



Newsletter April 2025

Interest Groups Timetable for April 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 22 nd	2 pm	Congregational Church, Ashby. Yogi Godwin - 'u3a - health-inducer, problem-solver, miracle-worker or universal panacea?'
Arts and Crafts	Thu 3 rd	10 am	Packington Village Hall.
Breakfast	Thu 17 th	10 am	Alpaca Café and Farm Shop at Hill Farm, Spring Lane, Packington LE65 1WU
Bridge	Mon 7 th Mon 14 th Mon 21 st Mon 28 th	7-9 pm 11am-1.30pm 7-9 pm 11am-1.30pm	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Calligraphy	Tue 8 th	10 am	At Jenny's
Coffee and Chat	Wed 9 th	10 am	Newlands Farm Cafe, Hilton, Derby DE65 5GQ
Computer	Wed 2 nd Mon 14 th	2 pm 2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Croquet			No meeting this month
Digital Photography	Thu 3 rd	10 am	Staunton Harold lower car park Photos of nature and old buildings
Drawing and painting	Wed 16 th	10 am	At Sharon's. The theme; "Spring into Easter"
Family History	Wed 9 th	2 pm	2 Marlborough Way
Food from Afar	Thu 3 rd	6 pm	Taste of Thai, Market Street, Ashby
French	Mon 14 th Mon 28 th	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Gardening	Thu 17 th	2.10 pm	Packington Village Hall. Roy Mitchell talk on Calke Abbey Gardens. Entry £4.
History	Thu 24 th	2.15 pm	Packington Village Hall. Yogi Godwin - 'The Slave Trade and England's Role'
Industrial Heritage	Wed 30 th	TBA	Britvic distribution centre, Magna Park, Lutterworth
Literature	Tue 8 th	1.30 pm	Sandra's house

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Lunch	Thu 10 th	12 for 12.30 pm	The Unicorn , 20 Main Street, Orton on the Hill CV9 2NN
Medium Walks	Mon 14 th	9.45 for 10am start	Meet at the Beacon Hill Country Park lower car park off Breakback Road
Music Appreciation	Wed 2 nd	10 am	Neil's at 40 Willesley Gardens
Recorder	Thu 3 rd Thu 17 th	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Rummikub	Tue 8 th Tue 22 nd	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Science & Technology	Tue 8 th	2 pm	Packington Village Hall. 'A Peak Behind the Curtain' by Stuart Sexton
Scrabble	Mon 14 th Mon 28 th	10.30 am	The Bulls Head, Ashby
Short Walks	Fri 11 th	10 am	Note change of date. Meet at Melbourne car park DE73 8GJ Entrance in High St opp. the Assembly Rooms for a walk around Melbourne
Social Events			No events in April
Supper Club	Thu 24 th	7 for 7.30 pm	The Falcon, Long Whatton LE12 5DG We will need to pre-order.
Walking	Tue 1 st Tue 15 th	9.45 for 10am 9.45 for 10am	Meet at The Vine Inn, Vine Lane, Clent, Nr Stourbridge DY9 9PH Meet at Donisthorpe Miners Institute, off Church Street, Donisthorpe DE12 7PX
Wine Appreciation	Wed 16 th	7 pm	Annie's house

Interest Groups Timetable for early May 2025

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Digital Photography	Thu 1 st	10 am	16 Winchester Way
Arts and Crafts	Thu 1 st	10 am	Packington Village Hall.
Recorder	Thu 1 st	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Food from Afar	Thu 1 st	6 pm	Taste of Thai, Market Street, Ashby
Bowls Evening	Fri 2 nd	6 pm	Bowls Evening at Ashby Bowls Club. Come along and try your hand at bowls for free.
Bridge	Mon 5 th	TBA	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Walking	Tue 6 th	9.45 for 10am	TBA
Music Appreciation	Wed 7 th	10 am	TBA
Computer	Wed 7 th	2 pm	16 Winchester Way

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR, JOHN PILGRIM

Spring is sprung, the grass is riz...

I pleased to say that with both the meteorological spring and vernal equinox days now passed, along with the warmest day of the year so far, we can now believe that winter is finally over and can start to turn our full attention to our new membership year ahead, starting on 1st April.

Firstly, a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has given up their valuable time this membership year to help provide the various activities we offer our members. Without the help and support of tea and coffee rota helpers, registration tickers, activity fee collectors, meeters, greeters, travel arrangers, Facebook contributors, group leaders and committee members, none of us would enjoy the benefits of Ashby u3a membership. Please, everyone, do participate, wherever and whenever you can for the benefit of everyone. And a massive thank you to those who have already chosen to join as new members, or renew their membership, for next year. Your new membership cards can be collected at the forthcoming Monthly Meetings. For those yet to renew, if you have enjoyed your activities this year, please do consider renewing your membership as soon as possible, as this helps manage the time and costs of our u3a administration enormously. Forms are available online, or at the forthcoming Monthly Meeting, with payment of the 2025/26 reduced fees payable via, BACS (preferred), Cheque or cash.

In the background the Committee and Group Leaders have been hard at work planning a range of events throughout the coming months, across various local venues and beyond. Each activity group publishes its itinerary, with trips, speakers and locations each believes to be welcomed by their participants and providing learning, fun and an opportunity to meet up - do check these out on our website, or contact the relevant group leader.

Ashby u3a wide events are also part of our established calendar, including our annual bowls evening at Ashby Bowls Club, our Summer cream tea, our stand at Jim's Tractor Run, our Christmas Carol meeting, Christmas lunch and Burns Night Supper. This year, we're also looking at the potential for a summer event with a fish and chip supper, alongside maybe a quiz, or similar. If you have an idea for what you might like as an activity for this evening event, please do mention it to one of the Committee. And, of course, ideas about new groups, trips, or activities are always welcome. To help spread our message about what Ashby u3a offers our members and continue to grow our u3a as a core part of the Ashby community, we are holding an Open Day on 19th May at Ashby Baptist Church. Our Committee and groups are showcasing their activities, so do please come along and bring your friends, if you are available - looking out for the flyers we shall be distributing beforehand.

Finally, on a wider note and for those who want to hear about what happens in u3as across the country, don't forget you can subscribe to the u3a Matters magazine, access u3a Facebook groups - including our own, listen to the u3a Podcast, subscribe to the u3a YouTube channel and access learning activities online (and come along to our Monthly Meeting) all as part of your £1.50 per month membership at no extra charge.

So with the spring sap rising, the birds and the bees starting to do their thing, flowers, shrubs and trees already growing fast and members planning their u3a activities, it's all systems go. The sun is riz...enjoy the warmth!

John Pilgrim

Chair, Ashby u3a

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE NOW DUE

As Chair John has reminded us above, your membership renewal is now due as of April 1st

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:

Val Reed, Ashby u3a Membership Secretary, 28 Windmill Close, Ashby de la Zouch, LE65 1EQ

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. Under the rules of our Constitution, they are all co-opted temporarily onto the committee, and will stand for election by the members at our next AGM in August.

Kevin Green, formerly our auditor, has agreed to take over the role of Treasurer from Val Reed, who in turn is taking over Membership from Iain Banns. Iain is remaining on the committee.

Michael O'Donohue and Adrian Hickson have also joined the committee and they are currently deciding which posts they will take on.

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.

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.

BOWLS EVENING

There is a Bowls Evening planned for Friday 2nd May at 6pm for 6.30 start at Ashby Bowls Club in the Bath Grounds

Come along and try your hand at bowls for free. The bar will be open afterwards. The club can accommodate up to 20 people. Contact Glenys at socials@ashbyu3a.co.uk to add your name to the list.

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.

OUR FACEBOOK PAGE



Ashby u3a Facebook page is now one year old with a steadily increasing following, both of u3a members, friends and the general public. Several new members have found us through seeing reports and photos from different activity groups on our page.

Our main aim is to share information about the benefits of u3a membership and the many activities on offer to members here in Ashby. While many groups meet in a member's home or are at optimum size, so may not need additional publicity, there may be other groups that we could promote by sharing details of meetings and outings on the page. We are always happy to post reports and photos of what you get up to!

If you'd like to feature on our page from time to time, please email me at facebookmods@ashbyu3a.co.uk

Lynda Kovach

MONTHLY MEETING – 25TH MARCH

Martin Cooper – ‘The Air Ambulance Service’

Martin, who is one of our members, came along with his friend Marty Meerkat to tell us all about the excellent work that the Air Ambulance service does in this area.

Martin decided last year to become a community volunteer for the Air Ambulance and that he would do something to raise money and awareness for the service. He raised more than £600 from his tour of 24 Air Ambulance stores in the East Midlands. Along with talks he has given to organisations in the area he has now raised more than £3000.

He quizzed us on various facts and figures about the service reminding us that the charity received not one penny in support from the government or from the National Lottery. All activities are covered by voluntary donations from the public.

A single mission costs on average £2300. The helicopters fly up to 80 times per week covering Leicestershire, Rutland, Derbyshire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire. They operate two helicopters, one for quick response to road crashes, serious injuries and life threatening illnesses, and a second one purely for sick babies and children for transfer to hospital, or if they are too ill to travel, to bring medical teams and bespoke equipment to them from across the UK. They also have 2 rapid response cars for when the helicopters cannot fly due to bad weather etc.

Across the 5 counties, they provide emergency cover for 3.2 million people and they have flown over 50,000 missions since their first flight in 2003.

Martin’s humorous stories made us realise, if we didn’t know before, the amazing job that the Air Ambulance service does for us all. Thank you Martin (and Marty).

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

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

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 March - Olive Branch Cafe

The group met at the Olive Branch Cafe in School Lane, Ashby this month. A popular venue for both the Breakfast and Coffee & Chat groups.

On April 17th they will be breakfasting at the Alpaca Café and Farm Shop at Hill Farm, Spring Lane, Packington LE65 1WU

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.

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

11th March

Five of us met today to compare our efforts over the last month. Lynda and Sue have been looking at Arabic lettering for the word ‘mother’ as well as different languages for the word. Jenny and Di have been practising ‘Modern Calligraphy’ and agreed it’s not as easy as it looks. Gill is continuing to concentrate on the work of Jessie M King.

We all agreed to keep practising this month and meet again at Jenny’s on April 8th.

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 April. On the 7th and 21st it will be from 7pm to 9pm, and on the 14th and 28th it will be in the morning from 11am to 1.30pm.

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

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

28th March

For our first meeting on the 'summer lawns' we had all three lawns in operation with 12 players. We also had the bonus of a visit from Mike O'Brian, an Ashby Croquet Club member. This meant that we could include an experienced player on each lawn to advise on the rules as well as play the game. With the added bonus of sunshine a very enjoyable morning was had by all.

There will be no meeting in April, so the next session will be on Friday 30th May.

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

12th March - Sunnyside Café in Ibstock

The group met at the Sunnyside Café in Ibstock this month.

Our next gathering will be at the Newlands Farm Cafe, Hilton, Derby DE65 5GQ on April 9th

If you would like to join us, please let Colin Woodland know at coffee@ashbyu3a.co.uk.

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

17th March

Today we had six in attendance.

Peter needed help receiving FM radio on his phone.

Mike reported a small saga with his laptop. It seems that when he closed the lid to hibernate the machine (rather than power it off) it froze. This feature normally requires the battery to be removed then discharged. As his battery is soldered in, the procedure was more difficult and required professional assistance. It seems the only safe way to deal with this is either to leave the laptop open to go to sleep all by itself, or to power it off. The alternative is to disable the hibernate mode.

JD noted that his iPad was occasionally slowing almost to a stop when typing or scrolling. This could only be cured by powering off then on again. No explanation was offered for the phenomenon.

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

6th March

A reduced attendance for various reasons, three brought memory sticks although one turned out to be empty! The idea of Spring photos was optimistic as spring had hardly sprung. Some photos were from a previous year especially the ones sent to me from a non attendee.

We discussed various thoughts for April as the weather should be better by then, so we decided we will meet at the Staunton Harold lower car park. The plan is to take photos of nature and old buildings.

DRAWING & PAINTING - Leader: Lesley Thomas- painting@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 07895 971090

19th March

This month we had fun with three funny birds: Penguin, Puffin or Pelican.

Next month's meeting will be on April 16th at 10am at Sharon's. The theme; "Spring into Easter"

I am stepping down from leading the group from this month and the role is going to be managed by Lesley Thomas and Susan Meakin. Lesley has agreed to be the 'digital' contact. Her details are shown above.

Regards Christine



Lesley's Penguin, Puffin and Pelican

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

March

The French Group continues to meet fortnightly at the Ivanhoe Club on a Monday morning at 11am (the club only opens up at 11am). The next meeting is on 14th April.

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.

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

6th March – Hispania, Ashby

This month the group visited Hispania in Ashby.

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 March - Planters Garden Centre, Tamworth

Today we had afternoon tea, and a talk by Gerald Ingram at Planters garden centre Tamworth. Unlimited drink and a substantial amount of food was the prelude to our talk before Gerald bought out a large selection of plants and sundries to give us a talk on.

We got some very useful information; he told us he had just purchased Pacific Nurseries and will now be able to supply their own plants for sale at Tamworth and at Bretby. After the talk most of our group took a leisurely stroll around the plants and inside the covered areas.

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

12th March

Today we were five at table, with some still away in the Antipodes.

Eileen continues filling in her Family History Book, a large paperback notebook with pro-forma pages for entering up the main details of each member of the Tree. This is a very valuable way of summarising the key information in a readily accessible form.

Dora, back from New Zealand, is organising the results of some research she did on holiday there. Her father's cousin emigrated there whilst he was there on War Service, and she is working to see if they ever met. Other antipodean links are proving very promising too. From her recent DNA test, she is confident she is in the right area.

Elizabeth is still working up her family records from her notes and also writing her father's life story.

JD is working on his own life story, but this seems to expand every time he revisits it! He has submitted a short piece to the Wakefield and District Family History Society's magazine 'Kinsman' to see if anyone can help to establish how his parents met in the 1920s

Finally, JD reminded the Group that we need to get our offering ready for the Ashby u3a Open Day in May. As it takes place very shortly after the May Family History Meeting, we need to think about it next time in April. To assist this process, JD will be running, on the lounge TV, the PowerPoint presentation he prepared for the last Open Day and providing the photocopies of pictures submitted by the group members last time. But these are for encouragement, and example, not as a substitute for fresh ideas and suggestions!

If any members want to get ahead of the game and start submitting ideas now, your Leader will be all ears!.

HISTORY – Leader: Yogi Godwin - history@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 01530 467840

27th March

Today 38 members turned out to listen to Bill Devitt, an old favourite of ours and long-standing member of Ashby u3a, to take us through the intricate intertwining of power and its means of production, and the progress of the Industrial Revolution.

But first, as is now becoming a favourite feature of our gatherings, Yogi treated us to a few 'Anniversaries':

The Ides of March (the 15th) in 44 BC when Julius Caesar was stabbed by his 'friends'.

It is now 5 years since Boris Johnson announced lockdown, denying access to friends and relatives.

March is also International Women's Month. Progress towards equality has been made but we must challenge how parents raise sons lacking respect for women. A good comparison is Afghanistan where the ruling Taliban deny formal education for girls.

Bill Devitt, 'The Power of the Industrial Revolution'

Almost since forever, horse, donkeys and oxen et al have provided the power we need to do those things we cannot do unaided, and particularly on the farm and the highway. This is why we traditionally rated machines by the 'horsepower' they represented. Now we have gone all scientific and use things called 'Newtons' and 'kilowatts' (among others).

The impact of the Napoleonic Wars in severely reducing the number of horses available, together with the burgeoning rate of invention in machinery, helped push the application of the new wonder energy source, steam, into more and more applications.

Already during the late 17th century and into the 18th century, transportation requirements were changing the equation. Manufactured goods and raw materials were required in ever greater quantities to be transported over ever greater distances, and, although the canals were proving their worth in this area, they were increasingly seen as too slow and confined to expensive routes and infrastructure.

Unfortunately, land transport was much slower for any great quantities of goods or people, as the roads were basically cart tracks which turned into quagmires when it rained. Stagecoaches could barely reach an average of 3 to 4 miles an hour, and often the poor passengers had to get out and push! After the Wars, as large numbers of war wounded and destitute soldiers were returned to England, and with the economy struggling, the 'Year of no Sun' in 1816 really pushed many people over the edge into beggary and even highway robbery. The Corn Laws, designed to protect local farmers from the cheap imports of American grain, and to control the effects of vagaries in supply, made things worse, with riots (some of them involving the ancestors of our own members!) and even large political movements raised against them. On the roads waggons hauling heavy loads were unable to move large quantities long distances, at any sort of speed.

However, almost too late, Thomas Telford's new method of road building, using techniques the Romans had developed, enabled stagecoaches to run at much higher speeds, sometimes averaging 12 to 15 miles an hour between stages, and resulting in timed and scheduled long distance services from London to Edinburgh and Glasgow via York. This same facility also benefited long distance goods haulage. I say almost too late, as the Railway Age was about to start and make stagecoaches and long-haul waggons almost redundant.

The upshot, among many other effects, was to encourage the adoption of steam power to compensate for the lack of horses and to increase production. There were several 'pioneers' in early powered transport. Trevithick is often credited with the first practical use of steam haulage in Devon and Cornwall in 1805 but his design of the beam engine to raise water from the coal mines included innovations to greatly increase the power from steam enabling them to be worked harder and further. He is credited with the development of many advances in the efficiency and power of industrial steam engines. However, it was the dramatic success of George Stevenson's 'Rocket' at the Rainhill Trials in 1829 which kick started the railway age.

Steam had already been long in use in stationary engines on farms and other semi-industrial venues, but its use for long distance transportation now became apparent. Not the least to people like George Hudson, who almost single handedly triggered the Railway Mania which rapidly covered the country in many networks of lines.

It followed, of course that the push to steam became adopted by factories, which had heretofore used waterpower to run their machines.

There came into being a sort of Virtual Circle, or more aptly a Virtual Triangle, of interdependence between Coal, Rail and Industry.

Almost by accident these advances spread worldwide, with the expertise being gained here in these islands being exported worldwide.

Bill's presentation was filled with all sorts of examples and pictures depicting how this complex process started, developed and spread. It was by no means a simple linear evolution, as there were inventions and developments moving side by side at different speeds, sometimes conflicting with each other, sometimes helping each other. But the picture he evoked was absolutely fascinating.

Bill closed by posing the question I think we are now all beginning to ask ourselves:

"What comes next?"

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.

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

We had two outings this month as the planned February trip slipped to early March

6th March - JCB factory tour, Rocester, Staffs

This was the second time Industrial Heritage had been to JCB but the last time was 11 years ago and much had changed for visitors. A new Visitor Centre has been opened, and very smart it is, looking more like the lobby of a posh hotel. We were offered tea, coffee and biscuits before being equipped with hi-vis jackets, safety glasses and radios with headphones so that we would be able to hear our guide as we walked around the noisy factory. But first we were ushered into a very smart theatre to watch a film about the history and future of JCB. The company was started in a lock-up shed in Uttoxeter in 1945 by Joseph Cyril Bamford, his son Anthony took over as chairman in 1975. The company now has a revenue of over £4 billion a year and is still privately owned by the Bamford family.

JCB are the makers of the ubiquitous yellow diggers seen on building sites, roadworks and farms around the country but they also make a whole range of related products around the world. It has factories in the USA, Brazil, China, India and Russia, although it has suspended operations in Russia since the invasion of Ukraine. It makes almost every part of its machines itself at its various factories, including the self-designed engines which in future will be hydrogen-powered rather than diesel.

For the tour of the spotlessly clean factory we were divided up into 3 groups each with their own guide. We started with the goods-inward warehouse which, although the factory operates on a just-in-time basis, seemed to be a huge version of an Ikea warehouse filled to the high ceilings with racks of parts. It is important that parts arrive on time as stopping the production line costs £10,000 per minute!

We saw how sheets of metal are cut, folded and welded into various parts before being painted and gradually assembled into diggers. Engines, axles, wheels and tyre, drivers cabs and the all-important diggers all being added to the chassis.

The site has its own doctor's and dentist's surgery to save workers having to take off many hours for an appointment. It must be worth getting a job there just to be able to get a dentist appointment! They also have their own college across the road where apprentices get their formal schooling and ultimately their qualifications.

We finished with a tour of the JCB museum with exhibits from Joseph's very first products through to the latest. There was also one of the fleet of scooters he bought because they had JCB numberplates which he transferred to the company cars and models of all the private planes that the company has owned. Joseph, as a qualified pilot, would fly prospective customers to E.Mids airport before driving them to Rocester in his JCB 1 numbered Cadillac. Always the showman.

A fascinating look at one of the UK's most successful companies who seem to like to do things their way

26th March - Lincoln Cathedral guided roof tour

It doesn't get much more Industrial Heritage than seeing how buildings were created nearly 1000 years ago. The earliest parts of the cathedral building were started by the 1st Bishop of Lincoln, Remigius de Fécamp, in 1072. It was completed in 1092 but severely damaged by earthquake in 1185 and rebuilt over the following centuries. The cathedral reached its current form by 1380. At that time it had a tall spire atop the central tower which reputedly made it 525 ft tall. This would have made it the first building in the world to be taller than the Great Pyramid of Giza. Unfortunately the spire was blown down in a storm in 1548 and never replaced. If it had continued to stand, it wouldn't have been surpassed in height until the Eiffel Tower was built in 1887-9.

Our tour, led by the very knowledgeable David, took us up into the twin towers of the west end façade via various spiral staircases where we were shown how the building had moved in the 1185 earthquake and how it was saved from almost certain collapse in the early 20th C by pouring 19,000 tons of concrete into the gap between the inner and outer walls. Unfortunately this concrete is reacting with the limestone walls themselves and may have to be dug out again before too long! From there we went up inside the roof itself to see the forest of wooden beams holding up the roof. Many of these beams are original to the 1380 construction and the oak trees would have been up to 200 years old when felled making the wood itself over 800 years old. We stepped out on to a small balcony on the south side of the roof just in time to hear the striking of the Great Tom bell at 12 noon. The bell weighs over 5 tons and was cast in 1835. From there we went back to the West façade but higher up and were allowed out from another balcony with excellent views of the castle, city and beyond.



We were also able to look down into the nave from the west end and to get right up close to one of the amazing stained glass windows. We finished the tour by walking the length of the nave not at floor level but along the upper gallery. This fascinating tour lasted a full two hours rather than the advertised 90 mins giving us little time to look around the rest of the cathedral so we had a rushed lunch in the cathedral café before our car park tickets ran out. That leaves us much more to see next time!

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

13th March The Bull's Head, Ashby

March's venue was to have been the White Hart, Market Street but they deigned to reject us on the day we wanted, so we went to the Bull's Head, Market Street, just across the road instead.

On April 10th we shall be at The Unicorn , 20 Main Street, Orton on the Hill CV9 2NN.

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 March

As only 5 of us were available today, we took the opportunity to listen to some longer pieces starting with Sallie's choice – 17yo Canadian pianist Ryan Wang's winning performance at the BBC Young Musician of the Year 2024. We watched and listened to almost all of the 30 mins of Rachmaninov piano concerto #2 in C minor (we skipped a bit in the middle). It was incredible to watch someone so young play so assuredly whilst watching the orchestra and audience and involving all of them. A truly great performance.

After that we listened to some more usual pop, swing, jazz and country songs:

The sublime Carpenters with 'There's a kind of hush'

The recently departed Roberta Flack and wonderful 'The first time ever I saw your face'

Glenn Miller and 'Moonlight serenade' followed by Carly Simon's version of the same song.

A couple of tracks from the underrated Beverley Craven singing 'Hope', a very apt song about loss of democracy, and the Abba tune 'The winner takes it all'

Another YouTube video was of an American woman on holiday in Ireland being asked to join in the local music session at a pub in County Kerry. The woman just happened to be the incomparable Dolly Parton and she gave an impromptu version of 'Coat of many colors'. The local musicians gave great backing and she sang wonderfully.

We also listened to Bunny Berigan's 1937 recording of the jazz classic 'Caravan' and Acker Bilk's 'Buona Sera'

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

March

The recorder group had its first meeting on 6th March, with 7 members playing a selection of our music. We played Fun Folk, a modern arrangement of folk tunes, arranged for 5 parts. We then had a look at a suite of Spanish Airs and Dances by Gaspar Sans, originally written for guitar. We recognised the tunes, which makes it easier to play.

We have been invited to play in a concert on 29th March at Stanton Methodist Church, Derbyshire, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the church. Six members volunteered to play, so we started to choose the music. We also decided to have an additional couple of rehearsals, which we scheduled for the intermediate Thursdays between our usual meetings, 13th and 27th March.

On 20th March, we had 10 members at the meeting. Our list of music was very similar to that of the previous meeting, although we added "The Skye Boat Song", "Fine Knacks for Ladies", and the "Cantique de Jean Racine", as we were considering playing them at the concert.

We have sorted out our playing list for the concert, with the choice of instruments required, which we hope will interest and entertain the audience. The other performers are The Boundary Singers, a ladies' choir who meet at the York Road Methodist Church in Church Gresley, and a group of Fijians who, we understand, attend Stanton Church.

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.

The 1st report is carried over from last month:

11th February - 'Genetics – Fact or Fiction?' by Catrin Rutland

Did you know that in about a quarter of births in the UK, the baby does not know their correct father. This is just one of the astounding facts revealed by our guest speaker, Catrin Rutland. Many more were to follow.

Catrin Rutland, is a Professor of Molecular Medicine at Nottingham University and has been interested in genetics since the age of five. Genetics features strongly in scientific research, crime investigations and in popular media, notably in the Star Wars films and the Jeremy Kyle television series.

The growing interest in family genealogy has spawned many online companies offering DNA testing to discover our ancestry and our risk of certain diseases.

Catrin discussed the controversial issue of 'cloning' as featured in the Jurassic Park films to create extinct dinosaurs from their DNA preserved in amber. The reality is that such cloning is almost impossible without a suitable donor. The earliest real clone was a tadpole in 1952, then in 1997, 'Dolly' the sheep was cloned but only after many aborted attempts. Even though clones have the same DNA as the donor, they will not behave or look the same because many characteristics are determined by the environment. For ethical reasons, human cloning is banned, but genetic engineering of specific human and animal organs is allowed. For plants, cloning is wide-spread, Kew Gardens has a repository of plants and seeds to ensure their survival after a nuclear attack. Many countries hold human DNA databases to support identity checks for security reasons.

A lively discussion followed the talk, including whether genetics should be used to live longer or to live healthier lives. This led onto personalised healthcare whereby medical decisions are based on an individual's risk to specific diseases, determined by genetic testing. It was evident that as the science of genetics becomes more sophisticated many fictional notions will become reality, raising difficult ethical questions for us all.

11th March. – 'Diabetes' by Eleni Robinson

A talk on this important topic was given to the u3a Science and Technology group by Eleni Robinson, Engagement Lead for the local NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme, who also led some lively questions and answers.

Diabetes is a condition that causes a person's blood sugar level to become too high. It is important for it to be diagnosed as early as possible because if left untreated, it is likely to get worse and can cause long-term health problems. The NHS currently spends around £14 billion a year, treating it, 10% of its total budget!

There are 2 types:

Type 1- an autoimmune condition which requires monitoring glucose levels and treatment with insulin injections.

Type 2 - which develops with age and lifestyle. Type 2 diabetes is when a hormone called insulin does not work properly, there either is not enough insulin produced, or your cells become less receptive to insulin. This causes the level of glucose (sugar) in your blood to become too high. It affects adults and children, and if diagnosed early enough can be monitored.

It is estimated that two million people in England are at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes, which is a leading cause of preventable sight loss in people and is a major contributor to kidney failure, heart attack, and stroke. About 30% of people can even have type 2 but be unaware of their condition and risk.

There is also gestational diabetes that can occur during pregnancy, but no one in the audience was likely to have this! These women will have regular monitoring during and after the birth.

The most common signs and symptoms of type 2 diabetes are feeling very tired or weak, peeing more than usual, feeling thirsty all the time, losing weight without trying to and blurred vision. These vary between different people, and some people have no symptoms at all. The only way to be sure is through blood tests administered by your GP. There was a lot of discussion on this as GP practices vary in offering blood tests and their frequency. You can check your risk – look for 'KYR diabetes' on the internet (Know Your Risk)!

Several factors that increase your chances of developing type 2, or being pre diabetic are excess weight, an unhealthy diet, genetic factors, stress, some medications and poor sleep. Consumption of ultra-processed foods is best reduced or avoided as these contain too many trans fats, salts and added sugars.

The good news is that if diagnosed as pre-diabetic there is a FREE NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme that one can be enrolled on. When followed, 76% of people have reduced their blood glucose levels, 79% have successfully lost weight, as well as saving money for the NHS.

The prevention programme has 14 sessions spread over 9 months and it has a high success rate. The use of diabetes-related medications or injections can be avoided by taking healthy steps to improve your lifestyle long-term.

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

19th March

This month we were tasting some unusual Italian reds from around the country. The first was from the Marzemino grape native to NE Italy. This wine was a 2023 vintage from M&S. 12% alc at £8. A hearty fruity wine tasting of cherries and with no tannin so it was super smooth. Everyone liked it scoring it either 7 or 8 out of 10. A great match for tomato pasta dished, cheese and cold meats.

The next wine was also from M&S, 14% this time, also 2023 vintage but costing £11. This was from Tuscany; Governo All'uso Toscano is an unoaked wine, near black, rich and fruity almost raisiny so tasting almost like a dry port. This scored better than the 1st wine at an average of 8/10 with several scoring it 8.5

Third was Castellore Aglianico del Vulture 2021 14% from Aldi at £8. It comes from Puglia in southern Italy. It showed signs of age, being more reddish brown than purple and tasting of dark fruits like black cherries and plums with vanilla to indicate time in oak. It was drier which was particularly noticeable after the last wine. This proved a little more divisive with scores ranging from 5 to 8.5, but averaging out at exactly the same as the first wine.

Lastly came Santodeno Negroamaro 2023 13.5% from Sainsbury at £12. This too was from Puglia, again rich and plummy but spicy and sweeter this time. It too was divisive but less so than the Aldi wine averaging out at a little over 7/10. However we thought it rather too expensive for what it was.

So, to our wine of the month. Difficult this time. The Governo All'uso Toscano scored highest but we didn't think everyone would like its sweetness and, like the Sainsbury wine was too expensive.

Probably our recommendation would be the M&S Marzemino, but there are very many good wines at £8 (£8 is the new £6 it seems as prices rise by the day) as this is a very competitive part of the market, and whilst these wines were very enjoyable, none of them were outstanding.

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.

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

27th March - The Cricketts Inn, Acresford

Despite having pre-ordered our food choices as requested by the pub, it seemed that they didn't receive our email with said choices. That didn't matter anyway as the menu had changed from the one we had chosen from which was downloaded from their website.

Fortunately that didn't seem to faze the serving team who took all our new orders efficiently and cheerfully and which were served up surprisingly quickly. The only disappointment was that one or two items that members had set their sights and tastebuds on were no longer on the menu.

However the food which we did get was tasty and very generous. In fact several of us were unable to eat a dessert although it didn't stop a few trenchermen and women from indulging. A good evening was had by all.

Next month we shall be at the Falcon in Long Whatton on April 24th where we shall again have to pre-order. Hopefully from the correct menu this time!

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

21st March. Ticknall car park for a walk into Calke

Eighteen people met in Ticknall village hall car park to walk into Calke Park. Our route took us through the old tramway tunnel to the lime kilns area which is now a nature reserve. One of the problems with walking through the tunnel is the uneven ground, not easy to negotiate in almost total darkness, and we did have a faller but she soon stood up and continued the walk.

From the kiln area we took a path leading across to join the main entrance road. We stopped at the hut where membership cards are read to enquire if the cafe kiosk in the children's play area was open. Unfortunately not, so 17 walkers continued to the cafe near the house while Margaret returned for her car and brought it to the main car park and joined us. While we had coffee we decided who would like a lift back to our start point. Three felt they had walked far enough so that left 14 to complete the walk back into Ticknall. The total distance of the walk for them was a little further than usual at 3.75 miles.

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

10th March. Ticknall, Melbourne and Calke, led by Kevin

After a run of lovely bright days, a slightly cloudier day greeted ten of us as we gathered at Ticknall Village Hall car park. Following the group photograph we left the car park into Chapel Street and turned left though the gate opposite the Calke Estate main traffic entrance. The dry grassy track took us across several fields before turning right onto a tarmac track to cross over the A514 and around a field to St Brides, now a Grade 2 listed farmhouse that was once a possible medieval Chapel.

Soon we crossed the B587 road to Melbourne, following it downhill before turning right to the Staunton Harold Reservoir water tower and NT café for coffee. The easy going stone track took us along the water's edge, crossing a quiet access road, further fields, across a bridge and along the track though Calke Lime Kilns and back to the car park.

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

4th March. Calke Tramway, Piston Hill and Scaddows Farm, led by Kevin

Another lovely sunny day greeted sixteen walkers at the Staff of Life, Ticknall car park. After ordering lunch we set off along the road past Calke main entrance and turning right into the Lime Kilns. We passed through the tunnel under the main drive to Calke Estate and joined the Tramway trail all the way to the Staunton Harold Estate, taking the road into the estate and left to Dimminsdale.

After stopping to admire a pair of legs in a tree! we returned to a wooded track then across the road and back onto the Tramway Trail and into Calke Estate passing Betty's pond, the main drive, the ticket office and back to Ticknall for Lunch.

18th March. Around Woodhouse Eaves led by Kevin

After a few days of warm weather, we were greeted by a lovely morning as fourteen of us gathered at the Old Bulls Head at Woodhouse Eaves.

Following the usual group photo, we left the pub car park walking along the high street and the beginning of a climb which took us uphill and into Broombriggs Farm Estate. On reaching the top of the estate we stopped for a short breather and were rewarded with a lovely view across Leicestershire down towards Loughborough.

Rested we continued along a grassy path and a fenced off enclosure and were rewarded with a foal resting against the fence. Not long afterwards we began climbing again to the top Beacon Hill carpark before continuing round and down the hill back into the Broombriggs Farm Estate and Woodhouse Eaves.

Your Committee

As you will have seen above we have recruited 3 new members to the committee. Some have yet to be appointed to roles but I'm sure that won't be for very long.

Role	Name	Contact email
Chairman	John Pilgrim	chairman@ashbyu3a.co.uk
Business Secretary	Tony Smith	secretary@ashbyu3a.co.uk
Treasurer	Kevin Green	treasurer@ashbyu3a.co.uk
Membership Secretary	Val Reed	members@ashbyu3a.co.uk
Interest Group Co-ordinator	vacant	interestg@ashbyu3a.co.uk
Welfare	vacant	welfare@ashbyu3a.co.uk
Speaker seeker	Yogi Godwin	speakers@ashbyu3a.co.uk
Communications	Mike Stow	webmaster@ashbyu3a.co.uk
Social Secretary	Glenys Morrice	socials@ashbyu3a.co.uk
Without portfolio	Iain Banns	
Without portfolio (for now!)	Michael O'Donoghue	
Without portfolio (for now!)	Adrian Hickson	