



Newsletter February 2022

Interest Groups Timetable for March 2022

Please note that this timetable could be subject to change at any time.

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Monthly Meeting	Tue 22nd	2 pm	Congregational Church, Ashby David Skillen: Battle of Britain unsung heroes and heroines
Arts and Crafts	Thu 3rd	10:00 am	2 Marlborough Way
Bridge	Mon 7th	2 pm	Hood Park Leisure Centre
	Mon 14th	7 pm	Ivanhoe Club
	Tue 21st	2 pm	Hood Park Leisure Centre
	Tue 28th	7 pm	Ivanhoe Club
Calligraphy	Tue 8th	10:00 am	At Gill's. SPRING- using an A5 sheet fill in with 'Spring' words
Computer	Wed 2nd	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
	Mon 21st	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Digital Photography	Thu 3rd	10 am	16 Winchester Way
Drawing and painting	Wed 16th	10 am	Venue TBA. Theme to be either 'Jubilee' or 'Spring is in the air'
Family History	Wed 9th	2 pm	2 Marlborough Way
Gardening	Thu 17th	1 pm	Self-drive visit to PLANTERS garden centre, Tamworth. A talk by Gerald Ingram, owner of Planters, plus a buffet. Buffet at 1pm, talk at 2pm. Price £10, drinks cost extra. Please advise if you have any food allergies or intolerances.
History	Thu 24th	2:15 pm	Packington Village Hall. Bob Brechim - 'Pallitoy'
Industrial Heritage	Wed 23rd	TBA	The Great British Car Journey, Ambergate
Italian			TBA
Literature	Tue 8th	1:30 pm	Meeting at Sandra's house

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Lunch	Thu 10th	12 for 12.30 pm	The Gate, Hinckley Rd, Osbaston Hollow, Osbaston CV13 0HP
Medium Walks	Mon 14th	9.45 for 10am start	Meet at Moira Furnace top right CP
Music Appreciation	Wed 2nd	10 am	At Brenda's, 36 Willesley Gdns
Recorder	Thu 3rd	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
	Thu 17th	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Science & Technology	Mon 14th	2 pm	Ashby Alliance Evangelical Church. Mark Stretton - The science of archery
Short Walks	Fri 18th	10 am	Meet at Ticknall Car Park
Supper Club	Thu 24th	7 for 7.30 pm	The Tap House, Burton Rd, Smisby, LE65 2TA
Walking	Tue 1st	9.45 for 10 am start	The Staff of Life, Ticknall
	Tue 15th	9.45 for 10 am start	Bulls Head, 1 Woodville Rd, Hartshorne, Swadlincote DE11 7ET
Wine Appreciation	Wed 16th	7 pm	Annie's house

Interest Groups Timetable for early April

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Bridge	Mon 4th	2 pm	Hood Park Leisure Centre
Walking	Tue 5th	9.45 for 10 am start	TBA
Music Appreciation	Wed 6th	10 am	TBA
Computer	Wed 6th	2 pm	16 Winchester Way.
Arts and Crafts	Thu 7th	10 am	2 Marlborough Way
Digital Photography	Thu 7th	10 am	16 Winchester Way.
Recorder	Thu 7th	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal

RESULT OF EGM ON 22nd FEBRUARY 2022

At the start of last month's meeting we held an EGM to ask members to vote on the proposal that our constitution should be amended to remove the requirement for dual authorisation for bank transactions. This is to allow us to operate internet banking which usually doesn't have dual authorisation. The motion was passed unanimously.

As it is becoming increasingly difficult to operate our accounts without internet banking, we are currently actively looking for a bank which welcomes internet operated charity accounts, without excessive bank charges, which most banks seemingly do not want to do presently.

A REMINDER ABOUT MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Your membership renewal will be due on 1st April.

The fee this year is £20.00, or £16.00 if you are the 2nd member at one address or a fully paid up member at another U3A.

There is a small increase from before as the bank now charges us for every transaction, the Third Age Trust has increased its levy and the Congregational Church has raised its fees for us to meet there.

We haven't raised our fees for at least 7 years.

Renewal forms are downloadable by clicking on the "Information" tab on the website or from the Membership Sec., Iain Banns. **Please don't just send money, we need the completed form to comply with Data Protection legislation.**

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. Especially as the new variant seems to be much more transmissible.

Group leaders may also wish to remind participants that they may wish to wear face masks in crowded spaces including homes, although since Jan 27th it is no longer a legal requirement.

Again, it is no longer a legal requirement to wear face masks in places of worship which includes the Congregational Church where we hold our monthly meetings and also the Ashby Alliance Evangelical Church where the Science Group meets, but feel free to wear one if you prefer.

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

February 22nd - "Fool's Gold" Acoustic music and story telling

This was the second time that Carol and Steve Robson from Stanley in Co Durham, otherwise know as Fool's Gold, have visited us. The last time was 4 years ago. As before they performed various inter-related songs and told us the stories behind them. This time their theme was Queen Victoria, or more precisely, Victoriana.

They gave us tales and songs about Jack the Ripper, quack doctors and railway madness.

Grace Darling, who apparently hated her celebrity and turned down any offers to attend receptions in her honour, even from the Queen herself, died just four years later from TB aged just 26.

Steve also told us of the fate of troop ship HMS Birkenhead which ran aground off Danger Point near Cape Town. Army Colonel Seton took charge of the evacuation and called the men to "Stand fast. Women and children first". The women and children took to the boats and most survived. The men stood to attention in ranks as the boat sank. A few survived by clinging to the rigging and were rescued. Many drowned or were killed by sharks.

The term Birkenhead Drill became defined as courageous behaviour in hopeless circumstances.

On a more cheery note, we were treated to some well-known songs such as "The man who broke the bank at Monte Carlo", "On Mother Kelly's Doorstep", "My old man said follow the van" and "Any old iron" and many others.

Steve's guitar playing and Carol's singing (and bass- and flute-playing) were excellent as ever and we all had a wonderful time whilst learning many new facts about that period.

GROUP REPORTS

Bridge

The Bridge Group meetings are back under way. Whilst Neil is still away, Alison and Gary are continuing to look after the group.

Craft

13th January

The group met to discuss the programme for the start of this year before starting on their first project which will be to decorate flower pots before going on to create macramé pot hangers for them.

Calligraphy

8th February

Our meeting was the first of a series concentrating on Modern Calligraphy which looks rather free and easy but is actually hard to do. The other styles we have enjoyed are much more disciplined with specific rules to follow which we have all become very familiar with. Having spent time during the weeks before our meeting to practice, we all agreed that it was quite difficult to achieve the free style of Modern Calligraphy but had grasped basic letter formation. We had ideas for our Valentine Card and spent an enjoyable time together using the new font but agreed that we are still influenced by the more traditional styles and decided for our next meeting we would try to vary the size of the letters to gradually develop this new challenge.

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. Or now you can come along to one of our meetings in person.

21st February

Today we were seven, with a new member, John P. We now have a PhD of Johns...

Peter is making progress setting up his new(ish) printer, kindly donated by John H. He has had to source a suitable cable, which has also been donated by John H from his box of parts.

Richard has been struggling with Windows Edge and its annoying practice of forcing him to use Bing for his search engine. He can change the default to Chrome for one tab, but the Edge forces him back to Bing for subsequent ones. It can apparently be fixed but it involves delving into the operating system. He and Mike worked on a way to bypass Edge altogether.

Mike also worked with Sheila on getting her Files and Folders sorted out. Your correspondent understands there was a satisfactory outcome.

Drawing and painting

February

Because of half term complications it was a "work from home" session this month. The topics were either, "Love is in the air" or "Jubilee".

Next month's theme will be either "Spring is in the air" or "Jubilee" (continued)



This is Sharon's Jubilee Fireworks. Check the gallery on the website for some more paintings.

Digital Photography

3rd February

This was our first meeting since December.

We had 5 attending, and, although we had last thought of going out to the Oakthorpe Picnic site, we decided to stay in and review progress.

After a few discussions on photographing difficult subjects, such as the Northern Lights and the Moon with stars behind it, we decided that we would all try and prepare a suite of photos of flowers between now and the next meeting, for showing and discussing then, unless the weather is sufficiently good for an expedition.

Of note is that a photo by our very own Steve has made the front page of 3 Views News, the local newsletter for Oakthorpe, Donisthorpe and Acresford.

Family History

9th February

We were down to four today, but had a good session, nonetheless.

Eileen is still deep in the 18th century. She has a problem, though, with a father and son apparently dying in the same year:1742. We discussed how this might have come about, but she will need more information from the source. It is likely that the date is for the father, but a less likely probability is that both were taken off by illness or accident.

Keith is filling in background on his grandfather. It seems he was wounded in the First War, and discharged on that account, having lost a leg, but Keith would like to know the circumstances of his wounding. This is not mentioned in the Service record. It may be a dead end, as John D's father was gassed and retired to Home Base after recuperation, but we only know this from a telegram sent to his mother. Otherwise, the Record is silent.

Sylvia needed help navigating the 1921 Census, so we worked on that together. In particular, she wanted to check who was at a particular address, but without buying the image. It is possible to get an indication by opening the first stage of a query for a particular entry, then reading off the first names indicated at the address.

That does help if you know the first name of your target and is better if they were recorded in the 1911 Census. But it is not final until you purchase the image.

We also looked at how you get to see the address once you have purchased the image.

John D has assembled quite a lot of images from the 1921 Census for his father's cousins, which show the schools they taught at (most of them were teachers.) so he now has information to pursue. Once he has sorted it out into order! Getting information from local archives can be a little difficult as they often have search codes which are difficult for a non-specialist to navigate.

We make progress.

Wine Appreciation

February

Unfortunately many of our members were unavailable for this month's session and so it was decided to postpone until next month. The wines Annie had bought for the tasting will doubtless wait until March.

History

4th February - "4 Fiddlers"

Bill Devitt entertained us royally to an account of four of the greatest con men of the 19th Century.

43 members turned out as Bill is always a good draw.

The 'Fiddlers' of the title were George Francis Train, Isaac Merrit Singer, Mr ZZ (Zacharios Basikeos Zacharoff) and Joshua Abraham Norton.

GFT was called the rudest man of the 19th Century. And is one of the originators of the story of Phileas Fogg. He was orphaned at the age of 4 but went on to build and lose fortunes in the shipping business and was involved in large scale schemes in America and Australia in the railroad business. In the UK he founded with others the luxury railway concept, and even went to America to work with Pullman. He also started a successful Horse Bus enterprise using street rails. Involved in international politics, some of his hare-brained schemes included trying to sell Ireland to the IRA, declaring himself Dictator of the States, and annexing Cuba. He tried to spend his income of \$97 thousand a year by circumnavigating the world but seems to have sparked a competition between two lady journalists who did it in opposite directions in less than 80 days. He went into tax fraud in a big way, failed and died penniless.

Isaac Singer made his name improving the sewing machine and adapting it for the domestic market. He seems to have invented the 'higher purchase' system, but also devised a trade-in system to strangle the second-hand market. An impresario and bigamist he is said to have fathered 26 children by at least five women. His gravestone stands in Torquay.

Mr ZZ was another energetic type. He was an arsonist for the Constantinople fire brigade (!), a pimp and arms dealer. Amazingly devised a steam powered submarine with a tall smokestack. How he expected it to submerge is unclear. He engaged in a machine gun contest with Maxim but cheated to win. As a final gesture, at age 75 (1 years before he died) he married and gave his wife the casino at Monte Carlo as a wedding present. It took two days to burn his life history.

Joshua Norton also inherited a fortune but lost it all speculating. He was another with grandiose political ambitions and proclaimed himself Emperor of America, protector of Mexico. He even issued his own currency. In the course of his adventures he 'abolished' Congress On the other hand he was responsible for the concept of the Golden Gate bridge. His luck ran out and he died in 1880.

Altogether a fascinating canter around some of the century's classic 'chancers' many of whom made the century what it was: a dynamo of invention and enterprise.

Lunch

10th February

The luncheon group met at a new venue (for the group but not for many members) at the Greyhound Inn at Boundary. This is a very spacious albeit busy pub serving mostly carveries but also pizzas and a goodly selection of the usual pub classics and a few more unusual and tasty sounding choices. All food and drink orders were taken at the bar, but delivered to the table with the exception of the carvery for which one queued at the servery.

Approximately 25 turned up to be seated at two long tables. All the food seemed to be excellent. I heard no complaints. The service was friendly, efficient and prompt.

There were a few new faces so we hope to see them again, and everyone appeared to enjoy themselves. We shall doubtless return to the Greyhound again.

Gardening

17th February

Our garden meeting today was a talk on "Colour through the seasons" given by Simon Gulliver who is advisor to 30 National Trust gardens. He has also worked at Birmingham Botanical Gardens and lectures on biodiversity.

We went on a journey from winter to autumn, with some super pictures, and were told about the history and care of the various plants and trees. He also bought a selection of plants for sale. The meeting was very well attended, with good comments from our members.

Science & Technology

14th February

Transmitton - A local company's technical story by Adrian Hickson

With a change of emphasis to include the 'Technology' side of our group Adrian, one of our members, gave an informative and entertaining talk on Transmitton Ltd.

With a focus on the history of Transmitton from the early days in Burton on Trent through commercial success supplying key equipment for the mining industry, in particular overspeed equipment to maximise efficiency and safety of lift winding gear speed limits, to the company's purchase by BICC enabling further investment with a move to Smisby Road, Ashby, and the building of the larger premises and the opening of a social club along with the business expansion overseas.

Adrian gave an explanation of the technology employed and key design elements of Transmitton's systems which gave the company a stronghold as a control system (SCADA) supplier. Rail, Oil and Gas and Industrial control systems were described up to and including the eventual purchase by Siemens and the company's move to its current position next to the M42.

We were informed of amusing and informative stories of project works including successes and incidents which made up an engineer's life in the 1980 - 1990's, including fire at oil tank farms and concrete where it was not needed within the London Underground.

After the drinks break, Tanya and Paul introduced four videos to bring the group up to speed with the latest science and technology news.

The first video described the incredible find in Rutland Water reservoir of the fossilized remains of a Sea Dragon, or Ichthyosaur, the largest ever found in the UK. The second video explained how a vertebrate palaeontologist developed a way to identify the gender of fossil birds. The third video explained the latest developments in nuclear fusion, the 'holy grail' of power generation, with no radioactive waste and only hydrogen isotopes as the raw material. Finally, we learned how the James Webb Space Telescope was slowly and carefully adjusting the shape of its main mirror to focus the telescope, all controlled from Earth, one million miles away.

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.

Industrial History

23 February - Visit to ACME whistles, Birmingham

15 members met up in Ashby to share 4 cars for the drive into Birmingham. We had planned to go by train from Tamworth but HS2 preparation work meant that there were no trains running twixt Tamworth and New Street this week. As it happened, going by car proved less trouble than taking the train. Although the car park was inside the Birmingham clean air zone, all 4 cars were sufficiently modern to be exempt from the £8 charge.

From the Jewellery Quarter it was a 15 min walk to the factory where we were shown upstairs (many stairs!) for a look round some of their products whilst enjoying tea, coffee and biscuits. We were joined shortly by their Chairman and Managing Director, Simon Topman, who gave us a most interesting and humorous history of the company and it's founder before showing us around the factory itself.

Joseph Hudson came to Birmingham from a farming background aged 12 to seek his fortune. He trained for 7 years in the local engineering workshops before deciding in 1870 to start his own company making whistles.

The Metropolitan Police were looking for a replacement for their cumbersome rattles that they used to communicate with each other on the beat but were not loud enough in busy Victorian streets and advertised nationally for new ideas.

Hudson thought that a whistle would do the job but it had to have a distinctive sound. He took his design to London where it was chosen as the new signalling device and an order for 21,000 whistles was placed. His discordant two tone whistle has become the standard for many police forces and every British Bobby still carries one.

From there he went on to sell referee's whistle, silent dog whistles and even whistles for the Titanic. They were able to recently make Titanic replicas from the same tooling, on the same hand-presses in the same building 100 years later.

Whistles are still made almost entirely by hand from brass, silver or even gold, although some of the new cheaper whistles are plastic. Their dearest whistles can be diamond encrusted and cost 10s of thousands of pounds!

Simon enthusiasm for the history of his company was very evident as he treated us with a fascinating series of stories too numerous to repeat here but suffice to say he kept us entertained all morning. And the entirety of the fee we paid will go to support local children's charities.

Supper club

24th February

Having missed out last month to hand the date to the Burns Supper on Jan 27th, this was our first meeting this year. 15 of us visited the ever popular George Inn at Coleorton.

As a party had our table before us, we didn't sit down until 8pm but we quickly placed our orders and the food arrived soon after. There was a varied selection on the menu with quite a few different and interesting choices. Everyone seemed to like the food and ate their way through the large helpings.

We had some new members this month (although some had been at the last lunch). I hope they all enjoyed our company, we enjoyed theirs. We hope to see them at future suppers.

Music Appreciation

2nd February

After cancelling last month's session because so many of us had other things to do, it was great to get together again for the first time since December. We were joined by Estelle for her first "live" session as she joined the group immediately before the first lockdown and had only participated in our online sessions. Five of us met at Nev's house, while Neil and Sid were not able to join us.

Mike started us off fittingly with Irish folk singer Christy Moore and "Welcome to the cabaret". This is a humorous song he uses to start his live sets. Christy is not well known in England, and unknown to this group, but RTE voted him Ireland's greatest living musician in 2007. (Above Bono, Van Morrison or James Galway!?)

Brenda wanted to play Louis Armstrong's "Basin St Blues" but the CD seemed to have the tracks mixed up and we couldn't find it. Luckily Estelle happened to have a version by Jack Teagarden with her, so we played that instead. And very good it was too.

Estelle's own first choice was Alan Parsons' "The Gold Bug" from his album "The turn of a friendly card". Alan Parsons started as an engineer at Abbey Rd and worked on Beatles and Pink Floyd albums before starting his own prog rock band.

Nev continued his recent theme of playing two different versions of the same song, this time "Misty" by its writer Errol Garner and then a lovely vocal version by country singer Ray Stevens who is perhaps better known for his comedy songs.

Sallie gave us the wonderful "Sound of silence" by Simon & Garfunkel. Coincidentally, Mike then played a very different Paul Simon piece "Homeless" from his "Graceland" album which features South Africa's Ladysmith Black Mambazo, a song which made them world famous.

We returned to jazz with Brenda's excellent choice of "My Blue Heaven" by Dudley Moore and Estelle's Louis Armstrong "Someday you'll be sorry"

Nev introduced us to the stunning remixed version of George Harrison's "While my guitar gently weeps" from the Beatles' "Love" album. Most of us were unaware of the album but I've now ordered it from Amazon!

Sallie gave us our first classical piece of the day with Khachaturian's "Waltz" from his "Masquerade suite". We thought this had been used as a tv show theme tune, but didn't know which one! It has been used in many movies.

Mike had some more African music, this time from Ghana's Afro-rock Osibisa with "Music for gong gong". The band are credited with starting the World music genre. They started in the 1950's under different names but didn't become Osibisa until 1969 and are still performing. Their leader Teddy Osei is now 87!

Brenda gave us another Dudley Moore track; "You'd be so nice to come home to" and Estelle followed that with Acker Bilk and "Perdido St Blues" to complement the earlier "Basin St Blues"

Nev's alternate versions of songs brought us Bob Dylan's "Make you feel my love" but this time by Billy Joel. This version actually was released a few months before Dylan's in 1997.

Sallie's last selection was George Gershwin's "Walking the dog", a very evocative clarinet-led piece.

Short Walks

February

With the threatened storm Franklin due on the day, we decided to stay at home!

Walking

1st February. Around Coleorton and Peggs Green led by Tony

25 walkers met at the Angel Inn Coleorton Moor on a bright but crisp day. Regrettably the pub should have been open to take our lunch orders but it remained closed and there was no answer to our phone calls. Nonetheless we set off along Prestons Lane and then down Moor Lane to Hough Mill which is a restored flour mill. We followed the paths over various fields and emerged onto the A512 a few hundred yards away from the George & Dragon pub. We took a tea/coffee break at the corner of Stordon Lane where the leader made hurried arrangements with the Robin Hood Inn at Swannington to accommodate us for lunch after the walk. We then proceeded to Peggs Green and stooped on Aqueduct Rd to admire the remains of the Coleorton railway. We returned to our vehicles at about 1.15pm to find the Angel Inn still closed. So, as arranged, we drove down to Swannington to lunch at the Robin Hood. We were extremely grateful to the landlady for providing excellent service and food at such short notice.

15th February. Swannington, Ravenstone and Coalville led by Tony

9 hardy u3a walkers set out from the Robin Hood Inn Swannington on a wet and blustery day in the direction of Limby Hall Lane. For the record, there never was a Limby Hall but in earlier times the local residents so named the lane so as to make the area in which they lived sound more 'grand' than it actually was. From there we traversed the fields towards Sinope and crossed the Ashby to Coalville railway line to emerge onto the A511. Crossing the road we headed off towards Ravenstone where we sought refuge from the weather in a very handy bus shelter and stopped for our coffee break. Following the route of the former Ashby to Coalville turnpike road we set off again and took the old colliery road past the former Snibston colliery (now Snibston Country Park) onto Ashby Rd Coalville and then towards Stevensons College. We walked back to the Robin Hood via Cuckoo Gap Wood.

Medium walks

14th February. Ravenstone, Sence Valley and Kelham, led by Val

On a dismal damp February morning 10 hardy walkers turned up in Ravenstone.

The walk took us out of the village and across the fields to the outskirts of Sence Park, and then on to Kelham nature reserve where we took the higher path to try to avoid some of the mud. At Donnington le Heath we turned back toward Ravenstone and followed the track passing the tiny church of Snibston.

Having arrived back at the finish we were all lucky that the threatened rain had only been light showers.

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
Colin Woodland	Groups Co-ordinator	interestg@ashbyu3a.co.uk	01530 413867
Peter Clement	Minutes Secretary	minutes@ashbyu3a.co.uk	01530 560894
Sharon Woodland	Welfare	welfare@ashbyu3a.co.uk	01530 413867
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