



Ashby U3A

March Newsletter



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Dear All,

What strange and uncertain times we live in. 2020 is not yet three months old and yet life has changed out of all recognition. On New Year's Day, I doubt if anyone here had even heard of the virus which has now transformed so much.

Whilst it is obviously regrettable that we are unable to hold our usual meetings and activities, their suspension is inevitable. Many of us fall into the older age group and may have existing medical conditions so we need to do as much as possible to protect ourselves.

It is also clearly right that we all try to minimise the peak demand on NHS services. I fear that this situation will last for some weeks, so it may be a while before we can resume our normal activities. Rest assured that we will do so as soon as it can be done safely. In the meantime, I would urge you to try and keep in touch with your fellow members, particularly the Groups to which you belong, as much as you can by telephone, e-mail or social media.

However, as I write this, the sun is shining and the spring flowers and blossom are beginning a colourful display, so the end of the world has not happened yet! I remain optimistic that things will eventually return to normal.

I hope that you are all well and remain so. It will be really great to be able to welcome you back to our next meeting, however long that takes.

Best wishes to you all,

Colin Ellis
Chairman

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 2020-21 IS POSTPONED

We are not actively collecting renewal payments nor issuing membership cards. However do not worry, all 2019-20 members will remain members until we are back to normal, or something resembling it. At that time we will review membership charges for 2020-21.

If you have already paid or newly joined, thank you. Again we will review charges when we are back to normal.

NOTICES

FRAUDS

1. Leicestershire Neighbourhood Watch are warning people to watch out for scammers who might knock on your door offering to collect shopping for you. They will take your money and never return.

If someone is offering to do your shopping, be sure you know who they are and ideally pay them when they bring your shopping.

2. Those pesky TV Licensing emails will just not go away. Action Fraud received over 3,000 reports about them in January.

The emails state that your TV License is about to expire. It is a ploy to access your financial details. **Don't click on these links!**

It looks genuine but DON'T TAKE THE BAIT!!

HELP & WELFARE

If anyone needs someone to chat to, the following people are ready to chat:

Our Chairman, Colin Ellis 01530 272592

Colin Woodland 01530 413867

Ann Donegan 01283 760348

Tony Smith 01530 831822

Our Welfare Officer, Estelle Sandles 01530 459858 or email welfare@ashbyu3a.co.uk.

Estelle can also offer support and welfare information.

AgeUK - www.ageuk.org.uk has lots of information and advice on all matters regarding coronavirus including matters financial or health.

The U3A National Office has an email Newsletter which you can sign up for at <https://u3a.org.uk/email> It has the latest advice on the virus and also lots of information and advice on how to keep safe and occupied.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Can we ask Group Leaders (and members) to keep in touch with other group members to see how they are coping.

If any Group Leader wants phone numbers for their members, Membership Sec Iain at members@ashbyu3a.co.uk or I, Mike at webmaster@ashbyu3a.co.uk will be able to provide them.

ACTIVITIES

As you will obviously have realised, it is not possible for us to gather for our usual meetings, outings or group activities until the Government gives us the all-clear to leave our homes for such matters.

In the mean time, some Groups are attempting to develop virtual groups which can operate remotely and allow us to at least keep in touch and maybe continue with whatever activities they were doing before albeit in a different manner. See below for more information.

VIRTUAL GROUPS

The usual Group reports from last month are further below, however as I said earlier, some Groups are attempting to keep running. It would seem to be important at this time to try to keep in touch with Group members to see if they are alright or needing anything, even if it is just conversation. This is what some Groups are doing.

Supper Club

The supper club had its first virtual meeting on Thursday night, our usual meeting date. Several of us decided to cook something a bit special and to enjoy the meal whilst thinking of other members. Most seem to spontaneously decide to have a curry, but others had homemade chicken pie, poached salmon and even pheasant. The evening coincided with "Clap for the NHS" which helped remind everyone not just of their friends but also those working so hard to try to keep us safe.

Lunch Club

The Lunch Club is planning to do something similar to Supper Club on April 9th and subsequent months.

Music Appreciation

We are planning to carry on listening to music chosen by the members. Members will/have downloaded Spotify, which is free, and will suggest tracks that are available on said App for each of us to listen to. By emailing their suggestions to all members, it is easy to look up the tracks and play them whilst having the customary tea/coffee and biscuits. Preferably at the usual time but not necessarily. We may even be brave enough to comment on the choices!

Computer Group

The Computer Group is still able to help people with their computer, tablet or smartphone problems. Obviously we can't do repairs, but if you have software problems or other difficulties email help.computer@ashbyu3a.co.uk or phone John Howlett on 01530 461774 and someone will have a look at your problem and get back to you.

Other Groups

I don't know if any other Groups have plans in place yet, but I would have thought that many could keep going remotely. Here are some suggestions. Please do not take them as instructions from me or the committee, but it would be nice to try and keep the various groups going in some form or other.

Arts & Crafts can continue with their current projects. Photograph your work and send it to others.

The Quiz could send out a set of questions for people to answer. No cheating.

Family History can work at home but phone/email each other for help.

Literature Group can still keep reading and perhaps email their review to the others.

Painting and Drawing can keep painting and drawing. If they can photograph their efforts, we can get them on the website.

Calligraphers can keep penning and emailing their results to each other or have them posted on the website.

The Gardeners are very busy gardening at the moment, but they may wish to keep in touch with each other for advice or just to chat.

The obvious groups with a problem to keep going are the **Walking Groups** and **Trips & Outings**.

We are all allowed to go out for some exercise but walking alone is not the same as walking with a group of friends. And we can't go to the pub afterwards. One day!

Likewise we can look forward to some lovely trips in the not to distant future.

OTHER THINGS TO DO

Many people have dug out jigsaws from the back of the cupboard.

Those that are able to, have taken up knitting and cross-stitch.

Scala Radio is on DAB, online and can be listened to on tablets etc. It is a mix of popular classics, film scores, light music with very few ads and not too much chat. Very relaxing. Google Scala Radio for details.

The National Theatre is screening plays on YouTube every Thursday night at 7pm. Search for "National Theatre at home" for details

Royal Opera House are on www.youtube.com/royaloperahouse with a series of operas and ballets each Friday night at 7pm

Google Arts & Culture – <https://artsandculture.google.com> has high resolution photos of many of the world's great paintings and other artworks from 2000 museums round the world, plus you can explore the most famous places in the world such as Eiffel Tower, Angkor Wat, Sydney Opera House plus loads more. Somewhere to get lost for a few hours.

If anyone has any other ideas that I can pass on, please let me know at webmaster@ashbyu3a.co.uk

GROUP REPORTS FROM THOSE WHO MET LAST MONTH

Arts and Crafts – Leader Sharon Woodland – 01530 413867

5th March

The Group met at 2 Marlborough Road on 5 March and completed the top layer of their Cot Quilt after 5 sessions. Sharon will now add the wadding and backing before quilting the layers together.

The Arts & Crafts web page has a gallery which shows a photograph of the ladies' handiwork so far (the safety pins will be progressively removed as the wadding and backing are attached).

Computers – Leader John Howlett - 01530 461774

16th March

For our last meeting before the official shut down, we had 7 stalwarts.

Colin Ellis had a problem capturing individual photos from a commercially produced DVD of his own images. John H worked with him. It required the download of a special piece of paid for Software (Uniconverter) which worked.

John D brought along his Flight Sim and Colin Woodward tried to help overcome the problem of recognising the joystick. It was not to be, but JD will keep trying with various solutions offered on the Internet.

There was a general discussion on setting up means by which U3A members could keep in touch and help each other, among them setting up a WhatsApp group, and a Face Book page, or at least the use of Messenger within FB.

In later news these seem to have got off the ground extraordinarily well.

There is no further meeting date set, but do not hesitate to call or message the group or any of its members if you need help or to discuss things computer.

Go well, and keep safe. See you all on the other side!

Digital Photography – Leader John Howlett - 01530 461774

4th March

For our second meeting of the year we had four present. We decided not to go out as the weather was gloomy and damp. Instead we discussed the topic of focussing using both simple digital cameras and more advanced equipment.

Edwin made a very effective and instructive presentation on the TV, connected to his camera, which explored the techniques of focussing on a specific spot in the image, and the way in which detail can be picked out and used. The effect of depth of field was demonstrated most effectively.

Even with simple equipment, using the two pressure feature available on most cameras, it was possible to make a passable try at forcing the focus of automatic systems to lock on to the desired target.

The use of a tripod was touched on briefly, and methods to avoid key-stoning (i.e. having the image taper from top to bottom).

We also quickly looked at the different effect that changes in overall background can have on any given scene: for instance between the same scene in normal sunlight and conditions and the same scene in full snow, when a curious black and white effect occurs.

Family History – Leader John Dogherty - 01530 411148

11th March

Despite the dire warnings about the Virus, we still had six brave souls today. After going through Decontamination (washing their hands to the tune of Happy Birthday!) we were able to concentrate on our work.

Keith has a need to pin down the precise date of birth of an ancestor for whom he has a transcript from Ancestry. We tried to find them again, but drew a blank. So he will need to apply to the GRO for a copy of the Certificate. This will give him more information than the Transcript, though. He also learned how to correct the gender assignments of tree members.

Carolyn is deep into the Parish Registers, and having difficulty with the faintness of some of the entries. This is making it tricky for her correctly to identify the relationships of some of her ancestors, especially those who have the same names but in different generations.

Eileen is still trying to connect up two branches of her tree which have the same family name, and some of the same first names. There just has to be a common ancestor, but she has not managed to track them down yet. We may need to call in the Heavy Mob to crack this one!

Dora was troubled by the sudden emergence of a different first name in a family tree that seems always to have had the same first name. We discussed how this might happen, and how to check that we have the right person. Sometimes it is not possible to be absolutely sure, but we can assign a probability. If still unsure, the entry can be flagged as provisional. We looked at the convention in some parts of the country for the assignment of names to children. This is only a convention and should not preclude deviations from it.

John H is once more having difficulties in tracking his modern day relations from earlier generations.

Luncheon Group – Leaders Colin & Sharon Woodland - 01530 413867

12th March – Angel Inn, Coleorton

The Angel Inn, Coleorton, was the venue for the Luncheon Club's March adventure. A total of 19 intrepid lunchers enjoyed a comprehensive menu with something to everyone's taste.

All the members of staff were both attentive and amiable. Food was served promptly, good and hot and well presented.

The next Luncheon was scheduled to be at the Nag's Head, Castle Donnington. However this will be postponed until the all clear is sounded!

Meantime, if you would like to join us for a "virtual lunch" on 9 April, just email luncheon@ashbyu3a.co.uk.

Music Appreciation – Leader Lesley Thomas - musicapp@ashbyu3a.co.uk

4th March

With ten members present, it was yet another morning of good music started off by Ann with two James Bond themes; Nancy Sinatra and "You Only Live Twice" and "We Have All The Time In The World" by Louis Armstrong.

Dorothy was next and she played two very different pieces. Bobby Darren's "A Walk In The Park" followed by Mozart's "A Musical Joke"

Sally continued the classical theme with Rachmaninov's "Prelude in G Minor" played by Kathrine Lamb, a pianist from Leicester, then "If I Ruled The World" by Harry Secombe proving that the Welsh can sing!

Barbara then gave us a second Welsh connection of the day with Aled Jones and Handel's "Did You Not Hear My Lady" and then Cliff Richard and two for the price of one recording of "Over The Rainbow / What A Wonderful World".

Barry gave us Procol Harum with "A Whiter Shade Of Pale" and the theme from Ghost - "Unchained Melody" by The Righteous Brothers.

Brenda brought the wonderful Carol Kidd singing "Dat Dere" and the original stage cast of Calamity Jane who had "Just Blown In From The Windy City"

David's first piece was Dave Brubeck playing Bernstein's "I Feel Pretty" and a third Welsh connection "Myfanwy" (beloved) with Bryn Terfel.

Nev had Dave Edmunds "I Hear You Knocking" and great to hear again Lonnie Donegan with "Muleskinner Blues"

Lesley had two songs with the same title "I'll Never Find Another You ", one by The New Seekers and the other was by Billy Fury.

Neil tried to convince us that he was a going to be able to turn the rain off with music by playing "Crying In The Rain" by The Everly Brothers, "Rider In The Rain" by Randy Newman and The Temptations' "I Wish It Would Rain" - and it did.

Thank you Neil for hosting.

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

5th March

Three of us met this afternoon, 2 descants and a treble (SSA). The number was disappointing, after a maximum of 6, but we managed to find enough suitable music to keep us happily occupied.

We played:

Madrigals (SSA): "Benedictus", "Where the Bee Sucks", and "It Was a Lover and His Lass"

Sellenger's Round

Twelve Trios for Recorder Ensemble: Pavane by Arbeau

Recorder Poppets: all seven pieces (we haven't played any of these before, so it was good sight-reading practice!)

Bronze Recorder Ensemble Pieces: Gavotte, Copycats, the latter being a disaster from my point of view, as it's written for 3 descants, and I couldn't cope!

Joan

The Science & Technology Group - Organising committee: Tanya Dempster, Paul McKay, Bill Devitt

9th March.

The Group had its first "proper" meeting and Bill Devitt gave us a talk on how steam engines work, concentrating on the various pieces of equipment which gets the heat from the coal, via the steam, to the cylinders which push back and forth to drive the wheels round. Most enlightening and not half as simple as you might think!

Trips Group – Contact John or Margaret Howlett - 01530 461774

Obviously the planned trips are in abeyance. Colin is currently negotiating with various venues to see if we can get refunds on tickets purchased, or whether they are going to just offer tickets for future events.

The Rail trip from Bristol to Cornwall is still scheduled to go ahead in July although that is looking increasingly unlikely. Just to be sure, Colin has booked a hotel in Bristol for two nights with the express proviso that it can be cancelled. Those going will have to decide sometime in June if we are to cancel and get our money back. Hopefully the train organisers will have decided whether the trip will be running by then.

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.

17th March. Hartshorne to Repton Common

There were 21 walkers today. We walked about 7 miles on this spring morning. Sadly we could not lunch together because the Bulls Head was closed due to the restrictions imposed by the Government in response to the Corona Virus Crisis. Since then restrictions have been tightened which prevents us driving anywhere to start a walk or to walk in groups. So until restrictions are lifted there will be no more walks.

Medium walks – mediumwalk@ashbyu3a.co.uk

The Medium Walk group do walks of up to 6 miles.

9th March. Calke Abbey grounds led by Jane

9 walkers met at the round car park adjacent to Calke village, which has now reverted back to a free car park, on a sunny if cool and breezy morning. We saw the welcome return of Val and Trevor after their far flung travels. The 4 mile walk took us round part of the reservoir, over the weir and past the deer park. There were some deer visible but they were all having a rest and lying down.

We then entered the 'Bluebell' wood where the bluebell leaves were apparent but too early for any flowers. It is worth going again later in the Spring to see them. After leaving the woodland we descended down to a track and onto the new development in the grounds, Calke Explore, where we had a coffee stop.

A pleasant place to stop with plenty of seats and toilets and at weekends and busy summer days the café is open (but obviously not at present). It was then into another woodland which eventually brought us to Calke Abbey church and thence along the road, out of the park and back down the lane to the cars. Not too much mud encountered by the current standards!

Your Committee are:

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|-----------------|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Colin Ellis | Chairman | chairman@ashbyu3a.co.uk | 01530 272592 |
| Anne Donegan | Business Secretary | secretary@ashbyu3a.co.uk | 01283 760348 |
| Val Reed | Treasurer | treasurer@ashbyu3a.co.uk | 01530 564279 |
| Iain Banns | Membership Secretary | members@ashbyu3a.co.uk | 01530 416697 |
| Colin Woodland | Groups Co-ordinator | interestg@ashbyu3a.co.uk | 01530 413867 |
| Peter Clement | Minutes Secretary | minutes@ashbyu3a.co.uk | 01530 560894 |
| Estelle Sandles | Welfare | welfare@ashbyu3a.co.uk | 01530 459858 |
| Bill Wilson | Speaker seeker | speakers@ashbyu3a.co.uk | 01530 413182 |
| Mike Stow | Communications | webmaster@ashbyu3a.co.uk | 01530 469152 |
| Avril Wilson | Social Secretary | socials@ashbyu3a.co.uk | 01530 413182 |
| Tony Smith | Member | tony@ashbyu3a.co.uk | 01530 831822 |