



Ashby U3A

May Newsletter



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Dear All,

I continue to hope that you are all well and able to cope with the rather strange times in which we find ourselves. As far as possible, contact has been maintained within the groups and membership and, as the Committee, we have not become aware of any major issues within our ranks. However, if you or anyone you know is in need of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact one of the Committee: we will try to help wherever we can.

Sadly, this is the third newsletter since these difficulties began and we have also lost three of our monthly meetings. I very much regret this as I regard the social side of our U3A as most important, whether through Group or Monthly Meetings. Whilst I fear it may be some time before we are able to resume as in the past, I hope it will not be too long before we are able to begin some activity. I am very much looking forward to it.

On a personal note, it would never have occurred to me three months ago, amidst the myriad of our activities, that the highlights of my week would be the fortnightly trip to the supermarket and, very exciting this, a trip to click and collect at Screwfix in Coalville.

Times indeed change! Although far from an expert gardener, I do try to grow things and green shoots are appearing. I am not completely sure whether these are vegetables or if the weeds have developed a new survival strategy and are now growing at regular intervals in rows!

Progress continues on the model railway, although it can be slow and frustrating at times. I have concluded that electricity is not a very intelligent substance - it has no idea where it's supposed to go!

However you may be reassured to know, that even here, the universal rule applies. When all else has failed, try reading the instructions!

Obviously it is very difficult to plan ahead without any sort of timescale, but some small steps have been possible. You will be aware that we have had to postpone our 10th Anniversary celebrations from August. Nevertheless, as you will see elsewhere, Val has continued to work on the cake decorations, representing our various groups. I mention this as a sign of our determination to resume our activities as soon as we can. Rest assured, we WILL have a PARTY! There WILL be CAKE!

In the meantime, I hope that you remain well and enjoy the first small steps towards normality. I look forward to seeing you all.

Colin Ellis
Chairman

OUR 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

As Colin says above, our celebrations have obviously had to be postponed, but in the mean time Val Reed has been busy preparing to make a U3A themed cake for when we will be able to gather and celebrate 10(+) years of Ashby U3A. Here are some of the fabulous decorations she has made. She assures me they will last until celebration day. Can you spot your Group among them?



COMMENT

You'll see that this month's newsletter seems to be obsessed with food! Above you have pictures of virtual cake, further on the Lunch and Supper Clubs are drooling over hugely expensive virtual meals in posh restaurants.

I think we have all been "locked down" for too long, away from social contact and meals out. Hopefully it won't be too long before we can at least see and meet up with family and friends but it might be a while before we are eating the meals imagined below!

POSTPONEMENT OF OUR AGM

Our AGM was due to take place in July and this would include election or re-election of some Committee Members. Allowing for the formal notice of the AGM which has to be given to members in advance, it is very unlikely that we will be able to proceed as scheduled, so we have taken the decision to postpone it. The AGM will be held as soon as reasonably practical after we can resume our activities and, in the meantime, current Committee Members have agreed continue in post.

Please note that, whenever the meeting can take place, only paid-up members are entitled to take part and vote - if this is a matter of concern to you, your subscription should be paid prior to that meeting. We will give the usual minimum 21 day notice before holding an AGM.

HELP & WELFARE

The Committee has attempted to contact all those members who we thought maybe short of other contact, or who we weren't sure about. If we missed you out, sorry, and if you would like or need someone to talk to, the following people are always 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.

COVID Symptom Tracker

If you wish to help Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals to track the spread of Covid 19 across the country and find out what type of person is getting infected, you can sign up to the COVID 19 Symptom Tracker here at <https://covid/joinzoe.com> You need a smartphone to which an app is installed.

It asks you for some personal details of age, height, weight etc. and general health and medication. This can all be anonymous if you wish.

You can then report each day how you feel, it takes seconds. You can see how Covid 19 is spreading or retreating and you will be helping research into how and why it spreads, and who is most vulnerable. 2.7 million people are already signed up.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

As I mentioned above, the committee are doing our utmost to keep in contact with as many members we can during this time of enforced isolation. Can we ask everyone, but particularly Group Leaders, to keep in touch with their group's 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 Mike at webmaster@ashbyu3a.co.uk will be able to provide them.

WITH APOLOGIES TO WORDSWORTH

I wandered lonely as a cloud
Two metres from the madding crowd
When all at once my name was called
To enter Waitrose' hallowed hall.

This was the pensioners' special hour.
I'd gone to get a bag of flour.
But I forgot, when through the door,
What I had gone to Waitrose for.

The Waitrose staff were extra kind.
I told them it had slipped my mind.

They asked what else I had forgot
They clearly thought I'd lost the plot.

I phoned my wife again to ask.
And remind me of this special task:
"I need some flour to bake a cake
With all that cream you made me take."

"Yes, I recall" I had to lie.
I dared not ask what flower to buy
But then I saw them next the tills
A bunch of golden daffodils!

VIRTUAL GROUPS

Until the Government gives us the all-clear to leave our homes for social gatherings, 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.

Lunch Club – May 14th

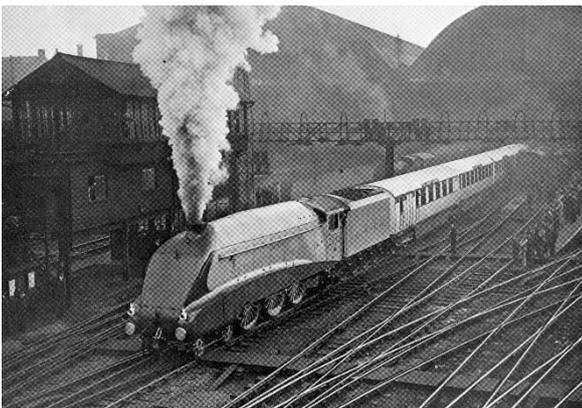
What a fantastic day it was! Roberts, true to form, turned up on time with their brand spanking new Virtual mind transporter to convey us to the Ritz in Piccadilly, London. What a bus! It had every luxury we could imagine. It was totally Eco-friendly. It used no fuel, caused no exhaust avoided congestion and took no time at all to make the journey.

First on the bus were Ann and Bill Devitt making a bee-line for the back seat. From my recollection of travelling on school busses all I could ever see was a mass of arms and legs as the sixth form boys and girls tried to eat each other. Even then I much preferred Bread pudding with loads of custard. Next came Sheila and Paul Dean with their flask of tea (at least that's what they said was in it) for the journey. Heather Garnett, boarded the bus with some apprehension while Fred took a look round the outside of the bus a bit concerned that he couldn't find any tires to kick. The bus works on a secret levitation system and doesn't have any wheels. Isobel Salt arrived with Pat Orton and Margaret Berry all giggling like schoolgirls but clearly excited about the prospects of a posh nosh in London. Mike Stow, not wanting to be outdone by Robert's new coach, suddenly appeared from nowhere having transported himself from home to the coach in the experimental matter transporter he has been working on during lockdown. Unfortunately, due to some teething problems, we could see him but he could not see us and thought he was the only one on the coach. As expected, Colin Ellis was not going to be outdone by Mike and his garage too has been a hive of activity as he perfected his time travel machine. Needless to say, Colin did not join us on the coach but met us at the Ritz after a fantastic journey that I will let him describe a little later on in this report. Sharon and I brought up the rear arriving just as the driver put his thinking cap on to get us started on our journey.

Despite the amazing speed of the journey, whatever we thought we would like to see appeared outside the window. Of course, Bill and Ann were so busy on the back seat they didn't spot the Orient Express travelling at speed on the line by Watford Gap. Only Paul and Sheila noticed the brief stop at a picnic sight where they enjoyed the "tea" from their flask. All the others looked like they had dozed off but I am sure their minds conjured up amazing sights as the miles zipped by.

The coach driver was very considerate and, when we arrived, he specially dropped Ann and Bill off at the tradesmen's entrance as they particularly wanted to go that way. Next time you see them, perhaps you could ask them why. The rest of us were dropped off at the main entrance in Piccadilly. It was not until after lunch that I was able to meet up with Colin Ellis. I will let Colin tell you why in his own words.

"I regret that I was unable to join you at the Ritz but, unfortunately, in 1936, The Silver Jubilee is not scheduled to reach Kings Cross until 2.00pm, so I lunched on the train. Unlike today, but as was usual with the LNER high speed streamlined trains, arrival was slightly ahead of time. (Trains then arriving 10 minutes late were not regarded as being on time). Also, unlike today, I enjoyed a most excellent 5



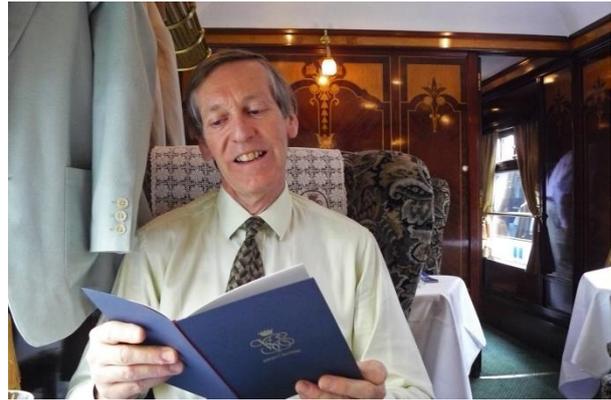
WINE LIST		MENU	
<p>BRANDY</p> <p>Per 1/2 Bottle Cognac, A.C. Hennessy 100 2.00 Cognac, J. & F. Martell 100 2.00</p> <p>WHISKY</p> <p>Per 1/2 Bottle James Watson, Scotch 100 2.00 J. & F. Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 J. & F. Martell, Cognac 100 2.00</p> <p>VERMOUTH</p> <p>Per 1/2 Bottle Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00</p> <p>BOUQUANT (WINE)</p> <p>Per 1/2 Bottle Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00</p> <p>CHAMPAGNE</p> <p>Per 1/2 Bottle Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00</p> <p>MINERAL WATERS</p> <p>Per 1/2 Bottle Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00</p> <p>COGNAC AND CREAMS</p> <p>Per 1/2 Bottle Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00</p>	<p>BRANDIES</p> <p>Per 1/2 Bottle Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00</p> <p>COGNAC</p> <p>Per 1/2 Bottle Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00</p> <p>COGNAC</p> <p>Per 1/2 Bottle Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00</p> <p>COGNAC</p> <p>Per 1/2 Bottle Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00</p> <p>COGNAC</p> <p>Per 1/2 Bottle Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00</p>	<p>Dinner 5/-</p> <p>Grape Fruit Cream Souffle Grilled Sirloin Duck Sauce Beef Fillet and Potatoes Roast Chicken French Beans Potatoes Charlotte Russe Hot Apple Toss Cheese, etc. Dessert Coffee 4d.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Per-Chef</p>	<p>DRINKS</p> <p>Crossed Potatoes 0.00 Fruit (selected by a special menu) per portion 2.00</p> <p>FISH</p> <p>Grilled Sirloin 3.00 Duck Sauce 1.00 Beef Fillet and Potatoes 2.00 Roast Chicken and Potatoes 2.00 French Beans and Potatoes 1.00</p> <p>MINERAL WATERS</p> <p>Per 1/2 Bottle Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00</p> <p>COGNAC</p> <p>Per 1/2 Bottle Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00 Martell, Cognac 100 2.00</p>

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course lunch, freshly prepared on the train and most attentively served. The choice may not be quite as flamboyant or extensive as the Ritz but the chefs there do not work in a kitchen the size of a broom cupboard and which, together with the restaurant, is being hurled round the countryside at over 90mph. I attach photographs of the train and of an LNER dining car table.

Unfortunately, I do not have a picture of the actual Silver Jubilee interior laid out for service. Also attached is the menu and wine list.

My choice was the soup, lemon sole, roast mutton, Charlotte Russe, cheese with a half bottle of the Niersteiner and a half bottle of Volnay. With a quarter bottle of sherry, an old liqueur brandy and a couple of cups of coffee (and a friendly porter to help me off the train on arrival!), that set me back 15/11d plus tips. I'm not sure that even then the Ritz would have provided very much for well under £1!



Imagination is aided a little in that, in 2014, to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Mallard's record speed, some special trains hauled by the same type of locomotive, authorised to travel at 90mph, were run and I was fortunate enough to be able to travel from York to Kings Cross. We covered the 50 miles York to Retford at an average start to stop speed of 66.9mph and from there to Connington (south of Peterborough) at 69.8mph, helped by reaching 92mph only 9 miles from the Retford start. From Essendine to Werrington, 9.2 miles we averaged 91.2mph, so I can claim to have experienced 90mph dining behind steam.

The nearest thing to fine dining on British Railways today is undoubtedly the VSOE Orient Express Pullman Train and the other photograph shows me struggling to reach a decision! I can remember when such luxury would be available every day - all you had to do was turn up at the station. As a witness to a Parliamentary enquiry once said, "There may have been improvements....but not for the better".

Once we were in the Dining Room we met up again with Ann and Bill who, having reacquainted themselves with many of the staff on their way from the Tradesmen's Entrance, wove their way through the maze of corridors to join us.



Mike really planned to pushed the boat out starting with a bottle of the Cuvée Sir Winston Churchill champers (£400) whilst perusing the menu, hopefully with an appetiser or two, and saving some for later.

"I would like to go for the Epicurean 7 courses and its flight of wines, but it has to be served to the whole table, so rather than impose that on everyone, I'll go with:

Norfolk Crab and Avocado (£36)

Cornish Turbot (£56)

Beef Tournedos (£45)

Cheese board (£25)

And a light dessert to finish! - Rhubarb and Custard (£19)

It would have to be a decent Chablis (£195) with the fish, and a Gevrey-Chambertin (£450) for the beef and cheese. I'd finish off the champagne with the pudding.

Coffee and Armagnac to finish (me) off.

I make that £1226 plus coffee & brandy and a tip. Call it £1400

Maybe book a room for a lie down afterwards. Starting at £525. Say £2k all in.

And here is his report, send to me after a period of rehabilitation and detoxification:

"I've just recovered from the Feast at the Ritz and thought it was about time I told you how it went. The virtual coach trip was fine, but since we were all in isolation, I didn't see anyone else on the coach. Lunch was excellent as you would expect at the Ritz and the food along with the Champagne, Chablis and Burgundy all went down a treat.

It was all lovely and tasted very different. So different in fact that it all tasted just like mac 'n' cheese!"



Heather and Fred were fairly restrained in their virtual choice at the Ritz but really splashed out at home:

Ritz Menu choices	Fred
1 st Course:	Isle of Mull Scallop
Main:	Anjou Pigeon with seasonal veg.
Dessert:	Yorkshire Rhubarb
Wine:	
Red:	France Cahors 33267 £10
White:	South Africa 92115 Chenin Blanc £60
Champagne:	Pol Roget Reserve £120

Heather:
Beef Tartare
Cornish Turbot with seasonal veg.
Ritz Choc Souffle

Their home meal: Aberdeen Angus Rib Eye Steak (medium rare) with fried onions, mushrooms, sauté potatoes, carrots and Brussel sprouts served with red wine gravy. Wine Chilean Malbec .
“Cheers, Heather and Fred”

Not used to the high living and more accustomed to meals “below stairs” Bill and Ann had – well I’ll let them tell you:

“Our lunch choices were:

	<u>Ann</u>	<u>Bill</u>
Starters	Norfolk crab	Ballotine of duck liver
Main	Fillet of fallow deer	Tournedos of beef
Dessert	Ritz chocolate soufflé,	Selection of cheeses
Total cost of both £200.		

Drinks, the list nearly caused me to lose the will to live, 94 pages does seem rather excessive,!!

As appetiser 2 glasses of Pol Roger “pure” champagne	£28 x2
Then Italian Barbara d’alba “piano “ ceretto.	£95
Dessert wine, never heard of Chinese wine So have chosen	
Vidal ice wine “silver label” cailonglin	375mls x2
Glad that this is all pretend!”	

Isobel’s choice was:

First course:	Norfolk Crab
Main course:	Kentish lamb
Dessert:	Salted Peanut Parfait

All to be accompanied by Taittinger champagne.

“I haven't costed it out!”. Well, Isobel, normally if you have to ask the price you can't afford it but, if you put your mind to it, you can do anything, so the price doesn't matter..

The Norfolk Crab seems to be a popular choice, Margaret started with it too. Margaret said:

“I’ve donned my glad rags, can’t miss a trip of such luxury with my lunch club pals. My choice would be:

Norfolk Crab (£36) a reminder of visits to relatives in that part of the world.
Fillet of Fallow Deer (£49) dreams of great walks in Calke Park, which will soon be on the cards.
Followed by the great Yorkshire Rhubarb (£19), although I know a Yorkshire woman who would never pay that amount for something which appears in abundance at this time of year.
All washed down with the Chianti Classico Riserva (£115), oh hang the expense, it’s the region in Italy where I had the last wonderful holiday with my late husband.

In reality it’s – organic scrambled eggs on luxury seeded bread with a side of local mushrooms, Followed by home baked cherry buns, made from a secret recipe only shared within the Berry family.

Enjoy, Margaret Berry”

Pat said:

“The menu sounds superb my choice would be
Duck to start followed by Turbot and then Strawberries.
No Champagne just a White Burgundy with a little age maybe a Meursault
We can dream.
Enjoy the lovely weather and keep safe.
Pat O.”

As for Sharon and me, well, we tried to compete with Mike the master but fear we came a poor second. Here is our menu:

	<u>Sharon</u>		<u>Colin</u>	
Food	Langoustine	£37	Native lobster	£42
	Sea Bass	£45	Filet of Fallow Deer	£49
	Ritz Chocolate Soufflé	£18	Yorkshire Rhubarb and Vanilla Custard (at least a litre)	£19
			Selection of British Cheeses	£25
	Total	£100	Total	£135
Wine between 2	Starter: Bâtard-Montrachet, Grand Cru Burgundy			£660
	Main: "Solaia" Antinora, Tuscany			£500
	Cheese Course: Chardonnay "Noble Man", California			£230
	Total			£1360
			Total Bill	£1595
			Gratuities	£319
			Total damage	£1914



The Spaghetti Bolognese and Fresh fruit Salad we actually had would have made even head chef Mauro Gomez a jealous man!

Mike clearly won the virtual prize of a week in Bognor for his Belly Buster.

Sharon and I took the second prize of 2 weeks in Bognor.

I could not really award a wooden spoon to anyone but, by far the cheapest day out went to Collin Ellis thanks to his time travel machine putting him in a position to do all he did, eat all he ate and drink all he drank and still have enough change from a fiver to get a taxi home.

See you all on 11 June. Any suggestions as to where we should go? Colin & Sharon

Supper Club – May 28th

The supper club was not able to compete with the Luncheon Club's extravagance and so we kept it low key and went to some local places with nice memories. Although some travelled further as you will see.

Estelle headed off to Dick's fish and chip shop in Skeggie, Joyce and Sam went to a lovely restaurant, The Old Vicarage, on the edge of the Peak District to indulge in Crab, Lamb Shank and a Mocha Meringue Mille Feuille washed down with a bottle of Pinot Noir, a nice Shiraz and a Tia Maria to finish. Lovely.

Mike Shuttled over to France and just down the coast to the lovely Hotel Normandy, the stop-over of choice when duty-free shopping in earlier times, for oysters, Dover Sole and Iles Flottante.

Mr Ellis was content with nothing less than the Blue Train in S. Africa! As he said "As the journey involves leaving Cape Town at mid-day with arrival the following morning, it will be necessary to have lunch and breakfast as well! It is no 'either or' menu; if the diner wishes and is able, he may have everything on it!" Knowing Colin, he probably did.

The evening coincided with what may be the final "Clap for the NHS" but hopefully we won't stop remembering them and all the others keeping us safe.

Music Appreciation

For our second virtual meeting we sat down in our own homes to listen to each others suggestions.

Neil offered "Oh Well pts 1&2" by Fleetwood Mac, "Never going back again" both by Fleetwood Mac although in reality they were 2 very different bands. Then "A Space Oddity/ Captain Tom". Not the David Bowie version but one rewritten in tribute to Capt. Tom Moore. Very apt just a few days after his 100th birthday

Nev gave us "Bicycle Race" by Queen, "Home (when shadows fall)" by Terry Blaine and "We'll meet again" by Johnny Cash. Nev should have been cycling in Mallorca at the time, hence "Bicycle Race". The song's video of 65 naked girls on bicycles probably wouldn't pass political correctness today!!

Terry Blaine was new to most/all of us but I don't know why as she is excellent. Johnny Cash's version of "We'll meet again" is very poignant as it was the last track of the last album released in his lifetime.

Estelle suggested "Out of The Blue" by the Alan Parsons Project. Vocals Tony Hadley on this track. From the album 'The Time Machine' and "Oh Life (There must be more)" also by Alan Parsons. Vocals David Pack. From the album "Try Anything Once". Estelle is a big fan of Alan Parsons who was also recording engineer on some Beatles and Pink Floyd albums.

Mike's choice was "Apache" and FBI by The Shadows. He'd seen a film on TV of the Shads at 60 and realised that they don't get played much on the radio nowadays but they had been a huge influence on so many bands that followed.

Dorothy's was "Polovtsian Dances" by Borodin. As we mostly watched all the music on YouTube, there was an excellent video of the Kirov Opera & Ballet singing and dancing this. We followed with "Sarabande" by Handel which always reminds Dorothy of "Wolf Hall"

Lesley asked for "The theme from Cheers" just for the cheery lyrics and "Milestones" by Miles Davis, Cannonball Adderley and John Coltrane". Miles is one of Lesley's favourite musicians.

Another great session, and using YouTube was a bit easier than Spotify.

Drawing and painting – May 20th

Another "lockdown" session, this time the suggestion was MAYDAY!!!

We each interpreted the theme in our own way and the results can be viewed on The Gallery.

Next scheduled meeting, Real or Virtual, is Wednesday June 17th

Literature Group

The group have formed a WhatsApp group so that they can carry on reading at home and then discuss the books they are reading.

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.

We haven't had any direct enquiries but Mike has helped members with how to set up wildlife cameras, choose a new laptop, check whether various phone app updates are genuine and look at setting up Zoom for conferencing, whilst John H has been updating and documenting our website to make it easier for others to maintain it in the future.

Family History – May 13th

Only two managed to come for our second Virtual Meeting today. The wonderful weather understandably tempted folks away to the garden and daily self-isolating exercise.

John D has had a splendid response from his family and from contacts that have turned up on Ancestry. In applying information given him about the family of one of his nephews' wives, he had a contact from Ancestry querying some of the extensions of that family into the past. The corrections that came out of that are extending the tree splendidly. In addition, a contact from Australia has tied up with one from Northern Ireland and helped fill in many blanks. Both lines of research are, as they say, ongoing.

Libby posed a line of research into her father's half sister. She seemed to disappear not long after the 1911 Census, and she can't find a death, marriage or anything else for her. Her first name was Edith or Lillian Edith. We drew complete blanks with Edith or Edith Lillian, partly because there were so many of them, but partly because none of them seemed to fit. So we decided to reverse the first names to Lillian Edith and found her emigrating to Canada in 1922. Caution was needed, as in the same year, another Lillian Edith, with the same month and year of birth, from not too far away, emigrated to America. The game changer was the Passenger Lists which showed both her and her mother on board. Result! Here too, work is ongoing to extend the information.

Onward and upward!

We Virtually Meet again on Wednesday 10th June, as it seems unlikely we crumblies will be out of some sort of lockdown before then. But watch this space.

Recorder Group

The recorder group are trying to get together using Zoom or Skype but the time delay is making it very difficult to play in sync.

Science & Technology- March 9th

I forgot to post this in the last newsletter – sorry Tanya, better late than never!

The first official meeting of the **Ashby U3A Science and Technology group** was held on Monday 9th March at Ashby Alliance Church, Ashby.

A talk was given by Bill Devitt relating to the considerations given by designers of steam powered railway locomotives, and how the locos work. The early models were made for local conditions and prone to boilers blowing up, before the development of safety features and more standard models. The talk was illustrated showing the way his team sectioned in 1975 the Merchant Navy locomotive Ellerman Lines for the National Railway Museum in York. Further developments included the Pendolino Trains to increase the speeds possible while still using existing tracks. Their design was to include high levels of safety, even the unlikely problem of "Umbrella man". Bill had also worked on these Pendolino trains and we heard about the problems of electrification to achieve higher speeds when the infra structure includes small Grade 2 listed tunnels!

Future talks have been postponed, but if you feel you could contribute a talk then please contact the organisers Bill Devitt, bill.devitt@sky.com, or Paul McKay pmckay@189gmail.com or Tanya Dempster tanyadempster@hotmail.com. After all we have time to prepare these presentations now!

Tanya

Tanya and Paul have also been sending out science based quizzes every week or so to Group members. They have certainly kept us on our toes or awoken some little grey cells to try to remember things from school, uni or work!

Walking

There have been no virtual walks this month but John Dogherty, along many others, has been getting out for his recommended daily exercise, but he has been recording his walks. This is one of them:

Tuesday 19th May

Pisternhill Farm, Smisby and Blackfordby

As today was an exceptional day, I decided a solo walk was needed. The company of one assembled at 2 Marlborough Way and set off in high spirits. We walked via Canterbury and Sherborne Drive to Smisby Road, not stopping to talk to Bill and Avril. We crossed over to the pathway behind Smisby Road and strolled all the way up to Cliftonthorpe, meeting nobody en-route, and not passing the time of day with them.

From here we dared the traffic on the A511, and struck out north wards towards Pisternhill Farm, pausing along the way to admire the extensive views from the Hill itself. The path marked on OS maps through the farmyard was not too obvious, so an alternative was explored on the far side of the field at the pleasure of the sheep. Their water trough provided a handy step over, strangely with a matching step on the other side of the fence. This left us on the approach road to the farm, so we set off westward, seeking a path to the left cutting the corner to Smisby. The path we found was broad and level, but, alas was not the correct path, and we had to cross several fields taking care to tread on the thinnest part of the crops along the edges to emerge triumphant on Smisby Road. Only to find that 150 yards away was the exit from the proper path. We investigated this to find it overgrown and in need of TLC.

Our next stop was the church in Smisby itself, where we paused on a bench commemorating the Smisby fallen between 1918 and 2018. We had a fine view of the church from the shade of a huge Copper Beech, and passed the time of day with a small dog, attached to a medium sized lady.

After refreshment the party set off once more westward out of the village, taking the footpath straight into the woods where the road swung sharply to the left. We entered a peaceful world of birdsong and bluebells, wandering along a winding path between and past several pools or small lakes, clearly frequented by fishermen. Only to find the path ran out in brambles, nettles and fences. Turning back we met a couple who had followed us, and together we decided we had taken a wrong turning, so backtracked to the nearly invisible fork we had missed whilst admiring the birdsong, bluebells etc, etc. This path took us straight to the A511, which we crossed, noticing that the finger post from the road was completely hidden by trees on the road side. We came out on Burton Road via an extremely narrow path beside the Ivanhoe Country Store, once again noting that there was no finger post and, from the road, no sign whatsoever that there was a path of any kind.

Daring the very heavy non-traffic on Burton Road, we went to see the Alpacas, who seemed uninterested in our numerous party, so we followed the paths safely to Blackfordby.

The last stretch was straight, all the way to the Recreation Ground at the back of Churchill Close from where we gained the haven of No2.

In all we had negotiated 6.75 miles in just over 3 ¼ hours, back in time for lunch. A splendid day, in great company and lovely sunshine, with lots of birdsong, bluebells etc, etc.

SOME QUIZZES FOR YOU

Visit <https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/weekly-quiz> for a weekly quiz, and the answers a week later.

I sent links to the first two a couple of weeks ago but the old quizzes and answers are still there if you missed them.

OTHER THINGS TO DO

Visit the **U3A National website** at <https://www.u3a.org.uk/>

There is information about COVID-19, but also lots of more interesting stuff such as what other U3As are doing around the country, bird migration tracking for the British Trust of Ornithology, photography challenges, ideas to keep learning and there are quizzes and maths puzzles to occupy a few minutes or hours! See above.

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

Our Committee consists of the following people who, as I said at the top of this newsletter, have agreed to stay in post until we can organise an AGM:

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