



Newsletter April 2023

Interest Groups Timetable for April 2023

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

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Monthly Meeting	Tue 25th	2 pm	Congregational Church, Ashby. Geoff Purglove "The history of the Ashby canal"
Arts and Crafts	Thu 6th	10 am	Packington Village Hall
Bridge	Mon 10th	7 pm	All meetings are at the Ivanhoe Club
	Mon 17th	7 pm	
	Mon 24rd	7 pm	
Calligraphy	Tue 11th	10 am	At Gill's. Word of the month is "Names" using uncial
Calligraphy 2	Wed 5th	10 am	At 148 Woodside, Ashby
Computers	Wed 5th	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
	Mon 17th	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Croquet	Fri 28th	10 am	Ashby Croquet Club, Moira Miners' Welfare, Bath Lane, Moira DE12 6BP
Digital Photography	Thu 6th	10 am	16 Winchester Way. Possible day out
Drawing and painting	Wed 19th	10 am	2 Marlborough Way
Family History	Wed 12th	2 pm	2 Marlborough Way
French Conversation	Mon 3rd	11 am	Ivanhoe Club, Wilfred Place, Ashby
	Mon 17th	11 am	Ivanhoe Club, Wilfred Place, Ashby
Gardening	Thu 20th	10 am	Coach trip to Birmingham Botanical Gardens Leaving from Royal Hotel at 10 am. Coach fare and entry £21.
History	Thu 27th	2.15 pm	Packington Village Hall. Speaker TBC
Industrial Heritage	Wed 26th	TBA	Gladstone Pottery Museum, Stoke ST3 1PQ
Literature	Tue 11th	1.30 pm	Meeting at Sandra's house
Lunch	Thu 13th	12 for 12.30 pm	The Unicorn Inn, Main St, Orton on the Hill, CV9 3NN
Medium Walks	Mon 3rd	9.45 for 10am start	Meet at Mount St Bernard's Abbey CP, Oaks Rd LE67 5UL. NOTE change of date

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Music Appreciation	Wed 5th	10 am	At Nev's, 26 Homecroft Drive, Packington
Reading	Wed 19th	2 pm	Meeting at 79 Nottingham Rd
Recorder	Thu 6th	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
	Thu 20th	10 am	
Science & Technology			Easter Break – No meeting this month
Scrabble	Mon 10th	-	No meeting as it is Easter Monday
	Mon 24th	10.30 am	Bulls Head pub, Market St, Ashby
Short Walks	Fri 21st	10 am	Meet at the car park near St Peters church, Stapenhill
Supper Club	Thu 27th	7 for 7.30 pm	The Bulls Head, Main St, Wilson, DE73 8AE
Walking	Tue 4th	9.45 for 10 am start	The Gate Hangs Well, Barton Rd, Carlton Leics CV13 0DB. Approx 6.5 miles
	Tues 18th	9.45 for 10 am start	The Royal Oak, Cossington LE7 4UW. 7.7 miles. Muddy in places, suggest bringing a walking pole.
Wine Appreciation	Wed 19th	7 pm	Annie's house.

Interest Groups Timetable for early May 2023

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Medium Walks	Mon 1st	9.45 for 10 am start	TBC. Note change of date to avoid Coronation Bank Holiday, but this is May Day
Walking	Tue 2nd	9.45 for 10 am start	Queens Head, Heather LE67 2QP. 7.5 miles
Calligraphy 2	Wed 3rd	10 am	At 148 Woodside, Ashby
Music Appreciation	Wed 3rd	10 am	TBA
Computer	Wed 3rd	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Arts and Crafts	Thu 4th	10 am	Packington Village Hall
Digital Photography	Thu 4th	10 am	16 Winchester Way
Recorder	Thu 4th	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 renewals are now due as of April 1st

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.

NEW GROUPS JUST STARTED

Croquet

The Croquet Group has now started up. They will meet on the last Friday of the month at 10 am at Ashby Croquet Club which 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 croquet@ashbyu3a.co.uk so that he can set up the right number of lawns and equipment. A report of their first session follows below.

HISTORY GROUP TRIP TO YORK

There are still a few places available on the coach trip to York on Thursday 25th May. The coach fare is £24. Anyone wishing to come along please contact Colin Ellis on 01530 272592.

The coach will be leaving Ashby at 8.30 am and returning around 6.30 pm with approx 5 hrs in York to see whatever you wish. In view of the many alternative attractions in York, no Group visits are arranged but information on some of the possibilities will be available at the Meetings.

FEBRUARY'S MONTHLY MEETING

28th March. Judith Lewis on "Winning Mastermind" and Sylvia Spare on "Aquabox"

This month we had two speakers giving very different talks. Firstly Judith Lewis talked about winning Mastermind, and Sylvia Spare introduced us to the charity Aquabox and what it does around the world.

Judith is a retired NHS psychiatrist from Ashby who won the coveted Mastermind glass bowl in 2019. She described how and why she came to take part and also explained the considerable controversy about her win.

Judith said that she had fancied taking part in a TV quiz but she didn't know enough about sport, music or popular culture and that she couldn't remember celebrities faces so she chose the least populist of the quizzes, Mastermind. She also said that she was good at cramming and learning things quickly, so that would be good for a quiz like Mastermind. After applying online and giving a list of subjects that she would like to chose as her specialist subjects she heard nothing. Then out of the blue, whilst at work one day, she got a phone call from the BBC. After being asked a few background questions, she was faced with an instant general knowledge quiz which she apparently passed before they discussed her choice of subjects. She had chosen The Life of CS Lewis, the books of Lord Peter Wimsey by Dorothy L Sayers and the books of Fortunes of War by Olivia Manning.

Judith explained that choosing a subject with a finite amount of research is the best way to learn everything needed, and that the reference sources are agreed between contestant and question setter beforehand. Presumably this is to avoid disputes where there may be a difference of opinion between sources.

Having won the first two rounds, she made the final with 5 others and was lucky that year in that they took each finalist off to the location of their specialist subject. The first books of the Fortunes of War are set in Romania so she spent several days in Bucharest with a film crew at the locations from the story, to film an introductory piece for the final program. Very nice.

The final went well and Judith was in the lead after her specialist round. In the general knowledge round John Humphrys was in the middle of asking "What rodent was the mascot of the Desert Rats" when the buzzer sounded and some people claimed she said Gerbil and not Jerboa which is the correct answer. It was apparently questioned in the studio, checked and agreed by the other contestants that she said Jerboa. She therefore won the competition by one point.

However when the show was broadcast, the Sun newspaper phoned her up and asked her about it, then published a front page story entitled "Disastermind" claiming she had won with a wrong answer and causing all sorts of outrage in the press. Never mind that even with a wrong answer, she would have won for having the least number of "passes". Eventually the BBC issued a statement confirming that Judith had given the right answer and that she was the rightful champion of 2019. A fascinating insight into the world of quizzing and TV shows.

Sylvia, one of our members, and her husband Ray, came along to describe Aquabox, a charity set up to provide a means of producing clean drinking water to crisis zones in all parts of the world, particularly after natural and man-made disasters.

The idea came about 31 years ago from a member of Wirksworth Rotary who thought up a hand pump which could filter dirty water to make it drinkable. After a few iterations the pump will now also filter out bacteria and viruses such as cholera and diphtheria. Being hand-pumped they don't require any power supply which may not be available in a disaster area. A single pump can produce 1 litre of water per minute and larger ones can supply a school or community.

These pumps are assembled by hand by volunteers in the UK before being sent out along with other useful items such as pots and pans tools and towels. Each box is filled with items relevant to the area

they are being sent. They are careful not to use single-use plastics where possible. For instance the pumps are not bubble-wrapped to protect them on their journey, but instead wrapped in towels which can be used afterwards.

Each filled box costs Aquabox around £150. All equipment and transport is paid for by donations and gifts. Over 110,000 boxes have been sent to over 50 countries, including Ukraine, helping hundreds of thousands of people. A very worthwhile charity doing an excellent job.

GROUP REPORTS

Croquet

31st March

Here is a lightning report of this morning's water sport event filed just before we went to press.

Nine brave U3A members came to the croquet lawns for the initial meeting of this group. We used all three lawns and following a brief practice, played two 30 minute games. Unfortunately heavy rain then curtailed play. (We normally play through light rain)

The attendees seemed very enthusiastic and are looking forward to the next meeting on Friday 28th April.

The Family History Group

8th March

Snow and cold weather cut our numbers down today, with only three to sit down and one working from home.

Keith carried on his search for ancestors with some success.

Mary had a puzzle to disentangle. It seems an ancestor, apparently born in 1770, appeared later with a different age. There were no other clues as to whether this was the same person or another with the same name. This does happen. However, closer examination of the 1841 Census, and the application of the rounding rules used in this Census, gave a good fit for this to be the same man.

We then discussed the various ways we can improve validation of a potential ancestor, or eliminate them, including using DNA to 'triangulate' them. This latter only works if there is another tree holder who has taken the Test and is willing to communicate.

Eileen, working from home, is currently looking at Parish Records from the 16th and 17th centuries. She posted two snaps on WhatsApp to see if we could read the rather blurry entries. We managed one of them, getting a sufficiently good answer for her.

John D is still working through his father's School Logs of 1924-6, and we talked about the enduring puzzle of his conversion to RC and how he might have met John's mother.

Finally, at coffee time, we paused to think of Sylvia Dearing, who passed away on Sunday.

R.I.P. Sylvia.

Arts and Crafts

2nd March

The Craft Group had a successful gathering at Packington Village Hall. We continued work on our Easter Wreaths and they are nicely taking shape. We made all the leaves, so next month, April, we will be putting the flowers, leaves, chicks and eggs onto the wreaths.

A few people will be missing this next month and then we will not be meeting in May, due to the hall being used for the election.

Calligraphy

14th March

There were six of us meeting this month to review our work using the word 'celebrate' as inspiration. As well as finding inspiration we had to remember the technique for writing in Italic script. Celebrate was not the easiest word to research as Google only wanted to send us to sites celebrating end of life, which wasn't quite what we had in mind! As ever, all the work produced was so different and of an amazing standard. We thought that working this way had certainly inspired us to be more creative.

So, it's on to another word and font for next month.

Calligraphy 2

1st March

There were five members present and we were very grateful for the support of Sue and Jenny who come along and gave us further introduction to calligraphy.

We discussed various styles of writing and materials and we also learnt to be more free and to develop our own styles. We look forward to meeting again on Wednesday 5th April and decided to concentrate on an Easter theme. In the meantime we will continue to practise our writing.

Computers

20th March

Today we had 8 attending, with three needing help.

Peter and Mike discussed Peter's security set-up on his laptop, checking that the anti-virus and firewall software was configured correctly

Sylvia needed to copy material from her emails and upon inspection it seems that what was wanted was to set up folders for the information in them. Steve helped and found much had already been copied over.

Marion's laptop was running very slowly. Richard worked with her to clean up folders and unwanted apps. He found an unexplained 7 partitions on the HDD, but these do not seem to be the culprits. He also helped her to open an old external hard drive which Windows at first failed to recognise. A bit of magic with different connecting cable solved that. The contents were found to be quite old. Marion will now think what she wants to do with them.

There ensued a general discussion on connecting external storage devices to computers. This includes phones.

We meet again on Wednesday, 5th of April.

Drawing and Painting

15th March

Our much-anticipated visit to Swannington Hough Mill was very interesting but the day was bitterly cold, so after an hour of collecting "atmosphere and inspiration" we decamped back to Ashby to enjoy hot coffee and delightful cake provided by Sue. At our next meeting we will actually draw and/or paint "Windmill(s)".

The Digital Photography Group

2nd March

For our first March meeting we met at Mike Stow's house to look at our attempts to manipulate the settings on our cameras in order to demonstrate the interrelationship of the key elements of the Exposure Triangle. This plays off shutter speed against depth of focus and the camera's sensitivity to light.

We had offerings from Johns H & D, Steve, Richard and Mike. The subjects ranged from night-time shots of the moon, through subterranean shots in the tramway tunnel at Calke by John D and the operations of a Victorian steam pumping engine by Richard, to Mike's and Richard's pendulum clocks, and Mike's vase collection.

A very interesting series of contrasting effects for each. We all learned a great deal from this session on the practical effects of altering the basic settings and seeing what the camera makes of them..

French Conversation

6th March

Next meeting of the French Conversation group is on Monday 3rd April at 11am at the Ivanhoe Social club, Wilfred Place, Ashby. It's still very much a fledgling group trying to become more organised. Last time we did several exercises around understanding conversations that might occur at passport control and in the street if stopped by someone conducting a survey.

Gardening

16th March

Our garden meeting today was a talk on the history and evolution of four of our stately gardens given by Camilla Anderson, a historian and lecturer.

Included in the talk were the gardens of Chatsworth House and Alnwick Castle. It was very interesting how these gardens have changed through the ages and how the various owners have put their stamp on both the gardens and houses.

This was our last indoor meeting until October. April 20th is our coach trip to Birmingham Botanical Gardens and May 18th will be a self-drive to a yellow book garden called Barracca in Earl Shilton. Details of both trips are on the website. Advance booking is essential.

Recorder

9th March

The recorder group had a small meeting this morning. Five of us braved the snowy roads, and the drive to the hall, and we played until we realised that the snow was getting thicker, so we called a halt shortly before 11. We did, of course, play the Goroum. Luckily, we had the right recorders for most of the music. We also played the Scottish songs and Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring.

We're hoping for better weather in 2 weeks' time.

History

23rd March – “50 Gems of Leicestershire” by Michael Smith

Today we had a good turnout of 45 members to listen to Michael Smith, a local historian and Ashby u3a member, talking about '50 gems of Leicestershire.' Michael is also an author of several books specialising in local history.

This was a very interesting canter through the history of the county using photos and background information. Michael started with a photo of a mosaic representation of a Plesiosaur fossil, from around 150 million years ago, found in Barrow upon Soar in 1851 and nicknamed The Kipper.

He swiftly moved on to a Bronze Age barrow, complete with chariot, discovered in Cossington, and subsequent Iron Age and Anglo Saxon finds. Leicester was very important in Roman days being possibly the third largest city after Colchester and London. He showed us a very impressive section of the Jewry Wall and outlined the excavation history and finds.

A wonderful find of a ceremonial helmet and Iron Age coins was found around 2000 near Market Harborough. Interestingly Breedon church, a favourite stop on many of our walks, is on the site of an Iron Age hill fort. This was succeeded by a Saxon church, and then by Norman one. Reliefs inside show influences from far and wide.

Then he turned to Ashby Castle. This was originally a motte and bailey wooden fort. He referred to the part the Hastings family have played in the history of the town and the Wars of The Roses. But they fell out of favour afterwards.

He continued with our own St Helens church Ashby, which has many interesting features and monuments. One special one is a possibly unique set of finger stocks in which the miscreant has to place their hand on a small board, with slots for the fingers, and then curl the fingers around the edge. An 'L' shaped top board is then locked down over the fingers clamping them in place.

He dwelt a little on the end of Richard III; the Battle of Bosworth Field, which is now known to have taken place some way away from the traditional location; and the Richard III Experience in Leicester

Many people may not know of Thomas Wolsey's connection with Leicester. He fell out with King Henry VIII over his failure to negotiate the annulment of the King's marriage to Catherine of Aragon. He died before Henry could accuse him of treason and is buried in Leicester Abbey. Henry's fourth wife, Anne of Cleves, is memorialised in the eponymous pub in Melton Mowbray which bears a portrait of her which is said to be quite unlike her!

Interestingly for the chroniclers of the development of education in the UK, it seems that the closure of monasteries by Henry VIII shut down schools that had been going since the early mediaeval period. So the local authorities built schools. Some were installed over top of the fixed market stalls in the centre of towns. A particularly fine example is in Market Harborough.

Michael then moved on to the Industrial Revolution, and the specialisation in our local area of framework knitting. Photos from the Wigston Framework Knitters Museum helped bring this era to life.

Then came photos of Taylors Bell Foundry and the Campanile in Loughborough; Moira Furnace and its lime kilns; the disused Blaby Glenfield railway tunnel; East Midlands Aeropark; The Motorbike Museum at Triumph in Hinckley and the memorial to Frank Whittle in the form of a Gloster jet fighter on a roundabout at Lutterworth. Whittle's test site was in Lutterworth.

Finally, he showed photos of the mobile Century Theatre mounted on 2 or 3 low loaders. This now static building was a post-war solution to the loss of so many bombed venues. It now resides in Coalville and is still in regular use.

So many photos of so many gems of Leicestershire that it is impossible to get them all in. But totally absorbing.

Industrial Heritage

22nd March – Silverstone Interactive Museum

This month we had an interesting visit to the recently opened Silverstone Interactive Museum at the famous racing circuit.

I don't think any of us had been to Silverstone in recent years and it was fascinating to see how much the infrastructure has developed over the years. Apart from having its own junction off the A43 leading to a dual carriageway approach to the circuit, there are a large number of buildings dedicated to motorsport engineering including the huge 3 buildings comprising the Aston Martin F1 factory which are under construction. Once parked in one of the vast near-empty car parks it was a short walk to a very imposing museum building.

Despite some confusion over how to pay, since their invoice to us arrived too late the day before for us to make payment, and their bank details appearing to be wrong anyway, and the pay desk not being able to take our money! we were allowed in without paying (yet).

The café's cashless card readers were not working either so all transactions had to be by cash, but they had little change. Not a good start. But it got better. Suitably refreshed, we entered the museum proper, having still not paid but with paper wristbands acting as tickets.

The whole museum has state-of-the-art computer-projected displays and sound systems. The museum covers the history of the site from its earliest days as Luffield Priory in the 12th century, through the war years as a Wellington bomber airfield to the start of motor racing on the disused airfield runways and perimeter roads. There were plenty of exhibits to get hands-on with, some for kids and some suitable for us big kids.

On the lower floor were various displays of significant race cars and bikes and memorabilia such as helmets and overalls of famous drivers past and present along with films, pictures and posters of the evolving circuit. There was also a large hands-on section explaining how various parts of cars and motorbikes work such as suspension, tyres, engines and gearboxes along with actual F1 and MotoGP (bikes) engines and other bits. Very enlightening for the casual observer and enthusiast alike.

We returned to the café for a very pleasant lunch (the contactless cash machines working now, as was our ability to pay!) where we found out that some race cars would be coming out to practice on the circuit shortly. We could go outside to stand by the track as several older and current sports racing cars hurtled round noisily. This was a great way to end our visit, and after many minutes watching the cars, we headed home.

Next month we shall do something completely different and visit the Gladstone Pottery Museum in Stoke, currently the home of the C4's Great Pottery Throw Down series of shows.

Scrabble

27th March

Our venue at the Bulls Head on Market St is proving popular with parking handy. We've decided that late comers play alongside another person until the game is finished, and that the box must be properly packed away before anyone leaves to avoid a muddle. A member brought along a list of two letter words that are allowed, which was very useful. We have a couple of dictionaries too, as well as four sets of scrabble, enough for now. Another member had, on loan, a lovely set with pegs to stop the tiles sliding. If anyone has one of these to sell, let us know (not travel scrabble, though. That's too small for our eyes). Everyone is welcome, 10.30 at the Bull's Head, Market St. A very sociable group.

Music Appreciation

1st March

Dorothy started things off with a lovely soulful piece called "Farewell to Stromness" by Peter Maxwell Davies. Sallie followed that with another soulful piece, the much more well-known, Elgar's "Nimrod".

We needed cheering up a little after that and Nev's choice of Billy Joel & Ray Charles playing and singing "Baby Grand" was just the ticket. Lesley then offered Madonna's version of "Don't cry for me Argentina" from the film version of Evita.

Heather had another thoughtful piece, John Williams' "Schindler's List" with violin by Itzhak Perlman. Beautiful.

As it was just a week after what would have been George Harrison's 80th birthday, Mike played the acoustic version of "While my guitar gently weeps" that George had recorded as a demo and which was later used by Cirque du Soleil for one of their shows. Brenda produced another unusual arrangement, this time Cole Porter's "Anything goes" played and sung by the man himself.

Neil chose to play John Martyn singing "Couldn't love you more". John has a distinctive gravelly voice which Neil admitted is not to everyone's taste. But most of us liked it!

Dorothy next played Acker Bilk and "Summer Set", a pun on his home county, played in his distinctive quavering style. Sallie followed that with another clarinet piece, the humorous "Walking the dog" by George Gershwin. Nev's next choice was also a humorous one, Tom Jones and the Stereophonics singing "Mama told me not to come" about the perils of psychedelic parties!

Lesley had chosen Keane and "This is the last time", a favourite of hers. Heather introduced us to a Scottish folk group called North Sea Gas playing a medley of tunes "Cramond Island", "Big canoe" and "The cowshed". Very good.

Mike chose the Hollies fun song "Stop, stop, stop" and Brenda followed that with Dusty Springfield and "Windmills of your mind" rather than the more usual version by Noel Harrison, while Neil played Paul Young's "Everything must change".

To finish off, Mike played a classic comedy record which some hadn't heard before, "Woodman spare that tree" by Phil Harris who was popular in the 40s and 50s, and then Nev closed the session with the king of skiffle, Lonnie Donegan, and "Have a drink on me". Another varied and interesting session.

Reading

15th March

Six of us met again at Annie Scotney's house where we had a lively and thought provoking discussion about our various feelings and interpretations of the story after reading "The Other Hand " by Chris Cleave.

We expressed several points of view but concluded that the subject matter had been both informative, thought provoking and emotional, in fact quite upsetting at times.

We discovered that we could interpret the ending in more than one way and agreed that the title was very clever and related excellently to the content.

In conclusion four of us would recommend this book but two of us were not sure that they would.

We would welcome others to come along and join us. Our April book is "A Town called Solace" by Mary Lawson which we will be discussing on April 19th at 2pm ... again at Annie's.

Science & Technology

14th March - Water: Past, present and future by Chris Hesketh

Our first meeting in our new venue, the Main Hall in Packington Village Hall, was very well attended, despite our meetings now being moved to Tuesdays. The topic was 'Water: past, present and future' presented by Chris Hesketh, which was followed by a lively discussion. Chris stepped in at short notice when our planned speaker couldn't make our newly changed day. She had also given us the excellent talk on "John Snow, Father of Epidemiology" last month.

The very first slide got our immediate attention: a graphic showing the water distribution of the Earth. The majority of the Earth's water isn't available for human use, as surface water accounts for only 1.2% of the Earth's water, with the remainder being the oceans which are saline. The surface water was then further broken down into lakes, rivers and boreholes, with the majority of the surface water locked in glaciers and the ice caps. Surprisingly, most water in the UK is used by industry, a lesser amount by agriculture and even less by domestic use.

Chris gave a brief history of water supply and waste disposal from before the aqueducts of Roman times, via centuries of open sewers, up to the Big Stink of 1858 and Bazalgette's design and construction of the London sewer system, still in use today. Waste water can be classified into yellow, brown, black and grey and contains many different pollutants such as fats, solids, bacteria, wipes, nappies, chemicals, nitrogen, phosphorus, pesticides, agricultural run-off and medicinal drugs. We learned the importance of chemical oxygen demand (COD) and biological oxygen demand (BOD) in determining the strength of sewage, which then determines how the sewage is treated. There are many different stages: filtration, settlement tanks to remove some suspended solids, secondary and tertiary treatment and in some modern sewage treatment works, new additional treatment.

Water companies are allowed to discharge untreated waste water into water courses and the sea under certain conditions, and these discharges should be reported to the relevant authorities. However there are many loopholes in this system as the water companies are allowed to self-regulate and are allowed some discharges under certain conditions. This is certainly contentious and some national newspapers and organisations such as Surfers Against Sewage are running campaigns to rectify this. The problem is compounded by domestic plumbing in which all waste currently goes into the same sewer, thus mixing surface water run-off with domestic waste.

There are now requirements for new housing estates to provide surface water reservoirs, but this can't be applied retrospectively to existing housing stock, which forms the majority. Different solutions to this problem were discussed, including reducing demand for water and reusing grey water, such as bath water, for watering the garden for example. It was felt that there is a definite need not just for a consistent government policy on waste disposal, but for international consensus and action. Water supplied for the domestic users should not be too pure, however, or the process of reverse osmosis takes place in the body, resulting in a loss of calcium, for example. A final slide certainly gave us food for thought as it showed the global drought risk. Despite considering ourselves a rainy country, the UK is a high drought risk! Tanya then thanked Chris for stepping in at such short notice to provide us with another fascinating and informative talk.

The second part of the meeting began with Tanya introducing us to British Science Week, 10-19 March - a ten-day celebration of science, technology, engineering and maths, which is held every year since 1994. It is organised by the British Science Association and funded by UK Research and Innovation, aiming to inspire all people to learn more about science and all the scientific inventions around us, and also to encourage more young people to consider science related careers.

'Smashing Stereotypes' is a collection of over 30 stories from individuals and teams that challenge long-standing stereotypes, with the aim of encouraging more young people, from all backgrounds, to see themselves as scientists. With profiles of chefs, product designers, and fitness professionals, 'Smashing Stereotypes' showcases how science is for everyone: whatever your interests or background. An example of this was the free instruction sheet on how to extract your own DNA using a strawberry and easily available equipment in your own kitchen!

Kurt focused on the problems scientists have in getting their ideas accepted, not just for outsiders like John Snow, but for major scientists, who were part of the establishment. He talked about James Clerk Maxwell (1831 - 1879). He was first chair in experimental physics at Cambridge University and is credited with unifying electricity and magnetism and showing that light is an electromagnetic wave, yet at the time of his death, his ideas were not accepted or even fully understood. It needed Oliver Heaviside, a young man in his twenties with no formal education, to give up his job, move back into his parents' home to work on his equations and produce the final 4 equations we have today.

Kurt then returned to John Snow, who died on the 18th June 1858, at the time of the 'Big Stink' and he speculated that John Snow, who died of a stroke, might have succumbed to the miasma and heat stroke at this time. An ironic end to his life.

On this day in history (14th March): This day is known as Pi Day, celebrated all over the world, as in America the 14th March is written as 3-14. Also scientists at the University of Applied Sciences at the Grison have calculated the value of pi to a 100 trillion digits. Kurt was able to reveal that the 100 trillionth digit was in fact a '0'.

Also on 14th March, Paul Ehrlich was born. He was a bacteriologist, haematologist who did pioneering work in chemotherapy and also discovered arsphenamine, the first effective treatment for syphilis.

In 1879 Albert Einstein was born on 14th March and 1879 was also the year that Maxwell had died. While we were all aware of his scientific achievements, Einstein was also involved in politics and in 1952, 3 years before his death in 1955 he was offered the presidency of Israel. He did decline this.

Lastly, he mentioned Stephen Hawking who died on 14th March 2018 aged 76. His main work towards the end of his life had concentrated on black holes and the radiation emitted from them. This is now known as 'Hawking radiation'. He finished with a quotation from Stephen Hawking in 'A Step Backward For Civilization', The Washington Post, 16 Feb 2014.

'Aggression has had definite advantages for survival, but when modern technology meets ancient aggression the entire human race and much of the rest of life on Earth is at risk ... It is not clear that, unlike aggression, intelligence has any long-term survival value.'

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 9th May in the Main Hall in Packington Village Hall, when Yogi Goodwin will talk about 'Tudor Food and Nutrition - the Tudor food of both poor and rich, its preparation and the effects on the body'.

Please note there is no meeting in April, due to Easter.

Luncheon

9th March

This month we were without our leaders, Colin and Sharon, as they were on holiday. John and Margaret stepped in to co-ordinate our visit to the Greyhound at Boundary. A flurry of snow overnight and in the morning deterred a few but we still had a good turn out. Because of the size of our party, the pub had offered to just serve their lunchtime carvery menu. This was not a problem as it is usually excellent, as it was this time, and it came complete with complimentary soup or dessert. No-one went hungry!

By the time we had finished eating, the snow had melted and the journey home was a lot easier than getting there. As usual, a fine lunchtime gathering.

Supper Club

23rd March – The George and Dragon, Thringstone

This was our first visit to the George and Dragon since it changed hands, and despite a little hiccup over our pre-ordered menu choices getting lost in the ether, which then had to be phoned through the evening before, we were made very welcome by our hosts.

13 of us (not unlucky this time) were sat at one large double width table which made conversation from end to end a bit easier. The food turned up promptly and all pretty much at the same time, and was excellent. Several of us had starters and then main courses arrived just as the first course was finished, so those not having a starter didn't have to wait too long to get fed, which is not always the case. The mains were also very good with no complaints, in fact everyone was quick to complement the chef and staff for lovely food and good service. The dessert menu was extensive and tempting and most succumbed! A very good evening was had by all.

Wine Appreciation

15th March

This month Ken brought along a selection of four red wines from the online retailer, Laithwaites. Two were a rather hefty 15% alcohol, one 14% and the other a measly 12.5%! The wines all cost around £11/bottle.

The first of the 15% wines was a Garnacha grape from the Aragon region of Spain. We thought this was a solid, full bodied wine, smooth and fruity but with some tannin. A serious wine which would be great with red meat and BBQs.

The next was totally different. A 14% wine from the Languedoc region of France. Very dark but smooth and sweeter than the 1st one with a lighter taste belying its dark colour. We thought this was a more fun wine, easy drinking by itself or with food. It scored higher than the 1st.

The third wine was back up to 15% and was a Cab Sauv from SE Australia. It was a dark reddish brown colour as if it had great age but was the same 2021 as the others. This was soft, smoky and tannic but not liked as much and scored much lower than the 1st two.

The fourth and final wine of the evening was a Portuguese red of "only" 12.5%. This too was soft, with sweet fruits but strong tannin to start with which disappeared after a few minutes. However it still had a slightly odd flavour which not all of us liked, despite it being highly rated on the Laithwaites website. We scored it virtually the same as the previous wine.

This was an interesting selection of wines, some very good, some less so, but it just goes to show that peoples tastes vary. If you like something or not, that's fine. Don't be influenced by other peoples opinions.

Short Walking

17th March. Ticknall car park for a walk via the tunnel to the lime kilns

It was a beautiful day for walking and 10 people met at the car park and set off towards Calke park but when we reached the rail track we joined it and took the tunnel under the main entrance to Calke. This leads down a muddy track to the lime kilns, presumably a major element in funding the estate at the time. We continued down the track for a short distance and took the path back to the main entrance road which we crossed and entered the main estate along a short path into the large field beyond the pay booth. We followed the path across the road and along the top of the bank overlooking the lake before turning off to the cafe. After a much needed break we set off following the road in, until we joined the footpath to the new car park and children's play area. We took the path back to Ticknall, on the way we saw 2 brimstone butterflies, the first this year. Total distance just over 4 miles.

Medium Walking

13th March. Mount St Bernard Abbey, to have been led by Alison

ABANDONED. After sitting in the cars watching the incessant rain, and with a forecast of 40mph or stronger winds, it was decided to postpone the walk until next month. Several of those present retired to a nearby cafe.

Longer Walking

7th March. Around Heather, led by Kevin

Despite the forecast, another lovely day for walking greeted us, as 21 people gathered at the Queens Head. After the usual photograph, we crossed the road to take the path up the side of Sence Valley Forest Park passing the lakes to the car park at the top of the site. We joined the National Forest Way path towards Donington Le Heath but before reaching there turned left and walked through the Kelham Bridge Nature Reserve (Formally a Sewage works) and stopped for a coffee break in a bird hide overlooking the small lake. Our walk continued in figure of eight to re-cross the A447 and re-enter the boundary of Sence Valley Park, on into the Queen Elizabeth Jubilee Wood and a return to Heather and the Queens Head for lunch.

21st March. From Lakeside Bistro, led by Paul

Sixteen walkers gathered at the Lakeside Bistro car park for this walk around several attractions in the National Forest. The weather was forecast to be unsettled, but except for a brief shower, it was fine. We climbed some steep wooden steps to get onto the trail of a disused railway track, now part of the Ivanhoe Way used for the local Conkers Parkrun. Passing the Youth Hostel on our right, we then followed the short northern section of the Ashby Canal to Moira Furnace. This gem of local industrial heritage is a 217 year old blast furnace that made poor quality pig iron during the Napoleonic War. Its short working life is the reason it is such good condition now. After crossing a road and a bridge over the canal we came to Sarah's Wood and then Conkers Waterside, where we stopped for drinks. After going through a tunnel we came to Conkers Discovery Centre, then via a short road section to Albert Village Lake, an old flooded quarry that shows how an industrialised wasteland can be transformed to a habitat for bird life. After another road section, we were back onto the Ivanhoe Way and then descended a series of ramps down to the road. We followed a very wet footpath next to a stream through a wood, and arrived back at the Bistro for a well-earned pint and some hearty food, after walking 8.1 miles.