



## Newsletter April 2024

### Interest Groups Timetable for April 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 23 <sup>rd</sup>	2 pm	Congregational Church, Ashby. Glynis Myall and a talk about the charity Canine Partners
Arts and Crafts	Thu 4 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	Packington Village Hall
Breakfast	Thu 18 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	TBC
Bridge	Mon 8 <sup>th</sup> Mon 15 <sup>th</sup> Mon 22 <sup>nd</sup>	7-9 pm 11am – 1.30 7-9 pm	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Calligraphy	Tue 9 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	At Jenny's
Calligraphy 2	Wed 3 <sup>rd</sup>	10 am	At Val's
Coffee and Chat	Wed 10 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	TBC
Computer	Wed 3 <sup>rd</sup> Mon 15 <sup>th</sup>	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Croquet	Fri 19 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	Moira Miners Welfare
Digital Photography	Thu 4 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	16 Winchester Way
Drawing and painting	Wed 17 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	TBA
Family History	Wed 10 <sup>th</sup>	2 pm	2 Marlborough Way
Food from Afar	Thu 4 <sup>th</sup>	6 for 6.30 pm	Ask Italian, 3 Derby Road, Ashby LE65 2HF
French	Mon 1 <sup>st</sup> Mon 15 <sup>th</sup>	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Gardening	Thu 18 <sup>th</sup>	12 noon	SELF-DRIVE to Meynell Langley Gardens, Kirk Langley DE6 4NT Arrive for 12 noon. Tea rooms available and food to be pre-ordered in advance if required. Entry £5 inc. tour behind the scenes of the nursery
History	Thu 25 <sup>th</sup>	2.15 pm	Packington Village Hall. Topic TBC
Industrial Heritage	Wed 24 <sup>th</sup>	TBA	Factory tour of Morgan Cars. Entry £32.50
Literature	Tue 9 <sup>th</sup>	1:30 pm	Sandra's house

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Lunch	Thu 11 <sup>th</sup>	12 for 12.30	The Gate Inn, Osbaston Hollow CV13 0HP
Medium Walks	Mon 8 <sup>th</sup>	9.45 for 10am start	Meet at Swan pub in Main Street, Milton DE65 6EF
Music Appreciation	Wed 3 <sup>rd</sup>	10 am	Mike's at 91 Woodside LE65 2NU
Reading	-	-	No meeting this month.
Recorder	Thu 4 <sup>th</sup> Thu 18 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Rummikub	Tue 9 <sup>th</sup>	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Science & Technology	Tue 9 <sup>th</sup>	2 pm	Packington Village Hall. Jane Barnes 'Tales from a Dairy Farmers Wife'
Scrabble	Mon 8 <sup>th</sup> Mon 22 <sup>nd</sup>	10.30 am	The Bulls Head, Ashby
Short Walks	Fri 19 <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	-	-	Our first meeting will be in May, see below
Supper Club	Thu 25 <sup>th</sup>	7 for 7.30 pm	The Bulls Head, Wilson
Walking	Tue 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tue 16 <sup>th</sup>	9.45 for 10am start 9.45 for 10am start	Meet at the Bulls Head, 78 Main Street, East Leake LE12 6PG Meet at the Barley Mow, Milford, Staffs ST17 0UW.
Wine Appreciation	-	-	No meeting this month

### Interest Groups Timetable for early May 2024

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Calligraphy 2	Wed 1 <sup>st</sup>	10 am	At Val's
Music Appreciation	Wed 1 <sup>st</sup>	10 am	Steve's at 2 Mill Street, Packington LE65 1WL
Computer	Wed 1 <sup>st</sup>	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Digital Photography	Thu 2 <sup>nd</sup>	10 am	16 Winchester Way
Arts & Crafts	Thu 2 <sup>nd</sup>	10 am	Packington Village Hall
Recorder	Thu 2 <sup>nd</sup>	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Food from Afar	Thu 2 <sup>nd</sup>	6 for 6.30 pm	TBA
Singing for fun	Fri 3 <sup>rd</sup>	2 pm	Ashby Library
Scrabble	Mon 6 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 am	The Bulls Head, Ashby
Bridge	Mon 6 <sup>th</sup>	TBA	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Walking	Tue 7 <sup>th</sup>	TBA	TBA

## OUR NEW FACEBOOK PAGE

Ashby u3a Facebook page is now up and running. So far details of some group meetings and outings have been publicised successfully.

If you would like your group meeting to feature on our FB page, group leaders should send their text (and any accompanying graphic or photo - entirely optional) to [facebookmods@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:facebookmods@ashbyu3a.co.uk).

Any resulting enquiries from non-members will be referred back to the appropriate group leader via our Ashby u3a website.

## YOUR MEMBERSHIP IS NOW DUE FOR RENEWAL

**Your membership for 2023/4 has now run out as of March 31<sup>st</sup>.**

As I write this 232 people have renewed their membership or are new members this year. That included nearly 70 people who renewed or joined at our monthly meeting last Tuesday. Well done to Iain and his team for coping with the huge rush.

Thank you for renewing, and welcome if you are new to us.

However that is only about 2/3 of last year's membership. The rest are yet to renew. If you are one of those, can I please ask you to renew as soon as possible.

**Renewal forms for 2024/5 are 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 as many of you as last year or hopefully with more new recruits in 2024/5 we will have even more members this year.

## 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.

## MARCH'S MONTHLY MEETING

### Alex Leger – Tales of Blue Peter

Alex Leger spent a record 36 years as a producer and director on Blue Peter before retiring in 2011. He told us many stories of his four decades on the renowned children's TV show.

Alex was studying Industrial Engineering at Loughborough University when he thought about joining the BBC. Realising that his engineering degree wouldn't get him the producer's job that he wanted he joined the Army instead but retired from that aged 24. Hoping that his management skills learnt in the army would help, he applied for a job as an assistant production trainee at the BBC only to find out that he succeeded because his mother's reputation as a producer got him the job. As he pointed out, nepotism was still rife then.

He started on a 6 month posting with Blue Peter working with the legendary Biddy Baxter who offered him a full time job as Assistant Producer at the end of it, and so his career on Blue Peter was started.

Much of the show went out live interspersed with film clips shot outside. Alex helped produce 100 films in his first 3 years!

His most famous film was that of John Noakes climbing Nelson's Column to help clean it. The workmen actually doing the job weren't interested in the BBC filming them until John Noakes name was mentioned and then they were more than happy to meet and work with him. Modern Health and Safety rules didn't apply then so John was sent up a 170 ft ladder to the top of the column without any safety equipment, ropes or even a hard hat. Getting on to Nelson's plinth involved climbing the last part on an outward leaning ladder and he still wasn't roped on! Having done it, the sound engineer said that John would have to do it again as he swore on camera the first time! Hats off too to the cameraman who climbed up there first by the same route, carrying his camera.



John Noakes climbing Nelson's Column. Notice the angle of the ladders

Alex also showed us the famous clip of Lulu, the baby elephant, that nervously relieved itself on the studio floor whilst John Noakes, Peter Purves and Valerie Singleton tried to control it.

We were treated to many other anecdotes including filming lava flow on Mt Etna where the presenter was standing so close to the lava that his skin was turning bright red and another where Alex himself was filming gorillas in Uganda from just a few feet away.

On another occasion he was receiving a site in the Soloman Islands when the little boat he and two others were in got caught in a violent lightning squall just as their engine packed up. By the time the engine was restarted it was nightfall and they could only see one light ashore several miles away.

Shortly after they eventually got back, lightning knocked out the island's power supply for 24hrs including the single light they had used to navigate home. If it had gone out earlier they might never have got back.

This was a fascinating look back at moments from our childhood which we all remembered but this time seen from the other side of the camera.

## NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

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

7<sup>th</sup> March

The U3A Craft Group met as usual at Packington Hall. A report will follow shortly on the website.

Our next meeting will be at 10am on 4<sup>th</sup> April at the Packington Village Hall.

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

21<sup>st</sup> March at the Alpaca and Antlers Shop and Cafe, Hill Farm, Packington

Colin is away at the moment. A report will follow on the website shortly.

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 April. On the 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> from 7pm to 9pm and on 15<sup>th</sup> from 11am to 1.30pm.

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**

12th March

Four of us met to show our finished work on Shakespeare and we were duly impressed. It was interesting to see that we had chosen different fonts and to recognise how much we had improved.

The subject of our next project is the Modern Olympics, whether it's the oath that athletes take or to do with the fairly recent history of the Olympic movement.

Next meeting is Tuesday April 9th at Gill's.

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

March

The group didn't meet this month as, with members away, there weren't enough to make it worthwhile.

Next meeting is on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 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**

13<sup>th</sup> March - Lakeside Bistro

The group met for their coffee and chat at Lakeside. A popular venue for the group. A report will follow shortly.

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

The croquet lawns are now booked for the first meeting of the year. This will be on Friday 19th April starting at 10 am at Moira Miners Welfare.

New members for this group are always welcome. Further details available by contacting Rupert Knapton at [rupertknapton@gmail.com](mailto:rupertknapton@gmail.com)

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

**18th March**

A good turnout of 5 today yielded some useful conversations.

We talked about the different types of word processing programmes and their differences.

It has been suggested we might offer courses on aspects of computing. There is a problem here that once started, if the course covers more than one session, a newcomer might not be able to join in. More thought is needed for what could be a good idea.

Steve was concerned that a Windows Update had concealed/deleted his battery power indicator. He managed to reinstate it after a struggle.

JD reported a curious failure of a friend's mouse. It stopped working, but the touchpad on the laptop also stopped. Moving the mouse cable to a different USB socket solved that one, but the reason for the fault remains obscure.

Richard worked with Peter on setting up multiple tabs for word documents.

We meet again on Wednesday 3rd April.

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

**7<sup>th</sup> March**

Today 8 of us looked at photos that might be suitable for the 'Banner' or Profile picture of the Ashby u3a Facebook page, or for posting as examples of group activities.

Additional shots of Ashby and its surroundings will be welcomed by our Webmaster, Mike

Next time, on 4th April, we will be looking at photos on the subject of Easter and/or Spring.

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

**March**

During March the group has been busy working on creating their exhibit for the upcoming Ashby Outdoor Art Gallery.

The next meeting will be on April 17th (TBC).

**FOOD FROM AFAR - Leader: Colin Woodland - food\_from\_afar@ashbyu3a.co.uk - 01530 413867**

**7<sup>th</sup> March – The Rickshaw, Ashby**

The group were having their first curry night as a group, or more correctly, to taste Bangladeshi cuisine at the Rickshaw on the Tamworth Rd. A report will follow on the website later.

Next month they are visiting Ask Italian in Derby Rd on 4<sup>th</sup> April.

If you wish to attend, please let Colin Woodland know ASAP at food\_from\_afar@ashbyu3a.co.uk

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

**4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> March**

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.

They were due to meet at the Ivanhoe on Easter Monday, April Fool's Day. I wonder if they did?

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

**13th March**

A very good turnout of 7 today with a new member: Janet. We managed fairly well without the second table, which is on loan to the Painting and Drawing group for their entry in the Ashby Outdoor Art Festival.

Janet is working on a fascinating project to get as much life detail as possible on the soldiers named on the Donisthorpe War memorial for the First War. She already has a fair amount but would like as much as can be found.

We looked at the various sources and how to access them.

Rhona has her DNA Report, and this is showing a very interesting story with a large proportion of Indian DNA. She will be working on it to extract as much information as possible from it. Mary worked with her.

Eileen is still working through personalities named in the 1634 Will. We had a very interesting discussion on the effect the change from the Julian to the Gregorian Calendars had on the dating of documents.

It seems the earliest countries to change were the mainly Catholic ones in 1582. The UK moved in 1752, but at least one country (Saudi Arabia) did not change until 2016.

Elizabeth is searching for her great, great grandparents on both paternal and maternal sides. She has been making good progress in Scotland, using Scotland's People, and the Church of Scotland Parish Registers. Her next targets will be in Ireland.

Linda is still building up her Ancestry family tree. She is putting a lot of effort into checking her sources.

Shirley has been chasing down information about her ancestors in newspapers, especially a grandfather who was fined for involvement in an accident to a child who was burnt.

JD is now working on the life of his great uncle and building his school in 3D on the computer.

We meet again on the 10th April.

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

**21st March - 'The Blackberry Garden'. A talk by Alison Levey**

Today's talk was given by Alison Levey, on the creation of her large garden that she moved into in 2009.

It was mainly a blank canvas. The previous owner of the house was reluctant to mention the back garden during the sale as it was very large, and would involve a lot of mowing, but Alison said that is the main reason she would like to own the property.

She started creating the garden working in sections; there was a wild area, a grassy area, a pond, borders and trees.

It is amazing how quickly the plants mature and a garden is created. Alison gave us a very interesting talk.

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

The group is suspended for a couple of months due to low attendance.

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

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

One of our own, Adrian Hickson, gave a first-class presentation of his family history to 31 members.

In a model of how to do and present his research, Adrian first introduced us to his immediate family parents and grandparents. With photos (including a charming one of five-year-old Adrian!) and a short introduction, he led us into the story.

At first he believed the family had originated in Birmingham, but his researches quickly led him to Wisbech. A map of England showed a predominance of his name across the Midlands from coast to coast, yet the majority of his ancestors hailed from the East Coast. A fascinating story emerged from documents and pictures (photographs and drawings) of his great-great grandfather's family of ship owners and merchant mariners operating out of Wisbech. Owning three ships in the middle of the 19th Century, including the schooners Minerva and Economy and the paddle steamer Don, they were very active along the East coast and across to Northwest Europe. Adrian showed us the certificates of his great-great grandfather's registration as a mariner, and the ships he owned. They also owned the Rose Tap inn. There were many other documents that Adrian had uncovered in the Fenland Museum, including the logbooks of the ships and a legal battle over the salvage of the Minerva after she was wrecked.

But Adrian's research did not stop at Wisbech. He traced the earlier family back to a place called Barkstone le Vale, some 60 miles west of Wisbech and 15 miles east of Nottingham, where in 2012 he found a huge display of the family trees of all the families in the village on display in the church.

Cutting a long story short, Adrian has managed to trace his paternal family line back to 1776 using the conventional sources of censuses, electoral registers, directories and Parish Records (among others) and then further back to 1550 using Parish Records only.

The treats did not stop there.

Adrian then outlined the curious case of Maria, his great-great grandmother, wife of Thomas. She was a Hitchborn, not an uncommon name in the area. He was puzzled by the discrepancy in the presumed date of her birth, which varied from census to census, from 1806 to 1808. This is not an unusual situation. However, he found a Parish Register entry of a baptism in early 1805, suggesting a birth possibly in late 1804. Were there two Maria Hitchborns?

This small discrepancy led him on an adventure few of us Family Historians have had. Unravelling the ancestry of Maria revealed multiple cases down the years of her siblings, and their descendants, marrying descendants of Thomas Hickson's ancestors.

The resultant Tree resembled a plumber's nightmare. Fortunately, Adrian's engineering background and first-class coloured annotation of the slides helped us understand the complex interweaving of the two families. His software package enabled him to show us reports and listings, one of which showed the relationships revealed by the analysis of the Tree. This latter showed that many of the people listed had multiple cousin links to each other and himself. A bewildering concatenation of cross-links!

We were left gasping at the prospect of such a tree, and mightily impressed by his highly professional and skilled analysis and presentation of a very difficult project.



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

**27<sup>th</sup> March. Tower Brewery, Burton**

This tour was a change to our usual format in that we met at 6pm for an evening tour of a local industrial heritage site, namely, the Tower Brewery in Burton on Trent. 18 members entered an impressive three-storey Victorian building, hidden away on an industrial estate. We were welcomed by our host, tour guide and brewery owner, John Mills, with a pint of beer or soft drink. Needless to say, my pint of Tower Bitter was excellent. There was plenty of choice; Salts Burton Ale, Imperial IPA and 'Gone for a Burton' seemed to be the popular beers.

The open-plan ground floor contained a bar, seating area, brewing vessels, balcony and spiral staircase. The brewery is open to the public only at weekends when it often hosts music events and private parties. Our tour began by ascending the cast iron staircase to the first floor. John explained that in 2000 he was a brewer with Burton Bridge brewery when he heard that the building was for sale. It was built in the 1870s by Thomas Salt & Co Ltd, and later in 1927 owned by Burton brewers Bass & Co. Although the structure was sound, the building was derelict and neglected under its previous owners and needed restoration. Other parties interested in buying the property were interested in demolition and redevelopment of the site, whereas John wanted to restore its former heritage as a working brewery. This ambition matched that of the seller's and after 9 months of hard work, including the removal of 6 tonnes of pigeon droppings from the water tank, Tower Brewery opened in April 2001. The first floor stores bags of malt and a wooden hopper that feeds the 'mash tun' on the ground floor. It was clear that John had a deep understanding and love of his craft.

Climbing a narrow steep ladder, we entered the metal water tank on the top floor. This originally provided a gravity feed to the brewing system below. The water supply is still housed at this level but in a small insulated tank in a corner. John was keen to point out 2 engravings from previous employees in the wooden roof structure that recorded evidence of its heritage; 'Alf Tyers 1957' and 'Salts 1875'. In the gloomy and eerie atmosphere of this cold isolated structure you could almost feel their ghostly presence! Carefully descending to the ground floor we had chance to explore the Tap Room, a small 'snug' decorated and furnished in 1950s style with its open fire and gas lamps. Then we helped ourselves to a splendid buffet provided by Helen's Bakehouse washed down by more perfectly brewed beer.

Thankfully, the final part of the tour was on the ground floor where John explained more mysteries of the brewing process, including 'mash tuns', 'coppers', 'heat exchangers' and the all important hops. The tour was a unique mix of industrial heritage and modern brewing practices, enriched by fascinating tales from our guide, John Mills. If you want to sample Tower Brewery beers try Morrisons or Sainsburys in Burton or the Tower Brewery on most Friday evenings.

**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.

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

**14<sup>th</sup> March – The Sump, Burton**

At least 17 people were due to meet at the unfortunately-named Sump overlooking the Trent.

Next month they are visiting The Gate Inn at Osbaston Hollow, a popular choice for the lunch club

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

6<sup>th</sup> March

This month we were at Nev's house.

Neil kicked off with Beautiful South and 'A little time'. The band always wrote songs with clever often wry lyrics.

Margaret was in full Welsh mode with Catherine Jenkins singing the beautiful traditional song 'David of the White Rock' or more correctly 'Dafydd y Garreg Wen'

Dorothy changed the mood with the strange but very funny singing of the 'Highway Code' by the Master Singers. This reached the charts in 1966.

Brenda brought us back to classic pop with Carly Simon and 'You're so vain'. Mike followed this with another classic, Dusty Springfield and 'Just a little loving'

Yogi took us off in yet another direction, this time with a video of a flashmob performance of Ravel's 'Bolero' performed by the Saarländisches Staatsorchester in a shopping mall in Saarbrücken. The snare drummer keeps up a steady but complex rhythm throughout the whole piece whilst the other members of the orchestra gradually join in.

Steve, like Margaret, was in Welsh mood today with Bryn Terfel singing 'Ely Jenkins Prayer'

Janet's choice was more pop with Mel Tormé singing 'Send in the Clowns' as was Heather's with The Carpenters 'Top of the World'

Nev had found another interesting group, The Fendertones, a group of musicians who get together to make their own versions of Beach Boys songs. Their YouTube video rendition of 'Sloop John B' with the vocal harmonies and the layered instrumentals would do the Beach Boys proud.

Neil now played us one of his favourite artists, Ray Charles singing 'Busted' first released in 1963.

We now had two classical pieces. Margaret had chosen the 'Kyrie' from the Titanic Requiem written by Robin Gibb and his son Robin-John. It was written to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Titanic disaster. A very moving piece.

Dorothy followed that with the more uplifting Chopin 'Waltz #7'. It is so fast in places that I don't know how anyone could actually waltz to it! But it is still a lovely piece.

Next we had a song chosen by Brenda – Jools Holland and his Rhythm and Blues Orchestra playing Glen Miller's 'Tuxedo Junction'.

Mike followed this with 'House of the Rising Sun' by The Animals. A 60's classic.

Yogi took us back in time with a comedy video of Sid Millward and The Nitwits "playing" various tunes. This recording was from 1970, but the band started in 1937 and continued in various forms into the 80's. Completely mad, and very un-PC!

Steve brought us down to reality with Donovan and his biggest hit 'Catch the Wind'

Janet introduced some real class with Francis Albert Sinatra singing 'I get a kick out of you'. We don't play enough Sinatra.

Heather followed with a very good local folk band called Carillion singing the Bob Dylan song 'Make you feel my love' which was a big hit for Billy Joel

Nev closed the show with another folk duo, The Bygones, singing the Beatles song 'Honey Pie'. A lovely way to finish.

Next month we meet at Mike's house on the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

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

**7<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> March**

During our March sessions there were seven attendees (not all the same people at each session) and we played modern and traditional music which included 'Blow the Wind Southerly', 'When I'm Sixty-Four', 'Cantique de Jean Racine' by Faure, Five Scottish Songs, 'Gigue' From Suite XVI by Handel and many others.

We also played 'The Planet's Feet' which is a modern piece of music written for the recorder. When we first started to play this piece we found it quite difficult and we have practised it together many times over the past sessions and we are pleased our progress. We have some more new pieces which we are beginning to work on.

Our next meeting is on 4 April..

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

There were 10 people at Scrabble today, but I wasn't there as I was on holiday. Numbers are sustaining well, but holidays are coming up so we can expect to see fewer people at each meeting..

Don't forget, we meet fortnightly at the Bull's Head, Market St, 10.30 on a Monday. Send me an email to the address above 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**

**28<sup>th</sup> March -The Globe at Snarestone.**

There were 11 again this month including one new member, upstairs in the back room at the Globe. It must keep the staff fit running up and down stairs with food and drinks, which they did in a very efficient and friendly manner.

Once we were all sat down, the starters arrived pretty promptly. The mains followed without any long delays, so those who hadn't had starters weren't waiting too long to get stuck in, which sometimes happens elsewhere. With the arrival of main courses the conversation stopped completely as everyone enjoyed their choices. With main courses out of the way, conversation resumed and became quite lively and fun.

A few hearty souls had dessert too, with apple crumble seeming to be very popular.

A great evening seemed to be had by all, and the bill was settled without any hiccups or errors by anyone on either side. Quite a rarity!

Next month we will be at The Bulls Head in Wilson on April 25<sup>th</sup>. The 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 – Friday May 3<sup>rd</sup>**

There were no Social Events this month, but our annual Bowls Evening at Ashby Bowls Club is now booked for Friday May 3<sup>rd</sup> at 6pm. You don't need to have any skill or previous experience to have fun as many who have been before will testify.

Members of the Bowls Club will be on hand to help you try to get it right and the bar will be open afterwards for socialising.

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 and has quite a few names on it already.

12<sup>th</sup> March. 'The Pigeon – From Gods to the Gutter' by Kevin Reynolds

Kevin started by describing how the people's opinions of the humble pigeon was polarised, evoking strong dislike for some and fervent support from others. Kevin has questioned why people disliked the bird so much but had not received a rational answer, just a deep-rooted prejudice against them. Some thought they spread disease and were dirty and dumb, all of which were false. In fact, these opinions said more about ourselves than it said about pigeons. This dislike of the bird was not universal, being mostly confined to western cultures. In the East many pigeon varieties are highly regarded beautiful and colourful birds.

Kevin delved into the history of mankind's relationship with the feral pigeon, with evidence going back 5000 years ago. In the Bible, it was a pigeon that brought a leaf to Noah in the ark as evidence that dry land was nearby. In more recent times, the excrement from the bird was marketed as excellent fertiliser and as an essential ingredient in gunpowder, saltpetre (potassium nitrate). In medieval times dovecotes were popular, housing thousands of birds bred to produce these chemicals and to provide a source of food. Recently, the pigeon has proved to be highly intelligent, being able to distinguish cancer cell images taken from human tissue. The NHS has carried out successful trials of using the bird to deliver blood samples from hospitals to the testing laboratory. During the two World Wars of the 20th Century both sides used 'carrier' or 'homing' pigeons to deliver messages when there was no reliable telecommunication system. Severe penalties for harming these birds were imposed during these desperate times. Out of the 54 military medals awarded to reflect the important role of animals in wartime, 32 went to pigeons. The case in favour of the pigeon was overwhelming in my view and thoroughly deserved its description as a 'dove of peace' rather than a 'rat with wings'.

### Worms in film

In the second part of the science group meeting, Kurt Kovach talked about the newly released science fiction film Dune: Part 2. Nature magazine had contacted Oxford University professor Luke Parry to see how our real worms compared to the gigantic fictional sandworms in the film. Our real worms are much smaller of course but still as important to life on this planet and, as in the film, they can also sense vibrations. Hence, birds thumping the ground to bring worms to the surface and the practice of worm charming.

### Mammals on Planet Earth

Kurt then examined the number of domestic mammals on the planet. There are between 900 million and 1 billion domesticated dogs on the planet and approximately 600 million domesticated cats. There are an estimated 20 billion, billion mammals on the planet representing more than 6000 different species of which 14 have been domesticated. The most common of these are cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and horses. Domestication began almost 40,000 years ago with dogs.

So if we compare the total mass of all domesticated mammals on the planet, including nearly 8 billion humans this represents nearly 96% of all the mammals. In other words, the total mass of all the wild mammals on the planet make up just 4.2%. This staggering figure does not even include the 60 billion chickens (they are not mammals).

Domesticated dogs & cats alone equal the total weight of all the wild mammals combined. How extraordinary is that!!!!

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

20<sup>th</sup> March

This month Ken had brought along a selection of four Portuguese red wines all purchased from Laithwaites Wines. All the wines were 2021 vintage and ranged in price from £10 to £12, and all tended to be on the darker end of the redness scale.

Portuguese wines are becoming quite fashionable both for their quality and value for money. I notice a quite a few showing up on supermarket shelves lately although most of them are in the £8 range which is fast becoming the norm for wines these days unfortunately. So our wines were dearer than that but hopefully they would be worth that extra few pounds.

We started with a wine made from the Castelão grape called Rainha do Mar from Setubal which is just south of Lisbon. This was an easy-drinking wine, not exceptional but would be excellent with a BBQ if only we had some suitable weather to hold one! 7.5/10

Next was Amoras, a Castelão blend from just north of Lisbon. This was dark red but not purple, more of a reddish brown, having a rich but not heavy taste. Medium bodied. Very fruity with flavours of damson and berries with some vanilla. Very nice and silky smooth and well liked by almost everyone. It scored 8/10.

Third was Vilarissa Valley from the Douro. This 14% ABV wine was very dark almost black, with an intense dark berry flavour, quite spicy and almost Port-like in taste. Very, very smooth. Everyone liked this wine and thought it was dangerously easy-drinking considering its alcoholic strength! This scored 8.5/10

Lastly came the dearest at £12. Vinho do Fava from Setubal again, this was, if possible, even blacker than the last wine. Made from Portugal's most prized Touriga Nacional grape which is used to make Port wines, but here making a table wine. This wine has won awards including Best Portuguese Wine from the Independent newspaper. It has huge flavour and richness, dark and velvety with aromas of bramble, blackcurrant and plum. The taste was almost too strong for me personally but almost everyone else loved it. It too scored 8.5/10

This was a very interesting session as most of us had no real knowledge of Portuguese wines outside of Port on the one hand, or light white Vinho Verde on the other.

We won't be meeting in April as Annie is not available.

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

15<sup>th</sup> March. From Moira Furnace.

The weather was fine which may be why we attracted 14 walkers which included 3 new members of the u3a.

Brian set off along the Canal towards Donisthorpe but turned off towards the old rail track which took us towards Swadlincote. This took us high over the Moira road from Ashby and onto Moira Junction.

We turned off the rail track at the junction down towards Conkers over the children's railway and to the Canal Basin.

We now followed the canal tow path back to Moira Furnace where we had drinks and cake at the small cafe there, Total distance nearly 2.5 miles..

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

**11<sup>th</sup> March. Staunton Harold Reservoir, led by Alison**

We were a smaller group this month with just 8 walkers and this included a new person to our group - welcome Lynn and hope to see you again.

The day before our walk it had rained non-stop all day so it was a forlorn hope that the going would be good and it is so good when you are proved right. In fact one of our members proclaimed that it was the worst walk ever for mud - another first for the medium walking group!!!

After walking along the side of the reservoir to Broadstone Lane, we took the fields to the Ticknall Lime yards. Into Ticknall and onto Robin Wood, St Brides (where the epic mud was situated), Riding Bank, Robinsons Hill and back to the car park. Just about 4.5 miles and 2 hours later.

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

**5th March. From Staff of Life, Ticknall, led by Kevin**

Following the recent rain a beautiful sunny day greeted 14 of us as we gathered outside the Staff of Life Ticknall. Joan took the normal photograph and we set off across the road passing the Ticknall Alms houses, Parish Church and into the village hall car park. We left the car park passing Hangman's Stone and turning left just before Foremark farm to Milton saw mill. After several fields we began the one mile climb up to the gallops, the corner of Foremark reservoir and back via Scaddows farm and cottage for lunch.

**19th March. From the Three Crowns in Wymeswold, led by Kevin and Trev**

It was a lovely bright morning as fourteen of us drove to the Three Crowns in Wymeswold. After leaving the pub and crossing the road we encountered the first muddy path of the morning which followed the main road though a small wood. On leaving the small, wooded area we crossed back across the road and over one of the 20 plus stiles of the walk. Due to some very muddy areas we took a couple of detours from the proposed route before entering back into the village on a rather pleasant residential road past the Village Church and back to the pub for a nice lunch efficiently served from a very small kitchen.

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

Role	Name	Contact email
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>
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Member	Colin Ellis	<a href="mailto:membercolin@ashbyu3a.co.uk">membercolin@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>
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