



Newsletter January 2024

Interest Groups Timetable for January 2024

Please note that this timetable could be subject to change at short notice. Please check the website or with the Groups' Leaders for latest news.

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Monthly Meeting	Tue 23 rd	2 pm	Congregational Church, Ashby. Ian Maber "Laughing my way around the world"
Arts and Crafts	Thu 4 th	10 am	Packington Village Hall
Breakfast	Thu 18 th	10 am	Lakeside Bistro, Shortheath Rd, Moira DE12 6BW
Bridge	Mon 8 th Mon 15 th Mon 22 nd Mon 29 th	7-9 pm 11 am – 1 pm TBA TBA	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Calligraphy	Tue 9 th	TBA	Venue TBA. Our Christmas meal.
Calligraphy 2	Wed 3 rd	10 am	At Val's house
Coffee and Chat	Wed 10 th	10 am	Venue TBA
Computer	Wed 3 rd Mon 15 th	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Croquet	-	-	Croquet will restart in the Spring
Digital Photography	Thu 4 th	10 am	16 Winchester Way. Theme 'Christmas and Circles'
Drawing and painting	Wed 17 th	10 am	Venue TBA
Family History	Wed 10 th	2 pm	2 Marlborough Way
Food from Afar	Thu 4 th	6 for 6.30 pm	Venue TBA
French	Mon 8 th Mon 22 nd	11 am	Ivanhoe Club, Wilfred Place, Ashby
Gardening	Thu 18 th	2.10 pm	Packington Village Hall '365 Days of Colour in the Garden'. A talk by Karen Gimson from Radio Leicester and Garden News. Entry £4
History	Thu 25 th	2.15 pm	Packington Village Hall. Lynda Kovach - 'A family portrait'
Industrial Heritage	Wed 24 th	TBA	Nottingham caves

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Literature	Tue 9 th	1:30 pm	Sandra's house
Lunch	Thu 11 th	12 for 12.30pm	Bull's Head, Market Street, Ashby LE65 1AH
Medium Walks	Mon 8 th	9.45 for 10am start	Meet at Ferrers Arms at Lount. Lunch afterwards.
Music Appreciation	Wed 3 rd	10 am	Sallie's at Woodside Cottage, 61 Melbourne Road, Newbold. LE67 8JH
Reading	Wed 17 th	2 pm	Annie's. "Inside the Whale" by Jennie Rooney
Recorder	Thu 4 th Thu 18 th	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Science & Technology	Tue 9 th	2 pm	Packington Village Hall. "A Universe from Scratch" by Julian Onions
Scrabble	Mon 15 th Mon 29 th	10.30 am	The Bulls Head, Ashby
Short Walks	Fri 19 th	10 am	Meet at the Hood Park gates, Ashby
Social Events	Thu 25 th	7 for 7.30 pm	Burns Supper at Willesley Park Golf Club
Supper Club	-	-	No meeting in January
Walking	Tue 5 th	9.45 for 10am start	Meet at The Staff of Life, Ticknall
Wine Appreciation	Wed 17 th	7 pm	Annie's house.

Interest Groups Timetable for early February 2024

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Arts and Crafts	Thu 1 st	10 am	Packington Village Hall
Digital Photography	Thu 1 st	10 am	16 Winchester Way
Recorder	Thu 1 st	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Food from Afar	Thu 1 st	6 for 6.30 pm	TBA
French	Mon 5 th	11 am	Ivanhoe Club, Wilfred Place, Ashby
Walking	Tue 6 th	9.45 for 10 am start	Meet at the Milking Parlour, Southwood House Farm, Staunton, Calke LE65 1RG
Calligraphy	Wed 7 th	TBA	TBA
Music Appreciation	Wed 7 th	10 am	TBA
Computer	Wed 7 th	2 pm	16 Winchester Way

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

As I write this, it is New Year's Day and I thought it might be a good idea to take stock and look both back at the year that is ending and ahead to 2024.

Firstly though, I hope everyone in the u3a had a very good Christmas with those closest to you.

Looking back across 2023 we've had some great success and tried out new things.

To name a few, we have:

- Increased our membership by 20%
- Added several new groups, with yet more being suggested
- Set out our stall at Jim's Tractor Run
- Had our most attended Christmas Lunch with almost 100 members present
- Built relationships with all of the local Town and Parish Councils where our members live
- Connected with all the local village halls and similar venues with a view to using them as meeting places if needed.

Looking forward to 2024 and beyond as we continue to grow, we have exciting plans and events in the mix, such as:

- Attending more Ashby events to get our message out further
- Restarting Ashby u3a day trips and possibly longer outings
- Hopefully, gaining some additional funding via a Town Council Grant and HMRC Gift Aid
- Considering the potential for a summer event
- Looking for volunteers to help tend the South Street garden area - the Town Clerk is keen for us to help, if possible.

All in all there is still much going on and we are broadening our scope.

I wish you all and your families a Happy New Year and hope to see you soon at one of the many u3a groups, or whole membership events.

Cheers

John, Chair Ashby u3a

COMING EVENTS



Burns Night Supper – Thursday 25th January 2024



Thurs 25th January 7 for 7.30pm at Willesley Park Golf Club.

Traditional three course meal of soup, haggis neeps and tatties (veggie haggis or chicken also available) and Cranachan for dessert. 2 bottles of wine per table of 8, plus whisky to toast the haggis.

There will be the Piping in of the Haggis, the Address to the Haggis and various entertainments.

Sale of tickets has now closed as the Golf Club needed to know the numbers attending.

Ashby u3a Group Holiday to Bournemouth

This trip has been cancelled/postponed until at least 2025 as none of the coach companies or hotels that were contacted could provide the requisite number of single rooms that we required.

Val Reed is continuing to talk to the coach companies who think that they will be able to do something next year.

History Group Summer Coach Trip to Bath – Thursday 29th August 2024

Cost £25 pp. Depart 8.30am from the Royal Hotel, return 20.30. No guided tours arranged but plenty of sights to see in the city including the Roman Baths, Georgian architecture, Jane Austen Centre, museums, galleries etc.

At this time, we are merely trying to gauge demand to see if the trip is viable. By expressing interest, you are not committed to take up seats. However, in order to secure a coach, we may need to look for firm bookings and payment in the New Year.

If you are interested, please contact Colin Ellis on membercolin@ashbyu3a.co.uk or phone 01530 272592 or add your name and contact details to the sheets provided at the next Monthly or History Group meetings. If you sign the sheets, IT IS ESSENTIAL that you provide preferably an e-mail address or telephone number. Please write legibly as otherwise we will not be able to contact you.

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.

DECEMBER'S MONTHLY MEETING

Consensio Choir

Before we all gathered to eat mince pies, drink tea or coffee and chat to all our u3a friends, we were royally entertained by the ever excellent Consensio (a subset of Gresley Male Voice Choir) led by their Musical Director Karl Harper.

This year they gave us a celebration of the story of the Birth of Jesus in words and song, with a selection of hymns, carols and songs, some familiar and some less well known.

They followed this with a melody of Christmas pop songs, old and new, finishing with, of course, "White Christmas" to which we were all encouraged to sing along.

The 11 members of the Choir were in fine voice as ever, and gave us a great start to the festive season.

GROUP REPORTS

I would like to thank all the Group Leaders or their deputies who each month send me reports of what their group has been doing for the past month. Without them there would be very little to put in this newsletter.

There are fewer Group Reports than usual this month as many groups either didn't meet at all or they were busy having their group Christmas lunches.

Some groups did meet but understandably it is difficult to get reports in over Christmas as there are so many other things to do that take up our time. And don't I know it!

So thank you again to all of those of you who help me to fill this newsletter every month.

Mike

COMPUTERS

18th December

For our last meeting before Christmas and the New Year we had 8 in attendance.

John P continued helping Sylvia set up her new laptop, installing Excel and looking at embedding spreadsheets in emails.

Mike assisted Sylvia to set up her Google mail account. This was stymied for a while as she had forgotten her password. JD assisted by showing how it can be retrieved from her Apple phone settings.

Peter worked on setting up his VOIP service while JD worked with JH to set up his new Garmin Satnav.

Mince pies (hot!) were served at half time.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all! Ho ho ho!

We meet again on the 3rd of January.

WINE APPRECIATION

20th December

This month we dispensed with the formalities and gathered for a Christmas supper where we all brought some wine that we would like to drink over Christmas and some food to go with it. We didn't bother to score the wines, just appreciated them and discussed how much we liked them, whilst tucking into a lovely spread of food which was topped off with a magnificent cheese board provided by Annie.

We'll be back in business in the New Year with some new wines to try out.

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

7th December

Six sat down today to review photographs on the subject of 'Winter Waters'.

There was a good selection, although some were borrowed from earlier trips, due to inclement weather at times in the month.

This took an hour just in time for the break of a drink and cake and biscuits after which we discussed the ideas for 2024 meetings.

Next time we will look at Photos of the topic of 'Christmas and Circles'.

We next meet on Thursday, January 4th

GARDENING

21st December - 'Secret Santa'

We held our gardening group Christmas meeting at Packington Village Hall this afternoon. Everyone came in good spirits ready to enjoy a lovely buffet, mix with other members, relax and have fun. This year our buffet was provided free of charge due a generous donation from one of our members, who wishes to remain anonymous. It was a lovely gesture and much appreciated. The food was very good. There were unlabelled garden gifts to exchange, guaranteed to surprise the recipient.

There was a raffle of the Christmas table decorations and Christmas music playing in the background. Forty two members attended which was fantastic.

FAMILY HISTORY

13th December

For our last meeting of the year, we had five present.

Mary helped Shirley to locate Parish Records for her ancestors, using FindMyPast, but was unsuccessful in finding the one she was after. The exercise was very valuable in learning her way around the system. She has a very impressive paper tree going back to the late 18th century.

Shirley was logged on to the house internet.

John helped Ana to eliminate an intrusive Profile image which had been placed on her Tree by another subscriber. This was a puzzle because we all believed that it is not possible to edit another tree without permission. John will investigate how this can be possible. Ana copied the image (of a newspaper article about her great uncle) to a folder, then deleted it from her profile.

Anne worked on her very well organised files ready for more adventures. She, too, was logged on to the house internet.

We all enjoyed a good chat about research and our results, and homemade mince pies, and look forward to next year.

We meet again on January 10th, 2024.

Merry Christmas one and all, and a Happy New Year!

MUSIC APPRECIATION

6th December at Mike's

9 members made it round to Mike's house for the last session of the year and we were in a seasonal mood.

Nev got us underway with a piece by the John Wilson Orchestra, who have become regulars at the Proms with their renditions of film music. This piece was a video of a production of Oklahoma and "I'm just a girl who can't say no" sung by Lizzie Connolly. A fun way to start the session.

Dorothy had chosen "Gaudette" by the choir Anuna. This tune was made famous in the early 70's by Steeleye Span. A nice Christmassy feel.

Brenda's first choice was by the lovely late Kirsty McCall and "Here comes that man again"

Sallie brought us an interesting singer, 13yo Malachi Bayoh, who was a finalist on Britain's Got Talent, singing the beautiful "Pie Jesu". A stunning voice.

Mike changed the tempo somewhat with a video of a bluegrass group called Southern Raised and their version of "Orange Blossom Special" with their excellent violinist leading and including bits of "William Tell Overture" and "Eine Kleine Nacht Musik", all played at breakneck speed.

Neil also showed a video, the somewhat different, and very moving, except from "West Wing" featuring the tune of "Little Drummer Boy"

Sid gave us the excellent "Please Read the Letter" by Robert Plant and Alison Krauss. A great duo.

Steve's choice was Kings of Leon playing "Arizona". A new song to many of us, but one to remember.

Sarah had chosen Pat Benatar and "Love is a Battlefield". A classic 80's song.

Nev returned to the 60's with the Beatles "All you Need is Love" video. This was part of the first satellite broadcast, live around the world in 1967.

Dorothy's second choice was Hummel's "Trumpet Concerto" which many would recognise without knowing its name.

Brenda brought us back to Christmas with Harry Belafonte and "Mary's Boy Child" and then Sallie played Mario Lanza and "Drink, Drink" from the Student Prince. Very suitable for Christmas indulgence!

Following the death of Shane McGowan of the Pogues just before Christmas it seemed appropriate to play "Fairytale of New York", but Mike had chosen a version by Christy Moore which is even more moving than the original and finishes with a dedication to Shane.

Neil then played us "Pretty Paper" by Roy Orbison. A true Christmas classic.

Sid's next choice was a video of Justin Haywood and "Wind of Heaven". This is the theme track to the movie of the same name about a war veteran's rehabilitation via wild horses

Steve then gave us another classic, "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm" sung by the inimitable Billie Holiday, which Sarah followed with Celine Dion and "Refuse to Dance"

Mike closed the session with the amazing Chinese pianist Yuja Wang tearing through "Flight of the Bumblebee" in a nearly impossible speed of 1m 40 sec whilst still playing beautifully.

RECORDER

8th and 14th December

On the afternoon of Friday 8th, four members of the recorder group went to Cedar Court, Bretby, a dementia care home, to play Christmas Carols to the residents and staff. They had been expecting other entertainment, but those involved had dropped out at short notice.

We were welcomed in, and, set up our stands in one of the lounges, and began to play. We played a selection of carols, two medleys, a variety of individual carols, and a couple of popular tunes. A few of the residents joined in with some of the songs, and some of them showed their appreciation, which was nice.



We were full of admiration for the staff members who work with the residents with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia: not an easy job. It was nice to think that we might have taken the pressure off them for an hour.

We were even invited back! No date specified!

There were 6 of us (Christmas activities are starting!) on the 14th, and as Christmas is getting close, we played some Christmas carols, including some less common ones (Il est né, Noël Nouvelet). We also played some non-Christmas music, including the Hippopotamus. As usual, we were still playing as 12 o' clock approached, so we rushed through the 2nd Christmas Medley, to finish just in time!

We are looking forward to a very merry Christmas, and to playing again in the New Year. Next meeting is on 4th January.

SOCIAL EVENTS

14th December Christmas Lunch

The Christmas lunch at Willesley Park Golf Club went off very well, despite the club asking us to bring the time forward by half an hour at very short notice. Fortunately everybody seemed to get the message and turn up on time. All 96 of us. That is an all-time record for Ashby u3a and yet another sign of how popular our u3a has become.

There was a slight delay between the starter and main course, but we found out later that the head chef had to be rushed to hospital. We have not heard anymore, but hopefully he is fine now. Despite that everything went pretty well and I hope everyone had a great time. Thank you to Glenys for all the hard work organising it all, and to all the staff at the golf club for putting on the lunch.



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

12th December.- 'My Search for the Snow Leopard' by wildlife photographer Tony Davis

This was our last meeting of the year so we planned to have a main talk about Tony's adventure into Mongolia illustrated by his beautiful images of animals, followed by a Science Quiz (thanks to Lynda Kovach for supplying this) during the break. After struggling with the laptop and with the help of Mike Stow, we were soon on our way to Ulaanbaatar (UB for short) in eastern Mongolia via Moscow and a 2.5 hour flight to Chinggis Khaan airport. Although it was August (2019), conditions were thick snow and freezing temperatures. Accommodation was in traditional circular Mongolian tents, or 'gers', heated by a single solid fuel stove, basic but adequate for survival! Each day started by climbing 2000 feet to scan for signs of the elusive, and extremely well camouflaged, 'ghost cat'. Despite enlisting help from experienced local guides the only sighting was from a trail camera. Meanwhile Tony took stunning images of other less elusive wildlife, gerbils, the cuddly looking Pallas's cat, lizards, hedgehogs, squirrels and many birds, including vultures, eagles and falcons. Eventually, Tony returned home without seeing a live Snow Leopard, and, determined not to be beaten, immediately planned a return trip for early 2020 when temperatures were even lower and a global pandemic was about to threaten all travel plans.

For the return trip, the team travelled 6 hours over frozen wastes to reach the Snow Leopard's likely habitat and even used 'prayer wheels' to bring them success! After a tip-off that a goat had been taken by a wild cat, Tony camped for 5 hours in a tent 'hide' to await the return of the predator. After enduring temperatures of -18C, a Snow Leopard appeared to finish eating its kill; success at last. Another was spotted from the vehicle and gave them a great photo opportunity. All the waiting and hardship had been worth it, the images were truly stunning. It was all going so well... until Covid 19 intruded. A surprise visit from security and medical teams informed Tony that for 6 hours on the internal flight he had sat next to Mongolia's first Covid case. Fortunately all the team tested negative, but he must stay isolated in camp for another 3 weeks. Success had come at a price.

After pictures of frozen steppes, a warm drink and stollen cake were very welcome at the break. The group split into teams for the science quiz of 30 questions, several of which could be answered from information given in our talks during the year. Time to find out who had been paying attention! The scores were generally impressive, but 25 for the winning team was outstanding.

Our next meeting is on Tuesday 9th January 2024 when we welcome back Julian Onions from Nottingham University to talk about galaxies.

The Group's team leaders, Tanya, Lynda, Bill, Kurt and Paul would like to thank everyone for their support during the year and wish them all a Happy Christmas.

Paul McKay.

SHORT WALKING

15th December. Oakthorpe picnic site for a walk to Hicks Lodge.

An overcast day with ground water from previous rain but it was dry on the day. The 5 people set off back to the Donisthorpe road which we crossed and set off to Hicks Lodge - a fairly uneventful walk via the most direct route to the cafe. After coffee we returned taking the longer route around the lake where there were Swans, Coots and I thought there were some Crested Grebes but they spent most of the time we were there under water. We returned to the cars. The distance was 2.43 miles.

MEDIUM WALKING

11th December. Beacon Hill led by Val and Trevor

A small group of walkers met at the lower Beacon Hill Car Park for a 4 and a half mile walk, on a bright sunny morning.

We had planned to leave the wood and walk through the fields, but due to the recent rain, we decided to stay on the hard paths within the wood.

Having reached the top car park we continued onwards on what is the sculpture trail and the avenue of trees, before stopping for a drink below the rocks at the beacon.

After descending we reached the car park and discovered we had only walked 4 miles!!!

LONGER WALKING

5th December. Christmas Walk, led by Kevin

In usual tradition, the morning started with pouring rain as everyone gathered for sausage and bacon cobs at Rydal Gardens at the slightly earlier time of 09.30. Fortunately, the rain stopped, and the sun was just peeping through the cloud as we gathered at Packington car park to begin our walk. It wasn't long before we were presented with the first obstacle of a flooded stile into the first field. Luckily we were able to open gate adjacent to the stile and entered the field and rejoin the footpath towards the other carpark on Measham Road. After several rather soggy fields we passed by the Solar field and Champney Springs and joined what we thought was the relatively dry section of Babelake Lane back to Packington but that was not to be. As we entered Packington we were faced with a flooded road which left us no alternative but to walk through resulting in us all with very wet boots and socks except for our Chairman Mr John Pilgrim who was wearing wellingtons!

Note to everyone for next year wear wellies or bring a boat!

Here is a list of your committee members and how to contact them:

Role	Name	Contact email
Chairman	John Pilgrim	chairman@ashbyu3a.co.uk
Business Secretary	Tony Smith	secretary@ashbyu3a.co.uk
Treasurer	Val Reed	treasurer@ashbyu3a.co.uk
Membership Secretary	Iain Banns	members@ashbyu3a.co.uk
Interest Group Co-ordinator	David Spiers	interestg@ashbyu3a.co.uk
Welfare	Sharon Woodland	welfare@ashbyu3a.co.uk
Speaker seeker	Bill Wilson	speakers@ashbyu3a.co.uk
Communications	Mike Stow	webmaster@ashbyu3a.co.uk
Social Secretary	Glenys Morrice	socials@ashbyu3a.co.uk
Member	Colin Ellis	membercolin@ashbyu3a.co.uk
Member	Yogi Godwin	memberyogi@ashbyu3a.co.uk