



Newsletter March 2025

Interest Groups Timetable for March 2025

Please note that this timetable could change at short notice. Check the website or the Group Leaders for the latest news.

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Monthly Meeting	Tue 25 th	2 pm	Congregational Church, Ashby. Martin Cooper with Marty Meerkat talks about the Air Ambulance service
Arts and Crafts	Thu 6 th	10 am	Packington Village Hall.
Breakfast	Thu 20 th	10 am	Olive Branch Cafe, School Lane LE65 2RF
Bridge	Mon 3 rd Mon 10 th Mon 17 th Mon 24 th Mon 31 st	11am-1.30pm 7-9 pm 11am-1.30pm 7-9 pm 11am-1.30pm	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Calligraphy	Tue 11 th	10 am	At Di's
Coffee and Chat	Wed 12 th	10 am	Sunnyside Cafe, Leicester Road, Ibstock LE67 7GQ
Computer	Wed 5 th Mon 17 th	2 pm 2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Croquet	TBA	TBA	Ashby Croquet Club, Moira Miners' Welfare Club, Bath Lane, Moira DE12 6BP
Digital Photography	Thu 6 th	10 am	16 Winchester Way
Drawing and painting	Wed 19 th	10.30 am	16 Winchester Way - topic: P-P-P-Pickup a Penguin, Puffin or Pelican
Family History	Wed 12 th	2 pm	2 Marlborough Way
Food from Afar	Thu 6 th	6 pm	Hispania, The Mews, Ashby LE65 1HP
French	Mon 3 rd Mon 17 th	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Gardening	Thu 20 th	12 for 12.30 pm	SELF DRIVE to Planters Garden Centre, Tamworth B78 2EY. A talk by Gerald Ingram, owner of Planters. Sandwiches, cakes and tea or coffee will be provided before the talk begins. Price £15.00. Booking essential.

Group	Date	Time	Venue
History	Thu 27 th	2.15 pm	Packington Village Hall. Bill Devitt - 'The Power of the Industrial Revolution'
Industrial Heritage	Fri 7 th Wed 26 th	Dep 8.15 am TBA	JCB Factory tour (sold out) Lincoln Cathedral roof tour
Literature	Tue 11 th	1.30 pm	Sandra's house
Lunch	Thu 13 th	12 for 12.30 pm	Bull's Head, Market Street, Ashby
Medium Walks	Mon 10 th	9.45 for 10am start	Meet Ticknall Village Hall car park DE73 7JX
Music Appreciation	Wed 5 th	10 am	91 Woodside
Recorder	Thu 6 th Thu 20 th	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Rummikub	Tue 11 th Tue 25 th	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Science & Technology	Tue 11 th	2 pm	Packington Village Hall. 'Diabetes' - Eleni Robinson
Scrabble	Mon 10 th Mon 24 th	10.30 am	The Bulls Head, Ashby
Short Walks	Fri 21 st	10 am	Meet at Ticknall car park for a walk into Calke
Social Events			No events in March
Supper Club	Thu 27 th	7 for 7.30 pm	The Cricketts Inn, Acresford DE12 8AP We will need to pre-order.
Walking	Tue 4 th Tue 18 th	9.45 for 10am 9.45 for 10am	Meet at Staff of Life Ticknall DE73 7JH. Meet at Bull Head Woodhouse Eaves LE12 8RZ.
Wine Appreciation	Wed 19 th	7 pm	Annie's house

Interest Groups Timetable for early April 2025

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Walking	Tue 1 st	9.45 for 10am	TBA
Music Appreciation	Wed 2 nd	10 am	TBA
Computer	Wed 2 nd	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Digital Photography	Thu 3 rd	10 am	16 Winchester Way
Arts and Crafts	Thu 3 rd	10 am	Packington Village Hall.
Recorder	Thu 3 rd	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Food from Afar	Thu 3 rd	6 pm	Taste of Thai, Market Street, Ashby
Bridge	Mon 7 th	7-9 pm	Ivanhoe Social Club.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE DUE AT THE END OF THIS MONTH

Please note that your membership renewal is due on April 1st (No joke!)

This year we have reduced the fee to £18 and £14 for a second member at the same address.

Forms are available on the website and also at the Monthly Meetings. Can you please send completed forms to members@ashbyu3a.co.uk and make your payment to our bank account 08-92-99 67259878 or post the form and a cheque payable to Ashby u3a to:

Iain Banns, Ashby u3a Membership Secretary, 10 Downside Drive, Ashby de la Zouch, LE65 2QU

If you are a UK tax payer can you please remember to **tick the box for Gift Aid** as it allows us to claim an extra 25% of your membership fee from HMRC to help pay for all the services we provide for you.

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

We have recruited and co-opted three new members on to the committee to help fill the vacancies we have. Hopefully they will be elected to full committee status by the membership at the next AGM.

Some of them have attended their first committee meeting and we will be sorting out who takes on what roles and announcing names and positions shortly.

HISTORY GROUP TRIP TO LIVERPOOL

The History Group are hoping to make their annual coach trip to a city of historical interest. This year it is planned to visit Liverpool.

Date: Thursday 31st July, 2025 **Fare:** £25.00 per person

The coach will depart at 08:30 from outside the Royal Hotel, Ashby returning around 20:00 with about 5 hours in Liverpool subject to traffic.

If you would be interested, and have not already placed your name on the list, please advise Colin Ellis preferably by e-mail at colinellis1950@gmail.com or telephone 01530 272592 advising your e-mail address or telephone. Alternatively, the list should be available at History Group and Monthly meetings.

At this stage, there is no commitment. If a sufficient number respond to make the trip viable, you will be contacted with further information.

ASHBY MAYOR'S CIVIC DINNER AND CIVIC SERVICE

Mayor Liz Parle has invited members of local organisations, including our u3a, to two events:

A Civic Service at Holy Trinity Church on Sun 13th April at 10.30 am

And a Civic Dinner at Willesley Park Golf Club on Sat 26th April at 7pm, tickets £35, all proceeds to charity.

Anyone wishing to attend either event can find further details on our website www.ashbyu3a.co.uk under the Noticeboard section on the home page.

WELFARE

If you know of any member who is unwell or isolating or has a family member who is unwell, please contact welfare@ashbyu3a.co.uk or any 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.

MONTHLY MEETING – 25TH FEBRUARY

Jill Dwyer of Healthwatch, Leicestershire and Vinay Mistry of Community Pharmacy

Jill started by explaining that Healthwatch is an independent statutory body formed by government to champion health and social care. Their aim is to listen to, and gather feedback from, users of NHS services and to make sure that NHS and Social Services leaders are made aware of our comments and complaints. They have the power to enter hospitals, surgeries and care homes etc. to see whether they are up to standard but they don't have powers to enforce any change. There are around 150 local Healthwatches in England. They can also advise the public on where to find information about various health services.

They are currently looking into problems with seeing a GP, finding an NHS dentist and young mental health support.

She then handed over to Vinay Mistry to explain Community Pharmacies.

Community Pharmacies (CPs) are basically retail pharmacies and they are the fourth pillar of the primary care system in England along with general practice, optical services and dentistry. CPs are privately owned and are contracted to the NHS to dispense medicines. However they can now also provide other services designed to take the workload off of GPs. They can treat minor illnesses and are trained to spot warning signs of more serious problems.

You can request a private consultation with a pharmacist who can provide treatment and prescribe certain medicines without seeing a GP. This is completely confidential but any medicines or treatment would be added to your health record.

One particularly interesting fact we learnt was that all new pharmacists, plus any that wish to undertake more training, will be qualified prescribers of medicines. The list of medicines that they can prescribe is growing steadily and so some prescriptions will not have to be signed off by a GP as at present.

After the two talks both Jill and Vinay, and their respective colleagues who they had brought along, attempted to answer the many questions our members put to them. Many of these were very specific and not appropriate to relate here. However most people went away with a good answer.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

ARTS AND CRAFTS – Leader: Sharon Woodland - artcraft@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 01530 413867

6th February

The Kumihimo Necklaces are finished! A photograph of the ladies wearing the fruit of their labours should appear shortly in the gallery of the groups webpage.

Next, we are turning our hands to making shoe bags for stowing shoes in the suitcase when going away.

Our next meeting is at 10am at Packington Village Hall on 6th March

BREAKFAST – Leader: Colin Woodland - breakfast@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 01530 413867

20th February - Lakeside Bistro

The group met at Lakeside Bistro in Moira this month. A popular venue for both the Breakfast and Coffee & Chat groups. A report will follow next month.

In March they will be breakfasting at the Olive Branch Cafe, School Lane LE65 2RF

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 - phone 01530 455957 or 07804 743471

The group is meeting at the Ivanhoe Club every Monday in March. On the 3rd, 17th and 31st it will be in the morning 11am to 1.30pm, on the 10th and 24th it will be from 7pm to 9pm.

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

CALLIGRAPHY – Leader: Sue Cornell - calligraphy@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 01530 413345

11th February

Six of us met today to plan for our future projects. Everybody was buzzing with ideas and we had an interesting and exciting selection of suggestions.

- Modern Calligraphy - some wanted to concentrate on improving their skills with this font,
- Faux Calligraphy - something we haven't tried before so will need to research and practise,
- Middle Eastern/ Chinese/ Arabic fonts,
- Writing based on the work of Jessie M King who was an artist and illustrator and one of the famous Glasgow Girls.

We decided that we would use the theme based on Mothers' Day but approach it in our own chosen way, using a font of our own choosing. The emphasis will be on practising the necessary skills to show progression; some might end up with a finished piece of work or not! Colour, texture and illuminated letters can also be included!

We spent the rest of the session 'playing' with the word 'Mother', while enjoying our coffee and biscuits 🍪. We also discussed the Open Day in May and discussing what work we could use for our display. A very busy and productive morning.

The next meeting is on March 11th at Di's house.

CROQUET – Leader: Rupert Knapton - croquet@ashbyu3a.co.uk

28th March

I'm pleased to report that we had bright blue skies for the final croquet session on the 'winter lawns'. Six members enjoyed the friendly competition and we are looking forward to playing on the full sized lawns when we next meet.

The date for that is yet to be confirmed with the croquet club.

New Members are always welcome - do come and meet us at Moira Miners Welfare at 11.00 am.

COFFEE AND CHAT – Leader: Colin Woodland - coffee@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 01530 413867

12th February - Bluebell Tea Rooms, Swadlincote

The Bluebell Tea Rooms proved to be a great find. It is a quaint place full of the old world charm and nine of us enjoyed the delightful experience. The staff were extremely attentive, friendly and helpful. For such a minute kitchen, the choice and quality was excellent. Nothing was too much trouble.

Our next gathering will be at the Sunnyside Café in Ibstock at 10am on 12 March 2025. As well as Coffee and Chat, there is opportunity to browse the well stocked Garden Centre and shop.

If you would like to join us, please let Colin Woodland Know at coffee@ashbyu3a.co.uk. There are Nine on the list so far and there is room for more.

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

17th February

Today 5 attendees were introduced to casting from their laptops to a Smart TV. ie. to use the TV as a second PC screen.

There are two main ways:

1-Use the Windows key + K. This does not work for everyone.

2-Use Google Chrome to cast to a TV screen. The three little dots at the extreme right hand top of Google Chrome open up a menu, which has the option to cast to a tv.

You can either cast the current tab or the whole screen. In the latter case this allows you to use the TV as a second screen and work directly to it, for instance if you have too many people to gather round one laptop.

JD Used it to show his 2022 Family History PowerPoint presentation, which he is readying for the forthcoming repeat of the Open Day.

The process works equally well for anything you have on your laptop. The sound (if any) is relayed through the TV speakers. We each then had a go at doing this with our own laptops.

It is important to make sure the TV is on the same Wi-Fi system as the laptop, and is live. Merely to have the screen saver showing is not enough.

We next meet on Monday 5th March

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

6th February

Today we looked at the topical photos of four of the six attendees.

These covered a wide variety of subjects from winter countryside to Christmas Dinner.

A very pleasant interlude to get us back in the swing.

We next meet on 6th March when the topic will be 'Spring Photos'

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

19th February

Thanks to Lesley who hosted February's session.

It was either start or continue with last month's topic. A pleasant productive morning.

Next month at John H. 10 am on Wednesday 19th March

Topic: P-P-P-Pick up a Penguin, Puffin or Pelican

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

February

The French Group continues to meet fortnightly at the Ivanhoe Club Ashby on a Monday morning at 11am (the club only opens up at 11am). The next meeting is on 3rd March.

We usually start the 2 hour sessions with conversation in French about what members of the group have been up to recently. Afterwards we have a topic to work on. Recently we revised vocabulary to do with dates(important dates in French history) but this led on to a fun game in saying dates backwards and numbers in 2's or 10's or hundreds and then backwards.

Next time we continue this theme with an exercise to do with time, duration of time and related expressions (les expressions qui s'y rapportent).

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

12th February

Due to holidays and other inconveniences, we had three at table today, with two visitors: Sharon and Colin Woodland.

Linda is well on with tracking her grandparents in the 1921 census and related issues.

Eileen is continuing to assemble her family sheets and get them in order for her History of the White Family.

Both exercises we all must do to keep the data in order and under control!

JD worked with Sharon and Colin to try and delve deeper into the US records to find a link between Sharon's earliest known Poulson ancestor (born in 1805) and the roots of the family in Norway.

There was very limited progress as the US records are, as the UK records, somewhat uninformative before 1800. But that progress did manage to 'lock in' at one ancestor previously known only as a 'suspect'.

Many a mickle makes a muckle as they say North of the Border!

We used the main TV as a second screen, casting wirelessly from the laptop, which is a great improvement over fiddling with cables.

JD has also uncovered some useful information about his great, great grandfather's wife's maternal line. This is in hint form from Ancestry, so will need careful checking before inclusion in the records.

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

6th February 2025 - Zorba the Greek, Derby

Nine epicurean souls gathered at Zorba the Greek Restaurant in Derby this month. It was a first for all present and it most certainly did not disappoint! The staff were most convivial, the food was flavoursome and well presented. All in all, it was very good value for money.

With secure parking literally across the road from the restaurant or, for the more adventurous, roadside parking right outside the door; things could not be more convenient. For any who might plan to try the restaurant in a party of eight or more, a £5 deposit per person is required. It is useful to know that, for those who attend, the deposit is deducted from each individual bill but, for those who fail to turn up, the deposit is not refunded.

Our April jaunt will be to the Taste of Thai in Market Street, Ashby: an old favourite of many. If you wish to attend, please let Colin Woodland know at food_from_afar@ashbyu3a.co.uk.

GARDENING - Leader: Paul Dean - gardening@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 07707 862762

20th February - The National Garden Scheme

Today we had a presentation on the NGS garden scheme given by Hildegard Wiesehofer, the county organiser for Derbyshire. She started with a history from its beginning in the early 1920's being set up to fund health care for people before the NHS came into existence. Entry to gardens at the beginning was 1 shilling, that equates to £100 in the present day. After the advent of the NHS the charity has evolved to support various health charities including cancer charities, hospices, Parkinson's etc.

Hildegard herself was diagnosed with cancer 11 years ago and given 10 months to live, however she was given a new treatment and is now very well.

She then went on to give a presentation of many of the NGS gardens in Derbyshire. A very enjoyable and interesting talk.

27th February. 'The 2nd Agricultural Revolution' by Yogi

34 members turned out to listen to Yogi's presentation of the 2nd Agricultural Revolution.

Yogi began by explaining that the 1st Agricultural Revolution, also known as the Neolithic Revolution, marked the transition of our ancestors from chasing their lunch over the plains to settling down in tribal communities and growing their own food and domesticating animals. This started in the Near East around 10,000 BC, but didn't make our shores until around 4,000 BC. By contrast, the 2nd Revolution is more difficult to date but can be said to have started around 1700 in Europe and overlapped the Industrial Revolution into the mid-19th century.

At the outset it is thought around 80% of the population worked on around 50% of the available land, a figure that matches the general European picture. Today, by contrast, around 70% of available land is worked by only 1% of the workforce, producing around 55% of our food.

Yogi took us on a journey of exploration into how the improving technology and understanding of crop management, fertilisation and health have increased yields and varieties in a way our forebears would wonder at.

In a predominantly agrarian culture, driven by hard manual labour, it was necessary to produce enough food for your family with a good surplus: up to 20% to sell or trade for other goods and services. But even this was restricted by the distance such produce could go to its market. Transport overland was slow and expensive. Farmers had no good way of keeping large numbers of animals in feed over winter, so killed their surplus at Martinmas for curing over winter. The difficulty of cultivating much of the land that could have been available, because it was too heavy, stony or waterlogged, controlled the type of crops and the yield.

Several developments started to change all that:

- Advances in the design of the plough allowed for deeper and more even spread of the soil; they also enabled farmers to expand into heavier soils.
- Better seed drills controlled the distribution of seed to where it was needed, improving both yield and quality.
- The move from using oxen to horses as draft animals improved cultivation both in speed and quality.
- Developments in breeding food animals resulted in yields rising three- to four-fold in this time.
- Improved understanding of crop rotation enabled multiple crops to be grown side by side.
- The development and understanding of better fertilisers worked wonders on yield and quality.

Cooperation between farmers also meant that they could each specialise to improve profit levels, whilst the rapid improvement of transport facilities, starting with the canals, progressing through dramatic improvements in roads from around 1800, and finally speeded up tenfold and more by the advent of railways, meant that farmers could reach markets much further away much quicker.

These advances did not come without price, though, as competition from farms elsewhere was drawn into the calculation. Nonetheless, it is calculated that productivity on the land rose by 3 times. In addition, the vagaries of weather and war meant that the life of the farmer was always precarious. The Napoleonic Wars brought an end to the lucrative business of supplying food to the troops whilst the return of said troops and the general European wide economic exhaustion depressed all markets.

Weather, always a problem in hampering the farmer in his attempts to ensure a steady regular product, was to deliver a body blow in 1816 when the results of enormous volcanic explosions in the East caused the 'Year of No Summer'. Crop failures were widespread, and starvation stalked the land. Then the Potato Blight of 1845 to 1849, whilst Europe wide, caused devastation in Ireland and Scotland. But that is another story.

Over the period 1700 to 1850, driven by many social factors, the eating habits of the population also changed, and populations exploded. However, with all the improvements on the land, the need for labour was severely reduced. In contrast, as the Industrial Revolution got under way, the need for labour in the mines, factories, railways and towns increased exponentially. Sadly, the destabilising effect of such rapid and large-scale changes resulted in considerable baseline poverty and unrest.

Attempts to smooth out the supply of food were badly handled by central government. The Corn Laws of the early 19th century are just one example and point up the tendency of the population to take to the streets in times of stress.

Whilst it could be argued that these changes in many ways fed upon each other, in some ways they triggered the same changes. One great benefit was the rapid evolution of mass education, and health and safety regulations.

Yogi steered us through this complex and many-sided topic clearly and in his own imitable style. A thoroughly absorbing and educational afternoon. Many thanks Yogi!

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

February

We didn't make any trips out this month as February's date slipped to March 6th as the first date that JCB could take us for a tour of their factory making the famous yellow diggers.

Later in the month on March 26th we shall be climbing into the roof of Lincoln cathedral to see how it was made and maintained. We are also promised a high level view over the nave and outside to the city. There are still a couple of places available, so if anyone wants to join us, contact Mike by email or phone, details above.

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 will be on our webpage soon.

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

13th February The Bull's Head Thringstone

Twenty five members were booked to attend the Bull's Head Ashby for Lunch when, on the Tuesday before, we were informed that the chef had quit without notice! We were very grateful to the Bull's Head, Thringstone, who agreed, at very notice, to cater for us. Due to the confusion caused by the chef's abrupt departure at the Ashby Bull's Head, two of our members had to cancel and two got lost and did not make it to Thringstone. One other member was unwell on the day and could not be with us. We wish him a speedy recovery. The remaining 19 of us had an excellent meal, most opting for the sumptuous buffet.

March's venue was to have been the White Hart, Market Street but they have deigned to reject us on the day we want, so we will be at the Bull's Head, Market Street, just across the road instead at 12 noon on 13th March. Please note that it was advertised on the website in error as 20th March. Sorry about that: I have corrected the error. 23 members have already signed up for the event, but there is plenty of room for more. The Bull's Head have had a change of chef so it will be interesting to see how he/she is settling in.

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

MUSIC APPRECIATION - Leader: Mike Stow - musicapp@ashbyu3a.co.uk - 01530 469152

5th February

There were just 6 of us at Sallie's house this month due to various appointments and other commitments, so we had plenty of time to talk about each track played.

Mike started with Carole King and 'You've got a friend' which she wrote and was a big hit for her although James Taylor recorded it first for his debut album.

Carole King worked in the Brill Building which was the New York equivalent of Tin Pan Alley. Also working there was Neil Diamond who's song 'I am, I said' Neil had chosen.

Whilst James Taylor was working with Carole King he was married to Carly Simon, and Mike had picked a track 'The Carter Family' from her 'No Secrets' album as his second choice. Carole King meanwhile went to school with Paul Simon and Nev played his song 'Kodachrome' as his first choice. 'Kodachrome' was banned by the BBC for it's obvious product placement.

Neil had also chosen the song 'Girl you'll be a woman soon' but not the version by Neil Diamond, who wrote it, but the version by Urge Overkill, an almost unknown band but whose version was used in the soundtrack of 'Pulp fiction'. It's funny how often we choose related songs and artists without any pre-planning.

Sallie had chosen two songs by folk trio Peter, Paul and Mary, remembering the recent death of Noel 'Paul' Stoney of the band. She'd chosen 'Blowing in the wind' written by Bob Dylan and 'Puff the magic dragon' based on a poem by Leonard Lipton who was a friend of Peter Yarrow of the band.

Dorothy had chosen two popular classical pieces, the 1st Mvt of Mozart's Piano Sonata in C Major and Placido Domingo singing 'Che gelida manina' from La Boheme better known as 'Your tiny hand is frozen'

Brenda had gone back to the fifties with two songs from two of the greatest singers of our times, Frank Sinatra and 'Who wants to be a millionaire' from 'High Society' and Ray Charles singing 'What'd I say'. Great tunes too.

The song 'Between the devil and the deep blue sea' was first recorded by Cab Calloway in 1931 but Nev chose to play George Harrison's ukelele version as played on the Jools Holland show 'Later' with backing from Joe Brown and other notable musicians.

We had time at the end for some extra songs. Mike chose the comedy record by Phil Harris 'I am my own grandpa' about a man whose son marries the man's mother in law!

Nev played Brian Ferry and 'He'll have to go', originally a big hit for Jim Reeves.

Neil closed the session with Peter Gabriel singing 'Solsbury Hill'. Little Solsbury Hill is just outside Bath and has nothing to do with Silbury Hill or Salisbury in Wiltshire

RECORDER - Leader: Joan Gibson - recorder@ashbyu3a.co.ukJ

February

We had a large turnout for our first meeting of the month on 6th: ten of us, with at least two to each part. It's lovely to have 2 basses. We brought out some of our older repertoire for a change, alongside some newer music we are still working on. We are maintaining a mixture of styles of music, with compositions from a variety of periods.

On the second meeting on 20th, there were fewer of us as it was half term: just (!) seven, with at least two to a part for trios, but the treble and bass parts were lone players in SATB music. We carried on playing our newer pieces, getting more familiar with them, and reminded ourselves of the older ones. It's good to feel the improvement in our playing. We may be playing to public audiences this spring, so we need to be prepared!

RUMMIKUB – Leader: Betty Vos – rummikub@ashbyu3a.co.uk

The Rummikub group meets every 2nd and 4th Tuesday at 11 am at the Ivanhoe social club. We are a friendly mixed group of new and experienced players so if you are looking for gentle mental activity Rummikub might suit. We welcome new players.

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

19th February

This month we were tasting all Pinot Noir wines chosen by John and all sourced from Tesco. Pinot Noir is the basis of red Burgundy and of many Champagnes where it usually makes white wine. It can be a tricky wine to produce as it is very sensitive to the weather and soil conditions, but can be very good, indeed fabulous, if made right, but can also be fabulously expensive! So we were interested to see what we had here.

We started with a sparkling red wine, well a darkish pink really, from South Australia. John managed to buy it reduced from £16 to £10 so a potential bargain. The wine was called Bird in Hand, a 2024 vintage, Brut and 12.5% abv. and made by the Champagne method.

It had good bubbles, a typical strawberry/cherry flavour and was very pleasant. Even those who profess to not like sparkling wines were impressed. A good start to the evening and it would be a good start to any celebration, big or small. An absolute bargain at £10 for a quality fizz.

On to the 'proper' pinot noirs – red wines. First of those was Errazuriz from Chile at 13%, 2024 and £9 reduced to £7. This is easily found in Tesco and elsewhere. Some thought it was a little harsh with an odd initial flavour, but it improved considerably after a little time in the glass. We found a while ago, when previously tasting pinot noir, that it can taste very different in a different size glass! Strange but true.

This had a good fruity flavour and we thought well worth £7.

Next was Mark West from California, 2022 and 13.5% costing £11.50. This was very different to the Chilean. Darker, going brown rather than purple so showing a little age with more pronounced tannin. It tasted of Black cherry and plums, very fruity but sweeter than expected. We all thought it tasted nothing like you'd expect of Pinot Noir and it divided opinions. Some really didn't like it. Some thought it quite good.

Third of the reds was a French wine, Grand Conseiller by Bouchard Ainé et Fils in the heart of Burgundy. 2023 vintage, 13% £9.50. The first thing two of us said was 'this is a proper French wine'! It had a slightly drier taste, a little oak tannin but not much. Slightly thinner and less fruity than New World wines but very nice nonetheless. Interestingly, as a Vin de France wine, not all the grapes are from Burgundy but from all round the country although it is 100% Pinot noir.

Lastly came the odd-ball and most expensive wine. Devil's Corner from Tasmania. 2023 and 12.5% priced at £15 but reduced to £12. This was very dry, with a strange foretaste. Almost a meaty flavour and no-one really liked it! It scored just over 5/10 on average. A great shame. Interestingly the 3 reviews on the Tesco website all liked it, so perhaps we had a duff bottle.

On the basis of what we tasted, our recommendations would be the sparkling wine as a good substitute for Champagne, the Errazuriz would be nice with lighter meat dishes and the French 'almost Burgundy' is lovely if you like Old World wines which are less jammy than the New World.

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

There were no Social Events this month. The next planned event is the Bowls evening planned for Friday 2nd May. Details will be announced nearer the date.

SCRABBLE - Leader: Usha Sood. Group contact: scrabble@ashbyu3a.co.uk

We are continuing to meet twice a month at the Bull's Head, Market St, 10.30 on the 2nd and 4th Monday of the month for fun sessions of Scrabble. Send an email to the address above if you'd like to try us out. It's fun and sociable.

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

11th February. – 'Genetics - fact or fiction' by Catrin Rutland

A report of this fascinating topic will be in next month's newsletter.

The March 11th talk will be about diabetes. Nearly 5 million people in the UK suffer from this potentially life-threatening disease.

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

27th February - The Old Bulls Head in Woodhouse Eaves

This was the first time that we as a group had visited the Old Bulls Head although the Walking Group and some individuals had been here before. It is quite a large pub, bigger than it looks from outside, and was quite well patronised for a Thursday evening. It also seemed to be a little short-staffed, hence the service was not as quick as it could be, but better than some we've been to.

Having said that the service was friendly and attentive and importantly the food was very good. One person thought it was the best pork belly they'd ever had. The menu had some different and interesting offerings as well as old favourites. The price was a little higher than normal, particularly the wines, but that is the price you pay for being in Woodhouse Eaves!

All in all a pretty good evening with no complaints and good conversation.

Next month we shall be at the Cricketts Inn in Acresford on the 27th March.

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

21st February. From the Line Kilns at Moira Furnace

12 Walkers gathered at the 'Lime Kilns' carpark at Moira Furnace, defying a damp and blustery forecast. After the obligatory 'pack shot' we set off counterclockwise, via the small copse with several brave little patches of snowdrops, to the smaller car park by the playground, just in case any late comers had parked there.

Then we turned southwards onto the pathway from Shortheath Road to Park Road past the Whitney Homes site where work seems to be going on to upgrade the paths and approaches. At Park Road we climbed the short but steep stairs onto the old L&N and M railway track, which we followed all the way to Church Street in Donisthorpe. We could have avoided the stairs by continuing along Park Road to where it joins the track on the level, but our team would have none of that!

At Church Street we turned eastward for a short while by road to the Donisthorpe Woodlands Centre and Jungle Madness. Resisting the impulse to join in the 'Madness' the walkers walked past onto the canal towpath and turned north. We now met a slight headwind, the only trace of the heavy winds forecast, and enjoyed a pleasant stroll, being eyed by a large flock of ducks and a few coots, back to Moira Furnace and the cafe, where the traditional coffee and cakes session was enjoyed by all.

The going was excellent underfoot, and no rain at all, thank goodness. We walked around 2.25 miles in just over the hour, which was good going for us.

MEDIUM WALKS - Alison Thompson - mediumwalk@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 07930 557432

10th February. From Staunton Harold, led by Alison

11 of us set off on a very miserable, wettish day from the car park at Staunton Harold. 1 new person to the group and a returning one - welcome Karen and welcome back Lynn.

The walk was a figure of eight - the first leg of 2.5 miles to Dimminsdale, up to the ridge and back via the beautiful view overlooking the house, church and water at Staunton Harold. The snowdrops were out but were somewhat bedraggled.

After our coffee stop we set off on the second leg which was around Bagshaw and Lount Wood and was 2.2 miles - so 4.7 in total.

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

4th February 2025. Sutton Park, led by Kevin

After cancelling this walk in November due to snow it was still an overcast dry but cold day that greeted us as we all gathered in the pub car park. Thirteen of us set off over a busy road and straight into Sutton Park, a 2400 acre National Nature Reserve, via a small gated entrance. On turning left we followed the road/park boundary wall through wooded area to the Streetly Road park entrance. Soon after crossing the main railway line, we came across a muddy section to Bracebridge Pool, the first of six pools that can be found in the park, and stopped for coffee with views across the water. After refreshments we passed Blackroot Pool and carried on to the main Sutton Coldfield Town Gate entrance soon passing Wyndley and Powell Pools before joining the park boundary wall again back to the pub for a carvery lunch.

18th February. Bradgate Park, led by Kevin

Following several weeks of gloomy weather it was lovely to see a bright blue sky as fifteen of us gathered at the Bradgate Inn at Cropston. After registering our cars and a group photograph we set off crossing the reservoir dam wall with lovely views across the water.

On arriving at the Hallgates Bradgate Park entrance we took a footpath uphill which runs just outside the boundary wall to the Hunts Hill entrance where we entered the park and on round to the Newtown Linford entrance. Here we joined the rather busy main path (due to half term) towards the Chapel ruins and there turning right and back round the reservoir to the pub for lunch.

Your Committee

As stated above we have recruited 3 new members to the committee who will be joining as shortly. The current members are:

Role	Name	Contact email
Chairman	John Pilgrim	<u>chairman@ashbyu3a.co.uk</u>
Business Secretary	Tony Smith	<u>secretary@ashbyu3a.co.uk</u>
Treasurer	Val Reed	<u>treasurer@ashbyu3a.co.uk</u>
Membership Secretary	vacant	<u>members@ashbyu3a.co.uk</u>
Interest Group Co-ordinator	vacant	<u>interestg@ashbyu3a.co.uk</u>
Welfare	vacant	<u>welfare@ashbyu3a.co.uk</u>
Speaker seeker	Yogi Godwin	<u>speakers@ashbyu3a.co.uk</u>
Communications	Mike Stow	<u>webmaster@ashbyu3a.co.uk</u>
Social Secretary	Glenys Morrice	<u>socials@ashbyu3a.co.uk</u>