



Ashby U3A



Newsletter March 2019

A REMINDER ABOUT MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Your membership renewal is due on 1st April. The fee this year is £16.50, or £13.00 if you are the 2nd member at one address or a fully paid up member at another U3A.

Renewal forms are downloadable by clicking on the "Information" tab on the website or from the Membership Sec., Iain Banns. **Please don't just send money, we need the completed the form to comply with Data Protection legislation.**

Interest Groups Timetable for April

Date	Time	Group	Venue or Meeting point
Mon 1st	2-4 pm	Bridge	Hood Park Leisure Centre
Tue 2nd	9:45 for 10 am start	Walking	Plough Inn, Keyworth Road, Wysall, Notts, NG12 5QQ.
Wed 3rd	10:00 am	Music Appreciation	Sallie's at Woodside Cottage, 61, Melbourne Road, Newbold. LE67 8JH
Wed 3rd	2:00 pm	Computer	16 Winchester Way
Thu 4th	9:45 am	Digital Photography	The Attenborough Wildlife Centre. Meet at Winchester Way for Car share
Mon 8th	9.45 for 10 am start	Medium Walks	Newton Regis Village Hall
Mon 8th	7-9 pm	Bridge	Ivanhoe Social Club
Tue 9th	10:00 am	Calligraphy	At Lynda's Continue layouts
Tue 9th	1:30 pm	Literature	28 Willesley Gardens
Wed 10th	2:00 pm	Family History	2 Marlborough Way
Thu 11th	12 for 12.30 pm	Lunch	Angel Inn Coleorton
Mon 15th	2-4 pm	Bridge	Hood Park Leisure Centre
Tue 16th	9:45 for 10 am start	Walking	The Rising Sun, Rise End, Middleton DE4 4LS.
Wed 17th	10:00 am	Drawing and painting	16 Winchester Way The 'B' word
Wed 17th	2:30 pm	Quiz	Bull and Lion, Packington
Thu 18th	2:00 pm	Gardening	Packington Village Hall How to make an Easter Wreath - by Tina. £3 pp
Fri 19th	10:00 am	Short Walks	Meet at Ticknall for a walk into Calke
Wed 24th	8.45 at Featherbed Lane	Industrial Heritage	Taylor's Bell Foundry, Loughborough
Thu 25th	TBA	History	Newark Civil War Museum
Thu 25th	7 for 7.30 pm	Supper Club	The Unicorn Inn, Main Street, Orton on the Hill, CV9 3NN.
Mon 29th	9:30 am	Italian	Lynda's house

Early May

Date	Time	Group	Venue or Meeting point
Wed 1st	10:00 am	Music Appreciation	TBA
Wed 1st	2:00 pm	Computer Group	16 Winchester Way
Thu 2nd	9:45 am	Digital Photography	Church interiors. Location TBD. Meet at 16 Winchester Way
Tue 7th	10:00 am start	Walking	Old Dalby, Leics. Details to follow

*For trips, outings, walks and other events which meet away from the usual venues, see further details in the relevant Group Reports below, or on our website www.ashbyu3a.co.uk

Tea Rota etc. for the monthly meetings

Month	Tea and Coffee Rota	Meeters and Greeters	Reporting Groups
April	Jane Barnett, Sheila Hampson Marian Shuttlewood, June Meir,	TBA	History and Industrial Heritage
May	Margaret Baxendale, Neil Roberts, Leslie Roberts	TBA	Italian and Literature

MONTHLY MEETING - Tuesday 26th March – Taj Mahal

This month we were taken on a trip to central India, to a world of murder, sex and incest and of love at first sight.

Pete Fitzpatrick gave us a most interesting and fascinating talk on the Taj Mahal, telling us he wasn't an expert, but he has obviously been and seen it and researched the place and its history thoroughly.

He started by telling us how the Moghuls had invaded India in the 1500s from Persia and ruled India for about 200 years. They were a war-like people, but once they had conquered they tried to assimilate into their new surroundings and although they were Muslims they allowed Hinduism to continue.

With the Moghuls settled in India, their royal families lived a grand life. They built forts and fabulous palaces, using the best local craftsmen to add to their own skills. Incorporating architecture from both India and Persia to decorate them. They had air conditioning in their Palaces, created by water running over rippled surfaces within the rooms and bamboo blinds with water running down over the doorways.

Royalty sat on the roof tops during the evening sheltered by a Chattri, an Indian feature meaning a canopy or umbrella, to catch any breeze.

The emperors had large harems as their sexual playgrounds with Emperor Akbar reputed to have 5000 women in his harem and about 500 in Emperor Shah Jahan's.

The mothers of the emperors ruled over the harem and the ladies were not to be seen by outsiders. Abortion was commonplace in the harem as the more favourite wives did not want lesser wives producing the emperor's children.

There are no paintings of any of the wives as it was not appropriate for the ladies faces to be seen by commoners, so no artists could see them in order to paint them.

The rules of succession were not straightforward and so emperors' children were known to murder or poison their brothers and even nephews in order to inherit from their fathers. Emperor Jahangir, the son of Akbar, was exceptionally cruel and liked to watch his prisoners being trampled by elephants or being skinned alive.

Jahangir's son, Shah Jahan, who at the age of 16 and still a prince, visited a summer fair and saw Mumtaz Mahal and decided that he wanted to marry her, she was the daughter of a high ranking official. Emperor Jahangir decided that they must wait five years to wed so they planned a very lavish wedding with processions of ladies riding elephants or carried on silver palanquins, even cages with wild animals were paraded for the amusement of the onlookers. Some of their clothes took the full five years to make, embroidered with gold and silver.

Shah Jahan and Mumtaz travelled extensively with his armies to battlefields. Whilst the emperor's tent was a far more luxurious affair than the rest of their entourage, she had 14 children whilst on the road but only 7 survived.

Shah Jahan was summoned from the battlefield when Mumtaz was giving birth to their 14th child, she was haemorrhaging and wasn't going to survive. On her death bed she asked Shah Jahan to make two promises, firstly to not have children with any other partner which he didn't and also to build a love palace in her memory. And so he built the Taj Mahal. She was 39 when she died and apparently still very beautiful.

Shah Jahan was so distraught he went into seclusion for 9 days following her death. When he emerged he was a changed man; stooped, visibly smaller and white haired. He banned all music and merriment for two years.

Shah Jahan brought her body to Agra which at that time was the capital of India, then set to build the Taj Mahal. As with many Muslim buildings it is perfectly symmetrical. Made from brick and marble, designed and overseen by 37 artisans and with a workforce of 20,000, the Taj was started in 1632 and finished in 1658,

He sent camel trains to Egypt, China, Tibet and southern India for the finest precious stones and jewels for the decoration. The area of the Taj is the size of three football pitches with the walls inlaid with precious stone and Koranic verse. As Muslims do not have human or animal imagery on any religious buildings, the decorations are tulips, iris, lily and lotus designs. The gardens are now a shadow of their former self, after the British remodelled them to their own taste. Originally there would have had raised walkways to be able to view the plants and trees from above. A paradise garden.

Shah Jahan was eventually imprisoned by his cruel son in the nearby Red Fort, where for the rest of his life he could look out to see the mausoleum where his beloved wife lay. He died at the age of 73 and is now laid next to his wife in the crypt of the Taj Mahal.

The Taj is still very popular with 3 million visitors each year, however the Taj is suffering. Pollution from vehicles, which now have a half mile exclusion zone, and factories, which have now also been moved away, has damaged the building. All of the tourists bring condensation to the inner walls when they breathe causing deterioration to the surfaces. Nonetheless it is still spectacular when the sun rises causing the marble to glow from purple to pink and white.

Peter, who visited us last year to talk about the orphanages which he and his wife Pat sponsor, again reminded of the work still needed to be done in many countries to get kids off the streets and into places of refuge and education. His fee for this talk will go to the charity.

Next Monthly Meeting on Tue 23rd April at 2 pm

Paul Newsham will tell us that "There will never be another you" – a talk on biometrics.

GROUP REPORTS

Bridge – Leader Neil Roberts 01530 455957

This is Bridge for players of all levels playing friendly Contract Bridge with some chatter. Several of our number are "beginners" or "returners" and we have experienced players who are happy to help others improve their game. We now have about 20 active players.

The group has 2 venues. They usually meet every Monday alternately at the Hood Park Leisure Centre in the 1st floor function room for afternoon sessions and at Ivanhoe Social Club in the front lounge for evening sessions.

Free car parking is available at both venues, but must be signed in at Hood Park.

If you would like to know more, contact Neil on 01530 455957 or Pat Ford on 01827 830672

Calligraphy – Leader Jenny Slawson 01283 229718

12th March

We had a productive morning discussing planning and organisation. Gill, (who has had prior experience) led the meeting and provided us with notes and information to plan our work. We learned a range of techniques and ideas to try. All we have to do now is spend some time in putting these new-found skills into practice!

Computers – Leader John Howlett 01530 461774

We meet twice monthly to try to solve anyone's computer problems and to better learn how to use them whether they are PCs, Macs, iPads or Android Tablets. All are welcome. No experience necessary. If you have a computer problem, come along and we'll see if we can fix it.

18th March

We were six today and the first order of business was to log on with a new password as John H has had a new router installed, so those who did not attend today will need to be aware that their old password will not now work.

We discussed how to clear away cookies and browsing history without clearing away useful ones which allow us to sign in without passwords into our favourites. It is important to remember that cookies allow websites to sell on your browsing habits to advertisers. This is not the same as having strange emails targeting you from a company which has gained access to one of your friends' contacts list.

We discussed dodgy emails, phishing and spoof emails with dangerous links, how to recognise them and how to deal with them.

The subject of internet speeds came up, and the difference between upload and download speeds, (uploads are generally much slower) and why it is important when working in the Cloud. This will mainly affect people wanting to transfer or store lots of photos, or even videos in the Cloud.

Mike kept us up to date about the state of the art in flash- (pen-, thumb-) drives, with sight of a really tiny one packing 256 Gb of data. Which led onto the topic of the names for successively greater number series.

John D and Mike discussed how to copy a game CD onto a hard drive so that you do not have to load the CD to play the game.

Peter worked with John H on the process of backing up files to external hard drives.

Digital Photography – Leader John Howlett 01530 461774

We meet to try to understand how to get the best out of our digital cameras whether they are simple compact cameras or full-blooded DSLRs and how to edit or modify the pictures afterwards. We try to get out and practice every other month. We do not as yet enter competitions.

7th March

Five of us attended a presentation by Steve on how to use the manual settings on our cameras.

Steve went carefully through a very clear presentation, using the TV screen, starting with the basics of the Exposure triangle: F-Stop, Aperture and Film Speed, and showed how these are interdependent (a bit like Boyle's Gas Law).

Then he expounded on the features of each and their appropriate applications. Perhaps the best way for a novice to deal with the varying interactions would be to fix one setting, such as Film Speed (or ISO). This makes it far easier to proceed. You would then choose, say, the appropriate shutter speed and let the camera sort out the aperture, or vice versa

As an aid for the beginner, it is possible to see how the camera's automatic function has already solved this process by checking on your computer for the properties of existing photographs.

Then Steve showed us a series of possible mistakes for us to identify what went wrong. There followed a very useful exercise in composition, one which any artist would recognise.

Finally, he urged us to experiment and develop our own ways of getting a desired result. He ended with a short list of online references.

An excellent guide to help the beginner "Get off Auto and go Manual"

Drawing and Painting – Contact Chris Dogherty 01530 411148

20th March

This month the group and guests visited the "Leonardo Da Vinci" exhibition currently at the Derby Museum and Art Gallery.

A selection of Leonardo's drawings from the Queen's Royal Collection Trust have been allocated to Derby as part of a nationwide "road show" - a unique opportunity to view some of this incredible artist's work. There were mostly sketches and anatomical studies, drawn in ink, pencil or chalk, and it is incredible that they have survived 500 years and still look fresh and clear. The detail is amazing.

Next month, Wednesday April 17th 10am at 16, Winchester Way.

Suggested theme.. the "B" word !!!!!.

Family History – Leader John Dogherty 01530 411148

13th March

There were six working away today and we made good progress. Diane had to go early as her laptop was poorly, but Lesley was in full swing with a lot of work done and more to come building her tree.

Ana is now well on with the same work, but has just got into the DNA scene. She demonstrated her results and we discussed the implications. There is a story in her family of a Spanish element but no Spanish or south European DNA connections have shown up. It was suggested that maybe this story comes from the fact that sailors and soldiers from the Spanish Armada were shipwrecked around Britain's coasts, but this should have shown up anyway. The story continues.

Keith and John D worked on straightening out duplicates and "false" half siblings: a straightforward process but one which needs thought before action, as important information can be lost.

Chris D was working away from the table on her side of the family, but has come across multiple clues for John D's maternal side which now need pursuing.

John H, also working away from the venue, has been slowly assembling links in his Butler family chain but is struggling to link a child, given as grandson of his great grandparent, to them via his great grandmother? As always, Irish records can be very frustrating to trace and/or link up.

Gardening - Leader Paul Dean 01283 295987

The Gardening Group is one of the largest interest groups. The committee try hard to provide a selection of activities suitable for all, including talks on various topics, trips out to well-known gardens and social events where plants are swapped and garden problems are solved! There is always food and drink at the end of each meeting and occasionally prizes to be won! Please come along and meet us and give the gardening club a try.

21st March

At our latest meeting we had a talk and slide show on garden birds given by David Tidswell. Everyone appeared to enjoy the talk and presentation, with lots of information on different birds, their habitats, nesting habits and which plants will attract birds into our gardens. David also told us about song calls, how to construct nesting boxes, and lots more. A very entertaining presentation. Paul

History – Leader Jane Harris 01530 838025

28th March - Colin Ellis - "Racing the Train"

Colin stepped in at the last moment to substitute for the planned speaker Bill Devitt who was unable to attend and Bill's talk on the Orient Express will be carried over to another time. Colin's talk was also about trains but his was on the history of the racing of trains, which fascinated and appalled us all!

The first shot was of a locomotive being conducted by a walking attendant, much as a man might walk a horse. This was in 1804 and only small boys and dogs might have bothered to race the train.

Colin then took us through the stages by which steam locomotion became accepted, starting with all trains being proceeded by a man with a red flag on horseback and epitomised by the victory of 'Rocket' at the 1829 Rainhill Trials. From there to the expansion of railways to all parts of the UK took barely 25 years. Called Railway Mania this was the true Race of the Train! The vicissitudes by which rail standards were established were outlined and then Colin embarked on the history of the search for speed.

There were many aspects, most famously in the Race to the North in which several Railway Companies vied with each other to set ever more rapid times from London to Scotland whilst carrying fare-paying passengers. The risks were terrifying and rules were broken right, left and centre with drivers ignoring speed limits with impunity. But in the process the time came down from 12 hours to less than 7 hours. There was also strong competition on the London to Aberdeen and London to Plymouth routes. In some cases, on some stretches, those times are not equalled even today.

Queen Victoria was not amused by speeds over about 40mph, and had a special signal device set up on top of her coach to tell the driver to SLOW DOWN. But her son was of the opposite view and enjoyed speed.

The heyday of racing trains came in the 1920's and 30's, when eventually the world's fastest speed by a steam train was established in 1938 by Mallard at 126 miles an hour. Unbeaten to this day.

There was much more fascinating detail, and we were all enthralled by Colin's delivery and rare photographs. He closed with a clip of two German steam trains racing neck and neck only a few months ago. Steam, Smoke, Speed. J.M.W. Turner should have seen it!

The meeting was very well attended by 41 members this month.

Industrial Heritage – Leader Mike Stow 01530 469152

27th March – Amazon Fulfilment Centre - Rugeley

We had intended to visit Amazon at the end of last year, but understandably they don't really want visitors at their busiest time of the year and so we were put off until March. The building, opposite the power station at Rugeley is huge from the outside although impressively disguised by being painted in horizontal stripes of progressively lighter shades of blue. On arrival we were greeted at the door by our guide Gavin and his assistants who gathered us in a reception room to give us the obligatory safety briefing and to equip us with our "gilets jaune" (dayglo yellow vests) and headphones so that we could hear Gavin above the noise of the machinery. It was noticeable right from the start that they take security and safety seriously. All staff have to pass through security scanners on entry and departure and nothing unwanted is allowed in or out.

Once on the warehouse floor, we were led straight up to the 4th floor of the huge storage area. Gavin explained that every new item stocked by Amazon is first weighed and measured so that the computer system knows how big and heavy it is. Items are then scanned and randomly placed on the shelves (the location is also scanned!) so that popular items are scattered throughout the shelves. This stops bottlenecks forming with all the pickers wanting to go to the same place to pick up the latest computer game, book or DVD.

When an order is received, a picker is despatched to collect the item, put it in a plastic tray and place it on the huge conveyor system. If someone has ordered multiple items these are diverted to a holding station until all the items are together. They then go to the packing area where the computer tells the packer what size box is needed and provides a barcode label describing the destination address, the couriers name and the delivery date. The filled box is then scanned again and checked that it is the correct weight (i.e. the right objects are inside) and adds a printed human-readable address label. It then goes to the dispatch area where trucks take everything to the couriers' distribution depots. Barcodes are used everywhere to keep track of where everything is at any time. As we walked around it was noticeable how few people were on site. Although apparently they employ some thousands of staff, the operation runs 24/7 so only a fraction of the staff are present at any one time. And the building is HUGE. It might look big from outside, but inside you can't see from one end to the other!. There are 18 Fulfilment Centres in the UK alone, and this isn't their biggest Centre by far.

Amazon now offer an express same-day delivery option in certain areas. Rugeley used to hold the record for the fastest delivery, from a customer placing the order to delivery at their house in just 13 minutes!!

A truly interesting morning's introduction to the world of Amazon. And we got a free gift.

Italian Group – Leader Lynda Hall 01530 415922

25th March

We had our usual 4 today and it was revision day.

Substituting the correct particle, choosing the correct response to each of a series of questions and making sense of a telephone date arrangement. Then more Grammar practice with Buono, Bello and Bravo. Not quite so simple as it seems.

Applying "Anche" and its variants as appropriate. Choosing the correct form of Tenire and Venire. Changing the present tense of a series of statements into the continuous (Present Progressive) using the gerundive.

Then a set of statements and running commentaries on clothing fashion, which had at least one member floundering, not being a dedicated follower of fashion! But really stretching, none the less.

We will next look at Page 135, Section 9 "Cosa hai fatto di bello?" What have you been up to?

Literature Group - Leader Sandra Harris 01530 416653

Last month the group read and discussed "The Shepherd's Hut" by Tim Winton and next month will be reading "The L-shaped Room" by Lynne Reid-Banks

Luncheon Group – Leaders Colin & Sharon Woodland 01530 413867

14th March

This month we visited the Bull's Head at Thringstone near Grace Dieu Manor. They mainly serve carvery roasts and handmade pizzas and very nice it was too. The carvery consisted of a good selection of tasty meats and a variety of well-cooked veg. The pizzas looked good. There was a slight problem with desserts as the delivery truck hadn't arrived on time but the manager was on top of it and came around offering other choices which wouldn't normally have been on the carvery menu. Very pleasant and efficient.

We next meet at the Angel Inn at Coleorton on the 11th of April.

All U3A members are welcome to join us, just sign up at the Monthly meeting, email luncheon@ashbyu3a.co.uk or call 01530 513867 to book a place.

Music Appreciation – musicapp@ashbyu3a.co.uk

6th March

A good turnout at Neville's house were treated to another eclectic mix of fine music.

Lesley started the ball rolling with Brock Peters singing "It Ain't Necessarily So" from the movie soundtrack of Porgy & Bess and followed it with guitar virtuoso John Williams' "Sevilla".

Brenda then treated us to Madeleine Peyroux (who we variously thought was French or Canadian but a later check showed her to be from Athens, Georgia!) singing "Careless Love", a version which none of us could remember hearing before, but which was much appreciated by all. The Platters followed with their rendition of "Twilight Time".

Dorothy presented two very different numbers and in a first for our group sessions, played on good old-fashioned vinyl. "Bwala, Dance of Uganda" from David Fanshawe's African Sanctus album, which again was new to most of us, was followed by Rachmaninov's Concerto No.1. The latter was conducted by André Previn, who passed away recently, and who was to turn up again later in the session.

Paul introduced a couple of more contemporary numbers, Michael Bubl  singing "Everything", which he co-wrote, and the Walker Brothers telling us that "The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine Any More". Let's hope they are wrong!

Sally then introduced another Andr  Previn piece, this time as the pianist on Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue". Sally apologised for it being rather long, over 13 minutes, but all agreed that it was well worth the time.

Mike told us about Alison Krauss, who entered the music business at a very young age, making her first record at 14. Two years later she joined and later fronted the band Union Station with a group of well respected Country & Bluegrass musicians.

We listened to two tracks from their "Paper Airplane" album, the title track and "Dust Bowl Children", which featured some fine dobro playing - a sort of lap steel guitar.

Neil featured Richard Thompson, who first came to prominence with Fairport Convention. After hearing a little about him we listened to "I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight", a feelgood number which he made with his then wife, Linda, in the 70s, and followed this with "Outside of the Inside" a slower and more introspective song from 2003.

We then listened to the dulcet tones of Matt Monro singing "Walk Away" as introduced by Bob. All agreed that he had a wonderful voice and what a shame it was that he passed away at such a young age. Bob then told us a bit about American singer-songwriter Ben Folds, and played his song "Landed".

Host Neville then rounded off the session. Firstly with yet another side of André Previn. This time "Control Yourself" which he wrote and performed with his Jazz Quartet which included Doris Day. This was followed by Paul Weller singing a fine version of a very different song for him, "September in the Rain", with the Jools Holland Orchestra.

Considering that nobody had pre-consulted on their selections, it was particularly good to have seen so many different sides of André Previn. All that was missing was his guest appearance on the Morecambe & Wise Show as Andrew Preview. Sadly there was not time for this!

Next month's session will be at Sallie's - Woodside Cottage, 61 Melbourne Rd, Newbold, LE67 8JH - on April 3rd

Quiz group - Leader Malcolm Bird 01530 563872

The group meet at the Bull and Lion, Packington. The Start time is 2.30pm. You do not need to arrange a team before the meeting as teams will be drawn by lots on the day. This enables single individuals to take part - and to make new friends by joining an ad hoc team. Tea and coffee are served. Total cost £1.20 of which 20p goes to a kitty for prizes.

20th March

Having overcome the problems at the pub which prevented us meeting in February, 18 members of the quiz group met at the Bull and Lion in Packington this month. There was the usual hard fought contest between the teams for the fabulous prizes on offer (a notebook) with the usual banter when the answers were given. Our Quizmaster this month was Neil Roberts. As usual, a most enjoyable afternoon for the competitors, even if it did demonstrate vast deficiencies of knowledge for some of us.

Recorder group - Leader Joan Gibson - recorder@ashbyu3a.co.uk

The recorder group is a small but enthusiastic group. However more players in our group would definitely be a welcome addition.

20th March

First the good news: we have continued to play a variety of music arranged for 3 recorders, mostly descant/soprano, treble/alto, and tenor. On the occasions when only 2 of us can make it, we play duets, in whatever combination makes sense. Sometimes Marion and I play tenor and bass duets.

On 8th March, Marion and I went to a Playing Day hosted by Warwick SRP (Society of Recorder Players, a national organisation). The guest director for the day was Marg Hall, who composes and arranges music for groups of recorders. She is known for her jazzy rhythms, with plenty of swung quavers. It was good to play new music in a larger group, and to meet players from different groups.

Now for the bad news: Barbara has decided to leave the group. It seems that it was bottom of the heap when it came to prioritising her activities, and, as she seemed to be doing "too much", she decided to stop playing with us. We parted on good terms, and still see her around.

The remaining 2 need to decide whether we constitute a "group". New members would be welcome.

Supper Club – Contact Colin Ellis 01530 272592 - supper@ashbyu3a.co.uk

This group visits local pubs and restaurants for an evening meal. We usually meet on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7 for 7.30 pm.

If you would like to join in us, please sign up at the monthly meeting or contact Colin, by phone or by email, so we can book the relevant number of seats. If you need transport please see Colin and we will try to arrange for some car-sharing.

28th March – The Bull’s Head, Wilson

This month we visited the Bull’s Head at Wilson, a pub which the walking group and lunch club have both visited before but this was our first visit in the evening. When we arrived the pub was in full flow as a local boozier, which is nice to see these days, although many of the locals appeared to drift off for their own dinner at home. The 14 of us were seated at 2 long tables with our pre-dinner drinks to peruse the nice-looking menu and the specials board. Orders were taken quickly and starters arrived soon after. After that, the mains duly arrived with no delays or difficulties and the tables fell quiet, apart from the odd “mmm”, as everyone tucked in. The usual suspects ordered puddings to follow. There were certainly no complaints and all the diners seemed to enjoy the food and the service very much. Another excellent evening out and a pub to be recommended.

Trips Group – Contact John or Margaret Howlett 01530 461774

19th March - “The Magic Flute” at Theatre Royal Nottingham

Some 20-odd people shared cars to Clifton South before taking the tram into the city centre. Seven of us went in early in order to eat an excellent pre-show dinner at Bistrot Pierre.

The opera, performed by Opera North, was a somewhat avant-garde interpretation of Mozart’s famous opera. Sung in English and with many spoken sections, some delivered directly to the audience, it was at times comic, tragic, dramatic or just plain weird! The singing was excellent as was the characterisation and the clever staging but the star was undoubtedly Gavan Ring as Papageno, the bird-catcher. His stage-presence, his comic timing and asides to the audience were brilliant. A very entertaining evening.

27th May – “A concert of Russian music” at Birmingham Symphony Hall

22 people have signed up for this and it is now sold-out. Colin will be arranging car-sharing and a meal before the concert. Details to follow.

WALKS

The walk leaders will be at the meeting place whatever the weather and will only cancel the walk in consultation with those who turn up on the day. All dogs must be kept under control at all times. Walking boots or strong shoes are recommended. Be prepared for bad weather by taking warm waterproof clothing. Leaders act in a voluntary capacity. All ramblers walk at their own risk.

Walking Group - Leader Bob Baxendale 01530 481435

The walking group usually does walks of between 7-8 miles, twice a month, and we normally have a lunch stop at a pub near to, or at the end of, the walk.

5th March. Walk 200. Over Haddon, Derbys. led by Bob Baxendale

Today we did the 200th walk in the nine and a half years since the Walking Group and Ashby U3A were formed. The first walk was on the 10th August 2010 and we did about 5 miles from Staunton Harold around Calke Abbey with a stop at the tea room. It was warm & sunny, and there were 10 of us.

Appropriately today's walk was led by Bob Baxendale as he founded the Group in 2010 and has led it ever since.

This time the walk set off from Over Haddon, near Bakewell after driving an hour from Ashby. There were 24 of us today and, after the obligatory start-of-walk group photo outside of the Lathkil Hotel, we set off on the footpath downhill to Conksbury Bridge, with views back up Lathkill Dale. After crossing the bridge we continued down Lathkill Dale to Alport, where the Bradford River joins the Lathkill River. We then walked up Bradford Dale almost to its end before climbing out and passing Lomberdale Hall and the end of Long Rake, over the top to Meadow Place Grange. We passed through the farm yard here before dropping back down into Lathkill Dale, and out the other side up the steep climb to Over Haddon and a buffet lunch at the Lathkil Hotel. (And yes they spell it with just one l).

It was a lovely cool, sunny but windy winter's day which resulted in great visibility and fabulous views. We walked about 6 miles.

After lunch Bob was somewhat surprised to be presented with a framed map of the walk we had just completed. Steve Jennings gave a humorous speech thanking Bob for organising the Walking Group from the very beginning, and for all the 200 walks. Steve had arranged for the map frame to be demountable so that all those present could sign it. It will be taken to the next couple of walks so that as many people as possible can add their signatures.

19th March. Hatton Locks. Led by Kevin and Chris Green

On a dull March morning 14 of us gathered at the Hatton Car park at the top of a flight of 21 locks. After the traditional photo outside the nearby cafe we ordered lunch and set off along the canal. Soon we crossed a bridge and continued across several fields arriving at Haseley Parish church for coffee and banana stop. Setting off again we passed by the old Hatton Hall asylum to re-join the canal at the bottom of the 21 locks an impressive sight. After a steady climb and 8.5 miles later, we arrived back for an outdoor lunch the first of the year.

Medium walks – Leader Carole Harriman 01530 222634

The Medium Walk group do walks of up to 6 miles. Anyone interested please contact Carole.

11th March Ibstock, Odstone, Nailstone led by Val and Trev Reed

On bright, windy morning, 10 of us met for a 5 mile walk from Ibstock. Passing by the scenic sewerage works and through a very muddy farm, we headed for Odstone, where we joined the Ivanhoe way, to cross fields to Nailstone, before heading northwards and back to Ibstock where we enjoyed glorious views of Ibstock church in the sunshine despite a very strong chilly wind.

Short walks Group – Leader John Howlett 01530 461774

The short walk group organises walks using well defined paths and routes without stiles. The maximum length is 3 miles. All are welcome.

15th March – A walk in Willesley Woods led by John H

It was a day predicted to be wet and windy, despite this 7 people met at the Oakthorpe colliery picnic site. The weather turned out to be fine if a little windy. The grassy areas were wet from heavy rain on the days before we met. We walked in Willesley woods, including the Royal British Legion memorial stone, the site of the Oakthorpe shafts. We lingered at the display board telling us about the Ashby Canal. When we returned to the cars, we travelled in convoy to Moira Furnace cafe for a drink and eats.

Your Committee

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