



Ashby U3A

April Newsletter



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Dear All,

I hope you are all well and managing to cope with the current situation, in particular able to get the things you need and keeping yourselves entertained. It seems very strange not having a diary full of U3A events.

However, I trust, like me, you have been able to find some minor compensations. I have actually been out doing more walking than usual - as I don't have the other activities which would normally occupy my time, I have been able to get out almost every day and, in the course of my wanderings have met (at a suitable distance, of course) four of our members on similar solitary wanderings, which was rather nice.

The garden has had some attention. I was fortunate in that I purchased my vegetable seeds prior to the lockdown so I can even boast a few green shoots - knowing my luck, either they will turn out to be weeds or something will eat them!

Like me, you may be tempted into trying out those recipes which you have been meaning to try for so long. I decided that a Strawberry Charlotte Royale sounded rather nice. However, the recipe turned out to be designed for the 5,000 coming to dinner. By the time I had assembled the ingredients, it was apparent that they would only just fit into my largest glass basin. This almost completely covered my largest plate when it came to turn it out. I had to use powdered gelatine as I couldn't get the gelatine leaves specified. When set, it became apparent that I hadn't converted from leaves to powder as I should, so it was not set as well as I would have liked. Given the lack of room on the plate, when it came to invert it, I had visions of meeting my end under a tidal wave of Charlotte Royale as it hurtled across the kitchen! Fortunately, it was not quite as bad as I feared but it certainly did not look quite as it did in the book! However, it still tasted good!

It is good to think that you may also be finding your own occupations and minor adventures. Sadly, we cannot predict how long it will be before we are able to resume our normal activities. Rest assured that we will do so as soon as we safely can. In the meantime, if any member is experiencing any difficulty, please let me or another committee member know. Even if we cannot help directly, we may be able to point you in the right direction.

Remember, as Her Majesty said in her broadcast,

We will meet again.

Best wishes, stay safe,

Colin Ellis
Chairman

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.

OUR 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

It will come as little surprise to you that we have taken the decision to postpone our 10th Anniversary celebrations. Both the exhibition planned to be held in Holy Trinity Church Hall to attract new members and our Annual Cream Tea event at the Congregational Church are postponed.

Whilst they were not due until August, the current restrictions take us well into May and it seems likely that some restrictions, particularly for our age group, may continue for some time. Even if we are able to resume our planning in the relatively near future, it may well still leave insufficient time for groups to complete their displays. There is also the question as to whether individuals will wish to take part in or visit such activities for a while.

As soon as we can, the Committee will review the situation with a view to rescheduling for a future date when we hope to be able to organise a successful event.

HELP & WELFARE

If anyone needs someone to talk 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.

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

The committee are doing our utmost to keep in contact with as many members we can during this time of enforced isolation. We are working on a plan to ensure that, in particular, any isolated members will be contacted regularly. If you know any members that would welcome a telephone chat, information or other assistance do please let us know. Maybe you have some ideas as to how we could support you. All communications will be in confidence.

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.

A POEM BY PAM AYRES

I received this poem to pass on to you all. I hope you enjoy it.

Pam Ayres (age 73)

Time for us girls

I'm normally a social girl
I love to meet my mates
But lately with the virus here
We can't go out the gates.
You see, we are the 'oldies' now
We need to stay inside
If they haven't seen us for a while
They'll think we've upped and died.
They'll never know the things we did
Before we got this old
There wasn't any Facebook
So not everything was told.
We may seem sweet old ladies
Who would never be uncouth
But we grew up in the 60s -
If you only knew the truth!
There was sex and drugs and rock 'n roll
The pill and miniskirts
We smoked, we drank, we partied
And were quite outrageous flirts.
Then we settled down, got married
And turned into someone's mum,
Somebody's wife, then nana,
Who on earth did we become?
We didn't mind the change of pace
Because our lives were full

But to bury us before we're dead
Is like a red rag to a bull!
So here you find me stuck inside
For 4 weeks, maybe more
I finally found myself again
Then I had to close the door!
It didn't really bother me
I'd while away the hour
I'd bake for all the family
But I've got no flaming flour!
Now Netflix is just wonderful
I like a gutsy thriller
I'm swooning over Idris
Or some random sexy killer.
At least I've got a stash of booze
For when I'm being idle
There's wine and whiskey, even gin
If I'm feeling suicidal!
So let's all drink to lockdown
To recovery and health
And hope this awful virus
Doesn't decimate our wealth.
We'll all get through the crisis
And be back to join our mates
Just hoping I'm not far too wide
To fit through the flaming gates!

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 – April 9th

In all, 12 stalwart “Luncheoneers” turned up for the Ashby U3A Luncheon Club meal on April 9th. As this was a virtual lunch, all participants enjoyed lunch physically in their own homes but mentally in different places all over the world.

Mike Stow had intended to have a modest lunch at Brasserie Blanc to have their legendary Cheese Soufflé to start, Confit Duck and Fries followed by Rhubarb & Ginger Crumble. But when he saw where the others were eating he decided he would like to return to the 2* restaurant in London where he celebrated his 70th birthday, or maybe settle for a cauldron of the very best seafood at a restaurant on Ile de Ré outside La Rochelle. Mike said, “I decided that since I couldn’t really get to Brasserie Blanc for my soufflé, I had better make one. A mix of fresh and tinned crab went in it. It didn’t rise quite as much as I’d hoped and sunk a bit before I could photograph it, but it was delish. I hope you all enjoyed your lunch as much as I enjoyed mine.”

Estelle Sandles flew off to a billabong in Seymour, Australia for her lunch of Cheese and Onion Sarnies followed by loads of After Eight Mints. The lunch was somewhat interrupted by the incessant chatter of the Galaghs. (That’s cockatoos to you and me!)

Bill and Ann Devitt winged off to Miami for a divine juicy steak in very, very up market restaurant. Then, off to Delmonico’s near Wall St in New York that has been there since the 1880s for a Baked Alaska. In reality their lunch consisted of Toasted Crumpets with cheese.

Doug and Dora enjoyed an M&S Dine-in for two lunch in the sun! But their ideal menu would be a recreation of a Vegetarian 5 course Tasting Menu at the Grosvenor Hotel in Chester in 2018. That was fantastic, but a little more than £12. Cheers!

Brenda Dummer ended up in Padstow, Cornwall at Rick Stein’s place. She started with Ravioli of Lobster with Tomato and Basil Sauce followed by Braised Fillet of Turbot with slivers of Potatoes and Summer Truffles. Dessert was a yummy Crème Brulee. Then the bubble burst and before her was a Little Betty’s Steak Pie Chips and Peas brought promptly by 1.30pm by the ever smiling Rachel.

Margaret Berry got so busy in the garden that she didn’t have time to go anywhere for lunch so stayed home and enjoyed a gourmet Marmalade on Toast and Yoghurt.

John and Christine Dogherty slipped off to Maxim’s in Paris but kept their meal a secret. They did not want to shock us with their decadent tastes.

Well, we pushed the boat out and indulged in the world famous Fruit de Mer at the Alsace Restaurant on the Champs Elise, Paris followed by Bread Pudding and Custard (or Crème Anglais). Sharon did an amazing job of disguising the main course to look remarkably like Corned Beef and Onion Pie with boiled Potatoes, vegetables and gravy (my favourite). The pudding turned out to be Cherry Pie. Naturally Sharon could not, and dare not, disguise the custard in any way. She did, of course, ensure there was plenty of the liquid gold.

Sharon and I sincerely hope that you enjoyed April’s Luncheon Club. Have you got any suggestions as to what we should do for May’s little shindig on 14 May?

Take care and keep safe.

God bless,

Colin and Sharon Woodland

Supper Club – April 23rd

The supper club had its second virtual meeting last Thursday, Only 5 people were able to take part but we took our lead from the Lunch Club and decided where we would like to be eating rather than be stuck at home. Mike decided he would like to wander the tapas bars of San Sebastian, followed by a traditional Basque meal in one of its many 3* restaurants but settled for a paella at home.

Sam and Joyce were split in their choice of venue, Joyce fancying a trip to the Ritz for their most exotic meal served by Gordon Ramsey whilst Sam opted for simpler tastes, preferring fish and chips at the Gelsmoor.

Colin and Sharon also have exotic tastes and wanted to eat at the Long Bar in Raffles Hotel, Singapore. Their menu of 蘑菇大蒜, 面包鱼, 煮新土豆, 豌豆 and 柠檬奶酪蛋糕 looked very interesting until it was revealed to be garlic mushrooms to start, fish, boiled potatoes and peas followed by lemon cheesecake! I'm sure it was delicious.

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. At a suggestion from Colin, we decided to donate what would have been the cost of going out to suitable medical-based charities.

Music Appreciation

We managed to hold our first virtual meeting this month. We all posted our playlists to each other having first checked that they were available on Spotify so that we didn't need to have CDs of everyone's music. Those that took part managed to negotiate Spotify OK without too many difficulties. You'll see a (perhaps obvious) theme to many of our music choices:

Lesley's first piece was The Police "Don't stand so close to me" for obvious reasons, the second was Frank Sinatra and the concert version of "Ol' man river". Old Blue Eyes at his peak.

From Mike came the somewhat ironically titled “You'll never walk alone”! We all know the Gerry & the Pacemakers version but he opted for Roy Orbison's take on it. Little did he know that Capt. Tom Moore's would be the definitive version just a few days later! That was followed by John Williams' “Concierto de Aranjuez” from his Seville Concert album. Taking advantage of the lack of time constraints this was 11 mins long.

We welcomed Estelle, who is new to the group and joining us for the first time, as she chose the excellent Erroll Garner's 'Misty'. At 2.45 minutes she wished it was longer! You can give us more next time Estelle!

Nev provided a track that Greta Thunberg would appreciate: “Saltwater” by Julian Lennon. The second had a title that is appropriate for the current crisis although it is a song about lost love: “End of the World” by Skeeter Davis.

Dorothy chose the apt Simon & Garfunkel's 'Bridge over Troubled Waters'. Followed by Franz Schubert's “Ave Maria” played on the cello by Sheku Kanneh-Mason. This gorgeous recording was from Harry and Meghan's wedding.

Neil took on board the idea of playing a couple of longer songs that we can't normally squeeze into our regular sessions. Firstly “MacArthur Park” by Richard Harris which apparently really is about a cake left out in the rain! He followed that with “Flamenco Sketches” by Miles Davis. As it was April Fool's Day he also chose “Fool Number 1” by Brenda Lee, who has always been his favourite female singer.

Finally Sallie, who was the only one not able to work Spotify, but she gave us these choices to listen to: Tom Jones and “The Green, Green Grass of Home”, this being what she is spending a lot of time watching at the moment!! Her second choice was the theme from the film ' Brief Encounter' , for obvious reasons!

Apart from having to explain Spotify to Sallie, this all went very well. And hopefully we'll do it again next month.

Drawing and painting

It had been reported that David Hockney was producing art masterpieces whilst in lockdown, so we thought, if he can, we can!!!

We “met” on our scheduled Wednesday morning, each staying safe at home, and produced 5 wonderful interpretations on the theme “Spring”. Please view the gallery on the website.

The next “meeting” should be at home on Wednesday 19th May. The theme to be decided nearer the date.

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.

Family History

For our first Virtual Meeting we had three to tango. The wonderful weather understandably tempted folks away to the garden and daily self-isolating exercise.

John H has made a breakthrough in identifying the street where his grandfather was born and lived in the 1901 and 1911 censuses. He has also found what he thinks is his death registration and the name of a nephew who reported it. If true this gives him a solid link to more modern branches of the family. A grand result!

Dora has been working very hard on the Scottish Parish Registers relating to her great, great, great, great grandfather, and identified possibly 8 children born between 1751 and 1766. These will require validating, but if correct will give her a lot of extra work tracing their descendants and other relations! Another proof that persistence and hard graft will produce results.

John D has issued a call to his extended family to look at the family tree on Ancestry, as 'Editors' to check that the details are up to date and to provide good photos for the Profiles. As Editors they can view living persons. This privilege is only extended to them on the understanding that they do not make any changes themselves. Then they will begin to look at their antecedents and try and verify the details John D has derived from Hints and other sources.

John H has suggested that next time, if we are still on Lockdown, we could all use the Zoom app to see and talk directly with each other. This is already in use by some of us and is a very useful idea. I doubt we will be able to see each other's screens, though.

As a general topic, it has been suggested that we should all try to get our own personal histories recorded for future generations: we tend to forget that time and Family History does not stop with our parents!

We Virtually Meet again on Wednesday 13th May

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.

Walking

The walking groups are of course able to go out singly for their daily exercise but are limited to the local area. That hasn't stopped us imagining what we might have been doing, particularly for walks that have been recced previously. So:

Apr 7th. Today is the first day we have missed a walk since we started the walking group nearly 10 years ago. The plan was to walk around Carsington Reservoir in Derbyshire.

We didn't walk from Sheepwash carpark thru Carsington and Hopton, along the lane, before crossing the Ashbourne to Wirksworth road to join the track around the east side of the reservoir. We didn't have a coffee break. Eventually we didn't come to the dam. We didn't walk over it to the Visitor Centre which was closed, before not walking up the west side of the reservoir back to the cars. It was a beautiful spring day, and we didn't walk nearly 8 miles. Here are some pics of the reservoir, which weren't taken today, to show what we missed!

April 21st. We didn't get to do our group walk again, and this time we didn't get to walk around the Vale of Belvoir. However Steve and Mike pre-walked the route in early March just before lockdown so this is what we didn't get to do.

We didn't start from the Plough Inn and walk through the village and around the churchyard to pick up the footpath towards Harby. We didn't have to cross the abandoned railway nor walk up the Green Lane into Harby. We wouldn't have missed a turn and walked up someone's driveway before finding the back lane through the village. We wouldn't have noticed that the fields were getting softer underfoot as we walked down to the canal and along the towpath.

At Stathern Bridge we wouldn't have crossed back over the canal and walked half a mile up the road before realizing we had gone the wrong way! At the next bridge we wouldn't have entered a wood along a muddy, slippery track nor slithered through a farm paddock full of sheep. From Plungar we hopefully wouldn't have found 3 or 4 fields that resembled the Somme where the mud was ankle deep for the next two or three miles and we wouldn't have had to divert onto a busy road instead.

We wouldn't have returned to Stathern at 2.15pm after 4hrs walking to find the pub about to close as it would now be closed anyway. We wouldn't have walked 7.5 miles. Today was a lovely day and the views would have been lovely too. Hopefully it wouldn't have been as muddy as early March. Maybe we will have a chance to enjoy it properly before too long.

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.

So far there are:

Shop Around – Cryptic clues to shop names

TV programme anagrams – Self explanatory

First line of songs – Name the singer and song title

I'm sorry I haven't a clue – Based on the popular radio program

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:

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