



Newsletter November 2021

Interest Groups Timetable for December

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Monthly Meeting	Tue 21st Dec	2 pm	Congregational Church, Ashby Concordia Choir - Christmas concert
Arts and Crafts	Thu 2nd Dec	10:00 am	2 Marlborough Way
Bridge	Tue 6th Dec	2 pm	Hood Park Leisure Centre
	Tue 13th Dec	7 pm	Ivanhoe Club
	Tue 20th Dec	2 pm	Hood Park Leisure Centre
	Tue 27th Dec	7 pm	Ivanhoe Club - This date to be confirmed
Calligraphy	Tue 14th Dec	10:00 am	At Jenny's. Finish Christmas project
Computer	Wed 1st Dec	2:00 pm	16 Winchester Way
Digital Photography	Thu 2nd Dec	10:00 am	16 Winchester Way
Drawing and painting	Wed 15th Dec	10:00 am	2 Marlborough Way. Suggested theme: Christmas
Family History	Wed 8th Dec	2:00 pm	2 Marlborough Way
Gardening	Thu 16th Dec	1 pm	Packington Village Hall. Secret Santa. Please bring garden gift value of £5. Also craft demo. Please bring own food and cutlery this year.
Literature	Tue 14th Dec	12:30 pm	Christmas Lunch
Medium Walks	Mon 13th Dec	9.45 for 10am start	Meet at Ferrers Arms, Lount
Music Appreciation	Wed 1st Dec	10:00 am	36 Willesley Gdns
Recorder	Thu 2nd Dec	10:00 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Science & Technology	Mon 13th Dec	2:00 pm	Ashby Alliance Evangelical Church. Paul McKay - The Star of Bethlehem
Short Walks	Sat 18th Dec	10:00 am	Meet at the Oakthorpe colliery picnic site, the same as last month.
Walking	Tue 7th Dec	9.45 for 10 am start	10 Rydal Gdns, LE65 1FJ for breakfast rolls, followed by a shorter walk from Packington

Coming Events

Event	Date	Time	Venue
Christmas Lunch	Thu 9th Dec	12:30 for 1 pm	Willesley Park Golf Club. Sold out.
Burns Supper	Thu 27th Jan 2022	7 for 7:30 pm	Willesley Park Golf Club. Tickets now on sale

Interest Groups Timetable for early January

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Bridge	Mon 3rd	2-4 pm	Hood Park Leisure Centre
Walking	Tue 4th	9.45 for 10 am start	TBA
Music Appreciation	Wed 5th	10:00 am	TBA
Computer	Wed 5th	2:00 pm	16 Winchester Way
Recorder	Thu 6th	10:00 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Digital Photography	Thu 6th	10:00 am	16 Winchester Way
Arts and Crafts	Thu 6th	10:00 am	2 Marlborough Way.

REMEMBRANCE DAY



A wreath was laid on behalf of Ashby u3a at the Memorial in Market Street on Remembrance Sunday. As the service itself was held in Hood Park this year to allow for social distancing, wreaths were laid at the Memorial afterwards.

HELP & WELFARE

Covid

We remind you that we cannot guarantee that all members or other participants at u3a meetings or gatherings will have been vaccinated nor that they are virus-free and that it is up to individuals to decide whether or not they are comfortable with the risks of mixing in groups when the virus is still very much at large.

Group leaders may also wish to remind participants that they may wish to wear face masks in crowded spaces, although it isn't compulsory nor is it a legal requirement.

Welfare

Our Welfare person is Sharon Woodland. Sharon can be contacted at welfare@ashbyu3a.co.uk

If you know of any member who is unwell or isolating or has a family member who is unwell, please contact Sharon 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.

NHS Covid-19 Test and Trace

If you have a smartphone, we would encourage you to download the NHS Covid 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! It can also be used to check-in to pubs, restaurants and other premises for Test and Trace to save having to give your details at the door.

LAST MONTH'S MEETING

November 23rd - Guest speaker Mark Walsh - "Dad's Army - We're all doomed!"

Mark was last with us 3 years ago when he showed off his virtuoso Ukulele playing and told us stories of the Old Time Music Halls. This time he told us all about the making of Dad's Army, how it came about and the various people involved.

Jimmy Perry had wanted to write a comedy series about the Home Guard but could not get anyone interested until he showed it to David Croft, Jimmy's manager's husband. He liked it and the two got on well together writing a script. Jimmy had been a teenager at the start of war and joined the Home Guard, but his mother didn't like the idea, mollycoddled him, and sent him to training wrapped up in a scarf. Yes he was the original Pike. Jimmy wanted to appear in the series himself and realising that he was too old to play Pike, wrote Pte Walker for himself. However David Croft and the BBC management didn't think that the writer should act in it as there would be accusations that he had all the best lines.

Jimmy also wrote the theme tune, sung by Bud Flanagan, which everyone including Bud, thought was an old wartime song. However Jimmy wasn't so good at naming the show. He wanted to call it "Fighting Tigers" but the BBC management came up with "Dad's Army" which fortunately stuck. There was much debate as to who would play the different roles but Croft and Perry eventually got their choices and what great choices they were, although many of the cast, including Arthur Lowe and John Le Mesurier, were a bit dubious whether the show would be a success.

Mark, although much younger than the cast, became great friends with some of them through his show biz connections, namely Jimmy Perry, Pamela Cundell (Mrs Fox), Bill Pertwee (Warden Hodges) and Frank Williams (Rev Farthing).

Mark told us many anecdotes about the cast and writers and also entertained us with a few tunes on the ukulele and banjo-ukulele including "Who do you think you are kidding Mr Hitler"

A most entertaining afternoon of stories, jokes and music. Thank you Mark.

GROUP REPORTS

Bridge

The Bridge Group have restarted now and are meeting every week although the last meeting on Dec 27th is yet to be confirmed as it falls on Boxing Day holiday. Monday 27th and Tuesday 28th are both public holidays as Christmas falls on a weekend. On Nov 29th they got together for a seasonal tea party.

Craft

4th November

The group started making Christmas decorations which they will finish off next month.

Calligraphy

9th November

The group met to start our Christmas project which was to use Italics to write a Carol inside a Christmas tree shape. We also welcomed a new member to our group - Caryl - and had the first mince pie of the season!!!

Our next meeting is at Jenny's house on Dec 14th where we will finish off our writing.

Looking ahead, our Jan meeting is at Sue's on the 11th where we will be planning future work. The emphasis will be "Modern Calligraphy".

Drawing and painting

November

The poppy trail was the focus of activity this month. Six of us met in town to follow the trail around all the Ashby shop windows, our final stop being Macron where one of our group's poppies was displayed.



Alternatively, the virtual trail was available on the Ashby Art Festival Facebook page so hopefully most of us managed to see most of the exhibits. (The money raised from the auction of the poppy pictures will go the British Legion)

Next meeting, 15th December, 10am, at 2MW, theme: Christmas.

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.

3rd November

There was a lot to do today with nine in attendance, including one new member: Betty.

JD helped Betty with her iPad. She wanted to file emails into folders according to subject. This was a new thing for JD too, so we learned how to do it together. We also looked at how to snip a picture from the internet (being careful about copyright, of course) and sort photos into albums.

Mike helped Catherine to get rid of popup ads on google and identify if she is running short of memory. Then how to sort that. Mike also worked with Bix on transferring a PDF to a web page.

15th November

Another busy session, with seven in attendance

Betty was helped by Richard to create a group mailing list on her iPad.

John D worked with Greta on a couple of topics. She has found that recently outbound email on her BT email account has been stopped in the Outbox but can be sent from her Apple outbox. We could not immediately find a reason or cure for this but will return to it. Mike Stow gave advice by email, but this involves passwords which are tiger territory for some! In addition, she is concerned that a previous iPad still seems fully operational and wants to shut it down. She is concerned if she wipes it the data on it, linked to her new iPad, will be wiped too. This needs other cleverer heads as it is a puzzle how the process of setting up her new iPad did not clear her old one.

Peter and Richard worked on Peter's new laptop gradually setting it up. It seems that Windows 11 has features such as the start-up screen that will need getting used to. There are reports from outside the USA that shutting down isn't straightforward either, but this was not tested.

Digital Photography

4th November

Five today reviewed our photos from the last expedition on the 7th October to Moira Furnace. These were many and varied, although JD's did not appear on his pen drive. The legend "Empty Folder" told all.

Photos of the canal and the birds on it, the lime works, and the main furnace buildings were all in evidence.

It had been a very good day out, despite us having to repair to the Eden Bistro for coffee as the café in the furnace grounds was closed.

We next meet on December 2nd, at 16 Winchester Way, when we will decide whether to go out or stay in.

Family History

11th November

Another good session today, with six at the table including one new member.

Eileen is still making progress with the Parish Records now back into the 17th century. Dora is working on her Scottish ancestors and has also been able to penetrate back into the 17th century: good going! Ana is back with us and is still pursuing ancestors with her unusual name. This is a fascinating story! Carolyn also has returned and is restarting her searches

Frank is a new member, with lots of original documents and plenty of searching already done.

We spent some time looking for information on his grandfather. It seems he has hit a brick wall with a marriage between two Smiths (don't you hate that?) but we used a marriage certificate in his possession to find his grandmother on the 1871 Census before she married, and therefore her family. We also found his grandfather's military records for WWI and II, although we could not then print them off. JD subsequently located them, set up a temporary folder for him and emailed a Zip file to be opened later. He will also join the WhatsApp group as the others seems to find it very useful. There is lots more to do to fill in the gaps, but it is early days yet.

John D reported that the story of his great nephews gun has stopped, as the police, to whom his great nephew gave the Martini-Henry gun he found under the floorboards, have destroyed it.

This is frustrating as the regulations are quite clear about this sort of antique, and it should not have been destroyed. The dialogue with the police is on-going, but we will have to confine ourselves to pinning down the occupants of the house at the time it might have been hidden.

John will submit a new poster for the Group to go on the Display Board at monthly meetings.

We next meet on Wednesday, December 8th, 2021, at 2.00 p-m. when there may be MINCE PIES!.

Gardening

18th November

Our November meeting was a talk on bonsai gardening. George bought many of his bonsai plants that were displayed on stage. He went through the different shapes the plants are formed into and the different varieties of plants. He displayed on screen the different stages the plants went through over the years. We also had a demonstration of how to wire up a young plant.

Industrial History

Wednesday 24th October - Planning for next year

We met at the White Hart to try and sort out a programme of trips for next year and we now have a provisional programme. We rounded off the meeting with a celebratory pub lunch.

Lunch

Thursday 11th November

We met at the Mill Wheel at Hartshorne which many members confessed to never having visited before. I don't know why as it turned out to be a very nice place with good food. The Mill Wheel is eponymously named for the large 24 ft diameter water wheel inside the building which previously powered firstly a corn mill, a smelting furnace and then a screw making factory. As it was Remembrance Day we raised a toast to The Fallen before lunch.

Literature Group

The group are now meeting at Sandra's house each month so that they can discuss the books they are reading. The discussions are lively, one hears.

History

This was our first meeting since January 2020 and 39 members attended to hear Collin Ellis's excellent talk about the Settle and Carlisle railway. As ever, Colin managed to entertain whilst educating us.

The origins of the makings of this line stretch right back to 1778, strangely enough being tangled up with rivalry in the Midlands over the carrying of coal from the coal fields to London.

As the late 18th and 19 centuries progressed, and the Industrial Revolution along with it, the importance and value of this trade increased rapidly, with the so-called 'Railway Mania' bringing into existence lines all up and down the country. The scramble for the trade produced lines which were uneconomic, duplicated, or very lucrative and with a monopoly, which then reversed their fortunes in a bewildering succession.

The upshot was the link from Settle to Carlisle was in competition with the West Coast main line. This provided a very useful alternative to the vital link from Leeds (and thence London) and Glasgow. The line was opened in 1875 to goods, and from 1876 for passengers. But not after over 100 deaths within the 7000 strong construction crew. These lived with their families in bleak conditions in the remote valley where the main Ribble Viaduct was being constructed. The line cost around £3.8 million - a colossal sum for the period.

The line was very successful, despite the steep gradients (1:100) but being in competition with a major player, meant that its life was short. Short but sweet as the service available was very special: dining/refreshment cars even for Third Class (Second Class was phased out relatively soon) and other special services to make this a premium route to the North. Complications with the tendency of through trains from other lines not to stop for local passengers, and the inevitable attrition as the century went on from mergers and closures, was a threat that became very real after the First World War.

After the War, financial restrictions made it necessary to reduce complexity and cost in the system and the government grouped the multitude of lines into a fewer number of monolithic Groups with names we are familiar with such as LNER, LMS, GWR and so on. Sadly, the effect was to starve the line of traffic to the point of collapse in the 1960s. The last expresses ran in 1982 to Nottingham. Expresses through to London ceased earlier in 1976. However, a rescue campaign was successful and the line as we know it was born.

The route is spectacular, passing through remote country over many viaducts and several tunnels. The main Ribble-head Viaduct is 440 yards long and 100 feet high (no metric conversions available!) It is expensive to run, but the variety of locos and rolling stock, plus the attraction of the line to visiting railway aristocrats such as Flying Scotsman, Sir Nigel Gresley, Battle of Britain/West Country class locos from the Southern, and Coronation Class locos from the LMS, make it a very popular line, attracting visitors from all over the world.

There was much more to this detailed and very interesting talk, illustrated with a great many photos of locations and trains, but this is all the room your author has in which to present it.

An excellent afternoon.

Music Appreciation

Wednesday 3rd November

We met at the home of our new members, Sid and Ann, this month. Ann wasn't able to join us but Sallie and Brenda both returned. So with Neil, Nev and Mike there were 6 of us. We managed to play 20 tracks this session, which must be a record. (pun intended).

Sallie started us off with Chopin and "Fantasie Impromptu in C#", a brilliant piece of virtuoso piano playing. Brenda followed with the immaculate Carpenters and "We've only just begun". Mike then played "Chan Chan" from the Bueno Vista Social Club, a group of elderly Cuban players.

Nev, continuing his theme from last month, gave us two versions of the same song, "Ain't misbehavin'" firstly by its composer Fats Waller and then a very different version by gravelly voiced Londoner Tommy Bruce who had a big hit with it in 1960.

Neil then played us a song by Elton John called "Roy Rogers" and although it was from the Yellow Brick Road album, none of us had heard it before. Very good too.

Sid's contribution was two tracks, "Pharoah's Story" and "Poor, Poor Pharaoh" from "Joseph & His Technicolour Dreamcoat" starring Paul Jones as Joseph and Gordon Waller as Pharaoh.

Going round again, Sallie gave us Rachmaninoff's "Rhapsody on a Theme from Paganini - var 18". A beautiful piece used as a film theme but we can't remember which one!

Brenda had an Annie Lennox CD without track listings so we took pot luck and got the lovely "Money Can't Buy It" performed live.

Mike followed up Sid's Paul Jones theme with the Blues Band and "Let the good times roll". It seems the Blues Band are disbanding next year after 42 years on the road.

Nev introduced us to someone he heard play live and the rest of us had never heard of, Arthur Doherty, who sang a very poignant song about WWI "Green fields of France". Very moving and apt for this month.

This was followed by Neil's choice, Jackson Browne and "Sky blue and black". Browne is a very underrated singer/songwriter. Sallie then gave us Frances Ruffelle singing "On my own" from Les Misérables followed by Schubert's "Marche Militaire", a four-handed piece on the piano.

Brenda's next choice was a very early Frank Sinatra rendering of "Stardust". So different to Hoagy Carmichael.

Mike's last piece was Dolly Parton's "Travellin' Prayer" from her bluegrass album although this track was actually written by Billy Joel. Nev played the ever popular "Girl from Ipanema" by Astrid Gilberto & Stan Getz and Neil offered the wonderful, anarchic Ian Dury singing "I want to be straight".

Sid closed the session with, appropriately, The Animals and "We've got to get out of this place"

Another great session where we all learned something new.

Recorder Group

Thursday 4th & 18th November

The group have settled in to their now regular venue and regular twice monthly meetings, are coping with the luxury of more members than ever before. This month they hope to be playing some Christmas music.

Wine Appreciation

Wednesday 17th November

November's meeting had to be cancelled at short notice as many members had to call off with illness, holidays and other important reasons and only two were available to attend. We will not be meeting in December but will meet again in the New Year.

Science & Technology

Monday 8th November.

'The Accident of Life' by Kurt Kovach

The Accident of Life looked at many of the conditions in our universe, our solar system and on our planet that are favourable to life forming.

It started with a brief summary of the big bang and then went on to examine the 4 forces in the universe. We then looked at Sir Martin Rees's 6 major constants and their effect on the universe. We briefly looked at the role of carbon in the formation of life and the properties of water that are so special and vital to life forming. We then considered the role of our sun in the stability of our solar system followed by the earth, the ultimate goldilocks planet, with all its many benefits. The moon and Jupiter too have a role in protecting us from harm and stabilizing the planet. We considered the effects of a molten interior, the pluses and minuses, before examining just how complex life has become.

What are the chances of all these favourable outcomes and how can we explain them? Weird isn't it?

Finally we briefly mentioned the exoplanets that have been discovered, nearly 5000 so far. So perhaps we are not alone?.

Supper club

Thursday 25th November

We had planned to go to the George at Coleorton this month but we couldn't get a booking so we opted for the Smisby Arms instead. They asked us to pay a £10pp deposit and to pre-order our food which was slightly inconvenient, however understandable in current times when I expect last minute cancellations are common.

The food was fine as was the service and everyone seemed to have a good time.

We will not be meeting in December as the date falls two days before Christmas, nor in January as that clashes with the Burns Supper. Tickets for which are still available from Bill Wilson.

Walking

Tuesday 2nd November. Overseal led by Mike G

With a dry sunny day in prospect, an exceptional 19 enthusiasts turned up at the Robin Hood Inn, Overseal, to undertake the 7+ mile (precise measurements differed!) "Overseal's Emerald Necklace" heritage walk, with a 20th joining us at the half-way stage. The route took us through Gunby Lea Wood, skirted the Grangewood Airfield, along Green Lane, through Wadlands Wood, and on to the site of Wadlands Wharf, the original northern terminus of the Ashby Canal. From here, we broadly followed the Hooghborough Brook, which marks the Derbyshire/ Leicestershire boundary, via Gorseys Leys and Short Heath, then past a 5GW solar park and Seal Wood, picking up the ancient Church Way towards Netherseal before heading back to Overseal via Dead Danes Bottom. At various points, walk leader Mike Gibson waffled about nearby heritage features, noting the contrasting effects of mining subsidence: the "overnight" disappearance of Barratt Pool in the 1950s, and the equally sudden appearance of Broomfields Lake in the 1980s. Back at the very hospitable Robin Hood, which had opened specially for us, we enjoyed a well-deserved drink with our packed lunches, plus some chips (supplied by the pub).

Tuesday 16th November. Saddlington led by Bill Wilson

13 members met at the Queen's Head, Saddlington. Lunch was pre-ordered, the weather was grey and misty but dry. The walk took us round Fleckney through Kibworth and over Smeeton Hill which on a clear day affords lovely views. The path then took us past Saddlington reservoir opened in 1797 to supply water to the Grand Union canal. Another mile took us back to the pub for lunch and a pint. 7 miles mainly over fields with mainly gates and a just few stiles.

Medium walks

Monday 8th November. Jubilee Woods, led by Alison

The group assembled in the car park at the QE Diamond Jubilee Park and, as ordered by the leader and as promised by the weathermen, the weather was perfect - clear, dry and sunny. 11 of us set off which included 2 new members to the group - who we hope to see also in the future. The walk was just over 5 miles. Through the park to Ravenstone, down the lane towards Heather for a short stretch and across the fields to Sence Valley Forest Park, back to the car park via Ibstock.

Short Walks

Friday 19th November. Donisthorpe Picnic Area and Willesley Woods, led by John

It was a dry but overcast day when 8 walkers and Lily the dog went for a walk around Willesley Woods starting from the Donisthorpe picnic area car park. The walk was about 1 3/4 miles around the outer rim but cutting back onto the gravel path. to avoid the muddier areas. We visited the memorial which still showed the wreaths from Remembrance Sunday. We admired the fence included into a tree and the metal tortoise. On completion of the walk we went to the newly opened Eden Cafe in Moira for drinks, all except Lily and her keeper Sandra.

IF YOU WANT TO GET IN TOUCH, OUR COMMITTEE ARE:

Tony Smith	Chairman	chairman@ashbyu3a.co.uk	01530 831822
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
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Peter Clement	Minutes Secretary	minutes@ashbyu3a.co.uk	01530 560894
Sharon Woodland	Welfare	welfare@ashbyu3a.co.uk	01530 413867
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
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