



Newsletter March 2023

Interest Groups Timetable for March 2023

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

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Monthly Meeting	Tue 28th	2 pm	Congregational Church, Ashby. Judith Lewis – “Winning Mastermind” and Sylvia Spare – “The Aquabox Charity”
Arts and Crafts	Thu 2nd	10 am	Packington Village Hall
Bridge	Mon 13th	7 pm	All meetings are at the Ivanhoe Club
	Mon 27rd	7 pm	
Calligraphy	Tue 14th	10 am	At Lynda's. Word of the month is “Celebrate” using italics
Calligraphy 2	Wed 1st	10 am	At 148 Woodside, Ashby
Computers	Wed 1st	2 pm	2 Marlborough Way. Note change of venue
	Mon 20th	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Croquet	Fri 31st	10 am	Ashby Croquet Club, Moira Miners’ Welfare, Bath Lane, Moira DE12 6BP
Digital Photography	Thu 2nd	10 am	91 Woodside. Note change of venue
Drawing and painting	Wed 15th	10 am	2 Marlborough Way
Family History	Wed 8th	2 pm	2 Marlborough Way
French Conversation	Tues 7th	7 pm	1 Derwent Gardens, Ashby
	Mon 20th	11 am	Ivanhoe Club, Wilfred Place, Ashby
Gardening	Thu 16th	2.15 pm	Packington Village Hall. Garden talk by Camilla Anderson, a historian on Stately Gardens. £4 entry
History	Thu 23rd	2.15 pm	Packington Village Hall. Michael Smith - '50 Gems of Leicestershire'
Industrial Heritage	Wed 22nd	TBA	Silverstone Interactive Museum.
Literature	Tue 14th	1.30 pm	Meeting at Sandra's house
Lunch	Thu 9th	12 for 12.30 pm	Greyhound Inn, 149 Ashby Rd, Boundary, Swadlincote DE11 7BU. This is a carvery only.
Medium Walks	Mon 13th	9.45 for 10am start	Meet at Mount St Bernard's Abbey CP, Oaks Rd LE67 5UL

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Music Appreciation	Wed 1st	10 am	At Brenda's, 36 Willesley Gardens
Reading	Wed 15th	2 pm	Meeting at 79 Nottingham Rd
Recorder	Thu 9th	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
	Thu 23rd	10 am	
Science & Technology	Tues 14th	2 pm	The Main Hall at Packington Village Hall. Tim Sexton "A Year at Rutland Water" Note change of date and venue
Scrabble	Mon 13th	10.30 am	Bulls Head pub, Market St, Ashby
	Mon 27th	10.30 am	
Short Walks	Fri 17th	10 am	Meet at Ticknall car park
Supper Club	Thu 23rd	7 for 7.30 pm	The George and Dragon, A512, Thringstone LE67 8UH
Walking	Tue 7th	9.45 for 10 am start	Queens Head, Heather LE67 2QP. 7 miles. Good paths
Wine Appreciation	Wed 15th	7 pm	Annie's house.

Interest Groups Timetable for early April 2023

Group	Date	Time	Venue
French Conversation	Tues 4th	7 pm	TBA
Walking	Tue 4th	9.45 for 10 am start	TBA
Calligraphy 2	Wed 5th	10 am	At 148 Woodside, Ashby
Music Appreciation	Wed 5th	10 am	TBA
Computer	Wed 5th	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Arts and Crafts	Thu 6th	10 am	Packington Village Hall
Digital Photography	Thu 6th	10 am	16 Winchester Way
Recorder	Thu 6th	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal

REMEMBER WE HAVE A NEW BANK ACCOUNT

The new account is now active and so any payments to Ashby u3a, whether for membership fees, trips or social events like the Christmas Lunch, 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.

Please remember to add some indication to the bank transfer or the back of the cheque as to what the payment is for.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

A reminder that your membership renewal will be due by the end of this month.

The fees this year have unfortunately had to rise due to increased costs such as venue hire. The fees for 2023-24 are:

£22 for a single member and

£18 for a second member at the same address as another Ashby member, or anyone who is a fully paid up member of another u3a.

Membership forms can be downloaded from the Ashby u3a website www.ashbyu3a.co.uk ; click on the Membership Forms tab. Or they can be obtained from the Membership Sec at the monthly meetings. Payments please by bank transfer if possible, or by cheque. Our bank details are on the form.

Please return signed forms to the address on the bottom of the form. We need your signed forms for Data Protection compliance.

If you have already renewed, thank you.

HELP & WELFARE

Welfare

Sharon Woodland, our Welfare person, can be contacted at welfare@ashbyu3a.co.uk or 01530 413867

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.

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.

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.

FEBRUARY'S MONTHLY MEETING

28th February – Five in Harmony – Songs and monologues

We were entertained this afternoon by Five in Harmony who are a part of Gresley Male Voice Choir.

They sing songs and tell monologues often with a flavour of South Derbyshire, but not exclusively. They started with two modern classics – Paul McCartney's "Long and Winding Road" and "Blue Moon" by Rogers and Hart. This was followed by a song about an old gaslighter and a monologue about T.G.Green and their famous Cornishware entitled "The Blue and White". Another humorous monologue was about a baby elephant and an express train. It didn't end well for the elephant!

We had a couple of parodies of well known tunes converted to the South Derbyshire dialect with some new words. "Where Do You Go To Me Duck" was based on Peter Sarstedt's "Where Do You Go To My Lovely", whilst "The Pottery Turner" was based on "My Old Man's A Dustman".

There were a few folk songs, some written by members of the group, including a couple of sea shanties although Gresley is about as far from the sea as you can get in Britain.

They finished with "Leaving on a Jet Plane", "Salvation Army" and closed with "Swad Song". This song, written by one of the group, has become their signature tune and has had several thousand views on YouTube and is now apparently well-known around the world.

This was a thoroughly entertaining afternoon's wander back into the music, history and dialect of Swad.

NEW GROUPS JUST STARTED OR STARTING SOON

5 new groups are in the process of getting started. Details including times and venues are on the website. If you are interested in joining any of them please contact the Group Leaders or the Groups Co-ordinator at interestg@ashbyu3a.co.uk or 01530 413867. The groups are:

STARTING THIS MONTH

Croquet

Rupert Knapton is organising this group which is starting on March 31st. See the report below for details of when and where.

ALREADY STARTED

Scrabble

This group has had its first couple of meetings and is off and running, meeting at the Bulls Head in town.

French Conversation

This group is also up and running co-ordinated by Tony Smith.

Calligraphy 2

The original Calligraphy group had a waiting list of approx 10 people and so it was decided to start a second group.

Tom and Jenny Ingham are leading it and Sue Cornell and the rest of the original group will be helping them to set it up. They are meeting monthly at Tom and Jenny's house.

Reading

The Literature group is also fully subscribed and so Annie Scotney has started a second group. This has a wider remit that includes fiction and non-fiction.

GROUP REPORTS

Arts and Crafts

2nd February

The Arts and Craft group met for the second time at the Packington Village Hall on 2nd February 2023. There were 13 of us, including one brand new member.

We began the process of making our Easter wreaths. Some of the ladies hadn't made the roses which the rest of the group did in December, so they had to do "Catch up". It was somewhat hectic but enjoyable and everyone ended up ready to proceed next month, when we will make leaves for the wreath and, hopefully, get it all put together. If all goes to plan, we will be able to take the wreaths home in time for Easter!

We look forward to meeting again at Packington Village Hall on Thursday 2 March 2023 at 10am.

Calligraphy

14th February

We held our first 'working' session of the year at Jenny's on the 14th. All seven of us were there so it gave us a great opportunity to catch up on people's work on the word 'bright'. We have done lots of experimenting with our work lately so have now made the decision to revisit the fonts we have used in the past and write a longer piece. We planned up until July and are staying with the format of using one word as a stimulus.

We also discussed the second Calligraphy group and our continuing support if needed.

Calligraphy 2

1st February

The first Calligraphy 2 class was held today at our home. Three of us met along with Sue and Jenny of the other Calligraphy group who introduced us to the different types of pens and styles. It was very encouraging and we were very grateful for their help.

The next class will be on Wednesday 1st March starting at approx 10 am to 12

Computers

20th February

Another busy day today with 10 attendees, including two new faces.

Tony and Richard worked on finalising Tony's Garmin navigation issues. Elaine was helped by Mike with multiple issues to do with her tablet. Jim was helped by Bix also with issues with his tablet and phone, including email problems. Peter worked with John H and Colin to resolve a mail delivery scam.

A good session with lots going on.

Next time we all meet on 1st March at 2 Marlborough Way

Social Events

There is nothing on this month, but a Bowls Evening is planned for Fri 28th July at Ashby Bowls Club. Details to follow later in the year.

And of course we will be planning the Christmas Lunch and Burns Supper (the Golf Club and the piper are already booked!).

The Digital Photography Group

2nd February

There were 8 of us today to see Steve's next piece on the Exposure Triangle. Once again, a good, lucid canter through a vital piece of the jigsaw in understanding our cameras and how to take good pictures.

The Triangle is made up of Aperture settings, Shutter speeds and ISO speeds. Balanced together these will deal with any conditions you find.

For work in the field, when it is often not possible to set up all three parameters, a good rule of thumb is to fix on one, say aperture, then the camera will normally adjust the others to suit for you.

For the real amateurs, such as your correspondent, this was an extremely useful and understandable guide. For experts I am sure much of Steve's piece was very useful revision.

We also showed our favourite shots from 2022. A gallery has been created on the Group's webpage and every month group members are invited to submit their contributions to it.

Next time we will meet at **91 Woodside on March 2nd** and present photographs taken to demonstrate our understanding of the Triangle.

French Conversation

6th February

An inaugural meeting of those interested in forming a French group took place on Monday 6th February at the Bulls Head in Market St. The 10 attendees agreed that the aim would be to improve our French conversation. Tony Smith has agreed to lead the group which will meet fortnightly.

The second meeting was also at the Bulls Head but it was decided that it was a bit too noisy for conversation amongst people who are not practised in speaking French in public. The group will now meet alternately at the Ivanhoe Club, Wilfred Place, on Mondays at 11am and in members homes on Tuesday evenings at 7pm.

The next meeting is Tuesday 7th March at 1 Derwent Gdns, Ashby at 7pm. The meeting after that will be at the Ivanhoe Club on 20th March at 11am. These Monday sessions will then stay at the Ivanhoe club and we'll have to see how Tuesday evenings go to make a longer term view.

The Drawing and Painting Group

February 15th

It was a full house meeting in February, including a welcome to two new participants.

The challenge of the day was "Buildings".

Next month, on Wednesday 15th March, we hope to have an "on site" session, but the details are yet to be confirmed.

Luncheon

9th February

This month we returned to the Gate Inn at Osbaston Hollow which we have visited a couple of times previously. 24 members turned up to enjoy good food, drink and company on a lovely, sunny, spring-like day. One or two people unfortunately had to wait rather a long time for their food due mainly to an error in the newsletter stating that lunch would be 12.30 for 1pm, rather than 12 for 12.30. (*My fault. Ed*) Their later arrival meant that their order went in after another large group's. However the pub did their best to get food to them as soon as possible.

The Family History Group

8th February

A very lively meeting was attended by 9 researchers.

Pauline had a need to interpret a 19th century naval record. We managed to decipher most of it, and, later, a friendly contributor to the Facebook page called 'Ancestry UK' supplied an extract of the regulations for the Navy in the 19th century. We were also able to show her how to find the complete family on a census form when only part is shown on the target page.

JD was able to report on a successful visit to Wakefield Archives and Library in filling in the last gap in his father's life story. There is still a puzzle to solve as to how he met John's mum, but it is very likely we will now never know how this came about. There is some detail to extract from the School logs of his last school in 1926, and his re-enlistment papers of the same year.

Carolyn has been pushing back her family research by travelling to Yorkshire. She found her 4x great grandmother in Parish Records, with 13 children. A lot of material here to work on!

JH is embarking on constructing the Tree for his father's side from a comprehensive document compiled by a cousin and Richard is still working steadily through hints to flesh out blank spots in his Tree.

Keith is hunting for a great aunt: so far without success whilst Ana is engaged on general research.

Dora is still deep in the Sottish Parish Records in the 1600s and 1700s. She is finding difficulty in penetrating further back in time.

Eileen has been working on 17th century Parish Records which are difficult to read. Help needed!

We meet again on Wednesday 8th March.

Gardening

16th February

Today we had a talk by Simon Gulliver about Birmingham Botanical Gardens. As well as being National Trust adviser for over 30 gardens he also worked at the Botanical Gardens for a few years. The talk gave us a good insight into the gardens and their history before we visit them in April.

They were the first Botanical Gardens to be created in England. We were shown pictures inside the glasshouses showing the different temperate areas and the variety of plants and cacti as well as photos of the outdoor areas. There are teaching facilities which are used for teaching children and other interested groups.

One plant in the glasshouse throws up a flower spike just once every 30 years. This happened a few years ago and it was so large that a glass panel in the roof had to be removed to accommodate it. Then a couple of days later there was a storm and one of the other panels fell and sliced it off! Only another 30 years to wait to see it again.

There are just 4 spaces left if anyone else wants to join the coach trip on April 20th to the Botanical Gardens.

Literature

The literature Group gets together once a month to discuss books which they have read in the weeks before. They discuss the plot, the style of writing, the start and finish of the storyline, the meaning (if any) of the story and of course whether they liked it or not. Discussions can be quite lively. They are going to branch out and try reading plays and poetry in future. They are currently reading Frankenstein, which is proving quite a challenge.

History

23rd February. – Tales of Namibia by Bill Devitt

35 members gathered to hear a presentation by ever-popular Bill Devitt on 'Wrecks and Diamond's with the sub-title of 'Tales of Namibia. Its copper mine railway, the game reserve, the wreck of the 'Dunedin' on the Skeleton Coast and the diamond mining ghost town'

A very interesting look at a place most of us have only ever heard of. Namibia is located about ¼ the way down Africa's west coast and is said to be Sub Saharan Africa's driest nation, with 2.6 million people in around 320 thousand square miles. For comparison, the UK's 65 million occupy around 95 thousand square miles.

Bill related the history of the country from around 1900 when diamonds ere discovered in what was then German South West Africa. The output under the Germans amounted in value to around 150 million Reichsmarks by WWI, although it had already been known for its copper. The Germans treated the Herero tribal inhabitants horribly, driving them out of their villages into the desert to starve and die.

Diamonds are still a very important part of its economy. Today, access to the diamond producing area is tightly controlled by De Beers, with a 100 square mile exclusion zone enforced by their own private army. The original mining area is now effectively derelict, and sand covered. This is the focus of a thriving tourism industry, including a Smugglers Museum, and tours of the old workings and towns.

Tourists can also make trips into the desert, which is composed of sand dunes up to 300 feet high, and virtually unclimbable on foot. There is the Desert Express, a luxurious train, from Victorian times , but fitted out with all the luxuries you could want. The first trains were more utilitarian, and Bill showed many slides of the antique locos and rolling stock in use for the mines.

There is nearby the Etosha Game Reserve, and the Lüderitz resort town, from where air tours covering the whole country and its surprisingly varied terrain can be taken.

Bill's slides showed the beautiful but deadly landscape of the dunes marching away into the interior forming an impassable barrier to anyone unfortunate enough to be ship-wrecked on the 500-mile-long coastline. And that coast has earned its nickname of the Skeleton Coast down the centuries because of the skeletons of ships rather than people. Countless wrecks, old and new are scattered up and down the coast.

Bill told us the tale of the Dunedin Star, possibly the most famous wreck, and the saga of the several rescue efforts mounted after she ran aground on the northern end of the coast in 1942 with 21 crew and 85 passengers. Four ships, one after another tried, but each came to grief. Then two Lockheed Ventura bombers tried, one of which became bogged down on the beach. Finally, a rescue convoy made it overland from Windhoek. Remarkably all were saved, though two of the rescuing crew died in the attempts.

Thank you, Bill, for a fascinating look at a remote part of the world.

Croquet

The Croquet Group is a new group starting at the end of this month. They will meet on the last Friday of the month at 10 am and the first session will be on Friday 31st March.

Ashby Croquet Club is at Moira Miners' Welfare Club, Bath Lane, Moira DE12 6BP (opposite Conkers Waterside entrance). Free car parking on site. No experience is needed to join in. Non-heeled shoes should be worn. Trainers are ideal. There is a charge of £5pp for use of the lawns.

If you wish to attend, please contact Rupert Knapton at rupertknapton@gmail.com so that he can set up the right number of lawns and equipment.

Industrial Heritage

23rd Feb. - Rolls Royce Heritage Trust Museum

This proved to be very popular. RR said that they could only take 15 people on a guided tour of their excellent collection, but 34 people wanted to go! We persuaded RR to lay on 2 tours and restricted it to 30 people, with the remainder on a waiting list. Some members on the list unfortunately had to drop out, but it meant all those on the waiting list got a place.

8 drivers agreed to pick up all the others from home and we all arrived at RR early, in time for coffee (and breakfast for some!) from their excellent staff canteen. Our two guides introduced themselves and proceeded to show us around. The volunteer guides were extremely knowledgeable. Our guide Bob had started with RR in 1957 and retired in 1997. His stories about the history of the company, its founders and also each of the engines on display, from the earliest to the latest Trent XWB (which is huge up close!), were fascinating. After 2 hours, which passed in a flash, we said our goodbyes and set off for lunch.

Finding a pub which would serve 28 people for lunch wasn't easy, but we had found a very good and large pub in Littleover for whom 28 was just a trifle and we had pre-ordered our food. The excellent food and drink kept us busy while we recalled the morning's tour. A good start to the season.

Reading

15th February

Our first meeting of the new group took place hosted by Annie Scotney.

Ongoing, meetings may be held at the homes of other group members, subject to numbers and space. The group will meet on the third Wednesday of the month at 2pm. The next being on March 15.

There were six of us at the initial meeting and we enjoyed getting to know each other, and which authors and genres we preferred. We suggested titles of books we may want to try. Some had not belonged to a Book Group before. However, not daunted at the prospect of discussing our preferences, we are looking forward to sharing new reading experiences.

The group will welcome others to come along and add to the shared interest in books.

Annie had been to the library, and was supplied with a small number of the same book, "The Other Hand" by Chris Cleave. We can read this as our March book of the month, and share our thoughts on 15th March.

Recorder

23rd February

We met last Thursday at Overseal Community Hall, as usual. There were 7 of us.

We started with a couple of pieces in 3 parts: arrangements of "5 Fine Scottish Songs" and the well-known tune "The Ash Grove". We continued in four parts, with some Renaissance dances, and a bit of Bach, "Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring". We also played some more modern and traditional music: the "Cantique de Jean Racine" by Fauré, Linden Lea, Die Lorelei and Blow the Wind Southerly. We finished with the Goroum, as we thought of Sarah, visiting her family in Africa.

Next meetings: 9th March, 23rd March, same time, same place.

Music Appreciation

1st February

This month we had a record attendance of 12 members. It was quite a struggle to get us all in Yogi and Janet's living room. Like so many other groups who are fortunate in finding their membership increase, we are now actively looking for a venue that can take larger numbers, whilst also having facilities to play music.

But on with this month. Yogi started us off with a video of the Riverdance troupe performing to a tune called "The Russian Dervishes" which had excellent dancing to a specially written tune.

Sallie then offered some beautiful Chopin "Impromptu No.4 in C# major"

Mike played two tunes, The Beach Boys and "California Girls" followed by The Beatles pastiche of the same song "Back in the USSR" with very similar harmonies to the Beach Boys original.

Brenda's first track was the lovely "We've only just begun" with Karen Carpenter's exquisite vocals.

Nev introduced us to the Jive Aces, a 6-piece UK swing band, playing "Singing in the Rain". A fun band to listen out for.

Margaret took us back to her Welsh roots with Shirley Bassey and Bryn Terfel singing the very moving "World in Union" from the Rugby World Cup, whilst Steve brought us Roy Orbison and "In Dreams". Another great voice although not Welsh!

Janet gave us Michael Bolton and "Reach out and I'll be there", a song associated with the Four Tops.

Sid said that he had a strong connection to the next song, The Bangles' "Eternal Flame". A great pop song.

Dorothy brought us back to classical music with Handel's "Sarabande". A piece we all knew as it has been used in films, tv shows and even adverts, but few knew its name.

Neil played us "Wade in the Water" by Ramsey Lewis, a classic jazz version of an old gospel song, after which Heather introduced us to another UK band, London's own Dave Chandler, a pub jazz band singing "Blues for Billy".

Yogi followed that with a very funny video of a female quartet playing violin, cello and piano with each trying to outperform the others by playing their, and each other instruments upside down, back to front and any way possible whilst still playing exquisitely. Salut Salon are the quartet and "Competitive foursome" the track.

Sallie played the inevitable and wonderful Ella and Louis singing "Dream a Little Dream of Me". We can't get enough of Ella Fitzgerald and Nev followed with Jools Holland and Mick Hucknall playing and singing "I Got it Bad". More classic jazz.

Brenda's famously random selection this time produced Kirsty MacColl and "Here Comes That Man Again". Possibly not her finest song but we enjoyed her typically witty lyrics and then Steve chose Etta James and the wonderful "At Last".

Margaret had another Welsh tune "David of the White Rock" or more correctly "Dafydd Y Garreg Wen". A lovely piece of harp playing, whilst Sid's next piece was "Sonnet" by The Verve. Another classic Richard Ashcroft tune.

Heather chose a Mark Knopfler and Chet Atkins duet called "Tahitian Skies". A pair of great guitarists at their best, and then Neil closed the session with that great supergroup The Travelling Wilburys and "Margarita", which following the early death of Roy Orbison was unfortunately a very short-lived band.

Another great session.

Science & Technology

13th February. John Snow - Father of Epidemiology by Chris Hesketh

Chris started by describing the origin of the word 'epidemiology', epi = on/upon, demi = people/district and logos = study of. In simple terms, it is the study of health related events in populations. During the recent covid pandemic, government ministers were keen to follow the science, the science of epidemiology. In the early 19th century, it was thought that diseases were caught and spread due to bad air (miasma) or was God's retribution on the poor for their low morals; little credence was given to germs (the real cause) which remained invisible to the crude, low-power microscopes at the time.

There were 3 major cholera outbreaks in London at this time, resulting in over 100 thousand deaths and although John Snow used logical scientific methods, he was ignored by the authorities. He suspected it was associated with contamination of water entering intakes of the local water companies by raw sewage discharged into the Thames. Comparing statistics of deaths of people using water sources upstream of sewage outlets, with deaths of people drinking water taken from sources downstream clearly showed a statistical disparity. But there was no effect on brewery workers, who mostly consumed beer, sterilised by the brewing process. The scientific evidence was mounting, but it was not until support from the Reverend Henry Whitehead, impressed by John Snow's tenacity and thoroughness, that the authorities finally listened. Snow and Whitehead were able to resolve an anomaly in the statistics by the discovery of water pipe blocked by a baby's nappy that led to cross contamination of the water pump in Broad Street. Chris presented a fascinating battle between entrenched ignorance and pioneering scientific detective work which ultimately laid the foundations of modern epidemiology.

Note: As our meetings have become so popular, we will be moving to the Main Hall at Packington instead of the side room. This will give us much more space. However this has meant changing the day to the **2nd Tuesday of the month**. This may cause some difficulties with rebooking our planned speakers so keep an eye on the website or here in the Newsletter for any changes.

The next meeting will be on Tues 14th March. All other dates and speakers are provisional at present.

Scrabble - 27th February

We had 8 people at Scrabble today, which made two tables. We're learning lots of new words and we use our mobile phone timers to make sure the games don't drag out too long. Not all the members come every week, it's fairly free and easy, but we have several Scrabble sets to accommodate whoever turns up. There's parking at the Bull's Head, redeemable against a coffee. Meetings are fortnightly, and there's a Scrabble group set up on WhatsApp to inform everyone of the next meetings.

Supper Club - 23rd February – The Beeches

This month was our first get together for the supper club since November as our Dec and Jan dates clashed with Christmas and Burns Night. Expecting wintery weather, we had booked somewhere local, but the weather was fine for travelling. So 22 members arrived at Beeches at 7pm on Thursday to find it already packed out. We had to queue at the bar for quite some time to get a drink as the staff were very busy and our tables, booked for 7.30, weren't yet ready.

Once seated, our pre-ordered starters arrived quite quickly and were very nice, and those who hadn't ordered starters didn't have to wait too long before their mains started to arrive. Unfortunately one of the meat choices turned out to be not quite as good as expected for 4 people, but at least the pub didn't charge for it.

A few had pre-ordered desserts, and when the others saw them, many also ordered puddings. So a good night for most of us, but mixed results for some. The staff were very good and seemed to be working very hard. I suppose this is due to the general staff shortages in the hospitality industry at the moment.

Wine Appreciation

15th February

Chris and Tanya provided a selection of Riojas for us to try this month, one white (blanco), one rosé (rosada) and 4 reds (tinto in Spanish) with prices varying from £4.50 to £15.

Most of us hadn't tasted white Rioja for ages as it had a reputation for being strongly oaked. This one had a creamy oaky vanilla flavour that was really quite pleasant and made a change from the usual Pinot Grigio and Sauv Blanc. The rosé unfortunately had very little flavour and was very light on taste. Not good for an £8 wine. The reds were much better. We started with a £4.50 wine from Aldi which was smooth, without too much flavour but very drinkable and finished with a bottle from the newly opened "Ace of Drinks" in Market St. This, at £15, was by far the best wine of the night but so it should be at that price. This was a 2014 Campo Vieja Tempranillo Gran Reserva; almost black in colour, rich and with lots of smooth flavour. Lovely.

A very interesting tasting of Spanish wines showing you can still get good value wines as well as expensive ones.

Short Walking

17th February. Meet at St Bernards Abbey for a walk around the Abbey

Five intrepid adventurers converged on Mt St Bernard's Abbey, after an epic bit of navigating round closed roads. A nice, if breezy, day beckoned as we set off in a south westerly direction and a long slow incline up the hill to the crest of the ridge, There we turned to the northwest, and followed a narrow path by the hedge, with glorious views of the Abbey in one direction and far reaching views to Breedon-on-the-Hill in the other, nearly 7 miles away. The path was a bit lumpy but was negotiated in fine style by the team, and soon descended into the woods, where it turned and twisted in a generally northern direction. The woods were quiet and peaceful. As we came down to the more level stretches, once more with views across to the Abbey, we found the remains of the old Abbey Grange Farm, buried in undergrowth, and mostly inaccessible behind protective fences next to the quarry. This does not show up on the maps except at the turn of the 19th/ 20th century, but was very substantially constructed of local stone, as were the boundary walls. Just to the west of this is the Spring Hill quarry which absorbed the Pedlar Tor prominence early in the last century. From here we continued beside what seems to be the remains of a tramway from the old farm (or possibly the Tor itself) to the path from the west which skirts the quarry on its northern side and turned east to Oaks Road. Finally the gallant band tackled the short, but steep and lumpy, climb up from the road back into the Abbey grounds, over the only stile on the route. The walk was about one and three quarter miles, and we celebrated with coffee and cakes in St Joseph's Tea Rooms. Curiously, the entrance to the Tearooms is past a pleasant little cottage called 'Abbey Grange'.

Medium Walking

13th February. Around Oakthorpe and Willesley, led by Iain

Was it the walk leader, the walk itself, or fine weather that caused a record breaking attendance of 17 members?

The walk started at Oakthorpe Colliery picnic site and 16 of us passed through Willesley Wood, past Thoretit Lake to Willesley Woodside, where a rendezvous took place with member no. 17, who had been unable to locate the car park. From here we too the track leading to Willesley scout camp, continuing by footpath to Willesley Lane. We continued to head towards Ashby before turning right on reaching the Measham Road, and, on reaching the A42, we crossed the Willesley golf course, ending up on Willesley Woodside for a coffee break. We crossed the lane and re-entered Willesley Wood at a higher point, eventually reaching a farm track, taking us to Oakthorpe. From here, we took a path across fields and through woodland, back to the car park.

The distance varied between those who measured the walk, as usual, but was approximately 5.5 miles. The weather was fair, becoming sunny towards the end of the walk. There was little mud of consequence and few stiles for the excellent turnout (which included several members of the (longer) walking group).

Longer Walking

7th February. Around Ticknall, led by Kevin

Twenty one turned up for this mornings walk, strangely enough the largest number since the first walk in February last year where we had twenty five. Our numbers were boosted today by three new lady walkers and Sue returning from her hip operation. After leaving the Staff of Life we crossed the road to pass through the Church Yard and Ticknall Hall car park to turn left away from Ticknall across open fields into Robin Wood and Woodend Cottage. Soon after crossing the A514 we reached a group of properties called St Brides. Our route continued to the tower overlooking Staunton Harold reservoir. The final part of the walk took us along the Reservoir path and edge of the Calke Estate and lime kilns before returning to the Staff of Life for lunch.

21st Feb. Around Sinfin, led by Malcolm Fletcher

The 17 of us on the walk departed the pub and crossed the A514 and over the field which led us to the Trent and Mersey canal. Turning right we walked a short distance to Swarkestone Lock, turned left over the canal onto the Tonge to Derby cycle/walking path, along the disused Derby canal, to the junction of Sinfin Moor lane. Turning left we walked a short distance before turning right to circumnavigate the lake which took us past the new Rolls Royce nuclear research centre. Back on to Sinfin Moor Lane and then right to the footpath that led us over the fields and up to the side of the A50 where we had a short break for refreshments.

From there we walked alongside the A50 to Lowes Lane, turning right over the A50 then turning right down to the canal at Barrow on Trent. Then through the village which led us to the River Trent. Turning left we followed the river back to the Crewe and Harper where we had a very nice lunch. A walk of a around 6.9 miles.

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

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