



Newsletter August 2023

Interest Groups Timetable for August 2023

Please note that this timetable could be subject to change at any time. Please check the website for latest news.

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Monthly Meeting	Tue 22 nd	2 pm	Congregational Church, Ashby. Cream Tea served by the Committee
Arts and Crafts	Thu 3 rd	10 am	Packington Village Hall
Bridge	Mon 14 th	7-9 pm	Ivanhoe Social Club. Other dates in Aug are still to be confirmed
Calligraphy	-	-	No meeting in August
Calligraphy 2	Wed 2 nd	10 am	148 Woodside, Ashby.
Coffee and Chat	Wed 9 th	10 am	Newlands Farm Cafe, Hilton, Derby DE65 5GQ
Computer	Wed 2 nd	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
	Mon 21 st	2 pm	
Croquet	Fri 4 th	10 am	Ashby Croquet Club, Moira Miners' Welfare Club, Bath Lane, Moira DE12 6BP
	Fri 25 th		
Digital Photography	Thu 3 rd	10 am	Meet at 16 Winchester Way to drive to Donington Park Race Circuit, DE74 2RP
Drawing and painting	Wed 16 th	10 am	At Sue's house
Family History	Wed 9 th	2 pm	2 Marlborough Way
French	Mon 7 th	11 am	Ivanhoe Club, Wilfred Place, Ashby
	Mon 21 st		
	Mon 28 th		
Gardening	Thu 17 th	2 pm	Garden Party at 6 Wood St, Ashby LE65 1EG Booking essential
History	Thu 24 th	2.15 pm	Packington Village Hall. Jane Barnett - 'Memorable Holidays'
Industrial Heritage	Wed 23 rd	10.30 am	A guided tour of Cromford Mill and village
Literature	Tue 8 th	1:30 pm	At Sandra's house
Lunch	Thu 10 th	12 for 12.30 pm	The Black Horse, 2 Top St, Appleby Magna DE12 7AH

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Medium Walks	Mon 14 th	9.45 for 10am start	Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Wood CP, Heather Lane, between Heather and Normanton le Heath, LE67 2TD
Music Appreciation	Wed 2 nd	10 am	Sallie's at Woodside Cottage, 61, Melbourne Road, Newbold. LE67 8JH
Reading	Wed 16 th	2 pm	Annie's house
Recorder	Thu 3 rd Thu 17 th	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Science & Technology	-	-	No meeting in August
Scrabble	Mon 14 th Mon 28 th	10.30 am	The Bulls Head, Ashby
Short Walks	Fri 18 th	10 am	Meet at Snibston Colliery car park.
Social Events			No meeting in August
Supper Club	Thu 24 th	7 for 7.30 pm	The Mill Wheel, Hartshorne DE11 7AS
Walking	Tue 1 st	9.45 for 10 am start	The Tap House, Burton Rd, Ashby NOTE change of start point
	Tues 15 th	9.45 for 10 am start	Bricklayers Arms, Main street, Thornton LE67 1AH
Wine Appreciation	Wed 16 th	7:00 pm	Annie's house

Interest Groups Timetable for early September 2023

Group	Date	Time	Venue
French	Mon 4 th	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club
Bridge	Mon 4 th	7-9 pm	Ivanhoe Social Club. Date TBC
Walking	Tue 5 th	9.45 for 10 am start	TBC
Calligraphy 2	Wed 6 th	10 am	148 Woodside, Ashby
Music Appreciation	Wed 6 th	10 am	TBC
Computer	Wed 6 th	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Arts and Crafts	Thu 7 th	10 am	Packington Village Hall
Digital Photography	Thu 7 th	10 am	Meet at 16 Winchester Way to drive to Donington Park Race Circuit, DE74 2RP
Recorder	Thu 7 th	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal

OUR AGM – 25TH JULY

Our AGM was held this year directly before the July monthly meeting.

The minutes of the last AGM were formally adopted and previously circulated reports from the Chairman and Treasurer were accepted along with the audited accounts.

Tony Smith, Peter Clement and Mike Stow were re-elected and Glenys Morrice, Ronald (Yogi) Godwin and David Spiers were elected unanimously onto the Committee for the first time. Anne Donegan and Avril Wilson have stood down from the Committee. They were thanked for their contribution to Ashby u3a. Kevin Green was unanimously re-appointed as Auditor.

Tony Smith's allotted period as Chairman has come to an end and so a new Chairman, along with other posts on the Committee will be decided in accordance with our Constitution when the Committee next meets. I shall endeavour to let you all know who's who as soon as it is decided.

The following people were elected to serve on the committee:

Tony Smith	Mike Stow
Val Reed	Colin Ellis
Iain Banns	John Pilgrim
Colin Woodland	Ronald 'Yogi' Godwin
Peter Clement	Glenys Morrice
Sharon Woodland	David Spiers
Bill Wilson	

JIM'S TRACTOR RUN

For the first time, we decided to have a stand in Bath Grounds on the Sunday of the Tractor Run. Although the general demographic may have been about 40 years to young to be in a position to join u3a yet, we had quite a bit of interest from parents and grandparents of those enjoying the tractors and side stalls. A goodly number of flyers and leaflets were handed out and even a few Membership forms. So we may get some new members but importantly we raised our presence in Ashby.

NEW GROUPS PROPOSED

Two new groups have been proposed, both are food related!

One is a Breakfast Club and the other is International Cuisine. Very little has been decided about how, when and where these groups might get together, but if you think you might be interested in either of them contact Colin Woodland, our Groups Co-ordinator on interestg@ashbyu3a.co.uk or 01530 413867

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.

JULY'S MONTHLY MEETING

24th July. David Andrews – "100 years of the BBC"

David started by telling us of the series of coincidences which led to him joining the BBC as a reporter.

On his first day at Secondary school he joined the wrong class by mistake but the teacher, head of history, let him stay in his class and instilled a love of history which remains to this day.

He then went on to get a degree in history at York and on completion was looking for a job. He decided to become a teacher and chose which teacher training college to go to by pulling names from a hat. He picked Leicester and became a history teacher at Ansty. After becoming deputy head at the school, he decided that he didn't want to become a desk-bound headmaster so was looking for something else to do.

He visited BBC Radio Leicester as a volunteer and was being shown the ropes when a reporter about to do an outside broadcast fainted minutes before going on air. The producer said to David "you'll have to do it" and so he reported live for a 40 second spot on air. Afterwards the producer said that was pretty good, do you want a full time job? So that was how David became a radio reporter! He has since gone on to combine his loves of history and radio to study the history of the BBC.

He then went on to play us a number of famous radio and (some TV) clips, many of which we remembered if not necessarily first-hand, such as Neville Chamberlain's Declaration of War, the King's Abdication, the Queen's Coronation and lighter topics such as Women's' Hour, Muffin the Mule, Hancock's Half Hour, Roy Plumley and Desert Island Discs, The Doctor Who theme and Tony Blackburn opening Radio 1.

David then explained a little of the earliest history of radio. The first experiments in radio were by Guillermo Marconi in 1897 when he first transmitted a signal to a ship 300 yds of the Isle of Wight.

The British Broadcasting Company was set up in 1922 and first broadcast to the public in 1926. John Reith was the first chairman. Once there was a regular schedule of programs, the BBC had to produce its own magazine, The Radio Times, as newspapers considered radio, especially the news broadcasts to be a competitor to them and hence wouldn't publish their schedules.

The privately-owned British Broadcasting Company was closed down in 1926 and replaced by the British Broadcasting Corporation, a Crown-chartered organisation. Although not officially subject to censorship by the Government, Reith imposed his own censorship of anything he didn't approve of which was broadly in line with the Government.

A couple of notable firsts were The King's Christmas message in 1932 and the Abdication announcement by Edward VIII in 1936.

TV transmissions also started in 1936 to a very limited audience in the home counties but were halted during the war, restarting in 1946. The London Olympics were covered on TV in '48 and the Queen's Coronation in '53. ITV opened in 55. The first commercial shown was for Gibbs SR toothpaste.

The BBC improved picture quality with a switch to 625 lines (rather than 405) in 1964 in preparation for colour TV to start in 67. That same year the Home Service and Light Programme became Radio 4 and 2 respectively and Radio 1 started to rival the illegal pirate radio stations, and BBC Radio Leicester became the first local radio station in Britain. The next radio station to open on the BBC was Radio 5 in 1990.

David gave us many more facts, figures and anecdotes about the BBC, far too many to mention here. A fascinating trip down memory lane for most of us but also an insight into the origins of radio and TV in this country.

GROUP REPORTS

Arts and Crafts

6th July

The Craft group met on Thursday 6 July in the small room in Packington Hall. Once again, we continued to work on our Crystal Art pictures with eight Ladies present. One member started a smaller project as she will not be joining us next month and had not been at the previous meeting when we began the project.

We will continue with the picture at our next meeting on 3 August at 10am

Bridge

The calendar for the Bridge group is all in the air at the moment because the Darts Club at Ivanhoe who they share a room with on alternate days have had all their dates changed beyond their control. As I understand, negotiations are under way. Meanwhile Neil is on holiday until September and Gary Thompson is running the group in the interim.

Calligraphy

11th July

This month's meeting was held at Ann's house. Five members met to explore the theme of Pot-Pourri using a variety of fonts. We all worked away, stopping only for coffee and biscuits.

There will be no meeting in August due to holidays. We will meet again on Tuesday September 12th at Caryl's home to plan our future projects.

Calligraphy 2

5th July

We are making progress with our venture into calligraphy. Our next meeting will be on Wed 2nd Aug, 10am to 12.

Coffee and Chat

12th July

10 of us met at the "Upper Room" in the La Zouch restaurant at 10am on 12 July, up 4 on last month. Conversation was soon in full swing, and no one was left out. Many and varied subjects were covered.

As so often happens with people of "a certain age" the subjects of the youth today, the state of the nation and what we used to do when we were young featured quite a lot. Tea, Coffee and "calorie free" (we wish) Lemon meringue pie were consumed.

It was agreed that we would reconvene at 10am on 9 August at Newlands Farm Cafe, Hilton, Derby DE65 5GQ. Anyone wishing to attend should notify the coordinator at interestg@ashbyu3a.co.uk.

If anyone requires transport or can offer a lift, please let the coordinator know.

Drawing and Painting

19th July

Only two members of the Drawing and Painting group met this month, although their leader Chris was not able to attend. They are next meeting at Sue's house on the 16th Aug. Hopefully more members will be free of obligations and able to attend this month.

Computers

17th July

Today there were 6 helpers and three people came with various problems. Mike, the first to arrive, wanted to access non-Gmail emails from his tablet. We discovered part of his problem was a forgotten password, also there was a problem with his pointer device. All these got resolved. Peter's problem was similar in that he wanted to access emails from his phone and also to stop an annoying news feed. Finally Dorothy wanted to put files onto the cloud from her laptop so she can access them from her tablet.

There was also a general discussion about the problems with different Windows versions.

Croquet

The Croquet Group didn't meet in July for holiday reasons but there will be TWO meetings in August, on the Fridays of the 4th and 25th

Digital Photography Group

6th July

Six of us drove over to Elford Hall, near Tamworth for a very pleasant visit the Walled Gardens there. The Gardens are very large, over 200 yards square, and are laid out in a very regular but pleasing array of beds and zones of many kinds of plants. There are pleasant walks around the outside of the walls with winding paths and dense growths of bushes, plants and arbours which harbour many creatures for tricky photography.

We convened after an hour in the sunshine at the little D.I.Y café in the Gardens. Although nominally a self-service system, with an honesty box, there were two very nice ladies on hand to help. And we were offered cake and then extra biscuits as we sat at leisure around our table on the lawns.

We next meet on 3rd August at Winchester Way to drive to Donington Park Race Circuit..

The Family History Group

12th July

We had six stalwarts today in search of their ancestors.

Mary was looking for her great, great grandfather's Indian Army records and has located his Army Pension information. JD later dug up a website which might help with the general topic.

Jane has been checking trees for herself and a second cousin to make sure that information copied from one to the other was verifiable.

Dora is still well into the Scottish records of her great grandfather's brother's family in the 1800s. There are wills with much wealth in probate, but none has trickled down!

Eileen is far, far back to 1503 and trying to verify connections. This can be difficult as spouses don't seem to be mentioned in the Parish Records. However, she has located a copy of a will from 1639 and will need help to decipher it.

Carolyn wanted an introduction to DNA and its usefulness in Family History. That sparked a general discussion round the table, which was led by JD who is one lesson ahead of the rest of the class!

JD has been tracking the wealth that seemed to have been accrued by his great grandfather, only to find himself diving deeper and deeper into this man's relatives and their part in building large portions of Newcastle in the late 19th Century. From this has emerged a weird side story involving the staffing of great grandfather's school and the intertwined families of the staff.

A very interesting and lively session. We next meet on August 9th.

French

July

The French group continue to have tuition, more recently on the topic of reflexive verbs and their use with both perfect and imperfect tenses. Every opportunity is taken to revise topics previously covered i.e. dates, times, numbers, parts of the body and descriptions of common ailments.

The group is meeting 3 times in Aug, on Monday mornings of the 7th, 21st and 28th.

Industrial Heritage

26th July. Snibston Colliery

Stuart Warburton, former curator of Snibston Discovery centre, and now secretary of Snibston heritage Trust which operates the tours described to us the initial history of Snibston and Coalville.

In the early 1800s mines at Hugglescote, Whitwick and Swannington had difficulty in transporting coal to Leicester and onto the canal network and couldn't compete with the mines in South Derbyshire and Notts which were on the canal network.

William Stenson owner of the Whitwick mine and John Ellis a wealthy weaver approached George Stevenson with a view to building a railway between Swannington and Leicester. Stevenson agreed but put his son Robert in charge. This would become one of the very first locomotive railways in the world and opened in 1825 enabling coal to be sent cheaply to Leicester.

George Stevenson was persuaded to invest in a mine of his own and sunk a shaft in what was then known as Long Lane, close to his new railway. This became Snibston colliery and the area which rapidly became industrialised was by 1833 called Coalville.

Snibston mine was operational by 1833 and closed in 1983 after 150 years of continuous production.

Our tour now continued led by a former Pit Deputy who showed us what the mine was like in its last years. There are two mineshafts and winding gear still standing. One shaft originally had a fire lit at the bottom of it such that the draft from it would take hot air up the shaft which sucked cooler fresh air down the other shaft for ventilation. This second shaft also contained the man-riding lift to get miners in and out of the mine and also coal out. Later, fan-powered ventilation was used.

Scattered around the area are various excavating machines of increasing power, efficiency and danger! It was pointed out to us the hazards faced by miners on a regular basis and how easy it was to lose fingers, toes, hands or even lives. We then toured the remaining buildings where we were shown how simple technology such as tallies (brass tokens) recorded every man who went down the mine and who came out again. Electronic systems were tried but were not as reliable as physical tokens.

It was also explained how they checked for the 3 dangerous gases to be found in mines, CO₂, CO and methane. When mines rescue teams went down the mine after an accident they still carried canaries as they were the most reliable detector of carbon monoxide.

After a visit to the pay-room, we saw the medical room where the nurse would treat all the injuries and ailments of the miners. In the event of an incident down below she and a doctor would don overalls and helmet and go down to treat a miner who may be trapped or unable to be moved, even doing emergency amputations if needed!

Finally we were shown how blasting was done and how different explosives from black powder, through nitro-glycerine to dynamite made the work of extracting coal faster and safer.

A fascinating two hour tour through the recent history of mining which one or two of our members had experienced first-hand.

History

27th July - Dr A Featherstone - 'Victorian Melodramas'

Dr Featherstone provided a highly entertaining and informative piece on the Victorian Melodrama. 38 attended to hear her energetic talk on 'Maidens, Murderers and Monsters.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries it seems that the Melodrama, embedded in a programme of other acts, was almost as popular as Shakespeare. The short, usually three acts, plays were always structured around classical themes in which each stock character (Hero, Heroine, Villain) played out strictly controlled set pieces centred around such themes as 'Virtue Betrayed', 'Injustice Revealed', 'The Mistake That Cost everything' and so on, much as the Commedia dell 'Arte, and ancient Greek Tragedy had explored so well.

It was very important to get the visual background as realistic as possible, and as the century went by some of the sets were marvels of engineering and 3D effects, and even fake fires, complete with real fire engine and horses on stage.

These plays reflected the rapidly changing world around the common people such as advances in technology, medicine, warfare, and the vast population movements from the country into the cities. Latterly the advertising advanced, too, employing techniques borrowed from the new science of photography to produce clever presentations of the subject, such as the transformation scene in Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

Famous actors and actresses stayed in character throughout their career as the later 'star' system was as yet unheard of. Anne showed us several famous actors and the skills that went into their work.

Despite the seemingly plebeian venues, which were the rowdy and crowded Music Halls, the acting was a highly crafted art. Gestures, body language, speech and movement were carefully studied. As each act closed there would be a tableau in which all the actors froze in place for up to a minute, with each actor adopting a pose and expressions which showed the audience exactly what each was thinking and tried to convey all the subtle nuances of that moment.

It was of paramount importance that each character was seen for what they were right from the beginning. The Villain was very obviously 'Villainous' in manner, pose, speech and so on from the moment he stepped on stage, usually accompanied by appropriate music, the Hero very 'Heroic' and the Heroine suitably innocent and wronged. But in all cases GOOD always prevailed in the end; the wronged Maiden was rescued; the falsely imprisoned Hero was found not guilty. And the Villain always, always, got stuffed.

Music was an integral part of this, underlying the character of each actor, and marking the emotional and dramatic movements. The musical accompaniment to the 'Chase' 'Sorrow' 'Entrance of the Villain' and 'Dying Piteously' was standardised, as were gestures, facial expressions, and movements. These were highly structured and very professional set pieces.

It seems that these pieces had relatively short 'runs', as the audience mostly lived quite locally, and the available audience would all have seen the piece in a short space of time.

Anne used many telling images and publicity drawings to illustrate her points and her own presentation was at times fully as dramatic as her subject!

It seems that the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas at the end of the century were not seen as competition, being attended by more wealthy people. In any case, these were political satires, rather than melodramas, so it was a different market anyway.

Altogether a virtuoso performance by Dr Anne, and very entertaining. We now understand just how much went into these productions and how important a part they played in the lives of the Victorians.

Gardening

20th July - The Dower House at Melbourne

Today we went to the Dower House at Melbourne and had a guided tour from the head gardener Holly. It was really colourful with some amazing flowering shrubs and a variety of trees. Holly also gave us a short history of the garden and house.

The garden was in tiers leading down to a stunning lake with heron and ducks to name a few of the water birds. As we wandered around the garden on the guided tour we had an opportunity to discuss plants between ourselves and take the time to really look at them. There were many interesting and varied areas to wonder through. All of our members who attended expressed how much they had enjoyed the visit.

We had six new members attend.

Lunch

13th July – The Otter at Kegworth

This month we visited the Otter on the A6 just outside Kegworth. The pub, which has been recently refurbished, sits on the banks of the River Soar. We were fortunate to have a large table by the window offering views of passing boats. It was one of the few sunny days this month so it was nice to watch the world go by.

We had pre-ordered our food which arrived quite quickly and for all but one of us was very tasty. Unfortunately one persons battered fish contained almost no fish. On mentioning it later the pub apologised and didn't charge for it. The desserts were all tasty but different choices seemed to vary from small to huge for no apparent reason regardless of price. We all had a good time with the usual chat and banter.

Recorder

6th and 20th July

This month with many members away on holiday there were only 6 for each session. We try to play a couple of new pieces each month but also have a few favourites which get played regularly. This month we played some Scottish songs and folk tunes, plus "Tiptoe through the tulips", "The Entertainer", "The Bear Necessities" some pieces by Purcell and "Cantique de Jean Racine" by Gabriel Fauré. We also played "Variations on Greensleeves" which is another favourite.

We hope to have sufficient numbers to meet on our usual days in August, 3rd and 17th, although, if there are only a few of us, we may change this. Whilst Joan is away on holiday during August, Marion will be looking after things.

Scrabble

3rd, 17th and 31st July

The Scrabble group met three times this month. They are continuing to play at the Bulls Head in town. New members are always welcome.

Reading

21st June

5 of us met this month to appraise and further discuss *The Radleys*, the first cross-over (Youth/Adult) fantasy novel by Matt Haig. This novel is about a General Practitioner's abstaining vampire family living in rural England and their struggles with their individual identities.

It was agreed that it wasn't every 'bodies' night-cap read but it made an interesting choice, nevertheless. We delved deeper to discover any of the authors hidden meanings and concurred that all families, generally, have similar problems when bringing up their children. Hopefully with less bloodletting! The issue of protecting one's true identity in differing situations instigated a lively discussion.

This author has been described as one of the most inspirational popular writers on mental health of our age and at least a couple of us would like to read another of his adult offerings.

Our book for August is *The Sea Sisters* by Lucy Clarke. A thrilling and perceptive debut that explores the complex relationship between sisters and loss at its rawest. We will be appraising this at our next meeting at 2pm on Wednesday 16th August. New members always welcome.

Wine Appreciation

19th July

This month Kurt had supplied a selection of rosé wines for us to taste. We started with a Spanish rosado from Rioja. This had a full fruity taste and was quite dark for a rosé. It was made from the Garnacha grape which is one of the two major grapes used to make Rioja Tinto i.e. red Rioja. Everyone liked this a lot and it turned out to be the favourite wine of the evening, despite only costing just a little over £6.

This was followed by a wine from the south of France but not from the famous rosé production area of Provence. This wine was much paler as you would expect from S. France but was much drier than the first wine. Despite allowing it to warm up a little, as it was quite chilled, it didn't have a great deal of flavour but was perfectly drinkable.

Third was a very similar looking wine from Chile. The taste was very similar to the French wine but for some it had a quite pronounced aftertaste which they didn't like at all whilst others found it to be ok.

Lastly came the wine of which we all had high expectations. A Moselle Riesling rosé. Unfortunately it didn't live up to expectations. Whilst it was perfectly drinkable, it didn't seem to taste like a rosé at all, nor did it taste like a typical German Riesling. It tasted like a very generic white wine which whilst pleasant wasn't worth the £11 paid. A great shame.

As a finale, Annie produced a bottle of very old sweet red wine from Hungary which we had been asked to check out by a member who has acquired a quantity of old Hungarian wines and wanted to know if they were still drinkable. The wine was dark brown and tasted nutty, raisiny and very rich. This wasn't to everyone's taste but for those that did like it, we thought it to be delicious. Somewhere between a rich Oloroso sherry and a Port but not fortified like them. A previous bottle that was tried had turned out to be just going over, but this wine was two years older and still in very good condition.

So with all these wines, it just goes to show that you can't always go by the label, the colour or the region. You just have to open the bottle and taste it! I suppose this is why we enjoy wine tasting and trying to learn more about wine.

Music Appreciation

5th July at Brenda's

There were seven members at this month's meeting although Neil had other duties which kept him away until part way through.

Heather started proceedings this time and was the first of many with a summer theme despite the weather being most un-summer like. She had chosen Percy Faith and "Theme from a summer place" a tune we had all forgotten about despite it being quite lovely.

Nev reminded us that Brazilian singer Astrud Gilberto had died the previous week, aged 83. She was most famous for the tune Nev played – "The girl from Ipanema" accompanied by Stan Getz on saxophone.

Sallie then offered us Lang Lang playing the incredibly difficult "La Campanella" by Franz Listz which he played seemingly effortlessly. Astounding!

Janet's first choice was The Platters and "Magic touch". A lovely piece of pure 50s Doo-wop, and then Brendy returned to the summer theme with the inevitable and incomparable Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong with "Summertime"

Mike's choice was somewhat different, the Irish folk band Planxty and "Vicar St Reels". A good jolly tune. Planxty rejuvenated Irish folk music in the 70s and included singer Christy Moore, flautist Matt Malloy who went on to form the Chieftains and Bill Whelan who wrote a little tune called "Riverdance"

Heather's second piece also had a summer theme, the New Seekers with "I'd like to teach the world to sing" which became the Coca Cola advert in 1971. Possibly the world's most famous ad.

Nev chose Bill Wyman's Rhythm Kings with Beverley Skeete singing the old classic "Love letters". Beverley is a very underrated singer. The band's not bad either! Sallie's next piece was Nat King Cole and "Smile". The tune was composed by Charlie Chaplin based on a theme by Puccini. Smooth.

Janet's next tune was the police and "Everything she does is magic". A great 70s tune.

Brenda chose Red Nichols and his orchestra playing the Gershwin standard "I got rhythm" composed in 1928 and made famous by Ethel Merman in the show "Girl Crazy" in 1930.

Neil joined us at this point and leaped in with (Peter Green's) Fleetwood Mac and "Green Manalishi". A classic piece of early English Blues.

As part of his Irish theme, Mike's next piece was "Forgiven but not forgotten" by the Corrs. A group very nearly forgotten themselves but very popular in the 1990s.

Heather next played "If I were a carpenter" by Tim Hardin. The song was made famous by Bobby Darin, but Tim Hardin wrote it, and I think this is the better version.

Nev offered another Bill Wyman/Beverley Skeete song, this time "My handy man". The double-entendre lyrics of this song, which was written in 1928, are very rude if your mind works that way!

Another old tune was Sallie's choice. "16 tons" by Tennessee Ernie Ford about the life of a coalminer was written in 1946 although Ernie Ford's version is from 1955.

More modern was Janet's last choice. The Police singing "De do do do, De da da da". A great song from the 80s.

Brenda's last piece was by Neil Sedaka and the classic "Happy birthday, sweet sixteen" which Neil followed with the most modern tune today "Simple things" by Paulo Nutini recorded in 2009 even though it is a sort of skiffle rhythm. One from Neil's collection of tunes rarely heard on radio.

Mike closed the session with a light-hearted song from the 40s, Phil Harris and "Ain't nobody here but us chickens" originally recorded by Louis Jordan as a jive tune.

Science & Technology

11th July. – ‘A Year at Rutland Water’ by Tim Sexton.

Tim gave a detailed review, lavishly illustrated by his own photos, of his first year as the Recording Officer at Rutland Water. With superb images of wildlife, from otters to microscopic hydra, Tim kept us spellbound with his intimate knowledge of the wide variety of wildlife at this site. With the hindsight of his talk, it is not surprising that it is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the habitat it provides for many birds is of global importance. This largest expanse of inland water in England hosts 70 thousand black headed gulls and over 21 thousand ducks, including mallard, tufted duck, teal, wigeon, pochard, shoveler, shelduck and more! Rarer varieties, such as the smew, pintail, Mediterranean gull, and great white egret were also described. Rutland Water is famed for the success of its Osprey breeding programme and since its start in 1996, 250 osprey chicks have fledged.

Tim's scientific approach was evident in the recording of the location of the 300 bird and bat boxes on site; previously no records were kept regarding their use. He found blue tits used bat boxes and bats used the bird boxes! Ringing of birds and bats is key to tracking their long flight migrations. A pipistrelle bat attacked by a cat in Russia had a ring from Rutland Water. Sand martin banks at the site have been specially designed to allow access to the nesting areas allowing for the ringing of fledgling birds. Tim soon discovered that the fleas that feast on the sand martin's blood also had a liking for the human blood despite protective clothing. This discomfort was nothing compared to that inflicted by some other animals. For example, the bug which crawls up the nostrils of sheep to lay its eggs, the larvae of which crawl towards the brain. Tim was the first to record this at Rutland Water and alert farmers. Another example was the parasitic wasp that injects its egg into a ladybird to protect itself from predators, the larvae then munches on its host's internal tissues before breaking out through the abdomen! Tim had conducted his own experiments to show that the ladybird survives this gory ordeal.

Tim's talk was entertaining, educational and sometimes gory but it was all true and absolutely fascinating. We look forward to a return visit from him in 2024 to learn more about Rutland Water's wildlife.

Kurt Kovach then gave a short talk on events that have happened on this (11th July) in the past.

In 1987 on this day the earth's population reached 5 billion and World Population Day, designed to create awareness of this global crisis, was formed. It's also free Slurpee day. If you can find the right shop in USA, you can claim a free Slurpee.

1801 French astronomer Jean-louis Pons discovered his first comet and US SKYLAB falls out of orbit crashing into earth's atmosphere and disintegrated over Western Australia killing a cow.

Another piece of space debris fell to Earth on 8th January 2014. This was recognised as the first recognisable interstellar meteor by Professor Avi Loeb and his team. It was a basketball sized object travelling at 130,000 mph. It could not have come from within our Solar System because of its speed and trajectory. He was convinced that it was an artefact from an alien world. The debris fell into the ocean at a depth of 1.2 miles off the coast of Papua New Guinea.

Professor Loeb mounted an \$1.5m expedition (backed by the US Government) to recover some of this debris by using powerful magnets to dredge the ocean floor. He recovered 50 metallic beads of size 0.1mm to 1mm. Early analysis has shown they comprise mostly of iron, nickel and some trace elements. This does not match commonly manufactured alloys and previous meteorites.

His view is not shared by the wider scientific community, but he is confident he can prove that this an example of a spacecraft sent from an alien world from outside our solar system.

We also reminded members that there is no meeting in August, but a bat walk has been arranged for Friday 11th August, more details would be sent out by email.

Social events

It was intended to hold a Bowls Evening at Ashby Bowls Club this month but unfortunately it had to be cancelled/postponed due to a shortage members signing up for it, seemingly due to holidays and such. It may be arranged for later in the year.

Also in the planning stage is a possible Archery evening. Keep an eye out for further details.

Supper Club

27th July - The Quorndon Fox

Just seven of us ventured out to Quorn, south of Loughborough, to visit the Fox. Despite rumours of slow service and poor food, we had a very good meal. The pub were completely unfazed when the predicted numbers dropped from 15-20 down to just 7 and seated us in a nice quiet area off the main room. Service was attentive and friendly, unlike a recent occasion elsewhere, although they did forget two drinks, but that was quickly corrected when pointed out.

The menu was the same as the lunch club had had at The Otter two weeks earlier as the two pubs are from the same pub chain. The starters proved popular, the mains likewise. The dessert choices, as at The Otter, strangely varied from small to enormous without any correlation to price, but we all enjoyed them. It was a very pleasant evening and it made a change to be in a quiet room where we could all hear each other and have a good conversation.

Short Walking

21st July. Beacon Hill, led by John D.

Despite an unpromising forecast, five stalwarts decided to brave the conditions and met at the lower car park at the foot of the hill.

After a short briefing on what to expect for those who had not been there before, we set off up the southern side of the park. The path is good and firm, but parts were cut down into by heavy rain, negotiated without problems. We were more at risk from a cyclist hell bent on breaking records as he narrowly missed us. We took in the various exquisite wood carvings on the way and found the climb easy enough, even for the less agile among us. We rested at the picnic area at the top carpark and refreshed ourselves with water. Then, ignoring the cries of "Are we there yet?" and responding to "How much further?" with "Just keep going up until you run out of up" our heartless leader drove the team on to the summit. There we stopped for a photo or two, with one of us all taken by a kind gent with a big thumb... the photo has been cropped to 'lose' the thumb!

We took in the wonderful views all round, resisting the temptation to hop gazelle-like up to the trig point, admired the huge 'face' in profile in the rocks of the summit, and started down the northern track, which is considerably better. There were more carvings to see, some more like gargoyles than not, including the 'Old Man of the Beacon' cut from a 165-year-old giant redwood tree.

Meeting many more people on the path, dogs were patted and talked to. We watched the efforts of a large group of volunteers clearing bracken from the verges and the hinterland, and finally stopped to watch the chainsaw artists at the 'carvery' noisily creating their wonderful works of art. Then we arrived at the coffee shop for the obligatory coffee and cakes. On departing we found that the carparking machine would be unable to accept our cards: only coins!

We had encountered virtually no rain, and a very mild climate, so the walk was very comfortable. However, as we drove home the heavens opened. Were we glad we were in the cars! A very pleasant two and a quarter mile amble in very good company.

Medium Walking

10th July. New Lount Nature Reserve, led by Alison

The group was 10 strong today and we met at the New Lount Nature Reserve in Newbold. Rain was forecast later that morning so we set off sharply through the reserve, then heading north to walk parallel to the A42 towards Worthington. We favoured Worthington Lane rather than the Ivanhoe Way to get back to Newbold and the carpark. Just under 5 miles and we beat the rain.

Longer Walking

18th July. Bakewell, led by Kevin

Despite the wet weather forecast and roadworks in Chesterfield we all arrived to a dry day and on time.

On leaving Bakewell we passed by the cattle market, crossed the Monsal Trail and the local golf course, before beginning our one hour ascent to the ridge of Manners Wood. After a coffee break to catch our breath we continued along the tree lined ridge before coming out in a clearing with lovely views of Chatsworth House. We continued down a wide grassy path into the village of Edensor for lunch, sheltering in the Church porch as the rain was gently falling.

After lunch and a look inside the Church we continued with another climb out of Edensor along an old stoney track before crossing the golf course again and descending back to Bakewell by which time we were all very wet.

4th July. Ashby canal, led by John Pilgrim

Following on from the recent Monthly Meeting talk given by from Geoff Pursglove of the Ashby Canal Association, we linked in a walk of the Canal section still to be restored.

Fourteen of us massed at The Globe Inn at Snarestone and headed down the Ashby Canal towards Measham spotting a koi carp merrily swimming in the Canal and then soon encountering where it is blocked off. We continued walking on top of the in-fill, actually along the Canal bed in the exact route to Measham.

In Measham we diverted from the Canal route to take a look at the markers for the pit heads and onwards to the more modern transport route going under and alongside the A42, meeting some of the shouty dogs that were a feature of the walk. This took us next to the River Mease, being the origin for Measham.

Turning Eastwards we headed for Appleby Magna, crossing a number of stiles and fields, with various cereal crops of wheat, barley and oats, meeting a geophysicist tracking the land, as we neared Snarestone again.

Meeting our final shouty dogs on the fringes of Snarestone, we concluded back at The Globe. Eleven of us then munched our way through our orders for a well earned and convivial end to 8 1/2 miles of walking.