

## Newsletter December 2022

### Interest Groups Timetable for December 2022

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

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Monthly Meeting	Tue 20th	2 pm	Congregational Church, Ashby. Gresley Male Voice Choir Mince pie, tea and coffee
Arts and Crafts	Thu 1st	10 am	2 Marlborough Way
Bridge	Mon 5th	7 pm	Ivanhoe Club
	Mon 19th	7 pm	Ivanhoe Club
Calligraphy	Tue 13th	10 am	At Jenny's. Word of the month is Bright
Computers	Wed 7th	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
	Mon 19th	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Digital Photography	Thu 1st	10 am	16 Winchester Way
Drawing and painting	Wed 21st	10.30 am	Eden Bistro, Ashby Rd, Moira Christmas get together
Family History	Wed 14th	2 pm	2 Marlborough Way
Gardening	Thu 15th	<b>1 pm</b>	Packington Village Hall. Secret Santa and buffet. Please bring a gift valued £5 wrapped but not labelled plus an item of food to share for our buffet. Can you also please bring your own plates and cutlery. Free entry and a selection of drinks will be supplied
History			The History group is in abeyance until a new committee to run it can be found
Industrial Heritage			We shall meet again in Jan to decide next years programme.
Literature	Tue 13th	1:30 pm	Meeting at Sandra's house
Lunch/Social Events	Thu 8th	12.30 for 1 pm	Christmas lunch at Willesley Park Golf Club. All tickets are sold.
Medium Walks	Mon 12th	9.45 for 10am start	Meet at the layby in front of Ibstock parish church (St Denys) on A447 Hinckley Road
Music Appreciation	Wed 7th	10 am	Sallie's at Woodside Cottage, 61, Melbourne Road, Newbold. LE67 8JH

### Interest Groups Timetable for December 2022 cont.

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Recorder	Thu 1st Thu 15th	10 am 10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Science & Technology	Mon 12th	2 pm	Ashby Alliance Evangelical Church. Christmas special
Short Walks	Fri 16th	10 am	Meet at the Oakthorpe colliery picnic site.
Supper Club			We shall not meet again until Feb 23rd as Dec and Jan dates clash with Christmas and Burns Night. Venue to be decided
Walking	Tue 6th	9.45 for 10 am start	The Staff of Life, 7 High Street, Ticknall DE73 7JH
Wine Appreciation	Wed 21st	7 pm	Annie's house. Bring a Christmas red and some party food to share

### Interest Groups Timetable for early January 2023

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Bridge	Mon 2nd	2 pm	Ivanhoe Social Club – subject to confirmation
Music Appreciation	Wed 4th	10 am	TBA
Computer	Wed 4th	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Arts and Crafts	Thu 5th	10 am	2 Marlborough Way.
Digital Photography	Thu 5th	10 am	16 Winchester Way
Recorder	Thu 5th	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal,

### **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
Bill Wilson	Speaker Organiser	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
Colin Ellis	Member	membercolin@ashbyu3a.co.uk	01530 272592
John Pilgrim	Member	memberjohn@ashbyu3a.co.uk	-

## HELP & WELFARE

### Do you need transport?

Have you got a hospital or Doctor appointment but haven't got transport and can't use a bus?

There is a community transport service available through the Marlene Reid Centre. This is a voluntary service where local drivers use their own cars to get people to appointments.

Contact them on **01530 512456** and please give them much notice as possible to have a better chance of them fulfilling your request

If you live in NW Leicestershire, are over 60 and retired, they should be able to help.

Typical charges are\*

Ashby to Ashby - £6

Ashby to Burton return £20

Ashby to Leicester Royal return £26

Ashby to Glenfield return £22

\*NB Always check the price to be charged when booking transport as they are liable to change.

### 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.

### Welfare

Our Welfare person is Sharon Woodland. Sharon can be contacted at [welfare@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto: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.

## REMEMBER WE HAVE A NEW BANK ACCOUNT

The new account is now active and so any payments to Ashby u3a whether for membership fees or trips, social events like the Burns Supper can now be made by bank transfers to:

Co-operative Bank. Sort code 08-92-99 Acc. no. 67259878.

Cheques will still be accepted. Make any cheques payable to "Ashby u3a" as before. Cash can be accepted but please try to use bank transfers or cheques if at all possible.

## CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Don't forget we are having our Christmas lunch at Willesley Park Golf Club on 8th Dec, 12.30 for 1 pm.  
**This is now fully booked.**

## TICKETS ARE STILL AVAILABLE FOR THE BURNS SUPPER

### BURNS SUPPER at Willesley Park Golf Club on Thurs 26th Jan. 2023, 7 for 7.30 pm

There will be Traditional Fayre consisting of:

Soup - Haggis, neeps and tatties - Cranachan.

Meat and vegetarian options will be available for non-haggis eating Sassenachs.

The Programme will consist of:

Piping in of the Haggis

Address to the Haggis

Toast the Haggis

The Selkirk Grace

Address to the Lassies

Entertainment

Auld Lang Syne

£28.50 inc. wine & a wee dram for toasting the Haggis

Tickets are on sale now from Bill and Avril at [socials@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:socials@ashbyu3a.co.uk) or 01530 413182 or at the monthly meetings.

Payment can be by bank transfer to Ashby u3a, Sort Code 08-92-99 Acc No. 67259878, marked "Burns Supper" or by cheque payable to Ashby u3a sent to Avril Wilson, 8 Rotherwood Drive, Ashby LE65 2JD

### **A REQUEST TO MEMBERS ATTENDING OUR MONTHLY MEETINGS**

At the last meeting we had a record attendance of 127 members and guests. We had to open the upstairs gallery for the first time ever. This is truly great. However that gives us a problem.

About 100 of those members arrived around 10 mins before the meeting was due to start and it was impossible to check everybody in and get them seated by 2pm and our guest speaker was left waiting for at least 15 mins before she could start.

Can we please ask members to try to arrive a little earlier. We are also looking at how we can check you all in more quickly. Together we can hopefully get our meetings to start on time. Thank you.

### **LAST MONTH'S MEETING**

#### **"Marilyn Monroe" by Julie Kinnear.**

Julie Kinnear (né Ede, as she is better known to many of us) returned with another fascinating story of the rich and famous. This time her subject was Norma Jean Baker known to all as Marilyn Monroe.

Norma Jean was born on June 1st 1926 to Gladys Pearl Baker (né Monroe) and although Norma Jean was originally known as Baker, it transpired later that John Newton Baker was not the father (Gladys had divorced him in 1923). Gladys had married for a second time to Martin Mortensen in 1924 but divorced in 1925. He was not the father either although his name appears on her birth certificate. The likely father was a neighbour Charles Gifford.

Gladys was a loving mother but due to her mental health issues she put Norma Jean into foster care where she spent much of her early life. Gladys had a mental breakdown and was committed to hospital which she was in and out of for the rest of her life. One foster family, the Goddards, placed her briefly in an orphanage who convinced them to adopt Norma Jean. However when 'Doc' Goddard was relocated to West Virginia for his job, Norma Jean was told that she wouldn't be going with them.

She was not yet 16. To avoid going back to the orphanage, she married a 21yo neighbour James Dougherty just 18 days after her 16th birthday. It was 1942. A year later Dougherty enlisted in the Merchant Marine and was shipped out to the Pacific and Norma took a job in a munitions factory.

She was spotted by a photographer whilst at work and started modelling for him and signed with a Modelling Agency. The agency thought she was more suitable for pin-up work than modelling and she was featured in adverts and men's magazines. At this time she straightened her hair and dyed it blonde. She also got a screen test with 20th Century Fox and changed her name to Marilyn Monroe.

She spent six months at Fox learning acting, singing and dancing and she had a few bit parts in minor films. In 1946 she divorced Dougherty who opposed her career.

Fox cancelled her contract in 1947 and she returned to modelling but was signed to Columbia Studios in 48 but only lasted 6 months. However her lover at the modelling agency negotiated a contract back at Fox for 7 years although he died of a heart attack only a few days later.

This was the start of Monroe's breakthrough. Small parts in "All about Eve" and "Asphalt Junge" brought her notice and some acclaim. In '52 she was involved in a scandal when it was revealed that she had posed nude for a calendar in 1949 but it hardly damaged her career. It may even have improved it! She was now a sex-symbol.

Starring roles in "Gentlemen prefer blondes" and "Niagara" in 1953 made her famous.

She married baseball star Joe DiMaggio in '54 but he disliked her sexy roles in the movies and they divorced 9 months later after the famous photoshoot of her standing over a subway grille in a pleated white dress. 2000 people came to watch the shoot.

A year later she met and married playwright Arthur Miller, some thought it an attempt to be taken as a serious actress. She also started filming "The Prince and the Showgirl" with Laurence Olivier but they did not get on at all. Marilyn was often late on set. The film was not a success.

Monroe had become dependant on pharmaceutical drugs and drink and became increasingly difficult to work with even on the now much-regarded "Some Like It Hot"

One of her last appearances was at John F Kennedy's birthday party at Madison Square Gardens. Her beige skin tight dress made it look like she was nude, and her breathless singing of "Happy Birthday Mr President" caused a sensation. But it should be mentioned that she turned up for the President 2hrs late!

10 weeks late she was dead from an overdose of barbiturates.

Her looks, her sex appeal, her affairs with many famous men including JFK and brother Bobby and a few films out of the many she made became the stuff of legend and her memory will live on for many more years.

She would be 96 now if she had lived.

## **GROUP REPORTS**

### **Arts & Crafts**

#### **3rd November**

There were 9 ladies present today. Amid much chatter about family and holidays, we finally did manage to complete the painting of the air dried clay flowers which were made over the previous two months.

These were placed into oasis which was fitted into small wicker containers. They may not have been perfect, but the finished products did look nice.

See you next month on December 1st

## **Bridge**

The Bridge group now meets fortnightly on Mondays at the Ivanhoe Social Club from 7 to 9pm. Free parking is still available.

The schedule may change occasionally so please check the website. The next meeting will be on Mon 5th Dec.

## **Calligraphy**

### **8th November**

Six of us met at Di's house this month. Choosing one word as the subject each month has been very interesting as we have had the freedom to choose any style and any font. It's great to see all the different interpretations and ideas that we are producing and that we feel able to express ourselves with increasing confidence. This month's word was 'book' and each one of us produced something unique!

Next month our word is 'bright' and I'm sure Christmas will feature somewhere! The meeting is at Jenny's on Dec 13th at 10.am.

We have also arranged a late Christmas lunch for our January meeting - on the 17th.

We are aware that we have a waiting list of people who would like to join us but we are obviously limited to numbers because we meet in our homes. To address this we are hoping to hold a meeting in the New Year, where we will invite those on the list and suggest they start a second Calligraphy group.

We would share what we have done and the resources we use and give examples of topics etc. Hopefully this would help.

## **Drawing and painting**

### **16th November**

In November the focus was on "Getting ready for Christmas", resulting in a variety of interpretations. The December date falls just a few days before Christmas Eve so we have decided to forgo the Drawing and Painting session and meet at a local café for a little Christmas get together.

Meet at 10.30am on Wed 21st Dec at EDEN bistro, Ashby Road, Moira. (Car sharing can be arranged)



Sue's fluffy robin

For other paintings and drawings see the Group's webpage for their Gallery.

## **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](mailto: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. Or you can come along to one of our meetings in person.

### **21st November**

Another busy day, with 8 attending.

Pauline had several issues, which Richard helped out with. She has very little space left on her phone, so they looked at moving her photos to an onboard Micro SD card. It turned out that this had already been done, so they worked on removing unwanted apps, which were taking up space.

They then worked on how to organise files and folders on the laptop. And finally, Richard helped her to reset her car clock.

Mike worked with Joan to cancel her unwanted subscription to Norton, who have taken over Bullguard. She already has other anti-virus software available. Norton will stay working until year end, by which time Joan will have her subs to AV regularised.

John H worked with Peter to complete his work on organising his photo files.

John D had a few oddities to do with the way Virgin Media has been responding to keystrokes when deleting emails or moving photos.

The next meeting will be on December 7th

## **Digital Photography**

### **3rd November**

We had six today, and we showed our photographs of Autumn Colours. Each submitted a pendrive of pics. We tried to connect an iPhone to the laptop for one submission, but it didn't seem to like it. Therefore, we passed that set around.

There was a huge variety, mainly of trees and bushes in glorious colour, but a few others demonstrating the different ways Autumn manifests itself. Mists, mushrooms, and woodland walks.

There was an interesting discussion on locating photos of specific subjects on the Internet, and on the risks inherent in using such in one's own presentations.

Copyright is a minefield. This led on to the general subject of self-publishing work and offering photos to other publications (such as Ashby Life) and entering them into competitions. Many popular scenes are photographed multiple times, so identifying which specific shot might have been copyright protected and could be problematic.

The theme for our next meeting on December 1st will be 'Funghi': Mushrooms, toadstools et al.

## **Recorder**

### **3rd and 17th November**

After the Open Day, we have had a few new players, who have come along to see if they want to join long-term. We were 10 on the 3rd November, and 9 on the 17th. We played a variety of music, including some madrigals, popular tunes, spirituals and a recently acquired arrangement of J S Bach's "Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring", finishing with "The Goroum", a lively Irish tune.

Our December meetings are on 1st and 15th at the usual venue

## **Science & Technology**

### **14th November – “The Social Challenge of Nuclear Waste” by Phil Richardson**

Phil is a geologist, and spent the last 30 years of his career advising a range of clients on ways to address the social and technical issues surrounding the management and disposal of radioactive waste, following an early career in the National Coal Board. These included a range of environmental organisations, national governments and the United Nations. He began his talk by introducing us to the sources and types of radioactive waste generated from the nuclear industry, the use of radioactive isotopes in health and scientific investigations and as the result of the testing of nuclear weapons. He then explained the different management and disposal options that exist for the various types of waste, dependent on their activity and half-life, such as surface-based engineered vaults, shallow excavated vaults or disused mines for the less radioactive materials, and 500-metre-deep geological disposal facilities (GDF) for the most radioactive materials such as spent fuel and high-level waste.

Having established the existence of radioactive waste, and the need to safely manage it, Phil introduced the issues surrounding the siting and development of disposal facilities, pointing out the difference between how this was done in the past and what happens now and is planned in the future. How can we as Society recognise both the need to find an acceptable site and the understandable concern expressed by those living around a potential location? How can they and the public in general be informed of the issues and be supported to trust both the technology involved and the government and industry actors tasked to manage the process? Phil outlined the essentials of an acceptable process for public participation, based on extensive experience in numerous facility siting programmes around the world, discussing in particular the current UK process that he was involved in developing as a member of a government advisory committee. The underlying principles are that Society recognises the contribution a host community is making to solving a national problem, and that the community should be rewarded for that through a package of focused community benefits, whilst at the same time allowing local involvement in decision making etc. The UK process is currently ongoing, with 4 local citizen/industry partnerships exploring the suitability of potential repository sites in West Cumbria and East Lincolnshire.

Finally, Phil pointed out the difference between the current UK process for radioactive waste and the very recent proposal by the Truss government (now reversed after the Sunak accession) for the development of fracking. Phil questioned whether the earlier lack of meaningful public participation proposed by such as Jacob Rees-Mogg could raise concerns that the requirement for long-term political support for the radioactive waste process could erode the public trust which, as he showed earlier, was essential for a successful and acceptable outcome.

Next month talk on 12th Dec will be about the science behind how Santa makes his incredible journey on Christmas Eve.





## **Lunch**

### **10th November**

A good time was had by all at the Mill Wheel in Hartshorne on Thursday 10th November. The menu was simple and inexpensive but of very good quality. Mine Host and his wife arrived late due to an embarrassing senior moment causing them to travel to Hartshorne by way of the Copt Oak – don't ask!!

On December 8th it will be the Christmas lunch at Willesley Park Golf Club at 12.30 for 1pm.

Our first luncheon engagement for 2023 will be at the Bull's Head, Thringstone on Jan 12th at 12 noon for 12.30.

## **Supper club**

### **24th November**

We had a good turn out this month as despite 4 people having to cancel at fairly short notice 12 members still made it along to the Bull and Lion in Packington. The pub has had several changes of management over recent years, some better than others, which has made it difficult to recommend as an eating venue.

However the new landlord and landlady, Drew and Tracey, are a breath of fresh air. Welcoming and friendly, with nothing seemingly any trouble, they served us up some lovely food from an interesting menu with excellent service. Everybody seemed to enjoy themselves and at the end of the meal Tracey brought both the chefs out to be introduced to us. A nice touch. A great evening and it surely won't be long before we or the luncheon club return.

We won't meet again until February as the December and January dates clash with Christmas and the Burns Supper. Our February venue has yet to be decided.

## **History**

### **24th November. "Trouble and Strife, the challenge of finding a wife" by Roger Bisgrove**

Sadly, this may be our last Meeting as two thirds of the organising committee are standing down and no-one has yet volunteered to help take over. If anyone reading this would like to help, do please make yourself known: the Group has been one of the best and this meeting was a classic.

Roger 'Bis' Bisgrove of Swannington Heritage Trust entertained 34 of us to a fascinating look at marriage laws and customs down the years.

It seems we used only to be allowed to get married between certain times of the day, which have changed over the years, until recently being between 8am and 6pm. But now, with venues being licenced almost anywhere (so long as they were in public) this has been rescinded.

The age of marriage has been changing under successive Marriage Acts. Generally, almost any age seems to have been acceptable, provided that a parent's consent had been given.

In the UK, for instance, Lady Beaufort, mother of Henry VII, married first in 1450 at the age of 7 or 8 but required a Papal dispensation on grounds of a close relationship with her husband. Canon Law, however, did not recognise the marriage as it was contracted before she was 12. Then she married Edmund Tudor in 1455 at age 12 but was widowed a year later whilst pregnant with Henry Tudor. Then she married in 1458 at age 14, again with a relationship dispensation, once more being widowed in 1471. She remarried for the last time in 1472 (still only 29).

Generally, from 1753 onward, parental consent was needed to marry under age 21. Today, the minimum age is 18 in the UK, (16 with parental consent, but only until 2023) although it varies widely around the world.

The method of announcing marriages was quite varied. The system of Banns has been in place from 1215, with Canon Law requiring them to be read in the parishes of both parties, to prevent clandestine marriages. Licences for marriage away from the home parish had been issued since the 14th century but, because they had to be paid for, were seen as a perk of the wealthy.

Bis then looked at proxy marriages. These were usually the prerogative of royalty, and the marriage was supervised by the proxy. He also acted to protect the bride until she could be transported to her new home. Curiously, a silver cufflink of Charles II was found in Moor Lane, Swannington, supporting evidence that he was there at the time. He married Catherine of Braganza three times in 1662: once by proxy in Portugal, once secretly as a Catholic on her arrival in Portsmouth, then publicly in London in a Protestant ceremony.

There was even a proxy marriage arranged between a cosmonaut and his fiancée while he was in orbit and she in Texas. This is an example of variations on proxy weddings which included posthumous marriages. There was even one arranged between a man who killed his fiancée then himself. The families arranged it to remember them fondly by.

Certain types of marriage were prohibited, specifically to a deceased wife's sister or to a deceased brother's widow. Bis showed us a 1911 Census entry which indicated a woman married to her deceased sister's husband, so there were many variations possible.

Bis explored the interesting area of 'Boy Meets Girl'. How did people meet up to get married? He traced the various marriages associated with the Hough Mill in Swannington and various families from Castle Donington. These can be traced through the various attendees at marriages and the families they belonged to. Clear evidence of how close these rural communities were.

There were a few grace notes to spice things up:

Mistletoe apparently translates as 'Bird Poo'. So be careful this Christmas where and whom you kiss!

Bridesmaids wear the same colours and styles of dress as the bride it seems to confuse the evil spirits.

The Best Man was supposed to help kidnap the bride if required; to defend the happy couple from objecting parents; and to stand guard outside the marital home to ensure the marriage is consummated.

So ended a most enjoyable canter through the arcana of marriage.

The writer hopes you have enjoyed his Reports over the years, as he has enjoyed writing them. He stands ready to take up the pen once more if the Group is revived. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

## **Wine Appreciation**

### **16th November**

This month we enjoyed Kurt's much delayed tasting of Sauvignon Blancs. This was interesting as 3 of the 4 wines were from different vineyards but from the same company in Marlborough, NZ and all tasted quite different. One tasted of lime, another of smelled of mint and tasted lemony. Price really does make a difference! The fourth wine was from South Africa and was very different to the other three, being much more yellow in colour and quite peppery to my taste, but still very nice.

Next month we are each going to bring a Christmas red. That should leave much to interpretation. We have also been asked to bring some suitable food to share.

## **Family History**

### **9th November**

Today was very busy with 12 sitting down. Much was achieved, with several pairs working together to solve problems.

Sylvia D was researching her Irish roots which are looking promising supported by DNA evidence, but still a bit obscure. Much of her research is around living relatives who share common ancestors

Sylvia S has found in the British National Archives the lyrics to a song by Harry Champion, a Music Hall virtuoso, who is in her tree, along with other references she has long been looking for.

Ana is on the trail of a link to George Stephenson, the Railway Man, who came to the Coalville area to open mines with imported labour.

John H (working from home) has begun work on adding his father's family to his tree.

Keith is working steadily through many Ancestry Hints to see which he can verify and which he can discard. A sometimes tedious but always vital part of the work.

Pauline, one of our newest recruits is still building up her experience and knowledge with help from other team members.

Richard is working through a library book from Ashby Library on useful research sites. Sadly many of them are already defunct, but still a very necessary part of the work.

Carolyn worked with others to help her learning process. She produced some exceptional biccies: well done and happy birthday!

Eileen is still working on early Parish Records: the latest set mercifully are in a beautiful copperplate hand. Which is a great relief to her!

Jane is working through DNA matches showing up for other trees, messaging the holders to see what more she can derive from these.

Mary is working on tidying up her trees and eliminating errors. She was helped by others in sorting out how to show an individual who appears on two lines simultaneously.

We next meet on December 14th.

## **Gardening**

### **17th November**

Today's meeting was on "The history of the English and Gardening" with the speaker being Danny Wells who is a historian from Ashbourne.

It was a history of gardening from the 16th century to the present day, highlighting the different styles of gardening through the centuries, and how it was affected by various people and the world wars, and also by the increasing variety of plants available. 45 members attended.

## **Music Appreciation**

### **2nd November**

This month we met at Brenda's house and there were five of us today.

Janet started us off with "Bailero" from "Songs of the Auvergne" by Canteloube, a most delightful and ethereal piece sung in the ancient Occitan language. Brenda then offered The Beach Boys singing "Wouldn't it be nice". Very different to "Bailero" but equally good vocal sounds.

Nev played us Billy Joel and "The Piano Man". Billy Joel writes such witty and insightful lyrics.

Sid's first song was by Barbara Dixon, "The Witch of the Westmerlands", an interesting folk tale of a wounded knight who is rescued and healed by the Witch.

Mike then played a tune by someone whose music we think has strangely never before been played at one of our sessions. The man is Frank Sinatra and the tune "Come Fly with Me" recorded live at the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas with the Count Basie Orchestra as backing.

Janet's next choice was Belgian singer Jacques Brel and "Ne me quitte pas", literally "Don't leave me". An intense love song to his ex-girlfriend.

Brenda gave us the incomparable Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue". So good to listen to it again.

Nev's second choice was something he'd intended to play the month before but now had a much greater meaning. Gerry Rafferty's "Right Down the Line" is a beautiful love song.

Sid next tune was the ever popular "Tutti Frutti" by Little Richard. The words apparently had to be cleaned up for the record as the originals were somewhat rude!

That was followed by Ella and Louis Armstrong and "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off" from Mike, Edith Piaf and "La Vie en Rose" from Janet and Nat King Cole's "My Sweet Embraceable You" from Brenda. Three classic songs from a bygone era.

As a change of pace, Nev played us George Formby's "Swimmin' with the Wimmin'" which apparently was a favourite of the late Queen.

Somewhat more up to date, Sid gave us "Vienna" from Ultravox and then Mike ended the session and took us back to the 30s with Cab Calloway and "Minnie the Moocher" although this version was from the 1980 film "The Blues Brothers".

## **Industrial Heritage**

### **23rd November. Hack Green Secret Nuclear Bunker**

Hack Green was a Ministry of Defence site constructed in great secrecy during WWII. It is a large concrete structure with one floor at ground level and one below. Despite its thick walls and roof and blast doors, it doesn't really look as though it would withstand a direct hit from a large conventional bomb let alone a nuclear one.

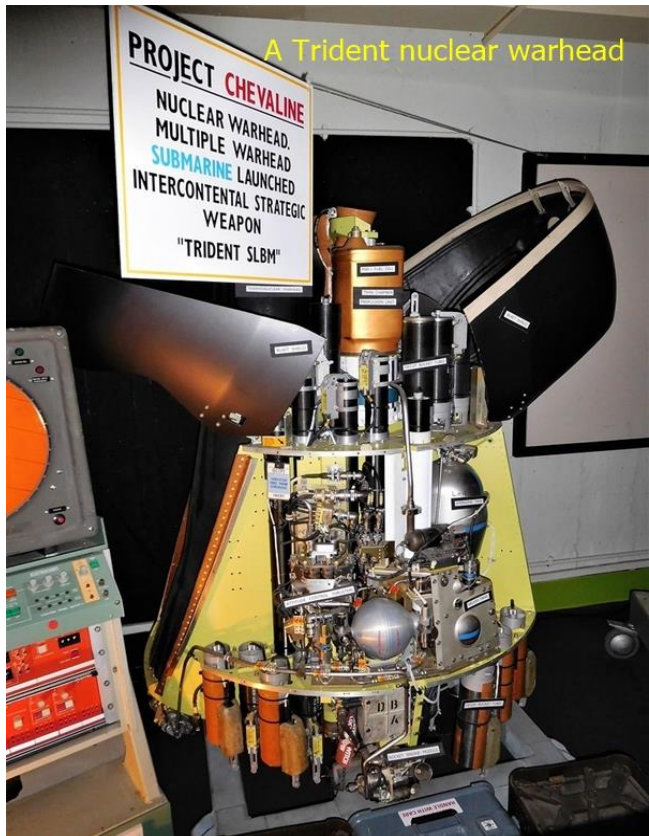
It's original use was as a radar listening post to detect incoming Nazi bombers but after the war the present building was constructed as one of 12 such buildings across Britain to detect Russian planes and missiles. Its early warning system would allow our V bomber fleet to get airborne for a retaliatory attack on Russia before the UK was destroyed by nuclear weapons. This role only lasted until 1958 when it became part of the UK's air traffic control network. It closed in 1966 but it would have another life yet. As the Cold War developed, the UK Government decided that in order to present a credible civil defence structure, secret plans were drawn up to ensure that should war have broken out the government would survive to lead and reconstruct post war Britain. In 1976 Hack Green was purchased from the MOD by the Home Office to provide one of several places for government to shelter if war was imminent. In total secrecy and at a cost of £32m the site was converted into the nuclear bunker. This took 8 years! It contained everything that the survivors would need to sit out the aftermath.

Much of the equipment is either still in place or replacements found to show just what it would have looked like. There were radio rooms, radar monitoring, communications between the other bunkers, a BBC studio to broadcast to the surviving public and a BT exchange to connect all the phone lines. Despite having over 40 rooms it doesn't look as though it would have been exactly spacious for the 135 civil servants and military personnel locked inside. Strangely the bunker was only operational from 1984 to the mid 1990s. Hardly the height of the Cold War, although two Soviet false alarms suggesting nuclear attacks by the US occurred in '83. Fortunately the alarms were realised to be erroneous and no retaliation attacks were made.

In 2004 Hack Green opened as a museum founded by a former member of the Royal Observer Corps, Rodney Siebert, who had bought it from the government.

It now, as well as recreating the bunker as it was, houses many very interesting exhibits from its history. Not least of which is an actual (decommissioned!!) nuclear warhead from a Polaris missile. Also on display were many pieces of ephemera such as uniforms, radios, helmets, decontamination suits and all the bits and pieces needed to survive underground. There is also a large collection of Russian equipment including a mock-up of a Russian nuclear bunker and a selection of military uniforms of very senior Russian officers.

A theatre was showing "The War Game" A 1966 harrowing docu-drama film showing very realistically the effects of a nuclear attack on a British town. It was intended to be shown on the BBC but they thought it too intense and violent and so banned it from TV. It was released as a feature film instead. I watched about 5 mins on the aftermath of the bomb. Not one for the faint hearted.



One could spend many more hours reading all the information on display than we had time for, but at least our tickets give us free entry for 12 months if we wish to return..

This was a most interesting, if not exactly enjoyable, visit because of its descriptions of, and equipment from, the Cold War era showing us just what would have happened if a nuclear war ever broke out, and just how close we came to that in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. The Cold War officially ended on Dec 25th 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union.

To wind down after this experience we visited a very nice pub in a pretty village nearby where the food, drink and service was very good. The Bhurtpore Inn is named after the British siege of the Indian Fort Bhurtpore in 1826 which was overseen by Lord Combermere on whose estate the pub was built. The pub still has an Indian theme and specialises in traditional curries but also has an extensive other menu and twenty two!! real ales, lagers and ciders on tap. We didn't try all of them

## **Short Walks**

### **18th November. Ticknall Car Park and into Calke Park and back**

The weather the day before had put people off walking but it stayed dry if on the cold side. However 4 people did join me so we walked into Calke along the newly improved path to the new car park and children's play area. One child entered the imitation badger sett but the entrance is too small for us. We carried on around to the elbow of the road which took us to the main building for drinks and cakes. We chatted for a while before walking back via the ponds and the main road in to the car park. 3 2/3 miles a bit longer than usual and we finished at 12.30 but we mostly enjoyed the walk. We also agreed that the next Calke walk in March will be via the tunnel and lime kilns.

## **Medium walks**

### **14th November. Staunton Harold Reservoir to Ticknall, led by Alison**

Our group of 11 walkers met at Staunton Harold Reservoir on a typical misty November morning. The walk started down the main path at the side of the reservoir, passing the sailing club and out onto Broadstone Lane. The reservoir is still very low and the remains of buildings, normally submerged, could be seen on the far bank.

After Broadstone Lane we crossed over a couple of fields and into Calke Park - walking past the ponds and down the main drive to Ticknall. The route back to the car park was via Veas Wood, crossing Stanton Hill road and onto St Brides, Riding Bank, down Robinsons Hill and up the footpath to the windmill and the reservoir car park. 5.5 miles in total.

## **Longer Walks**

### **1st November. Shipley Country Park led by Paul**

Sixteen walkers gathered at the Newdigate Arms, West Hallam for this relatively easy stroll around undulating parkland. There were no stiles and walking was mostly on gravel tracks or tarmac.

The first challenge was to negotiate a large puddle of rainwater under an old railway bridge, before entering the nature park. We passed some large water pipes intended to control flood water from Shipley Lake. We then walked alongside a new housing development on the site of the old American Adventure theme park, which had been a major family attraction up to its closure in 2007.

We had good views over Shipley Lake but due to the building work it looked more like a flooded quarry than a nature reserve. The drinks stop at the Visitor Centre allowed us to some shelter from a brief rain shower before continuing beside a wood and a small pond. We headed south along a traffic-free road towards Mapperley Reservoir before retracing our route back to the pub for lunch.

### **15th November. From Rydal Gardens around Packington, led by Kevin**

Despite the very wet forecast, 21 gathered for the bacon and sausage breakfast provided by Kevin and Chris at their house, ably assisted by Val and others. When the time came to start the walk there was not a lot of enthusiasm but 16 set off from Packington avoiding muddy fields and sticking to paths (saving the planned walk for another time). The weather was better than expected and for a brief moment it stopped raining so we didn't get too wet but we were all grateful to finish at the Bull and Lion to dry out and have lunch.