



Ashby U3A

September Newsletter

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Dear All,

Another month has passed and we are at the end of summer with little sign of normal activities resuming soon.

Nevertheless, it has been quite an eventful month for planning as, every time we think we have resolved an issue, it all changes again!

We had thought that we would be able to have a normal Committee Meeting in a suitable location but the latest restrictions have now prevented that and we will have to return to the internet for our deliberations.

Similarly, as outlined in last month's newsletter, we had hoped to have an Annual General Meeting, albeit with very limited numbers.

That, too, is now on the banned list! However, we are required to hold a formal meeting and this will have to take place with the minimum number of Members present via Zoom. In order for Ashby U3A to continue and be ready to resume normal activities, whenever that may be, it is important that the meeting is properly undertaken. I would be very grateful if all paid up members could review the information which will be sent to you and return your votes by means of the options provided. It is vital that we have sufficient votes recorded to achieve the quorum required. This will enable the Group to function until the next Annual General Meeting, which I trust will be held normally in July.

As you may be aware, we had hoped to resume walking groups, given the relaxation in restrictions. Initially it appeared that the new rule of six would prevent this but there is an exception for organised sporting activity. In the absence of any official definition, I believe that our walking falls within this category and, accordingly, our first resumed walk took place on Tuesday 15th September. However, even in the short period since, the situation appears to have worsened and, for the present, we have decided to limit U3A walks to 6 people and insist on suitable distancing. Naturally, we shall review this as quickly as possible.

We have considered what other limited activity may be possible but have reluctantly concluded that no indoor meetings would be appropriate at present.

I sincerely hope that you all are well and continuing to cope with the changing situation. Sadly, I do not foresee any return to normal in the near future but very much look forward to seeing you all again as soon as we can resume our activities.

With best wishes,

Colin Ellis

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON OCTOBER 20TH

As stated last month we will be holding an AGM on October 20th. Because of Government restrictions we are unable to have more than 6 persons in one room so the AGM will be conducted via Zoom with the committee and a small number of members invited to oversee proceedings. Paid up members will be able to vote by email or post.

Those of you who are paid up members should have received your ballot papers and all the other paperwork needed either by email or by post in the past few days. Don't forget to return your ballot papers to reach the Chairman by Oct 17th.

If you believe you have paid for this year but haven't received any correspondence, please contact me, Mike Stow, on 01530 469152 or comms@ashbyu3a.co.uk and I shall check what's wrong.

If you haven't rejoined yet but wish to, contact the Membership Secretary, Iain Banns on 01530 416697 or membership@ashbyu3a.co.uk. If you sign up before Oct 17th Iain will be able to supply you with ballot papers enabling you to vote. Details of the Membership Fees are shown in the Paragraph below.

MEMBERSHIP FEES

Approx 160 of you have very kindly paid their membership fees for this year (April 2020 to March 2021)

Only paid-up members are entitled to participate at Annual General Meetings and in U3A activities. As we are about to hold an AGM, and walking groups may resume shortly along with some other virtual groups, it is now necessary for us to set a subscription for the current year ending 31st March, 2021 to allow you to take part, if you wish.

The fees were previously set for this year at £16.50 or £13.00 for a second member in the same house.

In view of the absence of activities, it would be unreasonable to charge the full amount. Unfortunately, we are required to pay to U3A nationally £3.50 per member and £3.10 for the magazine. In addition, we still have some expenses to meet locally. The Committee has therefore decided on £8.00 per individual and £5.00 for a second person at the same household.

The amount for next year will be set closer to March 2021 when the future may be a little clearer. With the uncertainty regarding the extent of our future activities, we are concerned as to the proportion of the membership who will renew and the costs we may incur.

If you have not yet joined this year, it would be much appreciated if you could complete a renewal form (available on the website) and send it with your payment to the Membership Secretary as soon as possible.

Those of you who have already paid higher amounts will be entitled to a refund. Alternatively, it would much relieve the administrative burden if you felt able to carry that amount forward against next year's subscription or even, should you feel sufficiently generous towards Ashby U3A, to regard it as a donation, given the future uncertainties facing the Group. Could you please advise the Membership Secretary, preferably by e-mail, of your wishes?

RECEIPT OF NEWSLETTER

At the start of Lockdown, the committee agreed that anyone who was a member last year, but who hadn't yet paid this year, would continue to receive the Newsletter until the AGM, so if you haven't rejoined by the end of the month this will, I'm sorry to say, be the last issue you'll receive this year. However if there is any important news, hopefully good, I'll send a newsletter to all the names I have on the books.

As soon as we are able to restart activities I shall let everyone know. (See below)

RESTARTING SOME GROUPS

As you will all be aware, much has changed in the last month regarding social contact and the Rule of 6. The committee met via Zoom on Mon Sept 21st to discuss the "Rule of 6". On Sept 14th the Government had relaxed the rules to allow any 6 people to meet indoors in a private house. National U3A and ourselves had realised that this could mean the resumption of some Groups.

However, the Government are also saying that the home is the most likely place to transmit Coronavirus which contradicts their relaxations on meeting in homes. This was discussed thoroughly but with the PM's statement due the following day we were not sure what was to happen next.

Below are our decisions on resumption of activities and our reasoning.

Reasoning that restrictions were unlikely to be eased further and more likely to be tightened, we decided unanimously, and reluctantly, that we would not restart any indoor groups at this time.

(Subsequently in many parts of the country, not even two households can now meet up, so we seem to have made the right decision, unfortunate that it is.)

We also decided unanimously that walking should also be restricted to groups of 6.

The National U3A issued new guidelines on Sept 22nd, the day after our committee meeting, based on the Govt rules of Sept 14th which just say that Ramblers have issued guidelines for walking but don't provide links to the guidelines, nor do they actually say that U3As should use those guidelines. Ramblers still insist that they are able to walk in groups of up to 30.

However looking at Government Guidance*, links to which were provided by U3A, this seems to apply only to sport organised by a national sporting body.

Further investigation shows that the Government Guidance* on sporting activity talks of maintaining social distancing when not on the field of play which seems to imply that they are thinking of team sports. Walking does not have a field of play, nor can it be called a team sport so it doesn't seem to be covered by these guidelines. Furthermore each sport must submit to the Government an action plan of how it plans to operate. We have obviously not done that, nor can we see evidence that National U3A has done so either.

In further Guidance* it states that exceptions to the Rule of 6 include "organised sport or exercises classes or licensed outdoor physical activity. This does not include informal sport or fitness activity with family or friends - this must be limited to a group of 6". We cannot see how we qualify as "licensed".

Elsewhere the Government have stated that splitting a large group into groups of 6 is not allowed as they have a "common purpose". However they have not stated how far apart two or more groups need to be in order for them not to have a "common purpose" or to be considered a separate group.

This seems to confirm our decision to limit walking groups to 6 people. Risk assessments, Track and Trace lists and compliance with Covid-19 rules still apply.

NOTE if people decide to walk in groups not organised by U3A, that Rule of 6 and compliance with Covid-19 rules still apply.

*Links can be provided if someone wants to wade through them.

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. 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.

HELP & WELFARE

If you know of any member who is unwell or shielding or has a family member who is unwell, please contact Estelle or any other committee member and we can see if there is anything we can do to help, whether it is collecting shopping or prescriptions, having a chat or just sending a card.

If at any time 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 07919 986456 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.

ZOE COVID-19 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 even if you are well, 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. Over 4 million people are already signed up and contributing. There are 18 active cases in NW Leics at the moment.

INFORMATION FOR THE NEWSLETTERS

If you have anything that you would like to see in these newsletters, whether it is a report of something you or a Group have managed to organise despite all the difficulties or you have some information on safety, health, scams or anything similar please contact me, Mike Stow at webmaster@ashbyu3a.co.uk or 01530 469152.

GROUPS MEETING REMOTELY OR VIRTUALLY

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. Subject to the social distancing regulations in force at the time, we may even be able to do housecalls.

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

Drawing and painting – Sept 16th

Six members worked from home this month on the theme of "Still life in September". This provided a selection of various ideas from traditional still life compositions through more Covid themed ones to an autumn landscape of a very still day. All the paintings are viewable on the Drawing and Painting page of our website.

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.

Luncheon Club

Last month I wrongly attributed the luncheon clubs virtual outing to the Supper Club and vice versa. I can't do that this month since neither group ventured out in reality or virtually.

Music Appreciation – Sept 2nd

We started with some humour this month as Dorothy had chosen a performance by Victor Borge which reminded us how funny his act was even if it was really just silly, not unlike Tommy Cooper, but also that he was a very good pianist. Her second piece was "Alone again" by Gilbert O'Sullivan. His lyrics are often a lot more serious than the poppy tunes suggest.

Neil was on a cowboy theme this month. We had a live orchestral version of "The good, the bad and the ugly" complete with whistles, ocarinas and wah-wahs, followed by the theme tune from "Rawhide" and finally Doris Days' "Deadwood stage" from Calamity Jane.

Nev brought us two versions of the same song, Gershwin's "I got rhythm". Firstly an instrumental by The Teddy Wilson Trio and then a vocal and harmonica version by Robert Palmer and Larry Alder. He also gave us "Summertime Blues" by Eddie Cochran. As Nev said 'All of a sudden summer is over and I feel I've missed it'.

Estelle gave us two pieces from Bob Dylan's album "Oh Mercy", firstly "Everything is broken" and then "What was it you wanted". She followed that with another Dylan song "Make you feel my love" but this time sung by Bryan Ferry from his album "Dylanesque". Lastly she offered the original Fleetwood Mac and Peter Green's "I feel your need so bad"

Mike's choices were Bonnie Raitt accompanied by David Crosby and Graham Nash singing "Love has no pride" live at Madison Square Garden. That was followed by Jeff Lynne's ELO at Hyde Park playing "Mr Blue Sky". It always cheers me up. Finally, and as a change, we had some military drumming of which this is the best of the best – The Royal Marines Corp of Drums vs the Swiss Top Secret Drum Corp. Not exactly a tune but it is music and I for one appreciate it. The skill, the speed and co-ordination are amazing, particularly when they played each others drums.

Again a great selection of music. Very different but somehow complimentary of each other.

Recorder Group – September

We managed 3 meetings in September: 10th, 14th and 29th. The latest was a bit of a "pop-up". We looked at the weather forecast for the week, decided afternoons were probably warmer than mornings, and chose Tuesday, before the predicted change in the weather.

At the first two meetings there were 4 players, so we played a mixture of arrangements: duets, trios and quartets. We are flexible, and can double up, swap descant and tenor parts, etc.

We've recently discovered some duets by Loeillet: "Airs and Dances", which are challenging but rewarding. We also played some trios, with 2 descants, arrangements for SSAT and SATB. We've recently started playing some quartets by John Pitts, so I got my bass out! This collection includes "Kalinka", "Cherry Tree Rag", "Rondeau" by Purcell, "El Choclo", and "When I'm 64". Our music isn't all mediaeval or Elizabethan! We also played arrangements of spirituals, and finished with "Nellie the Elephant".

As we are a bit short of 4-part music, but 3 of us used to play with Lichfield U3A, so we played some of their music on the 14th. This included some music by Praetorius, John Dowland, Susato and Mendelssohn. Again we finished with the Recorder Quartets and Nellie the Elephant, then the "Cantique de Jean Racine".

After a stretch of poorer weather, it was lovely to get together again on 29th, but, unfortunately, there were only three of us. We played trios:

Celtic Trios, The Clark Collection: Try a Trio, 4 Handel minuets, Variations on Greensleeves, Byrd's "The Earle of Salisbury" Pavan and Galliard, and collections of motets and popular tunes. We also had a short look at "2 Mozart Adagios", a recent acquisition. We decided it probably (!) needed some practice, but had possibilities.

It is lovely to be able to meet up and make music together, and we do feel fortunate when the sun shines and we can get together. We have to be able to react quite quickly to the weather, which means we can't always get the full team. As the season progresses, this will become more difficult. We had hoped to be able to find an indoor venue, but it's not looking promising. Someone did point out that the Lichfield U3A recorder group played carols in the city centre near Christmas last year, suitably dressed against the cold (fingerless gloves included), but we'd rather not go to those lengths! We're a bit nesh here in Leicestershire.

All the best

Joan

Supper Club – August

The Supper Club were hoping that perhaps 6 members would be able to meet up, but unfortunately not, and so we had another month off, not going anywhere, not even in our imaginations.

Family History – Sept 9th

We had a more -Virtual- meeting than usual, but eventually six managed to join in with me, with very useful contributions. Eileen wanted to have a comparison between Ancestry and FindMyPast. This is an FAQ in the trade, so I located a very useful resume for her. Here is the link:

<https://genealogystories.co.uk/ancestry-vs-find-my-past/>

Dora is still working through the enormous family she has found, and struggling with death records for some of the infant deaths. It may be they were either stillborn or very very young. These can be hard to find. But she is still making progress through perseverance. That's the way to do it!

Shirley's search into her Hall ancestors in the 1700s have stalled for now, but did throw up a problem we have all had in one form or another: a marriage of a widower to a widow, where the son of the widower married the daughter of the widow. Both men had the same names as did the two women.

Confusing to see that on the tree! Sylvia reported in, although no progress to report on. A useful contribution, nonetheless. It happens to us all.

Audrey too could not supply anything, but noted that one of her granddaughters from France has become very interested in Family History and she spent a lot of time with Audrey on drawing trees and looking at memorabilia. And so unto the nth generation! Audrey has supplied a pair of charming photos of her granddaughter wearing Audrey's fathers sunglasses and the pince-nez.

Carolyn asked for information on how I file and record things. This is a biggie, as our filing system is an example of the cobblers children. I was able to supply typical views of our filing binders and contents, and talk her through the logic and organisation. Needless to say there are many things that do not fit tidily, but everyone has those. If nothing else it has prodded me into action to tidy things up and make sure stuff is consistently organised and properly backed up. Something we must all do from time to time.

Quiz

Pat Ford sent this message:

"Hallo everyone,

I do hope you are all still well and usefully using and enjoying your time! It seems such a long time since we met, and certainly my brain is now addled, so I trust you've been doing lots of puzzles to keep your brains active. It is sad not to mark our Wednesday in my diary any more..... I had obviously been keeping the biscuits for our session, but think after so long, I'd better start eating them! Well, it's an excuse.....

Luckily for me tennis restarted some time ago, and I am now back in the pub playing Rummikub in Ashby with my pals, with the box, bag, tiles etc. all sanitised after each session..... Bridge has to be played online, which means no chatting between hands.

All our gardens are obviously immaculate.....

If anyone has ideas about starting up again, please do say.

Regards, Pat"

Science & Technology- Aug 3rd

For the S&T group's second Zoom talk, Tanya gave a very interesting talk called "Sex and the single Panda"!

This was about her trip to China and in particular to the Panda breeding centre. Accompanied by some delightful and at times very cute photos of pandas, we got to find out how and why they are endangered and why they are so difficult to breed and raise in captivity. Basically they seem to be very choosy who they mate with despite the females only been in season for a very few days a year and the males are more interested in eating than mating. They are also very choosy about their food and only seem to eat a bamboo with very low nutritional value. Consequently they eat all day. It has recently been discovered by using motion-activated remote cameras that pandas are much more likely to breed in the wild but it is the lack of suitable terrain that is reducing their numbers.

Tanya also pointed out that pandas may look cuddly but they have pretty fearsome claws and, despite having her photograph taken with one, they are not to be considered tame even though they are obviously habituated to human visitors.

Walking

All the walking Groups were hoping to be active by September but, as you may have read above, the committee decided that the Rule of 6 does apply to us and so walking groups would be restricted to just 6 people at a time. There are many other restrictions including record keeping of names and contact details for Track & Trace, social distancing, sanitising and limits on coffee stops etc. Walk leaders will brief participants before walking.

Longer Walks

Before the restrictions came in the Long Walks group managed to get in one walk with more than 6 people:

Eleven of us gathered on a lovely sunny day at the Bosworth Battleground car park for the first walk since March 17th. Despite the new rule of 6 as long as we adhere to the Ramblers Guidelines we are allowed to walk in groups of more than 6. (This has changed again now. Back to 6 only unfortunately) After a brief Health and Safety Covid-19 talk and the application of hand sanitiser we set off. We completed the socially distanced photograph before heading down hill to cross the line at Shenton Battlefield railway station and then to pass through Shenton village. Several fields later we arrived briefly at the Ashby Canal tow path before heading up into Dadlington for lunch in glorious sunshine on the village green. After being suitably refreshed we left Dadlington along a quiet lane to re-join the canal for a short period, passing several lovely decorated narrow boats. Next stop was for ice creams at Sutton Cheney canal wharf before the final half mile back to the car park.

For the time being Kevin is not organising any more formal walks but small groups (6 or less) are meeting informally not under the auspices of U3A.

Medium Walks

Without a leader, the group is struggling to organise future walks. If anyone or maybe two or three people wish to help organise this group it would be very useful.

Short Walks – Sept 18th

John Howlett is now organising some short walks again. See the website for details or phone him on 01530 461774 if you wish to come along.

We were hoping to be organising a walk for larger numbers but the 12 hoped for and the 9 who said they were interested on Monday turned into just 5 by Friday so the Rule of 6 was not an issue. The weather was fine and dry if not particularly warm when we set off just after 10am.

We crossed the A514 and along the footpath towards Calke Abbey. Near the ticket hut we separated into two groups with the more adventurous continuing down to the new play area while the remaining 2 went straight to the cafe, probably reducing the walk to about 3 miles which is the normal maximum. From the play area to the cafe was less well marked but we arrived second and all went to the Trust cafe for drinks and nibbles. We all took the short way back with the whole walk taking just over 2 hours.

Although we are now limited to just 6 people because of current restrictions, in future if more than six people are interested in walking on any one day, we will try to arrange two separate walks.

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!

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 number of operas and ballets available to watch at any time. Currently the Sleeping Beauty is showing amongst others.

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.

THE COMMITTEE

If you want to get in touch, our current committee are:

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	07919 986456
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