



## Newsletter March 2024

### Interest Groups Timetable for March 2024

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

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Monthly Meeting	Tue 26 <sup>th</sup>	2 pm	Congregational Church, Ashby. Alex Leger "Producing Blue Peter"
Arts and Crafts	Thu 7 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	Packington Village Hall
Breakfast	Thu 21 <sup>st</sup>	10 am	Alpaca Café and Farm Shop at Hill Farm, Spring Lane, Packington LE65 1WU
Bridge	Mon 4 <sup>th</sup> Mon 11 <sup>th</sup> Mon 18 <sup>th</sup> Mon 25 <sup>th</sup>	7-9 pm 11 am – 1 pm 7-9 pm 11 am – 1 pm	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Calligraphy	Tue 12 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	At Sue's
Calligraphy 2	Wed 6 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	At Val's house, 28 Windmill Close, LE65 1EQ
Coffee and Chat	Wed 13 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	Lakeside Bistro, Shortheath Rd, Moira DE12 6BW
Computer	Wed 6 <sup>th</sup> Mon 18 <sup>th</sup>	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Croquet	-	-	Croquet will restart in the Spring
Digital Photography	Thu 7 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	16 Winchester Way
Drawing and painting	Wed 20 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	TBA
Family History	Wed 13 <sup>th</sup>	2 pm	2 Marlborough Way
Food from Afar	Thu 7 <sup>th</sup>	6 for 6.30 pm	The Rickshaw, 48 Tamworth Road, Ashby LE65 2PR
French	Mon 4 <sup>th</sup> Mon 18 <sup>th</sup>	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Gardening	Thu 21 <sup>st</sup>	2.10 pm	Packington Village Hall 'The Blackberry Garden' by owner and creator Alison Levey, writer and lecturer. Entry £4
History	Thu 28 <sup>th</sup>	2.15 pm	Packington Village Hall. Adrian Hickson - 'A Family Affair'
Industrial Heritage	Wed 27 <sup>th</sup>	TBA	TBA

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Literature	Tue 12 <sup>th</sup>	1:30 pm	Sandra's house
Lunch	Thu 14 <sup>th</sup>	12 for 12.30pm	The Sump, Newton Rd, Burton-on-Trent DE15 0TT
Medium Walks	Mon 11 <sup>th</sup>	9.45 for 10am start	Meet at Staunton Harold Reservoir, Calke Road, Melbourne DE73 8DL
Music Appreciation	Wed 6 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	Nev's at 26 Homecroft Drive, Packington
Reading	-	-	No meeting this month. See report below
Recorder	Thu 7 <sup>th</sup> Thu 21 <sup>st</sup>	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Rummikub	Mon 4 <sup>th</sup>	2 pm	Betty's house
Science & Technology	Tue 12 <sup>th</sup>	2 pm	Packington Village Hall. Kevin Reynolds 'Pigeons – from the Gods to the Gutter'
Scrabble	Mon 11 <sup>th</sup> Mon 25 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 am	The Bulls Head, Ashby
Short Walks	Fri 15 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	Meet in the Moira Furnace car park by the children's playground
Social Events	-	-	No events this month
Singing for Fun	Fri 22 <sup>nd</sup>	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Supper Club	Thu 28 <sup>th</sup>	7 for 7.30 pm	The Globe, 4 Main St, Snarestone, DE12 7DB
Walking	Tue 5 <sup>th</sup>	9.45 for 10am start	Meet at The Staff of Life, Ticknall
Wine Appreciation	Wed 20 <sup>th</sup>	7 pm	Annie's house.

### Interest Groups Timetable for early April 2024

Group	Date	Time	Venue
French	Mon 1 <sup>st</sup>	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Walking	Tue 2 <sup>nd</sup>	9.45 for 10 am start	TBA
Calligraphy 2	Wed 3 <sup>rd</sup>	10 am	TBA
Music Appreciation	Wed 3 <sup>rd</sup>	10 am	Steve's at 2 Mill Street, Packington LE65 1WL
Computer	Wed 3 <sup>rd</sup>	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Arts and Crafts	Thu 4 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	Packington Village Hall
Digital Photography	Thu 4 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	16 Winchester Way
Recorder	Thu 4 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Food from Afar	Thu 4 <sup>th</sup>	6 for 6.30 pm	TBA

## FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

I believe we are already in meteorological Spring, astronomical Spring is just around the corner, bringing nature to focus on refresh and renewal activity. In our Ashby u3a time-space, this also brings about a refresh and renew mindset, particularly membership renewal!

For those who attended our recent Monthly Meeting, you would have heard about some of our plans for our u3a, namely new activity groups starting up, better equipping ourselves for forthcoming Ashby community events and our first venture into the benefits that social media can bring. All very different opportunities to learn, laugh and live across our u3a.

I'm delighted at the commitment and contribution so many are making to our growing u3a. Longstanding and new members taking on Group Leader roles for Calligraphy 2, Rummikub and Singing for Fun (Val Reed, Betty Vos and Sarah Riley) respectively; Estelle Sandles stepping up as Group Coordinator on our Committee; and Lynda Kovach leading our Facebook endeavours as Administrator.

These build on the great work being undertaken day by day by contributions on the tea rota, leading groups, including arranging fascinating trips, speakers and material and driving our community and governance on the Committee, such as the recent reviews of our policies and Group Leaders Handbook. Thank you all.

Our application for an Ashby Town Council grant was successful, I'm delighted to say and has enabled us to purchase a gazebo and event table to use at local community events. We plan to be at Ashby Steam Rally in June and Jim's Tractor Run in July; with a u3a Showcase event later in the year.

And without stealing Lynda's thunder below, we've launched our Ashby u3a Facebook page at: [facebook.com/ashbyu3a](https://facebook.com/ashbyu3a)

I'm breathless and energised by all of this and hope, sincerely, you are as well.

Happy Springtime!

John Pilgrim, Chair Ashby u3a  
[chair@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:chair@ashbyu3a.co.uk)

## OUR NEW FACEBOOK PAGE

We have a new Facebook Page which can be found at [www.facebook.com/ashbyu3a](https://www.facebook.com/ashbyu3a)

Our Facebook page is an addition to and complements our website and printed publicity. It is an exciting opportunity to communicate and share information - not only with members who already use Facebook - but also with a section of the public who may not be aware of the excellent activities for learning and socialising, which we offer. A prominent "Sign Up" button on the page links directly to our membership application form, making it easy to join u3a.

Group leaders are welcome to publicise details of forthcoming or past events or meetings. If you wish to supply a photo (although photos aren't essential) please ensure that you have the participants' permission.

We can assure you that personal details will not be shared in the posts. The central u3a Branding Centre has an excellent and extensive collection of stock photos which we can draw on.

Our page can be a useful asset in an increasingly digital world. Information and updates are quickly disseminated and available for comment and online discussion, providing us with valuable feedback and potential new members.

If you're a Facebook user, we hope you will take a look, follow the page and help us continue to build on the success of our u3a.

Lynda

## A NEAR-RECORD MEMBERSHIP THIS YEAR

This past year we have had a near record number of members sign up – 328. This is the best we have had since 2019 when we had 331 just before Covid struck. We have also had a great start to the 2024/5 year with many new members joining and many existing members having already renewed for next year. So, unless you have recently joined or rejoined us, this is a good time to remind you all:

**Your membership will be due for renewal at the end of this month.** Renewal forms for 2024/5 are now available on the website or from our membership sec.

Payment by BACS transfer or cheque please, and remember to add your name to the Reference Info for a bank transfer or on the back of a cheque.

The fees have been kept the same as last year despite the various venues which we use having put their charges up, due mainly to the increased cost of electricity and heating.

Hopefully we can sign up even more members in 2024/5 and break our record next year.

## FEBRUARY'S MONTHLY MEETING

### Alan Hiley – The Burton and Ashby Light Railway

After a couple of problems with projectors and microphones, Alan Hiley was able to tell us the fascinating story of the Burton and Ashby light Railway. The railway was in reality a tramway system which opened on July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1906 and closed on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1927. The line ran from Burton town hall to Ashby railway station, with a branch line from Swadlincote to Gresley station. When it was first proposed it was originally opposed by the Midland Railway as it thought that it would take passengers away from its rail service. However when it was realised that it could serve communities that the railway couldn't reach Midland Railway bought out the company and built and operated it themselves. The open-top double-decker trams were electrically powered by overhead wires and the electricity was generated by diesel engines at Swadlincote next to the depot in Midland Rd.

The journey from Burton to Ashby took 64 mins, almost exactly the same time as the #19 bus takes today!

The Midland Railway was absorbed into the LMS in 1923 who continued to operate the trams

Alan showed us many photographs of the day, several with tram crews standing proudly beside their vehicles whilst testing the tram and track before opening and many showing the huge overcrowding that seemed to be allowed when it was busy. The trams could carry 51 passengers but one photo of a Methodist outing in 1910 showed 5 trams each with seemingly 100s onboard, or perhaps they were all standing on the top deck to have their photo taken!

The line had a good safety record except for one incident when a tram lost traction climbing up Bearwood Hill out of Burton on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1919. The tram started to slip back and despite both driver and conductress applying the hand-wound brakes it crashed and overturned at the foot of the hill. Several passengers were injured and the conductress, Lilian Parker died 3 days later and her memorial can still be seen in Newhall cemetery. The driver refused to ever drive again.

The service ended because of competition from the many bus companies which had sprung up in the area which were cheaper and went directly to all the villages and towns nearby. The major bus operator was Midland Red which was also owned by the LMS.

One tram, #14 was sold to the Detroit Dept of Transportation in 1976 where it ran on a tourist line until 2003. It was bought and returned to England and is now running on its own track at Statfold Bard Railway outside Tamworth.

A very interesting talk and photos of a piece of local history.

## NEW GROUPS

I announced last month that we had 4 groups trying to get started. Well 2 of them have succeeded!

### **SINGING FOR FUN – Leader Sarah Riley - [singing@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:singing@ashbyu3a.co.uk)**

The group is being led by Sarah assisted by Yogi Godwin.

They are holding an initial meeting at the Ivanhoe Club on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> March at 11am to decide details of future dates, times and venue, and to get ideas on what people would like to sing.

If you are interested in joining the group contact Sarah at the email above.

### **RUMMIKUB is being led by Betty Vos - [rummikub@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:rummikub@ashbyu3a.co.uk)**

We held our first meeting at Betty's house Mon 26<sup>th</sup> Feb to decide on details of dates, times and venue. The group now has an extra board for up to 6 players, provided by a start-up grant from u3a funds, which was put to good use.

We will meet again on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March at 2pm at Betty's house when further arrangements will be made. Check for road closure notices, which may be in place for Smisby Rd, in order to reach her house.

If you are interested in joining the group please contact Betty at the email above.

### **CANASTA and UKULELE are also still trying to get started.**

If you are interested in joining either of these groups, contact our Group Coordinator, Estelle Sandles at [interestg@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:interestg@ashbyu3a.co.uk) or phone 01530 459858.

## NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

### **ARTS AND CRAFTS – Leader: Sharon Woodland - [artcraft@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:artcraft@ashbyu3a.co.uk) - phone 01530 413867**

#### 1<sup>st</sup> February

The U3A Craft Group met as usual at Packington Hall. Eleven Ladies attended. One of our number was celebrating her birthday so a cake had been brought to go with our tea and coffee.

Once again we were working on our Kumihimo necklaces. On average, we have about 5cm (2 inches) completed. It will take a few more sessions yet to produce the finished article.

Our next meeting will be at 10am on 7<sup>th</sup> March at the Packington Village Hall.

### **BREAKFAST – Leader: Colin Woodland - [breakfast@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:breakfast@ashbyu3a.co.uk) - phone 01530 413867**

#### 15<sup>th</sup> February - Moment in Thyme Cafe, Pass Courtyard, Ashby

Eleven of us assembled at the Moment in Thyme Cafe. We filled the conservatory to capacity but the staff did a superb job of promptly serving up an excellent breakfast. There was a good selection on the menu and the group sampled most things between them.

Our experience was such that we will certainly be returning at some point for another breakfast.

Our next breakfast will be at 10am on 21<sup>st</sup> March at the Alpaca and Antlers Shop and Cafe, Hill Farm, Packington LE65 1WU. Seven people have already signed up to go. Why not join us? The Cafe does not open until 10am, so please be on time.

If you wish to join us, please let Colin Woodland know at [breakfast@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:breakfast@ashbyu3a.co.uk) or sign the sheet at the Monthly Meeting.

If anyone would like to have the fun of arranging these breakfasts, please let Colin Know and he will be pleased to help you take over the role.

**BRIDGE – Leader: Neil Roberts - [bridge@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:bridge@ashbyu3a.co.uk) - phone 01530 455957 or 07804 743471**

The group is meeting at the Ivanhoe Club every Monday in March. On 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> from 7am to 9pm and on 11<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> from 11am to 1pm.

If you are interested and would like to know more please call Neil Roberts, details above.

**CALLIGRAPHY – Leader: Sue Cornell - [calligraphy@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:calligraphy@ashbyu3a.co.uk) - phone 01530 413345**

13th February

An almost complete turnout for our February session. We are still working on speeches or sonnets from William Shakespeare, which we hope to complete next month. Each person seems to have chosen a different font to practice, so there was a discussion about the best pens and nibs appropriate for a particular font. (uncial, gothic italic, upright italic and modern calligraphy font). We showed each other our work so far which shows some impressive progress.

We all agree that it has been a valuable exercise to continue practising a font over a period of time, instead of rushing to produce something every month.

As usual, the tea, coffee, biscuits and chatter helped the morning go so quickly!!

Next meeting on March 12th is at Ann's when hopefully we'll have completed our work on Shakespeare.

**CALLIGRAPHY 2 – Leader: Val Reed - [calligraphy2@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:calligraphy2@ashbyu3a.co.uk) - 01530 564279**

February 7th

We continued with our theme of Gothic Font this month, which we found challenging. We have set ourselves a task of designing a bookmark, with our name and patterns on it.

If there is anyone interested in calligraphy, no experience necessary, we still have spaces.

Next meeting is on the 6th March at Val's house, 28 Windmill Close, LE65 1EQ

**COFFEE AND CHAT – Leader: Colin Woodland - [coffee@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:coffee@ashbyu3a.co.uk) - phone 01530 413867**

14<sup>th</sup> February - Moment in Thyme Cafe, Pass Courtyard, Ashby

Thirteen of us assembled at the Moment in Thyme Cafe, for Coffee and Chat on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

The conservatory was packed to the gunnels (Gunwales if you are a purist). There was no shortage of conversation and coffee and tea was accompanied by toast, teacakes or scones. We got to know a little more about each other and, for some, one cup turned into two.

Our next meeting will be at 10am on 13<sup>th</sup> March at the Lakeside Bistro, Shortheath Road, Moira DE12 6BW Nine people have already indicated they will be there.

If you plan to join us, please let Colin Woodland know ASAP at [coffee@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:coffee@ashbyu3a.co.uk)

**CROQUET – Leader: Rupert Knapton - [croquet@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:croquet@ashbyu3a.co.uk)**

We shall start again in the Spring when the clocks go forward for BST.

**COMPUTERS - Leader: John Howlett - computer@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 01530 461774**

19th February

7 of us met today at Mike's.

We had a visitor from the Walking Group: Steve, not to be confused with our regular Steve! He had an issue about synchronising the calendar on his iPad to the one on his iPhone. John Pilgrim helped out there.

JD was given a tutorial by Mike S on updating the History Group page on the website. This is not as straightforward as the other sites, as it requires adding the text in .csv format.

JD also noted a problem with text created in Open Office conflicting with MS Word. That resulted in a short discussion about that, and the additional problems caused by Apple Pages. All of which are solvable with simple work arounds.

We next meet back at 16 Winchester Way on 6th of March

**DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY - Leader: John Howlett - digphoto@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 01530 461774**

1st February

Seven turned out on a nice bright day to see what the members were able to produce in the way of the topic 'Pairs'. This was a surprisingly difficult theme, approached in different ways by several of the membership.

There followed a discussion about whether to crop an image after being taken, or within the camera (i.e. zooming) and the results, especially the unintended ones when a commission is called for.

There was then a general discussion, initiated by John P, about moving forward the image of Ashby u3a in general, and the Photography Group in particular. This centres (but not exclusively) on the possibility of there being a Facebook Page for our u3a.

Ideas for photographs showcasing both Ashby in general and our u3a's activities were invited for next time.

We meet next on 7th March at Winchester Way.

**DRAWING & PAINTING - Leader:Christine Dogherty - painting@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 01530 411148**

21<sup>st</sup> February

A busy period of activity for the next two months was initiated by drafting the outline for this year's entry in the Ashby Festival Outdoor Gallery exhibition. The projection of the image onto the 8 foot by 4 foot board is arranged for early March and then the dates, for March and early April, to paint the giant board will be agreed.

**FRENCH – Co-ordinator: Tony Smith - french@ashbyu3a.co.uk - 01530 831822**

1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> February

We continue to meet every fortnight at the Ivanhoe club on a Monday morning. We try to keep revising the basics and we practice useful scenarios such as going to a restaurant, getting help if the car breaks down, booking a sightseeing tour etc. We do this by means of role play which makes the sessions more fun.

Next meeting is Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March

**FAMILY HISTORY - Leader: John Dogherty - familyhistory@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 01530 411148**

14th February

Today was a busy day where we welcomed two new members, Rhona and Elizabeth.

Rhona was busy setting up her tree, with help from JD and Mary. Locating and adding great grandparents and children was quite an adventure. A remaining task is to make sure the children actually show up on the Tree.

Elizabeth is well organised with Family Record sheets to guide her through. Today's task was tracing all 16 great great grandparents, some of whom are proving very elusive, mainly by using Scotland's People.

Eileen is tracing the children of an ancestor mentioned in his 17th century will. She reported locating parish records for some, and receiving a photo of her maternal great uncle's family. Always good to get photos!

Ana is still on the trail of relatives with the name Ana. She needs a birth certificate which does not seem to be indexed in Ancestry. She will try a direct search on the GRO website.

Mary is working on people noted on a gravestone, a photo of which was sent to her by her son-in-law's aunt.

Linda and Shirley are working away at their data, although Shirley has been held up a bit by the FindMyPast accounts system.

JD is trying to reconstruct his grandfather's first school in Normacot, Longton. He had partial photos from the archives and has been given further references to school logs and attendance records to follow up.

A very busy and entertaining session. We next meet on Wednesday 13th March.

**FOOD FROM AFAR - Leader: Colin Woodland - food from afar@ashbyu3a.co.uk - 01530 413867**

1st February - Hispania Restaurant, The Mews, Ashby

Eleven of us met at the new Hispania Restaurant in The Mews, Ashby to sample some Spanish cuisine. The food was of excellent quality, well presented and pleasing to the tastebuds. The menu choice was not massive but quite acceptable with some more uncommon dishes such as Octopus and Ox Cheeks along with some more conventional dishes like Sea Bream and Aubergine Lasagne. A number of our group intend to return with family or friends.

We plan to subject our tastebuds to the Bangladeshi aromatic flavours at the Rickshaw, Tamworth Road, Ashby for our next outing on 7<sup>th</sup> March, at 6pm for 6.30. Twelve people have already signed up.

If you wish to attend, please let Colin Woodland know at [food\\_from\\_afar@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:food_from_afar@ashbyu3a.co.uk)

**GARDENING - Leader: Paul Dean - gardening@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 01283 295987**

15<sup>th</sup> February - 'The Plant Hunters'. A talk by Simon Gulliver

Our talk today was given by Simon Gulliver, who is an advisor to over 30 National Trust gardens. He previously worked at Birmingham Botanical gardens, and now lectures at Pershore college.

The theme of his talk was the Plant Hunters who travelled around the world looking for new species of plants. He, himself, has been to Guatemala on a plant finding expedition. It was very interesting to find out where certain plants originated from, and the history of the people who found the different species, bought them back to the UK to propagate them, and introduce them into circulation. A lot of the species names include the name of the explorer.

Simon showed us some super photos and also brought a selection of plants for sale that he had propagated.



22nd February. 'A Course Review' hosted by Yogi

Today was a departure from our normal session attended by 22. This was a Group Planning Session, in which Yogi aimed to elicit the views of the membership on the way forward for the Group.

He organised us into a large circle, then, by way of preamble illuminated the ethos of the group by noting interesting events in history that occurred on this date (22nd February) and which point up his theme- 'Is history about change?' He mentioned several diverse events, such as the birth of Anne of Cleves in 1515, Lech Walesa's momentous formation of Solidarity in 1980, Elephant Appreciation Day and Business Women's day, not to mention, which he didn't, the attempted invasion, by the French, of Fishguard in 1797.

The next step was to divide us into pairs. Yogi wanted us to appreciate the importance of sociability in the group, a feature which many of us Group Leaders find so important in our own groups. Our task was to introduce ourselves to each other. We were to explore each other's lifestyle and tastes. Then we regrouped into 4's, and the members of each pair shared with the other pair information they had each gathered about their partner. These activities point up the necessity of good listening and remembering skill, identifying the strengths and weakness of others rather than of ourselves. This activity is so important in good conversation to avoid it becoming a monologue.

The main event followed, which was to explore what the members wanted from the Group to help shape the programme for 2025 and beyond. This is a summary of Yogi's findings with some post-meeting addenda:

1. There must be academic content, not just social gathering.
2. More visits out, but do we self-drive or hire buses?
3. Speakers should use a microphone so all can hear clearly. There is a large proportion of the membership who have some hearing impairment, and a large group presents acoustic problems for those with gentle voices. A microphone should therefore be purchased to enable hands free operation and which operates with Packington Hall's PA system, with the cost perhaps to be shared with the Gardening and Science & Technology groups. Maybe some guidance in projection and technique could be offered to in-house presenters: this is a skill that does not come naturally.
4. More should be made of our local historic facilities such as Ashby Museum, Measham Museum, Ashby Workhouse, Ivanhoe Baths, local churches etc. The group is too big to visit small buildings, but it would be possible for sub-groups to visit them in leisure time and produce presentations to the whole group for 2-3 sessions. Such a scheme should take account of the fact that not everyone can attend all of a specific series, so thought could be given to making each module self-contained but linked to the others.
5. The Leicester museums could also be visited.
6. The cost of the majority of visits should preferably not exceed £25, but coach trips to venues will inevitably be dearer.
7. If a city trip is being organised, it would be a good idea to have a talk on that location beforehand.
8. The balance between external and in-house speakers is about right.
9. One of the sessions per year could be a social gathering, possibly based on a historic theme, perhaps in the summer.
10. We must be doing things roughly right because attendance numbers are steady and rising. This is my most reassuring conclusion.

**INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE – Leader: Mike Stow - indhist@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 01530 469152**

26<sup>th</sup> February. Coventry Transport Museum

10 members made their way to Coventry, and despite a little difficulty in direction finding from the car park, we all got there safely. Our guide for the morning, Matthew, showed us around the key exhibits explaining how Coventry's industry had evolved from ribbon-making and watch-making through sewing machines, to bicycles, motorbikes and cars. At one time Coventry boasted over 50 car makers, although many would-be entrepreneurs didn't last very long. At its peak in 1960 over 81,000 people in Coventry were employed in motor vehicle and aircraft production. Now only the Chinese owned LEVC remains assembling electric black-cab taxis from Chinese made parts.

One of the most fascinating areas of the museum is the bicycles. From the hobby-horse which had no pedals and was scooted along and the bone-shaker with pedals directly on the front wheel, it is interesting to see the development of the bicycle as people tried sometimes strange designs including the James Starley's famous penny-farthing before his nephew John Starley developed the Rover safety bicycle with two same-sized wheels and chain drive in 1885. It also had the near universal diamond shaped frame we all know.

After the first motor car (technically a 3-wheeled cart) was patented in 1886 by Carl Benz in Germany, car design evolved rapidly. They quickly acquired covered bodies, pneumatic tyres, brakes!, steering wheels instead of tillers, lights and all the modern accoutrements which we take for granted now. Walking round the museum it was amazing to see how fast they developed into something resembling the modern car.

The post-war section gave us all a chance to say 'I had one of those', or my dad or someone in my family did.

Finally the museum houses three land speed record cars, Thrust 2, Thrust SSC and Bloodhound LSR. Actually they are the previous and current record holders and the would-be next holder. All designed and built by the same British team they have held the LSR since 1983. Thrust 2 achieved 633mph and Thrust SSC 763mph, breaking the sound barrier in the process, the only land vehicle ever to do so.

The museum houses over 240 cars, 100 motorbikes and 200 bicycles and is a fascinating place to spend a few hours if you have any interest in transport. We barely had time to have more than a glimpse of it.

**LITERATURE – Leader: Sandra Harris - literature@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 01530 416653**

The literature Group gets together once a month to discuss books which they have read in the weeks before. They discuss the plot, the style of writing, the start and finish of the storyline, the meaning (if any) of the story and of course whether they liked it or not. Discussions can be quite lively. A full list of the books we are going to read this year are on our webpage.

**READING – Leader: Annie Scotney - reading@ashbyu3a.co.uk**

The reading group had a good start but attendance gradually declined to the point that the group isn't really viable in its present form. To try and help me understand what members wanted from the group I contacted all 23 people who had originally expressed an interest in the group with suggestion for how we could move forward and asking for feedback. 2 people replied that they were still interested in the group, 4 people said they were no longer interested and I haven't heard from the other people yet.

So, I have decided to suspend meeting for a few months in the hope that there will be rejuvenated interested and the group can start up again. If anyone would like details of the group or just a chat about what the aims and objectives of the group are, feel free to contact me.

The next scheduled meeting will be on 15th May at 2pm at my house. The book for discussion is 'A Man Called Ove' by Fredrick Backman.

Annie

7<sup>th</sup> February

This month we were at Sid's house.

Steve started proceedings with a somewhat forgotten band of the 70's – Amen Corner with "Paradise is Twice as Nice"

Dorothy immediately switched style with a recording of a street busker, Accordionist Pavel Runov playing Rachmaninov's "La Polka Italiano". It brought back memories of warm days abroad.

Sid chose Enya and "It's in The Rain" a lesser-known song in her usual multi-tracked style.

Heather played two tracks together as they were both short. Buddy Holly "That'll be the Day" and "Rave on". Classic rock n roll.

Sallie's first offering was Berlin Philharmonic playing the gorgeous 1<sup>st</sup> Movement of Tchaikovsky's "Piano Concerto". Stunning stuff.

Equally stunning, but very different was Ella Fitzgerald's "Stormy Weather" chosen by Margaret while Sarah had chosen Katie Melua "Crawling Up a Hill" from her debut album of 2003.

Mike had chosen Caro Emerald and "That Man". A song from the Dutch electro-swing genre. A modern version of Very foot tapping.

Nev offered Janis Ian and her classic "At 17". Probably her most famous song about teenage angst.

Neil made it 5 female singers in a row when he played Melanie Safka and "Centre of The Circle". Melanie is most famous for "Brand New Key" spoofed by the Worzels as "Brand New Combine Harvester"

Steve ended the run of women singers with the silken voice of Nat King Cole and "On The Street Where You Live"

Dorothy had chosen Stephanie Lawrence and "Tell Me It's Not True" from Blood Brothers by Willy Russell and Sid followed that with Barry Manilow and "Mandy"

Heather's next choice was James Last playing Ravel's "Bolero". Very apt as it was Torvill & Dean's 40 anniversary of winning Gold at Sarajevo just one week later.

Sallie played us Paul Robeson and "Old Man River". That man had the deepest bass voice!

Margaret followed that with the gravel-voiced Louis Armstrong and "Just One of Those Things"

Sarah chose to follow that with Paloma Faith and "Streets of Glory" from her 2<sup>nd</sup> album.

Mike had chosen The Hollies and "The Air That I Breathe" which was their last big UK hit in 1974 which made #2 but they never had another song make it into the top twenty.

Another little known group - The Beatles and "I Saw Her Standing There" was chosen by Nev, whilst Neil closed the session with Paul Young and "Everything Must Change". Paul's career was cut short when he developed throat problems.

Another good listening session with several lesser known songs as well as the famous ones.

Next month we meet at Nev's house on the 6<sup>th</sup>.

**LUNCH – Leaders: Colin and Sharon Woodland - luncheon@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 01530 413867**

**8<sup>th</sup> February – The Greyhound Inn, Boundary**

Twenty six people booked to have lunch at the Greyhound Inn at Boundary 8th February 2024. Unfortunately, only 21 turned up, leaving 5 empty seats. Nevertheless, those who did appear enjoyed a fine lunch. Most partook of the sumptuous carvery that included a complimentary pudding. For those who wished to decline the carvery, there were plenty of alternative choices on their menu.

The next lunch will be on 14<sup>th</sup> March at the Sump, Newton Road, Burton on Trent DE15 0TT at 12pm for 12.30. Seventeen people have already indicated they will be there but there is plenty of room for more.

If you wish to join us, please let Colin Woodland know ASAP at luncheon@ashbyu3a.co.uk.

**RECORDER - Leader: Joan Gibson - recorder@ashbyu3a.co.uk**

**1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> February**

We meet twice each month (first and third Thursdays), each is a two hour session. There were eight of us at the first session in February and we played the Handel Album from the Water Music, Jesu Joy of Mans Desiring, Variations on Greensleeves, Two Bulgarian Folk Songs, Nellie The Elephant, The Bare Necessities, and many others.

At the second session there were five of us plus a lady who sat and listened to us playing, as she is thinking of learning the recorder and joining our group. Our bass recorder player was unable to attend this session so we played music arranged for three parts (descant, treble and tenor). The music we played included traditional, spirituals and more modern tunes. On some of the pieces we swapped the parts around so there was a descant and a tenor playing the tenor part. This seemed to balance the music very well and was fun to do.

**SCRABBLE - Leader: Sylvia Tuck - scrabble@ashbyu3a.co.uk**

We've had a mixed contingent over the last couple of meetings, with a full house of 16 one week, but fewer this time. Some people were on holiday, and half term intervened, so grandparents tend to be otherwise occupied. Recruitment is continuing and members have been reminded to bring membership cards along next time to ascertain renewals. People come along when they are able, which suits this group perfectly, as we can mix and match according to numbers.

Don't forget, we meet fortnightly at the Bull's Head, Market St, 10.30 on a Monday. Send me a message or email if you'd like to try us out. It's fun and sociable.

**SUPPER CLUB – Co-ordinators: Colin Ellis and Mike Stow - supper@ashbyu3a.co.uk**

**22<sup>nd</sup> February -Staff of Life in Ticknall.**

Our first supper club outing of the year took 11 of us to the ever popular Staff of Life. For once we didn't have to pre-order our food so we could chose what we fancied to eat on the day. Service was well organised with drinks brought to the table and added to each persons named tab along with our food choices, so that payment at the end of the evening was completely painless. If only other venues could be so organised!

The food was all cooked in house and was well received and enjoyed by almost everyone. Portions were generous as well as tasty. With just 11 people across two tables, conversation was easier than it often can be and everyone seemed to have a good time.

Next month we will be at The Globe in Snarestone on March 28<sup>th</sup>. Usual 7 for 7.30. If you want to join us, email Colin or Mike at the address above.

**SOCIAL EVENTS - Contact: Glenys Morrice - socials@ashbyu3a.co.uk**

**BOWLS EVENING**

There are no Social Events planned for this month, but we are working on having another Bowls Evening at Ashby Bowls Club provisionally on Friday May 3<sup>rd</sup>. If you are interested in coming along, please contact Glenys at the address above. A sign-up sheet will also be available at the Monthly Meetings.

**SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY - Tanya Dempster, Paul McKay, Bill Devitt, Kurt and Lynda Kovach - science@ashbyu3a.co.uk**

**13<sup>th</sup> February. 'Science, Climate and Politics' by Professor Geoffrey Boulton**

Our speaker on 'Science, Climate and Politics' was Professor Geoffrey Boulton, Fellow of the Royal Society, a distinguished and internationally renowned expert on glaciers and their effect on the Earth's climate. Having been involved in climate science since the mid-60s with considerable experience of working with governments, he reached the conclusion that there are natural tensions between science and politics because of their differing focus – long term versus short term.

The first step was to consider the conflict between knowledge and beliefs. Beliefs are difficult to change, whereas scientific reasoning makes claims based upon evidence which is subject to peer scrutiny. He referred to the 'climate stand off', looking at the similarities and differences between alarmists and deniers. The workings of the Earth's climate engine were clearly demonstrated in a series of slides showing how surplus energy is transferred from the tropics to the polar regions.

Photos and data from research in the polar regions illustrated how and why the climate changes. Ice core samples were a valuable tool in determining the fluctuating salinity (resulting in the rising or falling sea level) of the oceans and also analysis of the composition of the air. Ocean temperatures are the highest on record and global temperatures remain at record levels – yet no significant action has been taken! The Professor explained how the Tipping Points interact with each other in ways that can't always be predicted. The anthroposphere (the coupled earth system) comprises the biosphere, atmosphere, hydrosphere and lithosphere. The Greenland ice sheet is certain to disappear with a resulting rise in sea levels. Why do we fail to act? ? Amongst other things, down to populist politics, credibility, lack of imagination, 195 governments in the world with different priorities? Finally Geoffrey referred us to the website of Greg Craven and a quotation from The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy 'So long, and thanks for all the fish'. The following lively discussion covered many relevant issues, including carbon capture and population.

Paul then gave a short presentation of videos taken over the last year by his garden trailcam. It was set to activate at night only, using infrared light to capture the nocturnal activities of hedgehogs, badgers and foxes. For these animals to access the garden from adjoining fields needs only a small gap (100mm x 100mm) in a fence or hedge and the absence of this in modern fences accounts partly for the sharp decline of hedgehogs in gardens. Although now in hibernation, hedgehogs were by far the most regular visitors to my garden, showing their eating, climbing and even mating habits. Their well-known defence tactic of curling into a spikey ball was demonstrated by the approach of inquisitive badgers and foxes. Hedgehogs' diet includes snails and slugs, not welcome in most gardens, so why not put out some food scraps and invest in a trailcam instead of slug pellets?

Kevin Reynolds will speak at our next meeting on 12th March 'Pigeons – from the Gods to the Gutter. Dove of peace or rat with wings?' A look at our complex relationship with, and perceptions of, this remarkable bird throughout history.

## **WINE APPRECIATION - Leader: Annie Scotney - wine@ashbyu3a.co.uk**

21<sup>st</sup> February

Annie had collected together a selection of 5 wines reputedly 'The Best Wines in the Supermarkets 2024' as chosen by writer Ned Halley.

We started with a Tesco Finest Soave Superior which proved very acceptable to all and it scored 8.7 out of 10. Very good value at £8.25 but a bargain at present with a 25% off offer.

Next was a Chilean Chardonnay also from Tesco, almost as nice and much the same price but not a typical Chardonnay taste with a taste of lime, oak and less creamy than the Soave. A delicious food wine. It scored 8

On to the Reds.

We started with Mimo Moutinho Lisbon, a blended wine from Aldi at £6.29. a very smooth, gluggable wine that would go well with tomato based foods. It scored 7.6

Next was a Montepulciano d'Abruzzo from Morrisons. After the other wines, we found this rather underwhelming, with no depth of flavour or character. It only scored 6.5

Last of the 5 was a rather expensive 2016 Rioja Gran Reserva El Duque de Miralta from M&S priced at £16. A wine for a special occasion perhaps.

We all agreed it was worth it as it was delicious. Almost everyone liked it a lot, some thought it exceptional and scored it 10/10. 'A proper wine' said one. Overall it scored 9.2

A good evening of tasting mostly very good wines. Overall Mr Halley had made some very good recommendations.

## **SHORT WALKS - Leader: John Howlett - ShortWalk@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 01530 461774**

16th February. Staunton Harold lower car park for a walk to see snowdrops.

Eleven intrepid walkers set off from the lower car park at Staunton Harold, the weather was sunny and dry. We walked along the road leading from the entrance near the Ferrers Arms. The traffic was an inconvenience but after a shortish distance we passed through a gate onto a track taking us up to the entrance gate. This track was very wet and very muddy.

We stopped for a group photo and stopped again when we got to the gate as here was a sizeable display of snowdrops. These are not as impressive as Dimminsdale but easier to walk to. We then walked back along the road seeing small clumps of snowdrops on the way.

We left the road when we reached the track across the lake from the house. As we left the road we watched a motorbike being filmed by a car following it. The car had a long pole attached to the roof and there were four people inside presumably the driver, camera man, sound recordist and the director. We never found out what it was for.

We continued along the track which was relatively dry and mud free, to the private road from the Melbourne entrance and hence to the Ferrers centre where we had cake and drinks. Someone had a pink chocolate drink. After a rest we returned to the car park via the path when we noticed a large display of snowdrops in the hall grounds. The walk was about 2 and 1/3 miles.

**MEDIUM WALKS - Co-ordinator: Alison Thompson - mediumwalk@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 07930 557432**

12th February. Moira Furnace, led by Alison

13 of us (including 2 visitors) set off a lovely bright morning. There was a definite feel of spring in the air. Initially, the walk was along the old railway track to Spring Cottage and beyond to Swainspark Wood. There was a slight deviation from the planned route in the wood (which is a nice way of saying that the leader took a wrong turn!!) but we were soon back on track to Albert Village Lake, where our next piece of excitement took place. Two of our party, inadvertently, branched off on their own but were soon relocated and all arrived safely back at the car park via Conkers and the canal tow path. The walk lasted about 2.30 hrs and was a distance of about 6 - 6.5 miles.

**LONGER WALKS - Leader: Kevin Green - walks@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 07470 227536**

6th February. From the Milking Parlour, led by Val and Trev

On a day where rain was expected by 12 o'clock a hardy band of 15 walkers turned up to the start from The Milking Parlour at Tollgate Brewery, We headed off towards the distant ridge of hills just as the rain started. Luckily for us all it was just a shower. Having climbed to the top near Pistern Hill Farm we crossed the Ashby road and into a wooded track eventually coming back out on to the road again where we walked through a very pretty garden and beside the house to cross a small stream and back into woods for our coffee stop. We then crossed a couple of very sticky muddy fields, before crossing the Ashby road to meet a footpath taking us to the tramway path at Calke Park. Passing Calke Explore and heading to Hoggs Corner and then down the track back to the brewery, where we enjoyed a pint and a pizza

20th February. From Sharlow, led by Tony and Malcolm

13 hardy walkers met at the New Inn Shardlow on Tuesday 20th February. The morning started well as the pub opened up so that we could use their facilities and pre-order our lunch. We set off down the lane and into Great Wilne until we went over the fields to the bridge over the River Derwent. We then took the Midshires Way towards Breaston but the fields leading into the village were very saturated and flooding was rife. Leaving Breaston on the Sawley Rd we again picked up the footpath which crossed several more fields which made the going very difficult in places.

However when we reached the top of Wilne Lane the last 2 miles of the walk were dry underfoot partly due to a management decision to bypass the intended route along the river bank and down the canal. A very welcome lunch was taken in the pub where we were joined by Steve and Bob as well.

## WELFARE

Sharon Woodland, our Welfare person, can be contacted at [welfare@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto: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 some shopping or prescriptions, having a chat or just sending a card.

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

<b>Role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Contact email</b>
Chairman	John Pilgrim	<a href="mailto:chairman@ashbyu3a.co.uk">chairman@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>
Business Secretary	Tony Smith	<a href="mailto:secretary@ashbyu3a.co.uk">secretary@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>
Treasurer	Val Reed	<a href="mailto:treasurer@ashbyu3a.co.uk">treasurer@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>
Membership Secretary	Iain Banns	<a href="mailto:members@ashbyu3a.co.uk">members@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>
Interest Group Co-ordinator	Estelle Sandles	<a href="mailto:interestg@ashbyu3a.co.uk">interestg@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>
Welfare	Sharon Woodland	<a href="mailto:welfare@ashbyu3a.co.uk">welfare@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>
Speaker seeker	Bill Wilson	<a href="mailto:speakers@ashbyu3a.co.uk">speakers@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>
Communications	Mike Stow	<a href="mailto:webmaster@ashbyu3a.co.uk">webmaster@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>
Social Secretary	Glenys Morrice	<a href="mailto:socials@ashbyu3a.co.uk">socials@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>
Member	Colin Ellis	<a href="mailto:membercolin@ashbyu3a.co.uk">membercolin@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>
Member	Yogi Godwin	<a href="mailto:membersyogi@ashbyu3a.co.uk">membersyogi@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>