to those who have been researching for several years. We may consider having some specific beginners sessions, in addition to our normal monthly meetings.

## PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

Our photo group was due to meet the last Thursday morning in March, but due to the wet, dismal weather, we decided to cancel. To encourage members to get out and use their cameras, we set up a WhatsApp group (not all members use WhatsApp, so emails are continuing to be sent out to keep all informed).

The WhatsApp group set a theme of 'Emerging Spring' photos, and here is a selection sent in by members, to date.

We hope (fingers crossed!) to meet on the last Thursday of May, looking to take photographs of bluebells.

Any type of camera is welcome within the group, including phone cameras, so if anyone wants to join us, just email our co-ordinator, Steve Kenney ([stevepkenney@gmail.com](mailto:stevepkenney@gmail.com))





Steve Kenney



Candice Barker



Christine Burne



Tina Horsman

## SUNDAYS FOR SOLOS GROUP

We are a small group who meet once a month, usually on a Sunday. The Group is for U3A members who live alone and for whom weekends can sometimes be too quiet.

We have just been to York for the day on a coach trip (picked up in Syston). We had a great time with lots of chat and laughter and a wonderful visit to the Minster, where we admired the restored medieval East Window and the new statue of the late Queen on the West Front.

*East Window*





*Statue of late Queen on West Front*



*In the Shambles*



*Some new statues in the Minster?*

We meet regularly to plan our programme for the next few months and take it in turns to organise our activities.

If you are interested in joining us, please contact Sue Blaxland via the website.

## WHAT'S ON NEXT

### GENERAL MEETINGS

In the Brookside Room at the Community Centre – talks start 10.30am

Tea/coffee and mingling from 10.00am



**May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023:**

***Peter Barratt – ‘Alice Hawkins - The Making of her Statue’.***

For those groups who have heard my talk on Alice previously, I now offer an update with a special section on the making and unveiling of the statue of Alice in centenary year 2018.

It is a fascinating story of Alice's life, the fundraising campaign I co-lead and included is a short TV documentary on the making and unveiling of her statue in the Leicester marketplace.

Generally recognized as commencing centenary year celebrations in the UK.

**June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023: Note this is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the Month**

***Julie Johnson - (Our Syston u3a Vitality Editor) “My not so prim and proper Victorian ancestors”***

The Victorians are generally thought to be very prim and proper but come along to my talk about my own Victorian ancestors and you'll see that is a sweeping generalisation.

As some of you know, I have been researching my family history for several years. I've found runaway brides, bigamists, a mistress, “lodgers” and “housekeepers” who were rather more than that, sons and daughters who were really grandchildren and plenty more besides.

Let me tell you about some of them.





**Roxanne Dinsdale, belly dancer: 'The myths of Middle Eastern dance'.**

Come along and hear all about the funny anecdotes which have happened over the years as a professional belly dancer and performer.

This includes a demonstration of Middle Eastern dance plus a rummage through costumes throughout the ages and how they have developed and what styles of dance they are used for.

## **SINGING & UKULELE GROUPS TO PERFORM LOCALLY**

Please come along, give your support and enjoy our u3a groups at the....

### **Kings Coronation Party on Syston Central Park Sunday 7th May 12noon -8pm.**

Our singers will be performing a varied selection of their songs.

The event will be under a large Marquee, there will also be various food and drinks stalls, children's face painting and small fair rides. See poster next page



Please bring your chairs or blankets and maybe a picnic along with your friends and family.

Various Artists will be performing

**12noon U3A Singing Group**

**12.50pm U3A Syston Happy Ukulele Band**

1.30pm Elderly Brothers (U3A members).

2.15pm Syston Band

3pm Carter and Harman Guitar Duo Singers

4.30pm Sarah Clarke and Dancers, popular songs

6pm 'HRT' 60's 70's 80's music

We have ordered the Sun but not had delivery yet! ☹️

## Thurmaston Engagement

The Singing Group will also be appearing at St Michaels and All Angels Church Thurmaston on the 13th May at 11am.

Please join us and enjoy. Buy a cuppa and yummy cakes!

## LAST MONTH'S GM

My plague on getting to our GM's continued. I doubt whether the speaker would have appreciated my coughing fits! Historical humour is often thought of in terms of musical hall artists, but humour is as old as the human race. Laughter is universal, albeit, what is amusing in one part of the world, may not be so in another. Royalty is to the fore, so let's have peek at the old role of the "fool".

The "fool" can be traced back to many parts of the world, but in our island, it is most associated with the royal courts. Fools and court jesters held a special position and were often well rewarded for their contributions to life in the royal household. However, the image that we have in our minds of the performer singing risqué songs and tumbling across the floor in the harlequin motley and bells is a romanticised version of the truth.

Sadly, history does not abound with information surrounding the jester, but there are a few things that we do know. Roland was a medieval flautist who lived in 12th century England. Court jester to King Henry II, Roland was best known for one thing and one thing alone: breaking wind. While little is written about Roland, one thing that we do know is that his particular skill set was reserved for one performance a year: King Henry's riotous Christmas celebrations. Roland was recorded as culminating his foolery with "*Unum saltum et siffletum et unum bumbulum*": a simultaneous jump, whistle, and fart.

Considered puerile humour today, the history of fart humour goes way back. The oldest joke in the world is a fart joke, it dates back to 1900BC. The Sumerian saying 'Something which has never occurred since time immemorial; a young woman does not fart in her husband's lap.' will hardly have audiences rolling in the aisles with laughter, but it does go to show that some jokes can transcend time and place. The fart became the great leveller between classes in Medieval times. A form of bodily embarrassment that was felt by the common folk and elite classes alike. From Chaucer to Shakespeare, fart jokes were the bawdy yet humorous equivalent of saying death comes to rich and poor alike.

Whether the height of comedy or a great leveller between the classes - Roland was so revered for his annual performance that he was gifted Hemingstone Manor along with 30 acres of land from the King, on top of payment for his annual efforts. Even back then comedy paid well for some!

Henry VIII had famous fools, Will Somar and Jane Fool appear on a family painting with Henry, wife Jane Seymour and his three children. Albeit they are on the periphery, as a man with red tights with a monkey on his shoulder, and a woman

with a shaved head (see below) Termed 'natural fools', Will, Jane, and Will's predecessor Sexton, were adults with learning disabilities. Their lack of social awareness and directness of tone with the Royals was considered endearing (where it would likely have led to anyone else having their head parted from their body). Believed to be closer to God and closer to truth, these 'natural fools' were an integral part of the Tudor court.



Jane was often showered with gifts from her mistress Anne Boleyn. She was the best-dressed woman at court after the Queen and princesses. Will on the other hand is featured in an intimate position between Henry and his children in another family portrait.

But behind the portrayed revelry and affection for their 'natural fools' lies the truth that these were adults who would not have had an easy life outside of their unique positions in court. Sexton, Will Somar's predecessor, (also known as 'Patch') needed six tall Yeoman Guards to transport him to court (due to his distress) and had an army of carers who handled everything down to his wardrobe and groceries. Financial records even show that Will Somar's 'keeper' was receiving payment for his care of Will long after the passing of Henry VIII. Proof of just how endeared and loved he was to the royal family and the rest of the court.

Many of us will have come across the "fool", perhaps on sufferance during our school days, as part of Shakespeare's plays. Such characters were clearly drawn from the Tudor court "fool". That said, his fools vary from one play to another. King Lear's fool is quite different to Bottom and Puck in A Midsummer Night's Dream, as are they to each other. Just as there are various genre of comedian and comedy today, so comedy had its variations going back in time.

Humour has evolved over the years and continues to do so, but the basic concept is ageless. It is often thought of as uniquely human, but those of us with pets can tell you otherwise!



**JOIN US ON A TRIP TO SEE**

# **THE END OF THE PIER**

**SHOW  
AT CROMER**

Melton Mowbray u3a is organising a trip to Cromer to see the End of the Pier Show. A coach will be leaving Melton Mowbray on Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023 for a matinee performance, however if there are members of the Syston and District u3a booked for the trip, they could be picked up in Syston.

Staying at The Links Hotel at West Runton for dinner, bed (twin rooms) and breakfast. (The hotel has a swimming pool and 9 hole golf course.)

Returning to Syston on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at approximately 6.30 p.m.

Total cost of coach, ticket for the End of the Pier Show and 3\*accommodation will be approximately £165.00. A non-returnable deposit of £60.00 is required at the time of booking.

We need to have details and the deposit at the time of booking.

It is also ideal for members for do not wish to see the Show but would like to see the sea and enjoy the facilities at the hotel.

Please email [theatre@u3ameltonmowbray.org.uk](mailto:theatre@u3ameltonmowbray.org.uk) for further details and to make bookings, giving a telephone number if possible.

Angela Fielding



LeicesterSymphonyOrchestra  
101st Concert Season  
Sunday 21 May 2023  
3.00pm  
De Montfort Hall

**SUMMER ENIGMA**

Guest Conductor  
Dexter Drown  
Leader Catherine Cole

**Borodin - Prince Igor Overture**  
**Elgar - Enigma Variations**  
**Tchaikovsky - Symphony No. 4**

DMH TICKETS: £20.00 / £16.00  
Family tickets (2 adults and up to 3 children): £42.00 / £35.00  
18 and under/NUS + 2-4-1 carer's scheme: £5.00  
LSO subscription – all 3 concerts 10% reduction on full price tickets

TICKETS AVAILABLE FROM:  
De Montfort Hall Box Office  
www.demontforthall.co.uk • Tel: (0116) 233 3111  
www.leicestersymphonyorchestra.co.uk  
REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 1078708 • LIMITED COMPANY NO. 1397368

making music DE MONTFORT HALL Leicester

**Reduced Price Concert Ticket Offer.**

I am very pleased to say that the orchestra is able to offer your group reduced ticket prices for our next concert to be held at 3pm on Sunday 21 May in De Montfort Hall, Leicester. We are able to offer you £20 tickets for just £10.

Attached to this email please find a poster for the concert, (see left) I hope you will find the concert and the offer attractive. Our Ticket Secretary, Sue Mee, will be pleased to take your order. With very best wishes

Sam Dobson  
Leicester Symphony Orchestra

Anyone interested in taking up this offer should contact our chairman Clive Iliffe  
[sadu3achair@gmail.com](mailto:sadu3achair@gmail.com)

**NATIONAL U3A ITEMS**  
**U3A TALKS**



**Don't Leave Me This Way:  
Neglected Historic Buildings and  
How to Help**

Liz Fuller from SAVE Britain's Heritage, a charity that campaigns for historic buildings, leads this talk on neglected historic buildings

Mon 15 May at 2.30pm  
Free – Online via Zoom

Book [Here](#)



**Bletchley Park and the UK World  
War II Codebreakers**

Science Subject Adviser for the u3a Leigh Edwards hosts a talk about Bletchley Park and the UK World War II Codebreakers – their story.

Tues 16 May at 2pm  
Free – Online via Zoom

Book [here](#)



**Their Finest Hour Reminiscence  
Project**

Join Dr Matthew Kidd of the University of Oxford and u3a volunteers to find out how you can preserve the everyday stories and objects of WW2 for 'Their Finest Hour'.

Thurs 25 May at 2pm  
Free – Online via Zoom

Book [here](#)

# HOT OFF THE PRESS!! CONGRATULATIONS CLIVE!



Many congratulations to our Chairman for winning Syston Citizen of the year at the Civic reception this evening (28<sup>th</sup> April) held at the community centre. Well done Clive!!

**NOT u3a BUT YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED**



**SYSTON TOWN COUNCIL'S PARTY IN THE PARK TO CELEBRATE THE KING'S CORONATION**

- On Sunday 07 May 2023 •
- From 12pm till 8pm •
- Central Park, Syston •

MARQUEE WITH LOCAL LIVE MUSICIANS  
 THE PHARMACIE ARMS, GIN AND COCKTAIL BAR - THE GIN GENIE AND SYSTON BOWLING CLUB BAR  
 FOOD STALLS FROM LOCAL SUPPLIERS OR BRING YOUR OWN PICNIC  
 BILLY BATES FAIR RIDES AND INFLATABLES  
 CHILDRENS ENTERTAINMENT



JOIN US TO CELEBRATE  
 THE KING'S  
**Coronation**

**£10.00 ADMISSION**  
 CONTACT US FOR TICKETS ON 01162602519  
 OR 07921528400

**MAY**  
 FRIDAY | **5** | AT 7 PM  
**2023**

An evening of food, drink and dancing to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III with live music from "The King" EMIs.

ELIZABETH PARK CENTRE  
 THURMASTON  
 LEICESTER, LE4 8FN




**SATURDAY 22ND APRIL**  
 2 - 4 PM

**Arming the Knight & The Death of King Richard III**

A TALK BY ANDREW HYAM

Fundraising event for  
 St Michael's Church  
 Thurmaston

Admission £5 including refreshments




**CHARITY**  
**Rock and Roll Dance**  
 Friday 12th May 2023

Dancing to DJ Mike

Elizabeth Park Centre  
 Checkland Road, Thurmaston  
 Leicester, LE4 8FN

7:30pm until late

Licensed Bar

Tickets: £5  
 £7 on the door

June Norris: 07484 347 534



Annual Thrummy Drummer fundraising event, in aid of Dementia Social and Support Group



**QUENIBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL**

**KINGS CORONATION CELEBRATIONS**

Saturday 6th May

King Charles III Coronation

Village Hall you're welcome to come and watch the King's Coronation on the big screen, refreshments will be

available. The hall will be open from 10:00am and for an hour after the ceremony at Westminster Abbey.

Spend the rest of the afternoon enjoying the celebrations with your family, friends and neighbours.

Sunday 7th May

1:00pm—10:00pm Picnic & Party on the Park

King George V Playing Field - free admission to a day of entertainment, including live music and a variety of

performers from different local groups, plus the amazing Dirty Carpet Band in the evening.

Various stalls plus a range of different foods, drink and a licensed bar will be available.

The Dog Show is also back and sponsored by the Horse & Groom.

Monday 8th May - The Big Help Out

Volunteers are invited to help with any clearing up after the weekend events.

For more information please email [coronation@queniborough.org](mailto:coronation@queniborough.org)

**EAST GOSCOTE**  
**CORONATION CELEBRATIONS**  
**COME AND JOIN THE FUN**  
**MONDAY 8TH MAY 2023**  
**2.00 P.M. - 5.00 P.M.**

**VILLAGE HALL GREEN**  
 Live Music  
 Icecream  
 Food & Drink  
 Bouncy Castle  
 Free Stalls

**PLEASE CALL 0116 260 2202 FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO BOOK YOUR STALL**

**WEATHER PERMITTING** **FREE ENTRY**

Syston QT Theatre Group presents  
**Pretzels for Dinner**  
 A two-act, bitter-sweet comedy by Janet Shaw  
 Directed by Jude Latham  
 By arrangement with Stagescripts Ltd.

**23 - 26 May The Old Chapel, Syston**  
 Tickets £9 (£8 Conc.) Call 07989 960014

**Bluebells in bloom at the Outwoods**

Residents and visitors to Charnwood are being encouraged not to miss this year's fantastic display of bluebells at the Outwoods in Loughborough.

The stunning display at the north side of the ancient woodland which bloom every year are expected to only be in flower over the next few weeks.

**VOLUNTEER CENTRE AGM NOT ANNOUNCED**

This item from last months newsletter turned out to be a very strange case of the phantom email. Your editor was not the only recipient. It actually relates to last year's AGM, although this was not apparent as no year was quoted. It is a mystery how it came to in effect be resent!! Details of this years AGM will be included in the Newsletter when they are available.

## FROM OUR MEMBERS

### MAY DAY

The 1<sup>st</sup> of May only became a Bank Holiday in 1978. There was some controversy at the time it was introduced by the Labour Government of the day. This was mainly because of the political history associated with the date. Back in 1891, the first day of May had been designated International Workers' Day and set aside for organized industrial agitation. However, the history and traditions of May Day go back much further than the late Victorian era.

May festivities were first recorded in Ancient Roman times. The Floralia – the Festival of Flora – took place between 28 April and 3 May in honour of the goddess of flowers, fertility and spring. It involved athletic games and theatrical performances, along with a goodly measure of bawdy behaviour.

British May Day traditions have their roots in our pagan heritage. These pagan roots did little to endear these festivities with either the established Church or State. In the sixteenth century, riots followed when May Day celebrations were banned. Fourteen rioters were hanged, and Henry VIII is said to have pardoned a further 400 who had been sentenced to death. To our Gaelic forebears it was “Beltane” and marked the mid-point between Spring and Summer. It is one of the few pagan festivals that survived the spread of Christianity in Britain. Many of the old customs celebrate new life and fertility, including Morris dancing, Jack-in-the-Green parades and dancing around the maypole.

The maypole is perhaps the most recognised symbol of the day. But, the cute sight of children dancing around a maypole is not how it started out. It was actually unwed young people who wove ribbons around the pole. Whilst they danced, they could flirt with whomever they fancied. If a young woman and man paired by sundown, their courtship continued so that the couple could get to know each other and, possibly, marry 6 weeks later on June's Midsummer's Day. This is how the “June wedding” became a tradition. The May Day festivities all but vanished following the Civil War when Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans took control of the country in 1645. Describing maypole dancing as ‘a heathenish vanity generally abused to superstition and wickedness’, legislation was passed which saw the end of village maypoles throughout the country. Dancing did not return to the village greens until the restoration of Charles II. ‘The Merry Monarch’ helped ensure the support of his subjects with the erection of a massive 40 metre high maypole in London's Strand.

This pole signalled the return of the fun times and remained standing for almost fifty years.

Although some poke fun at “Morris Men”, they are in high demand for May Day celebrations. However, they are not ancient in terms of May Day, going back some 600 years. The origins of the dancing style had been lost over time. The art had largely died out but was revived during the 1930’s and styles were based on a variety of folklore. That said, troupes at Abingdon and Chipping Camden can trace their roots back to the early 1800’s.



A much older character also typifies the concept of dressing up in odd costume, Jack in the Green, or the Green Man. I’m sure many of you can come up with locations that have a pub called The Green Man. Crowds gather on Clun Bridge in Shropshire to witness the Green Man defeat the Frost Queen to ensure there is a summer in the valley. The leafy face of the Green Man represents nature, fertility, and the cycle of death and rebirth. After his victory the Green Man leads a garland-festooned parade to the grounds of Clun Castle. It is only one of several locations where the character features.

Every May, thousands of people take to the streets of Helston for a Cornish festival that's "bigger than Christmas": the Helston Flora Day. Houses and shops are decorated with greenery and beautiful flower displays. At 7am, the bass drum sounds and couples begin to dance down the street, entering selected houses and shops to drive out winter's darkness and welcome in the spring.

The crowning of a May Queen is another tradition that started out differently. Originally both a King and Queen were crowned, but over time the King fell by the wayside. In the Victorian era, the May Queen was a symbol of purity, usually dressed in white. A far cry from the original King and Queen as young people representing fertility.

May Day traditions in southern England include the Hobby Horses that still rampage through the towns of Dunster and Minehead in Somerset, and Padstow in Cornwall. The horse or the Oss, as it is normally called, is a local person dressed in flowing robes wearing a mask with a grotesque, but colourful, caricature of a horse. The origins of the Oss are unclear.

Whilst some May Day traditions have their roots in pagan times, most have changed and evolved over the years, and undoubtedly will continue to do so.

By drinking 130 bottles of wine you could save a bird



*Thank you, Colin Grimes, for sending this quirky little gem.*

## DECLUTTER DEN

Do you have anything sitting in a cupboard, or on a shelf, that you no longer want? Might one of our



A pair of cycle panniers need a new home

Anyone interested please call 01162608944



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)

## POETRY CORNER

### The Beltane Song

At Beltane in the aulden time, it was the custom gay,  
To gather on the village green and hail the festal day,  
Huntsman gallant and sheperds grey, dought and blythsome men,  
And Lassies blooming fresh and fair cam liltin' doon the glen,  
Through the greenwood haste away,... Sing aloud the festal lay,  
Busk the Beltane banner gay, to Peblis and the play.  
Auld Neidpath, grim and grey wi' years, looks doon wi war-scarred face,  
And sentinels our royal toun wi' majesty and grace,  
Loyal sons of a fearless race, gather we here today,  
And sing the auld-warld round-e-lay of 'Peblis to the Play',  
Wave the Beltane banner high, Ring the anthem to the sky,  
While our silver stream rolls by, The Tweeddale glen for aye.  
Across the wild foam-crested wave, in distant lands of fame,  
The exile oft wi' pride recalls the dear auld Border hame,  
And while we crown our Beltane queen, 'mid flaming skies of June,  
We pledge the leal hearts far a-wa and lilt our festal tune,  
Honour is our watchword clear, Truth our dauntless halberdier,  
Liberty's our heralds cheer, Long live our Beltane Queen.

The phrase 'Peblis to the Play' in this traditional verse refers to a poem in Old Scots that is rumoured to have been written by James the first.

### MAY DAY IN ENGLAND by Aaron Marchant

May day in England, the sun smiling wide  
new leaf unfurling and catkins beside  
wildflowers dancing like children at play  
All this can be seen on an English May day

The melodious robin competes with song thrush  
The bees sizzle past in their nectar-drunk rush  
the church bells are pealing 'Go love while you may'  
sweet are the sounds of an English May day

Ramsons and wood sorrel freshen the breeze  
the blossoming hawthorn and horse chestnut trees  
Bluebell profusion in perfumed array  
Sublime is the scent of an English May day

Courting butterflies rest on the sycamore leaves  
The swallows renew their nest under the eaves  
Kissing couples hold hands as they swoon and they sway  
The world falls in love on an English May day

## And finally.....

### Things you may not know about the history of our Coronations

The first documented coronation at Westminster was that of William the Conqueror on 25th December 1066. Before this year there had been no fixed location for the ceremony.

The first king to be crowned in the present Westminster Abbey was Edward I in 1274.

Three monarchs did not have any coronation, they were Edward V (the boy king), who was presumed murdered in the Tower of London before he could be crowned. Lady Jane Grey was the 9 day queen, she was arrested on arrival in London for her coronation and executed. The third was Edward VIII who abdicated 11 months after succeeding his father and before the date set for his coronation.

William III and Mary II were the only joint monarchs to be crowned.

George IV's coronation was a great theatrical occasion, but he flatly refused to allow his estranged wife Caroline to enter the Abbey.

William IV had to be persuaded to have a coronation at all, and spent so little money on it that it became known as 'the penny coronation'.

The English coronation service proper was drawn up by St Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, for the grand coronation of Edgar, first King of All England, at Bath Abbey.

During the Commonwealth, many coronation artefacts were either stolen or melted down. The anointing spoon, an innocuous gilded silver spoon, was purchased by Mr Kynnersly, the Yeoman of Charles I's wardrobe, in 1649. Keeping the spoon safe throughout the interregnum and ensuing civil war, Mr Kynnersly returned the spoon to Charles II to use at his coronation. The spoon, which dates back to the 12th century, has continued to be used in every coronation since.

While it has since become to be known as a prison and dungeon, the Tower of London actually played a very large part in medieval coronations. New monarchs would typically move to the Tower in the nights leading up to their coronation to prepare for the ceremony.

Not every coronation has gone to plan, but some coronations have been exceptionally bad. Queen Victoria's coronation was nicknamed '*the last of the botched coronations*' as so many things went wrong that a special committee of historians was tasked with drawing up a more regimented plan for future monarchs to follow.

