



December Newsletter

A LETTER FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Dear All,

And so we come to the end of 2020 - a year I suspect most of us will not be too sad to see over! This time last year, we had not even heard of Covid and little envisaged what lay ahead of us. About the only positive thing is that, with so little travel and activity, my spending and car mileage have both declined significantly. Even so, I would willingly have foregone the savings!

As walking was one of the few activities that could be undertaken, I have been out and about quite a lot, particularly in that glorious Spring weather. In the course of my walks, I have occasionally encountered other U3A members similarly engaged. It was indeed pleasant to be able to stop for a chat - suitably distanced of course.

I must ask you to forgive me if I appeared to fail to recognise you - I have always had a very poor recollection of names and faces. On the other hand, I can remember my way round the back streets half way across Europe! On balance, when you are being pursued by a tram in Bratislava, I suspect the way out is more immediately useful than the driver's name!

As I write this on a gloomy December morning, I look at my diary and see the highlights of the week to come - a five minute zoom meeting and a haircut! Smile and be happy, things could be worse! However, when I think about it, I suspect 99% of the world's population would love to have my problems.

Looking forward to 2021 - it cannot be worse than 2020. Vaccinations have already started, although given the numbers to be immunised, it will not be for some time that the necessary level has been achieved to permit some return towards normality. I do not therefore envisage a return to our normal U3A activities any time soon. However, there is certainly cause for optimism and I hope that by summer we will be able to meet again in some form. Apart from anything else, I still need to redeem my promise from an earlier newsletter - there will be cake! I am so much looking forward to that.

You may be interested to know that we currently have 191 paid up members, of whom 25 are newly joined this year. Given that our activities have been almost non-existent, this seems remarkably good and bodes well for our future. Thank you all for your continued support.

I hope you all continue in good health and are coping with these unusual circumstances. Do please remember, if you need assistance or just a chat, we are available and will do our best to help.

On behalf of the Committee and myself, I wish you all a very Happy New Year.

Colin Ellis

STOP PRESS - FROM THE EDITOR

As I write this we have just moved into tier 4, as you will doubtless know by now.

So for the foreseeable future, the rules are no meeting anybody outside of our household or support bubble, either indoors or in private gardens, but we can meet one other person in public open spaces.

That makes organising any sort of u3a gathering impossible even walking. However you can go walking as a household or with one other person, so I hope you can all get out safely for some exercise, fresh air and maybe some company.

This is a fairly brief newsletter this month. Apart from the obvious restrictions on meetings, it would seem that many of us were preparing for the Christmas celebrations we weren't able to have.

Stay safe and keep well.

Mike Stow

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING ON DECEMBER 14TH

Thank you to all those who voted in our email/postal ballot to amend our constitution. This will allow just the sort of email or postal ballots which we have had to be possible at any other time in the future.

You will be pleased to know that 88 people voted, all in favour, none against and no abstentions, so the vote was carried unanimously and our constitution has been amended accordingly.

Hopefully we won't have to use its powers in the near future and we will be able to gather at our AGM to vote in person.

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. Any chats will of course be confidential.

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.

NHS Covid-19 Test and Trace

If you have a smartphone, we would encourage you to download the NHS app. It tracks whether you have been in close proximity to someone who subsequently tests positive for Covid-19 and allows Test and Trace to contact you and ask you to isolate for a number of days. Remember this app only works if you carry your phone with you when you go out!

FREE YOGA CLASSES ON ZOOM

The Patients' Group (PPG) charity at Castle Medical Group has organised free Yoga Classes for it's patients using Zoom to join in from your own home.

They would like as many people as possible to take advantage of this program for maintaining good health during the Covid-19 restrictions. There are 8 sessions next year, on Fridays at 11am:

Jan 8	Feb 5
Jan 15	Feb 12
Jan 22	Feb 19
Jan 29	Feb 26

Each session is approx 45mins and is mostly sitting on a chair in your own home whilst looking at your laptop or tablet.

If you are registered at Castle Medical Group (i.e. the Surgery on Burton Road) you are eligible.

For further information contact Bic Mistry on:
07813 689227 or 01530 414845 or bntmistry@ntlworld.com

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.

A COUNTRYSIDE QUIZ

A couple of people asked if I could include a quiz in the newsletter.

This one was originally devised by Colin and Joyce Beck of Branston & District u3a.

I have copied it from National u3a with permission to publish it only in this newsletter.

Each of the words or phrases is a clue to what looks or sounds like a feature(§), creature(†), bird(*), insect(°) or plant(^) likely to be seen in the countryside in Britain.

Question	Question
1 Write IX method § (7,3)	26 Backward deer flags* (4,7)
2 Bovine framework § (6,4)	27 Pastime* (5)
3 Putting area domestic area § (10)	28 Danger sign grumble* (3,6)
4 Beheaded smile 14lbs § (9)	29 Ripped upset for pickpocket* (6)
5 Unite reaper/thresher § (7,9)	30 Ash or Elm shadow-box line* (4,7)
6 One of 26 fight § (9)	31 Sulphur; roll in mud to follow ° (11)
7 Frighten spectators lose 500 § (9)	32 Lord's wife Robin or Tit ° (8)
8 Silver in French city novice § (7,5)	33 Car hooter extra terrestrial ° (6)
9 Seen in contract order § (7)	34 Green vegetable male° (7)
10 12" grand dance tone § (8,5)	35 Sad young woman, soar ° (4,9)
11 Public passenger vehicle halt § (3,4)	36 Punctuation mark ° (5)
12 Feline from Poland† (7)	37 Edge of hat and rock ° (9)
13 Lawn turf twist side to side† (5,5)	38 Spotted or dashed timber ° (8,4)
14 Found in pages to atlas † (5)	39 Revolutionary naval officer ° (3,7)
15 Row of bushes glutton† (8)	40 Found in covering letter ° (7)
16 Room entrance for small rodent† (8)	41 Sugary strongbox cob^ (5,8)
17 Beheaded climbing aid† (5)	42 Toe ailment wed archery bull^ (4,8)
18 Thousand before writing fluid† (4)	43 Sorceress's brush^ (6,5)
19 Tungsten headed artist's frame† (6)	44 Lea dessert^ (11)
20 Public House in cut grass† (6)	45 Fatal nocturnal colour^ (6,10)
21 Let after South West* (7)	46 Leopard or tiger relations^ (6)
22 50th anniversary ogle* (9)	47 Run away curse^ (8)
23 Bit of and top of roof* (9)	48 Make fun of learner^ (6)
24 Mollusc's case lower head* (8)	49 Prickly plant German wine^ (9)
25 Small headless chicken* (6, 3)	50 Race healthy^ (9)

Answers on the last page

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 house calls.

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

This month it was a case of "physician heal thyself" or at least thine own computer! My laptop started crashing and rebooting several times a day and I assumed the worst i.e. buy a new computer, but it always pays to try to fix it first. After searching on Google, I found that Microsoft have provided some utilities which can analyse the computer and attempt to fix it. In my case System File Checker found several corrupted files and repaired them. It took a few hours, mostly waiting for the computer to do its thing, but all appears to be well now (hopefully).

Drawing and painting

Four members worked from home this month on a Christmas theme. Some nice paintings were done. This one was done by Christine. All the other paintings are viewable on the Drawing and Painting Gallery page of our website.



Literature Group

The group appear to be continuing with their WhatsApp group so that they can read at home and then discuss the books they are reading.

Music Appreciation

4 members provided their choice of music and very good it was too.

Mike said: Nev and Neil have cornered the Christmas market, and Estelle had gone for the upbeat dance music so I thought I'd start off with some melodic pieces to remind us of the nice summer we got this year but couldn't fully use.

I started with Matt Monro & "On days like these" from the opening sequence of the Italian Job with the Lamborghini driving up through the mountains.

Joni Mitchell seems to epitomise summer for me. Mostly the summer of 1969, I suppose, but nonetheless she has a lovely light voice on "Both sides now"

And for something classical, "The flower duet" from Lakme by Delibes. This was used in a British Airways advert. Lesley Garrett sings both parts of the duet.

Estelle gave us some dance videos to get us all exercising to:

First was of film clips of famous people dancing to "Boogie Woogie Country Girl" by Jerry Lee Lewis

Secondly, "Dancing the Boogie" with Silvan Zingg on piano and Maeva & William dancing.

Thirdly, Miss Moonshine buckdancing "Billy in the Low Ground-Chomp and Stomp". Buck dancing is an early form of tap dancing originating from the Appalachians.

Lastly some Electro-Swing from two German dancers JSM and Eric, dancing to Jamie Berry featuring Octaves Rose on "Lost in The Rhythm".

Well they all got my toes tapping at least.

Nev pointed out that Sean Connery died recently and he was prompted to find a suitable James Bond track. Ironically this track is from "The Spy Who Loved Me" in which Roger Moore plays Bond, but he felt that the title of the song describes Sean Connery rather than any of the other actors who have played Bond. It is, of course, "Nobody Does (Did) it Better" sung by Carly Simon.

His second choice was a popular classical piece, Pachelbel's Canon, written by Johann Pachelbel sometime between 1680 and 1706.

Thirdly he picked an upbeat Christmas song "Santa Clause is Comin' to Town". There are many versions of this song but the one chosen is by Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters from 1943.

Finally we had another Christmas song, a thought provoking traditional African-American spiritual song called "Poor Little Jesus". The version chosen is by Maddie Prior and the Carnival Band.

Neil said that his favourite TV show was the West Wing which often used music to good effect.

His first choice was a scene mixing the White House Christmas celebration with the funeral of a homeless war veteran, with The Little Drummer Boy being sung by a choir in the White House.

He said that he has only ever bought one Christmas single – "Run Run Rudolph" by Chuck Berry. He was pleased to find out that someone had put together an entertaining cartoon video to accompany it, so that was his second choice.

"I suspect that like me, some of you may get fed up hearing the same old songs totted out each Christmas. There is one though which I look forward to hearing. "I Believe in Father Christmas" by Greg Lake. So this is my third choice."

Neil wanted to finish on a positive note, so snuck in fourth song. Ella Fitzgerald telling us to "Have ourselves a Merry Little Christmas", and assuring us that "Next year all our troubles will be out of sight".

Let's hope she is right !

Family History

A very good session today with seven logging on, one post session report, and 2 making apologies. It is very useful to make apologies as we know you are still with us!

John H has run into a problem with an ancestor who seems to be dying in 1916 twice: once aged 40 and once aged 1. Unfortunately FindMyPast does not give enough information to split the two, or to check if this is in fact the same person but mis-transcribed. More research needed into how FMP works.

John D is working on understanding how FMP works, by working through hints for known people who's history is well established.

Libby was unable to log on, but has been chasing down her grandfather's first wife and daughter, who we found emigrating to Canada. Through her sister and a cousin in Germany it seems that neither married, so their lines stop there. But there is much more to go at with the grandfather.

Audrey has been chasing down the godmother of her cousin's husband's cousin in Luxembourg. There is some talk of a possible legacy but Audrey is unsure of how to search for this. I posted her a Google link and a snippet of the Ancestry Search page for Wills and Probates. It sounds complicated, so will need careful research! If any of you can help, please let me know and I will co-ordinate for you.

Shirley has a problem with an ancestor born before the BMD records started. She is trying to find a Parish Register entry or similar which will yield parents names, or even a wedding. FMP yields several William Hepworths in the same periods and general location. More work needed here to refine the choice, but definitely progress.

Carolyn is trying to chase down someone called Hemp, but finds it may be mixed up with someone called Kemp. Not an uncommon transliteration I'm afraid!

Dora Lots to report here! Dora is investigating her mother's family in Holland but has run into a brick wall. She cannot find records on births after 1916. Her mum was born in Rotterdam in 1918 but records are only available after 100 years. So she's assuming that records are not necessarily uploaded every year. She can go further back but progress is slow. So she decided to go back to research her father's mother's family who are Scottish.

So back to Scotland's people for the digital records which cost to access but she can do plenty of free searching to narrow down to the records she wants to purchase. Currently looking to find details on her great, great grandfather and great, great grandmother in early 1800s. She is also widening out the search on her father's brothers. Phew!

Sylvia reported in after the session. She has a number of threads going, but one which stands out is her grandmother. She is unable to find her birth, despite identifying her on the 1911 Census, and getting her death and marriage certificates, and identifying her parents from her sister's birth certificate. I have asked her what sites she has used to search, and we will continue to root around for her!

Well done everybody!

Science & Technology

During this time of not being able to meet in person, the numbers of members attending our Zoom meetings is fewer than before so Ashby S&T have agreed to combine with Burton Science group, who also have fewer online members, to share meetings and presentations.

This month there were two short talks. John Hoddy of Burton talked about the 'Science of Christmas' followed by a talk called 'The Mystery of the Star of Bethlehem' by Paul McKay, who is a member of both Science Groups.

Paul told us that there is no agreed scientific explanation for the star or celestial object that guided the three Kings, Wise Men or *Magi* to Jesus in Bethlehem. There are various possibilities and the talk examined a few of these in detail comparing each with the biblical description given in the Gospel according to Mathew. Firstly, the depth of astronomical knowledge available 2000 years ago was

reviewed, which highlighted the absence of any scientific-basis. Knowledge of the stars at that time was used mostly for navigation across featureless desert landscapes. There is no doubt the *Magi* had good star knowledge but at the time nearly everything in the night sky that was bright and moved differently to the 'fixed' stars was called a 'star', including comets, planets and supernova (exploding stars).

After assessing each of these candidate objects against the biblical evidence it was concluded that no single feature could account for the behaviour of the Star of Bethlehem, as it suddenly appeared, moved, stopped then disappeared. Mathew's Gospel was written 80 years after these events and there is no doubt they were re-told by word-of-mouth many times, fiction replacing facts along the way.

But it is a story that has inspired the faithful for 2000 years and today still provides the imagery for many Christmas cards.

Walking

ALL CHANGE YET AGAIN. NOW THAT WE ARE IN TIER 4 ALL ORGANISED WALKING IS FORBIDDEN

Walk leaders are not currently organising walks for such small numbers as there are many other restrictions including record keeping of names and contact details for Test & Trace, social distancing, sanitising and limits on coffee stops etc. If walks do go ahead, walk leaders will brief participants before walking.

Longer Walks

For the time being Kevin is not organising any more formal walks 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

John says he won't be organising any short walks before Christmas as the cafés will be shut and that is one of the reasons most members join the short walks. He was hoping things would be better in the New Year. Unfortunately not, now that we are in tier 4.

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!

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

U3A Countryside Quiz Answers

1 Pennine Way	18 Mink	35 Blue Damsel fly
2 Cattle Grid	19 Weasel	36 Comma
3 Greenhouse	20 Minnow	37 Brimstone
4 Milestone	21 Swallow	38 Speckled Wood
5 Combine Harvester	22 Goldeneye	39 Red Admiral
6 Letterbox	23 Partridge	40 Ringlet
7 Scarecrow	24 Shelduck	41 Sweet Chestnut
8 Village Green	25 Little Owl	42 Corn Marigold
9 Tractor	26 Reed Bunting	43 Witch's Broom
10 Football Pitch	27 Hobby	44 Meadowsweet
11 Bus stop	28 Red Grouse	45 Deadly Nightshade
12 Polecat	29 Dipper	46 Catkin
13 Grass Snake	30 Tree Sparrow	47 Fleabane
14 Stoat	31 Swallowtail	48 Teasel
15 Hedgehog	32 Ladybird	49 Hollyhock
16 Dormouse	33 Hornet	50 Speedwell
17 Adder	34 Peacock	