



Ashby U3A

June Newsletter



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Dear All,

I hope that you are all well and able to cope with the extraordinary times since March. It seems unbelievable that it is now three months since we were able to undertake our normal U3A activities. I know that their absence has created numerous blank spaces in my diary and I suspect many of you will be missing them also. A number of groups have been able to create some activities over the internet and this is to be highly commended. I offer my thanks to those members who have devoted their time to organising these.

However, the internet is no substitute for our regular face to face meetings. With the initial easing of restrictions, you may wonder how our activities are affected. I regret to say that, given the present guidelines, we are still unable to arrange anything. As you will be aware, the limits are a group of maximum size six people in the open air and with a two metre distancing (There's nothing social about it!). Virtually all of our groups are in excess of this size and, as I write this, thunderstorms suggest outside gatherings may not be appropriate, There is, of course, nothing to prevent individual members getting together within the guidelines but we are unable to organise anything as U3A.

Unfortunately, the additional relaxations announced by the Government for July do not permit larger gatherings or indoor events, so for the moment are of little benefit to us. We will, of course, consider the effect of any further amendments as soon as possible. My crystal ball is somewhat cloudy at present, so I have no idea how quickly this will change but I suspect that it may be some time.

Given our age profile, we can be forgiven for being rather cautious and may not wish to attend for a while. Large gatherings, such as our monthly meetings at the Congregational Church, are probably some time away and, in view of how crowded they are, we will need to be very careful. Group meetings mostly take place at members' houses and it would be understandable if there was some reluctance to host and attend, even when that is permitted. Although some hospitality venues may reopen relatively soon, it may still be difficult to arrange group bookings and our trips usually rely on car-sharing or a coach where any sort of separation is impossible.

I am sorry to appear very negative but wanted to share my thoughts with you so that you can appreciate why there are no proposals in place. Until such time as an announcement of appropriate relaxation of the restrictions and a timescale are announced, we are unable to move forward.

Should you have any needs, queries, observations or suggestions, I would be delighted for you to contact me - 01530 272592 or colinellis1950@gmail.com. Alternatively, I am sure my fellow committee members would be pleased to hear from you.

Whilst so far very limited, I trust the amendments to the guidelines have been of value to you, particularly in permitting some family contact. I hope that you all remain well and positive. Although we do not know how long it will take, there will be a return to something approaching normality and I really look forward to seeing you all again.

With best wishes,
Colin Ellis

HELP & WELFARE

The Committee has attempted to contact all those members who we thought may be 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. 3.9 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.

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.

Luncheon Club – June 11th

Well, it's June 2020 and we are still pretty well locked down but that won't stop the intrepid Ashby U3A "luncheoneers"! This month we enjoyed our lunch in our own homes but each household invited a virtual guest of their choice; prepared a suitable virtual lunch and asked their special guest a question they have always wanted to ask.

Margaret berry was quick off the mark – She wrote:

“Well Colin, here’s this month’s menu.

Elvis Presley you were always on my mind, so if you’re lonesome tonight I’d like to welcome you to my world. I don’t care if the sun don’t shine in the garden. We’ll sit under the blue moon and have an American Trilogy of –

Crawfish & Hot dogs cooked on hot rocks & rolls of Peanut Butter and Banana wrapped in Cornbread.

Followed by Mississippi Mud Pie smothered in Coconut ice cream.

Washed down with Southern Comfort and Soda on ice.

The question I’d like to ask is, did you ever wear a pair of Blue Suede Shoes and, still own a Teddy Bear when you were 18 years old?

Margaret”

Obviously Elvis was a tad busy and arrived a bit later than lunch time as Margaret’s report of the occasion suggests:

“It was a night oo-oo what a night.

It was it really was such a night.

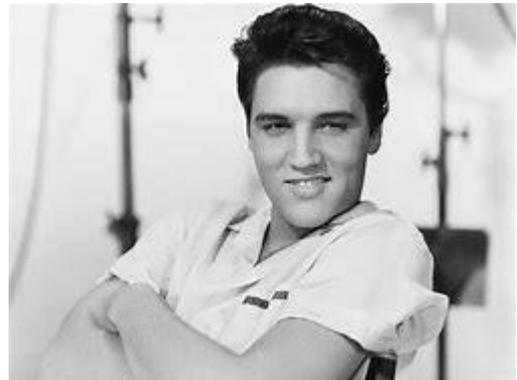
The moon bright oh how so bright.

It was it really was such a night.

The night was alight with smell of cooked food.

Oo-oo – and now it’s difficult to move.

Margaret.”



Colin Ellis Had a one track mind when he invited his guest:

“I am delighted to report that Isambard Kingdom Brunel, Esq., engineer to the Great Western Railway joined me for lunch. He was a trifle late and didn't stay too long but, then, he's a busy man, Mr. Brunel, a very busy man.

We started with Atlantic Prawns in memory of his three great ships, the Great Western, the first steamship to regularly cross the Atlantic, the Great Britain, the first iron hulled screw driven ocean liner and the Great Eastern, which laid the first trans-Atlantic telegraph cable.

Our main course was Sizzling Steak with a Dionysus Sauce. Dionysus Lardner was one of Mr. Brunel's most vociferous critics (always being wrong never seemed to discourage him). One of his pronouncements was that it was impossible to build a steamship which could carry sufficient fuel to cross the Atlantic. I thought the idea of him sizzling might appeal to Isambard's sense of humour.

We concluded with an Enormous Top Hat Cigar Gateau as a tribute to two of Isambard's characteristic accompaniments.

To finish we had Swindon Coffee. One of Brunel's best known letters was to the Swindon refreshment room owner: "I assure you Mr. Player was wrong in thinking I supposed you bought inferior coffee. What I thought I said was I was surprised you purchased such bad roasted corn. I was unaware that you had such a thing as coffee in the place. I am certain I never tasted any."

And so to the question: Why the odd quarter inch? Your proposal to the Board 15th September, 1835 suggested a gauge of 6'10" to 7'0". On 29th October, 1835 the Board sanctioned 7'0", a nice round



figure. Yet in practice the gauge used was 7'0.25". So far as has been traced, there was never a formal explanation of the reason for the increase.

Was it, as has been suggested, to ease running round curves or did you do it simply to add to the mystique of your Great Western Railway?

Whatever the reason, it was a gorgeous measurement, impossible anywhere but England.

Of course, he was in much too much of a hurry to actually answer the question, so we'll never know.....

If only.....

Regards,
Colin E"

Mike Stow reached the start line in pole position with his choice:

"My choice would be Murray Walker, the ex-F1 commentator, whose previous job had been in advertising for which he wrote several well-known slogans. As he is a born raconteur I don't think a question would be necessary much beyond "Hello, how are you" which would be enough to set him off telling some of his marvellous stories about the good old days of motor racing.



Menu:

Starter: "And they're off!!!"

Main: A Walker's pork pie

Dessert:—Since he created the slogan "A Mars a day helps you work, rest and play" it would have to be a deep fried Mars bar! Oh and a mint-flavoured dipping sauce made from Murray Mints

He also created "Trill makes budgies bounce with health" and "Opal fruits make your mouth water" but they don't lend themselves to a lunch menu! One final question for Murray might be "Was Nigel Mansell really that boring?"

Mike"

Bill and Ann Devitt kept their cards close their chest and did not reveal their very special guest until after the event (probably for security reasons). They wrote:

"Sorry we are late in telling you about our lunch guest.

It is Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth 1st

We shall be offering her a Spanish Armada cocktail, which consists of brandy, whisky, rum, sherry and bitters on arrival .

Main course: Coq au Dudley with brawn and cabbage.

Dessert: Queen of puddings plus Maids of Honour.

Drink during the meal will be hypocras, which is spiced wine, and beer

No tea or coffee, as it has not yet arrived in England.

Question?

Have you ever had carnal relations with a man? (Editor's comment – A bit indelicate, Bill and Ann, perhaps you should have asked if she lived up to her name "the Virgin Queen")

Hope you enjoyed your lunch! A pity we shall never know the answers to our questions!

Stay safe and well,
Ann and Bill



Well, that just leaves us. Sharon and I invited Guy Fawkes and were excited that he accepted.

We planned the following menu:

Starter: Cellar –y soup.

Main course: Saltpetre and pepper Squid, charcoal grilled Sea Bass and flame cooked vegetables (Something to provide an explosion of flavours).

Dessert: Chocolate Bombe.

After dinner drink: Fortnum and Masons Gunpowder black tea.

Big question: After a brief trial, you were sentenced, along with the other surviving chief conspirators, to be hanged, drawn, and quartered in London. On January 30, 1606, the gruesome public executions began in London, and on January 31 you were called to meet your fate. It is reported that, while climbing to the hanging platform, you fell from the ladder and broke your neck, dying instantly. Did you jump or were you pushed?

Clearly we all enjoyed our virtual lunch and were privileged to entertain such famous people.

All of them were so polite that they sent thank you notes to their guests.

Elvis wrote to Margaret: “Thanks for the Good Times”, “I Got Lucky” when you invited me to lunch. You’re like a “Little Sister” to me and no one could say you have a “Wooden Heart”. I can’t get over “The wonder of you” and “I Love You So” so “Kiss me Quick” and let’s do it again sometime soon.

Isambard Kingdom Brunel sent a quick note to Colin E: Sorry my visit was so short I received a message by Carrier pigeon that there was a major problem at the Clifton suspension bridge that needed my immediate attentions. However, it turned out that the bane of my life, Dionysus Lardner, had put it about that I had used substandard iron and the bridge would collapse within a week. As usual, he was pig ignorant and got it all wrong again.

To Mike, Murray Walker wrote: I told you before I left that I had a great time at your lunch. I know that is true because “I was there when I said it”. Nigel Mansell asked me if you gave me a free lunch and I told him “of course, he did it voluntarily but he has to do it”. “You can see visually with your eyes” that I was very moved by your gesture.

Ann and Bill received a royal thank you:



To my loyal subjects Bill and Ann, thou art fo gracious to have entertained me fo royally on fuch a fpecial ocaffion.

My taftebuds were furprifed by the fumptuouf fare fet before me and it waf a delight to fit at table with you.

Finally, Guy Fawkes wrote: What a blast we had on Thursday last. I was intrigued to learn that the vegetables were from your own plot. I am sorry I could not hang around after the meal but I had to get to another engagement at breakneck speed.

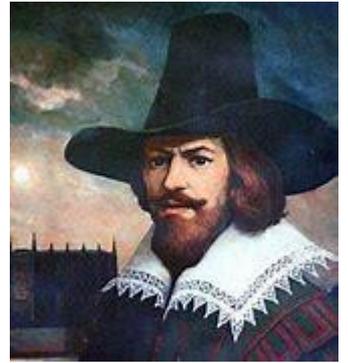
Any suggestions for the next lunch on Thursday 9 July 2020?

Keep well, keep safe,

Colin Woodland

Ashby U3A

Luncheon Club Coordinator



Supper Club – June 25th

The Luncheon Club headed by Colin & Sharon have been outdoing us with their exotic choice of venues so I proposed something slightly different this month, namely, which cuisine would people most like to eat? It could be anything from an Argentinian meat feast to a Zimbabwean porridge (maybe not!) via China, France, Italy, Japan, USA or anywhere you like - even England (and Scotland, Wales & N Ireland)!

Any who would you like to cook it for you? It could be a great chef, a famous personality or a good friend or family member. One thing Colin W has taught us is that in a virtual world anything can happen and so all our chefs will be brilliant!

My choice was a Brazilian Churrascaria where waiters bearing sword-skewered spit-roasted meats of all kinds patrolled endlessly to make sure your plate wasn't empty! Oh and there were gourmet salads plus chips, rice & black beans and other authentic Brazilian side dishes to go with it. It just needed a few good friends to help out and keep the conversation going.

I don't know any Brazilian chefs, but Aussie John Torode isn't afraid of a BBQ and an excellent cook, so I asked him along and afterwards over a few beers he told some great tales of Masterchef disasters.

Joyce and Sam said:

Hi Mike, Your meal sounds delicious and something I would normally absolutely relish but as I am trying to watch my weight !!!!! I'm afraid I would have to abstain. Instead, I would like to visit the restaurant on the Doc Martin series, sit outside overlooking the ocean (the weather would be like it is today, hot & sunny). Lobster to start, fillet steak with a salad for mains, raspberry mille-feuille and a lovely cold bottle of sauvignon blanc. (Joyce, that is pretty good abstaining. I should go on a diet like that! *Ed.*)

I would like the chefs, Gordon Ramsay, Gino D'Acampo and Fred Sirieix to cook the food and provide the wine and we would also have the entertainment laid on from them.

On the day, Colin and Sharon hurriedly sent this:

Just a quick note. We are really excited! President Sukarno has just arrived and set to in the kitchen preparing an Indonesian Rijsttafel (Rice Table) consisting of 20 dishes.

He's yelling for the soy sauce, must go!

Michael Hardy posted that Catherine & I have decided that although the "Social Distancing" regime seems to be being relaxed in the days to come, we are concerned that many people will just ignore the rules (as many have with the current rules) so we are going to restrict our dining to the following for the time being:-

We had 2 off Lunchtime specials from Nick's fish bar in the Callis, collected via his plastic protective shop screens. A small Fish, Chips & either gravy or curry sauce and we added the extra vinegar or salt when we got home – exciting eh? It should have been £9 for two but the price has just gone up to £5 each – extortionate!!

So Michael & Catherine take the prize as the first people to eat a real meal at the Virtual Supper Club! Hopefully they will be the first of many before too long.

Music Appreciation – June 3rd

For our third virtual meeting we sat down in our own homes to listen to each others suggestions. Most have found it easier to use YouTube rather than Spotify because of all the adverts in the non-paid for Spotify. Four of us chose some music this month.

Mike suggested that the weather was due to turn the following day (Wednesday) and so was reminded of the jazz group Weather Report and was going to suggest "Black Market", but then remembered the most evocative rainstorm track ever, The Doors' "Riders on the Storm" and on top of that you've got Jim Morrison's superb vocals.

And somehow YouTube led him to a very appropriate track for the present times – David Gilmour’s acoustic version of “Wish You Were Here”

Then to cheers us all up he found a video of classical pianist Elaine Rodrigues who notices that there is something wrong with her piano at the start of the concert. As the technicians take the piano away to replace it, she continues to play, as she and the piano, disappear down on the stage lift and is still playing a new piano as it reappears from below. A very funny video showing that classical musicians definitely have a sense of humour.

Neil said: My choices this month were prompted by a walk I recently undertook.

There have been some roadworks near where I live, and on a walk I went past a hole in the ground and started singing “Hole in the Ground” in my head. To my surprise I remembered all the lyrics, I think !

This started me thinking about all the comedy records that were around when I was young. In the early 60s there seemed to be a comedy record in the charts nearly every week. Songs by Benny Hill, Charlie Drake, Tony Newley, Tommy Cooper, Stan Freeberg, Bob Newhart, Allan Sherman, to name a few, & Bernard Cribbins, who sang “Hole in the Ground”. So I had a lot to choose from.

It was a toss up between “Hole .. “ and “Right Said Fred” also from Bernard C, but as “Hole .. “ was the catalyst for my contributions this month, that is my 1st choice.

(It was also a perfect choice to follow Elaine Rodrigues! *Ed*)

Neil’s 2nd was “Hello Muddah, Hello Faddah” by Allan Sherman. It is based on letters Allan received from his son Robert, and is set to the tune of Ponchielli’s “Dance of the Hours”.

He followed that with the Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band’s “The Intro and the Outro” headed by the eccentric ‘genius’ Viv Stanshall.

Estelle’s selection was “El macho” from the 2000 Mark Knopfler album 'Sailing to Philadelphia' and then from the same album “Prairie Wedding”. A sweet, somewhat unusual number. Apparently this album was a favourite to sling in the crew-bag for long sailing voyages.

Estelle was not the only one to choose Mark Knopfler this month, as Nev’s first choice was:

‘Tears’ by Chet Atkins and Mark Knoffler. “I’ve chosen this because I’m sure many tears must have been shed over the last 10 weeks or so. It was written by Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grapelli in 1937 and is based on a gipsy lullaby called ‘Muri wachsella an u sennelo weesch’”

His second choice was ‘The Last Time’ by the Rolling Stones. “I’ve chosen this because it is rumoured that last Thursday was the last time we would clap for the NHS and other key workers. It was written by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards in 1965 and although it is credited to them, the song's refrain is very close to ‘This May Be the Last Time’, a 1958 song by the Staple Singers. In 2003, Richards acknowledged this, saying: "we came up with 'The Last Time', which was basically re-adapting a traditional gospel song that had been sung by the Staple Singers, but luckily the song itself goes back into the mists of time." The Rolling Stones' song has a main melody and a hook (a distinctive guitar riff) that were both absent in the Staple Singers' version.

Nev’s final selection was ‘When You’re Smiling (The Whole World Smiles With You)’ by Jools Holland and his Rhythm and Blues Orchestra. Hopefully smiling will help us all feel better in the coming weeks. The song was written by Larry Shay, Mark Fisher and Joe Goodwin in 1928 and early recordings were by Seger Ellis and Louis Armstrong.

A good track to end on, and another great selection. Any non-members of the Music Appreciation Group are welcome to look up any of these tracks on YouTube if they want some good music to listen to.

Drawing and painting – June 17th

June activities have been focused on trying to complete the VE celebration board for the Ashby Arts outdoor exhibition which hopefully is re-scheduled to coincide with VJ Day in August.

Following the current social distancing recommendations, we have been able to have individual painting sessions in the garden at 2MW, and the board is now ready for its coat of weatherproof varnish. Check out the gallery for pictures of the progress

And some of us have continued painting and drawing at home

Our next Virtual or Real Meeting will be on Wednesday July 15th

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've been answering queries from members about anti-virus software, Windows updates and online banking amongst others.

I've just heard that although the very popular PC Clinic in the town closed down a few weeks ago the owner, Phil, is now offering a mobile service that can come to your house for service and repairs. Go to the PC Clinic website for details.

Family History – June 10th

We had three for our third Virtual Meeting today. The others were busy on lockdown matters or otherwise unavoidably detained. Some reported in on what they have been up to, so in effect we had a good virtual turnout.

John D has had little further to report, except that he now is pretty certain why he was sent to a boarding school way above his parents' means. He has discovered from the 1939 Register that two of his mother's nephews went to the same school!

Libby has just found that her grandfather was one of 7 children, not an only child. So she now has much more to go on, and, crucially, more siblings to triangulate her research upon.

Sylvia is heavily engaged in a tough problem with her mother's side. The trail is very confused by the fact that a pair of twins were split up and the father gave a much modified name for himself and his own father on his marriage certificate. Untangling this will take time as the names of the father's parents are not turning up anywhere.

One mention in the 1939 Register shows a wife as a Theatrical Artist, but in the man's will is described as single. Hmmm! There may be value in contacting the Association of Performing Arts, who have a wide collection of information and records, and can be very helpful.

Among others who reported in, but could not join in, Ana has been assembling a list of the Certificates she wants to get when the GRO opens for business. This is actually a very good idea, and we could all do well by listing all the certificates we have anyway. I've twice ordered certificates I already had!

Finally: Sylvia has a collection of family history magazines for anyone who wants them, although handover would be tricky to negotiate. I suggest the reverse procedure we use for receiving parcels: leave them at the door, and put them through a decontamination routine at home. Handling with gloves and lots of hand washing afterwards! On 18th June we set up a WhatsApp group to keep in contact: so far six are engaged.

Recorder Group – June 25th

The Ashby U3A Recorder group held their second "Covid" meeting in Marion's back garden, suitably "spaced out". There were five of us, and we enjoyed the shady patch on the grass, under the trees.

We were able to play a variety of instruments, so played a wide variety of music, with 2 sopranos, 1 soprano/tenor, 1 tenor/alto, and a 1 alto/bass. It's good to be versatile, but it can strain the brain!

Today we have played: - (with S1, S2, A and T)

1. Steal Away
2. Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho
3. Down by the Riverside
4. Swing Low
5. Four Handel Minuets
6. Off to the Fair (Linstead Market)
- 7 " " " " (Scarborough Fair)

We found some of the rhythms were challenging in the last two pieces!

Then for S, A, T and B and all from the same book: -

1. Kalinka
2. Cherry Tree Rag
3. Rondeau
4. Scarborough Fair (an easier arrangement than the first one)

These last arrangements were a little easier than the first group, which was good, as some of us were playing our second instruments, and our brains were getting tired.

As in the earlier meeting, it was lovely to get together, enjoying playing in a lovely spot, with short opportunities for a chat. No coffee break, though!

Thank you Marion, for the use of your garden, and to Nigel, for taking the photo:



Science & Technology- March 9th

Tanya and Paul have 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! This last time I was at least able to answer all the questions, but unfortunately not all correctly!

Walking

There have been no virtual walks this month but some members are starting to venture out singly, in pairs or small groups to get their exercise and to meet up socially whilst trying to keep 2m apart.

Short Walks

John Howlett says: From the 4th July we are allowed for 6 people to meet in the open air as long as we keep 2 metres distance. We may also stop and have a drink at a cafe. I was wondering if any short walkers would be interested in walking on the 17 July. We would not be allowed to offer lifts. If anyone is interested please contact me at shortwalk@ashbyu3a.co.uk or 01530 461774

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 for things that can be safely done at home or outside that I can pass on, please let me know at webmaster@ashbyu3a.co.uk