

Newsletter December 2025

Interest Groups Timetable for December 2025

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

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Monthly Meeting	Tue 16 th	2 pm	Congregational Church, Ashby. Consensio Choir will sing for us
Activities	Wed 3 rd Fri 19 th	1-3 pm 2-4 pm	Ashby Leisure Centre
Arts and Crafts	Thu 4 th	10 am	Packington Village Hall.
Breakfast	Thu 18 th	10 am	RedZ Café, Coxon's Mews, Ashby
Bridge	Mon 1 st Mon 8 th Mon 15 th Mon 22 nd	7-9 pm 7-9 pm 11am-1.30pm TBA	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Calligraphy	Tue 9 th	10 am	At Lynda's
Coffee and Chat	Wed 10 th	10 am	Lakeside Bistro, Shortheath Rd, Moira DE12 6BW
Computer	Wed 3 rd Mon 15 th	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Croquet	-	-	No meetings now until the start of Spring
Digital Photography	Thu 4 th	10 am	16 Winchester Way
Drawing and painting	Wed 17 th	10 am	At a local café yet to be chosen
Family History	Wed 10 th	2 pm	2 Marlborough Way
Food from Afar	Thu 4 th	6 pm	Wing Wah Chinese Buffet, New Street, Burton upon Trent DE14 3QW
French	Mon 8 th Mon 22 nd	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Gardening	Thu 18 th	1.15 pm	Packington Village Hall. Christmas celebration and Secret Santa. NOTE change of time
History	-	-	No meeting in December
Industrial Heritage	-	-	No meeting in December
Literature	Tue 9 th	1.30 pm	At Sandra's house for Christmas lunch

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Lunch	-	-	No meeting in December. Christmas lunch at the Golf Club the same day
Medium Walks	Mon 8 th	9.45 for 10am start	Meet at Foremark Reservoir CP
Music Appreciation	Tue 2 nd	10 am	Sallie's at Woodside Cottage, 61, Melbourne Road, Newbold. LE67 8JH NOTE change of day
Poetry Reading	-	-	No meeting in December
Recorder	Thu 4 th Thu 18 th	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Rummikub	Tue 9 th Tue 23 rd	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Science & Technology	Tue 9 th	2 pm	Packington Village Hall. 'Have yourself a Wild Christmas' by Kevin Reynolds
Scrabble	Mon 8 th Mon 22 nd	10.30 am	The Bulls Head, Ashby
Short Walks	Fri 19 th	10 am	Meet at the Hood Park gates
Social Events	Thu 11 th	12 for 12.30	Willesley Park Golf Club. Our Christmas lunch
Supper Club	-	-	No meeting in December
The 10 Milers	-	-	No meeting in December
Walking	Tue 2 nd Tue 16 th	9.45 for 10am -	Will start from Oakthorpe Colliery CP, Ashby Rd Donisthorpe DE12 7QD No walk today. Same day as Monthly Meeting
Wine Appreciation	Wed 17 th	7 pm	Annie's house

Interest Groups Timetable for early January 2026

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Food from Afar	Thu 1st	-	No meeting in January
Scrabble	Mon 5 th	10.30 am	The Bulls Head, Ashby
French	Mon 5 th	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Bridge	Mon 5 th	TBA	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Walking	Tue 6 th	-	No walk today
Music Appreciation	Wed 7 th	10 am	At Mike's
Activities	Wed 7 th	1 – 3 pm	Ashby Leisure Centre
Computer	Wed 7th	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Arts and Crafts	Thu 8 th	10 am	Packington Village Hall.
Digital photography	Thu 8 th	10 am	16 Winchester Way
Recorder	Thu 8 th	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal

CO-OP CAR PARK CLOSING

You may well be aware that the Co-op in Derby Rd has now closed. It was feared that the car park would also close on the same date. Now it seems that it is **remaining open for the time being** but no-one seems to know how long for.

Eventually this is going to make parking more difficult for the whole town but particularly for those coming to the Tuesday Monthly Meetings. We hope it doesn't put you off from coming along.

Hopefully we will be able to find parking places on the nearby streets or in the other car parks in Ashby.

BURNS SUPPER

23rd January – Willesley Park Golf Club

Bookings are now open for the Burns Supper. The price will be £35 pp



If you wish to attend please contact Glenys at socials@ashbyu3a.co.uk or phone 07721 635546 (please use email if you can). If you do not want real Haggis but would like either the vegetarian Haggis or the Chicken option, please let her know.

Payments can be made by Bank Transfer to Ashby u3a 08-92-99 67259878 or by cheque to Ashby u3a. Mark cheque or transfer "Burns Supper"

Glenys will also be at the Monthly Meeting on Tues 16th Dec and will be able to take bookings and payments there.

MONTHLY MEETING

25th November - Megan McMenamin - 'Bright Hope House, Swannington'

Megan came along to tell us all about Bright Hope House, but first she introduced their President Emeritus Stewart Shepherd to give us an overview of the charity's history. Stewart, it turned out, is Megan's granddad.

Stewart started out as a volunteer for Sue Ryder Home at Staunton Harold and when it closed down in 2002 he and several others decided to form Hospice Hope to try to help replace it in some way. They opened a support café in Legion House, Ashby. Ashby and Coalville Hospitals both had palliative care suites although much smaller than the 300 beds that Sue Ryder provided. Hospice Hope was able to fund an 'at home' team and community nurses. Eventually in 2017 they were able to open a day centre when a local doctor was moving to Madagascar and offered them her own home to use. When she returned, she moved upstairs in her own home to allow the day centre to continue downstairs! They realised that this could not continue and approached NW Leics District Council for help. The council offered some land in Swannington at a peppercorn rent and Bloor Homes generously offered to build and pay for the new centre. At this point Hospice Hope was renamed Bright Hope and Bright Hope House was born.

Megan now took over: The centre now offers a variety of services to those who need them including Day Care, Counselling, Support Cafes, Befriending, Way Back to Wellness, Complementary Therapy and Bereavement Support. They support 180 people each week helped by 180 volunteers.

In 2025 Bright Hope was awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Service which is the MBE for volunteer groups.

Bright Hope is constantly fundraising from the public and through Corporate sponsors as it cost between £350 - £400,000 each year to maintain the wonderful services it provides to those in need.

An excellent presentation of a wonderful local charity.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

ACTIVITIES – Co-ordinator: Michael O'Donoghue - activities@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 07485 159487

We had a big upturn this month with 34 members attending on the Wednesday and 25 on the Friday. However on Friday 8 members who normally come, had another event at Calke Abbey, so numbers could have been higher still. It feels like we are getting a good core of members coming at least once per month.

All members are more than welcome, so come and join us for some fun and laughter so this is a reminder of the December schedule:

Wednesday 3rd, 1pm to 3pm,

Friday 19th, 2pm to 4pm

As we are coming into the Xmas festive season, feel free to bring some Xmas attire to add to the fun.

Michael



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

6th November

The Craft group met on Thursday 6th. As we were coming into the coat wearing season, we made some hand stitched broaches to wear on our winter coats.

As usual, there was a lot of fun and laughter amongst the eleven ladies who attended. We even had cake to go with our coffee or tea as one of our ladies was celebrating her birthday that coming weekend.

Our next craft session will be on 4th December, our last meeting for 2025, where we will be making a couple of Christmas items.

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 December. Times for each day are either 11 to 1.30 or 7 to 9 pm but vary from month to month due to other events taking place at the Ivanhoe Club. Timings for this month are in the timetable above.

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

Unfortunately we no longer have access to winter lawns (on the bowling green) as the Welfare has a new bowls club. The bowling green is being rested and prepared for next season.

The next meeting for the Group is most likely to be at the end of March. More news in the new year.

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

20th November - Cattows Farm Café

Fourteen had booked to partake of breakfast at Cattows Farm Café but, in the event, only ten managed to get there. One of the hazards of getting older is that you can never be sure until the last moment that you will be able to fulfil your plans for the day. Family issues, medical appointments and general ailments can hit us without prior warning. Nevertheless, those of us who made it to Cattows had a fun time and enjoyed a good breakfast. Before we knew it, people were coming in for lunch and it was time for us to break up our gathering and get on with the rest of our day.

For a good chat, a hearty breakfast and some fun, why not join us on 18th December at 10am at RedZ Cafe in Coxon's Mews Ashby. Five of us have already signed up. If you want to join us, send a quick Email to breakfast@ashbyu3a.co.uk and you will be added to the list and made most welcome.

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

12th November - Bowdon Lodge Farm Tea Room

We had planned to visit the Courtside Cafe At Grangewood Tennis Centre. However, The Cafe was not planning to open that day, so we swiftly changed plans and met at Bowdon Lodge Farm Tea Room instead. Seven of us enjoyed a drink and a chat. Oh, and a cake or pastry to go with the drink. One downside was the presence of poorly controlled yappy dogs that obviously did not want to share the space with each other.

Nevertheless, a good time was had by all.

Our next gathering will be at Lakeside Bistro, Moira at 10am on 10th December. Nine have signed up to be there so far.

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

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

11th November

Five of us met this month and after a catch up on various health issues we decided to carry on with working on Modern Calligraphy texts. We looked at how using different textures produced some interesting results, as different pens and nibs. The rest of the session was spent practising the font and we decided that we would finish our work for the December meeting. We will decide what to move onto next in January.

Next meeting is on December 9th at Lynda's.

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

17th November

Another quiet day on the farm with 5 attending and only two issues to resolve.

Joan needed to update her version of Windows 11 but was unsure from the instructions how to do this.

This is relatively straightforward. Mike set to, to help, but the new version took so long to download and install that Joan had to take her laptop away with it still running!

She also was unable to read the Newsletter, so Mike helped her to download Adobe Reader, which is needed for this.

A suggestion was made that those with Windows 10, and unable to update to Windows 11, could be given advice on how to use the ESU facility which gives partial coverage for a year.

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

6th November

There were 6 of us today, to show our photos on the theme of Autumn. We had many with weird and wonderful fungi, trees and especially beautiful leaf falls and displays, and some nicely posed deer and birds, all of whom stayed still enough to be photographed!

We then discussed cameras and the use thereof, with notes on handling them outdoors: an important, if often neglected, aspect of the art. Brian showed us several magazines which would help to get the best out of the gear we have. We next meet on Thursday 4th Dec.: the homework is free format work.

FOOD FROM AFAR - Leader: Colin Woodland - food_from_afar@ashbyu3a.co.uk - 01530 413867

6th November - Omomo Korean Street Food, Derby

Nine of the thirteen who originally booked for our visit to Omomo Korean Street Food actually turned up, which was a little disappointing. The owner and staff were most amenable, efficient and professional. The meals were authentically Korean. One dish was particularly interesting as it was enthusiastically accepted by the American troops, yet it was basically a stew made up of all the leftovers from other dishes.

Our next meeting will be a first for the group. We will be sampling the Chinese buffet at the Wing Wah in New Street Burton Upon Trent at 6pm on 4 December at 6pm. Eleven have already booked for the occasion but we can increase the booking if more wish to join us. If you wish to attend, please let Colin Woodland know at food_from_afar@ashbyu3a.co.uk.

I have had to pay a £10 a head deposit which is non-refundable. If you are attending, please bring £10 in cash to reimburse me and you will then pay the restaurant the cost of your drinks and meal with a £10 discount. Complicated, I know, but that is the only way the restaurant works!

There will be no Food From Afar gathering in January 2026 as most of us will have been saying goodbye to the old year and hello to the new one the night before.

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

13th November - Halfway House, Donisthorpe

Seventeen members gathered at the Halfway House, for Lunch. This was our first adventure with this quaint village pub but I suspect it will not be the last! A good number of us arrived at the pub early to find it did not open until noon. It was a fairly raw day and we faced a wait in the cold. However, typical of a traditional village pub, the staff invited us in to the warmth of the bar to await opening time: a good start and a good impression. The restaurant area was quite small and we completely filled it and there was hardly room for the staff to perform their duties. Nevertheless, the staff cheerfully, efficiently and safely served not only our group but several other tables in the other bars. They very skilfully negotiated the route from the kitchen, through a very narrow gap between our tables, to serve us all with excellent meals, well prepared and well presented. Unusually, almost everyone decided to have dessert. Conversation flowed freely and we were quite a lot later than usual in leaving - because of the chat and certainly not because of any delays in feeding us. The staff did an amazing job and the chef deserved his title. Well done Halfway House.

In December, the U3A Committee take over the reins to organise the Christmas Lunch at the Willesley Golf Club. Our first Lunch in 2026 will be at the Mill Wheel in Hartshorne on 8 January at Noon. Eighteen have already signed up to be there. If anyone else wishes to join the group please email on luncheon@ashbyu3a.co.uk to book a place. Please note that we will have to pre-order our meals. I will circulate the menu as soon as I receive it to all those on the attendance list. Having made your menu choice, if you cancel with less than 48 hours notice I will have to charge you for the meal.

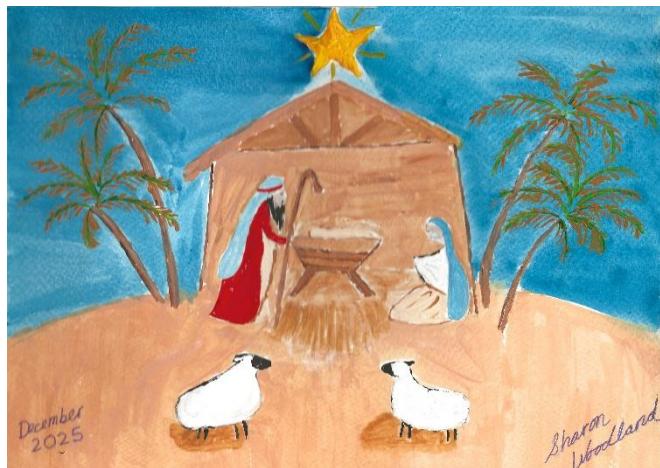
DRAWING & PAINTING - Leader: Lesley Thomas- painting@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 07895 971090

15th October

This month the drawing and painting group were going to leave the alphabet for the opportunity to paint a Christmas theme picture. Unfortunately only two of us were able to attend but I'm hoping that those absent will still submit their pictures to the gallery.



Christine's Christmas card



Sharon's Nativity scene

Next month on the 17th we will not be painting, we will be doing coffee and cake at a local café. We will be back to painting on the 15th January and the letter is G. That just leaves me to wish everyone the seasons greetings.

Lesley

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

12th November

7 in attendance today and two working from home.

Colin Daren: Colin is a visitor from Burton U3A. The team made him very welcome. JD worked with him to get him started on researching and building his tree.

Adrian: Still working on his Story, and helping Jan.

Sue: Pitched in with Adrian to help Jan. Still working on her 3xgreats grandparents with 10 children. Continued afterwards from home helping Jan.

Jan: Today she worked on confirming one branch of her tree. Adrian and Sue helped to sort out problems with this. She continued working at home afterwards: true dedication!

Eileen: Unable to attend, she worked from home, chasing hints and ordering certificates.

Mary: Offline, at home, but picked up the chase for Jan's ancestor with Adrian and Sue.

Elizabeth: Working today on her admin and Parish Records from the Church of Scotland.

Ana: Concentrated on tracing on ancestor through the censuses to 1911

JD: Worked to get Colin started on researching and building his Tree as the basis for his future work. Gave him a Family Tree Maker CD to start developing his skills and basic tree. Once he has a membership to Ancestry or FMP, he can transfer the tree by gedcom.

We next meet on December 10th.

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

November

The French group continue to meet at the Ivanhoe Club Wilfred Gardens Ashby fortnightly on Monday mornings at 11am.

Next meeting will be Monday 8th December when we will do role play involving visiting 'Le Bistro Muriel' and ordering food and drink. We will take turns in being the proprietor and the client. The proprietor will be out of some of the stock and the client will be in a hurry to catch a train so some choice vocabulary will be required.

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

20th November - Edwardian Gardens

Today we had a presentation on Arts & Crafts and Edwardian gardens given by Camilla Anderson, with some stunning photos. The Arts and Crafts gardens were designed to be a seamless harmonious extension to the home, Key features included the concept of garden rooms and the use of architectural features like pergolas, arbours and dry stone walls.

Celebrated figures like William Morris and Gertrude Jekell championed this approach.

A good turnout enjoyed our first meeting of the winter season.

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

26th November. Planning Meeting at the Bluebell

20 members turned out for our annual planning meeting to try to decide where to visit next year. The pub opened specially for us and provided lunch, tea and coffees (and drinks!) for which we thank both the pub and Bill for arranging it.

We were quite successful in getting more than enough potential venues for a full season and now a few volunteers are going away to check on opening dates, prices and other information before we finalise the programme for next year.

We have decided on January's venue which will be the Museum of Making at Derby. This is close by, easy to get to and indoors if the weather is inclement. And as a bonus it is free and therefore easier to organise!

Other venues will appear on the website as they are finalised. It promises to be an interesting year

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

This year we have read an amazing range of wonderful books. I think we would all agree that that The Forsyth Saga was top of the list. As a group we have been together for many years and read some amazing books.

For December the group will, as usual, be meeting at Sandra's house to discuss the latest book reading, which is 'Homecoming' by Kate Morton, but also to have our Christmas lunch. At that time we will make the final decision on what books to read next year.

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

We 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. If you'd like to try us out email the address above. It's fun and sociable.

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

30th October – Danny Wells - 'WWI Shattered Illusions'

As this meeting was on the last day of October it didn't make it into last month's issue, so here it is now.

38 attended to hear Danny Wells tell how the attitude to War changed from a gung-ho jingoistic beginning during the 19th century to terrible disillusionment in the carnage of The Great War.

Danny began his talk by painting the picture of the sense of adventure prevalent in the UK at the outbreak of War in 1914. This was built on the general feeling of exceptionalism in the country. 'Britannia Rules the Waves'. Children had been brought up to believe we were invincible. School was the place where they were encouraged to prepare for this. The celebration of Empire Day (May 25th) was accompanied with patriotic songs and poems.

The actual run up to the War has been typified as an accident waiting to happen, and the mood in most European countries was quite similar. War was a good thing, and young men felt that fighting was their birthright. The popular press and boys' magazines emphasised the 'Play' aspect: 'Play up and play the game'. Most young men were keen to have a go and were sometimes concerned that they would not get there in time to have a crack at the enemy.

Saner minds had their doubts. Sir Edward Grey, Foreign Secretary, could see a bit further than most and said: 'The lamps are going out all over Europe, we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime.' Kitchener, an experienced warhorse, thought the War could last for 7 years.

However the initial surge of enthusiasm produced 2.5 million volunteers inside 16 months, many of them in the so-called Pals battalions. This was followed by Conscription in 1916, as numbers fell away with the reality of War becoming only too obvious.

As the War went on the attitude changed. War poets in particular changed the tenor of their work. Rudyard Kipling at first was so enthusiastic to get his son into the fighting that he used his influence to override the medical standards. But after the War he wrote: 'If any question why we died / Tell them, because our fathers lied' His anguish at John's death just six weeks after going into the Line must have been awful.

Danny gave us several examples of the awful carnage especially in the Battles of the Somme and Passchendaele. He led us through several of the War Poets with lots of evocative slides. Some of the Poets risked serious consequences for telling what the High Command didn't want the public to know.

Afterwards the mood was pessimistic, despite the apparent victory. Field Marshal Fochs, Supreme Allied Commander from April 1918, felt that the Peace signed in 1919, was merely an armistice for the next 20 years. How accurate he proved to be.

Wilfred Owen's book of poetry, published posthumously after the War summed it all up: 'My subject is war, and the pity of war. The poetry is in the pity.'

Thank you, Danny. We shall not forget.

27th November – Yogi – 'Christmas Memories'

As is now customary, Yogi reminded us of events that occurred on this month in the past. With the recent budget in mind, these included Income Tax in 1799, the State Pension in 1909, car tax in 1920, Family Allowance for 2nd and subsequent children in 1945. There was also Winston Churchill's birthday in 1874, Guido Fawkes capture in 1605 and several others of differing importance.

Yogi then organised us for a round of fun. We were asked to get up off our chairs and circulate (literally) and exchange names with the other members. We then sat in small groups and talked about Christmas past and present (!), relating stories of joy and embarrassment. Yogi then had one of each group stand up and tell us all of special events related by the other members. Hearing of others' Christmas antics, escapades and faux pas past brought so many memories back. Here's to more memories this year.

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

5th November

Five of us met at Dorothy's and Brenda started the proceedings with The Beatles first hit, "Love me Do". This was followed by Sallie's choice of Peter Dawson singing "Old Father Thames".

As it was Remembrance week Nev picked an American anti-war song by Billy Joel "Goodnight Saigon". Andy followed this with the Bothy Band with "Summer Will Come". Dorothy's first choice was "I Vow to Thee My Country" from the annual Remembrance Service.

Brenda's second choice was a "Shall We Dance" by Fred Astaire from the 1937 musical of the same name. Sallie then picked "Boys of the Old Brigade" by the Royal Central Band of the British Legion. Another Billy Joel song , "Lullaby" was Nev's next choice.

Andy then chose "Aria" by Glen Gould from J S Bach's Goldberg Variations which was followed by Dorothy's choice of Acker Bilk playing "White Cliffs of Dover". Brenda's last choice was the Carpenter's with "There's a Kind of Hush (All Over the World)" and then Sallie Picked Al Jolson singing "When the Red, Red Robin Comes Bob, Bob Bobbing Along".

Nev's final choice was another anti-war song "The Green Fields of France" by The Fureys. Andy then chose an interesting version of Kate Bush's "Wuthering Heights" by the Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain. Finally Dorothy chose Handel's "Funeral March".

POETRY READING – Leader: Kath Fisher – poetry@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 07857 688822

20th November

The group met in November and had an enjoyable discussion about some of Larkin's poems which raised interesting points. There will be no December meeting and in January we'll look at poems to do with winter as suggested by members of the group.

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

November

On 6th November we had a good turnout with 13 of our members present. We played our usual varied selection of music, not much different from the previous meeting. We agreed that there was one piece of music which we wouldn't want to play again, but we liked the pieces from the same book by Praetorius and Susato. We returned to some Handel movements and the Cantique de Jean Racine, both requested by members.

After playing for a couple of hours, we moved to the Lakeside Bistro (not far away) for a group lunch (not Christmas). We enjoyed a good meal in good company, a chance to chat to the other members of the group. There isn't much time for this during our meetings so we plan to repeat this occasionally in the future.

On 20th November, we had a smaller number of players, only 6, including a new member, who has just joined Ashby u3a. The low numbers meant that often there was only one member per part, which is difficult unless you are reasonably confident. The trios were OK, as there were 2 to a part, but the playing was sometimes a bit challenging. The newer players coped well, however, so I hope they will be back for more in December, when we'll play some Christmas music, as well as other music.

Along with some other u3a recorder groups, we have been invited to play at the u3a Festival at York in July next year. The Festival runs from 1st to 3rd July, and the "recorder day" will be on the Thursday, 2nd. We are hoping to be able to organise enough of us to represent our u3a group. The afternoon will be a short "playing day" for members of all the u3a groups represented, led by Michael Piraner, a professional musician.

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. If you have not played it and would like to try a diverting and slightly challenging game, we would be delighted to see you.

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

27th November – The Mill Wheel at Hartshorne

The Mill Wheel has recently been taken over by The Jennings Rooms which has moved there from Swad. They have brought a good reputation with them and we had personal recommendations, so decided to try it out.

Spoiler alert! It was very good. The rather lovely menu online has been shortened down and made more seasonal for the Christmas period but was still interesting and somewhat different to the usual pub menus. We had pre-ordered, which seems to be getting more and more common these days but at least it saved time on arrival.

Service was very good, prompt and friendly, the food was very nice and quite generous and as it was a set price menu for 2 or 3 courses, paying was much simpler than usual with no-one forgetting that they'd had something extra!

I see that Luncheon group are planning to go there in January and two other members are planning to take other non-u3a groups there too. It has obviously made an impression in the short time that the new management has been operating.

SOCIAL EVENTS – Glenys Morrice – socials@ashbyu3a.co.uk - 07721 635546

This month on Thursday 11th at 12 for 12.30 pm it will be our Christmas Lunch. All tickets are now sold out. A full report to follow next month.

On January 23rd we will be having our Burns Supper, full details of how to book are above on page 3.

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

11th November - 'Mysteries of the Pyramids' by Kurt Kovach.



Kurt began by telling the audience that they were going to hear about various theories about how the many pyramids were constructed without the use of modern technology. As members with an interest in science and technology they would find some proposed solutions to the mathematical oddities and enigmas more acceptable than others.

Firstly he mentioned the three Giza pyramids built 4500 years ago by the Egyptians. Despite only having copper tools they were able to cut limestone and granite perfectly. On the international scale of hardness copper is 3 whilst limestone is 3 - 4, and granite is 6 - 7.

The largest pyramid, Cheops, was completed in just 20 years - laying a stone on average every five minutes. The pyramids were aligned with the points of the compass to an accuracy of 3/60th of a degree, aligned to Orion's belt and airshafts inside the pyramid were aligned with various stars such as Orion and Sirius, requiring a detailed understanding of celestial mechanics which the Egyptians were unlikely to have.

How could the stones be moved on sledges? How many workers were needed to pull an 80 tonne stone up a 5 degree slope? Over 440!

Boats were needed to ferry the stones from 500 miles away in Aswan. Kurt outlined the many mathematical facts about the pyramids involving Earthly distances and mathematical constants not yet discovered.

Sean Rust, author of "Pyramids of the Gods: Alien Architects of Ancient Egypt" maintains that alien intelligence helped the Egyptians with their knowledge of astronomy, mathematics and engineering. Also, they favoured granite because it produces an electric charge when compressed. This is known as the piezoelectric effect, which he claims could be used as an interstellar communication device and act as giant beacons that could signal other intelligent life forms and even act as a power grid to power tools!

So maybe aliens but we considered other possibilities. Chanting and singing to cancel out gravity, known as acoustic levitation. Even more bizarrely an Andean legend that describes a plant that produces a chemical that can soften stone.

Kurt then looked at other pyramids to show the many similarities between them. They were aligned with the points of the compass and Orion's belt and many contained subterranean tunnels like those at Giza. Did aliens provide a blueprint which was used by the various primitive cultures to follow and build similar structures all around the world?

Kurt finished the talk by describing the Dogon people of Mali in Western Africa, who are known for unique cultural practices and unusual knowledge of astronomy, including detailed knowledge of the Sirius star system.

They describe Sirius B, a white dwarf which they claim is made of the densest matter in the universe. Sirius B is indeed a white dwarf, which would be invisible to the naked eye, later discovered in 1862. They claim this knowledge was given to them by amphibious beings. They also knew about Jupiter and 4 of its moons as well as planets Saturn, Mars and Venus. A white dwarf is formed when a star the size of our sun exhausts its hydrogen and collapses down to the size of our Earth. Hence the density. But how would this tribe have known that?

Kurt finished by saying his audience could reject the alien solution, but perhaps our ancients possessed skills we still know nothing about. After all Aristarchus of Samos knew the earth went round the sun in 230BC, but Europe had to wait till 1610 to learn that from Galileo and even then the Catholic Church made him renounce his beliefs.

The ancients left behind amazing structures that we can only marvel at. And at the end of the day, we can only wonder and ask: - How on earth did they do that?

Kurt's talk was followed by numerous questions and a stimulating and interesting discussion.

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

19th November

After two cancelled sessions for various reasons, we at last we had sufficient people available to run the tasting and eight of us sat down to taste John's much-delayed Rieslings.

We started with New World wines before moving on to the traditional European ones.

First was a Cono Sur Reserva Especial 2023 from Chile. 13% and £11 from Tesco at full price but bought at 25% off.

This smelt as if it would be sweet and looked nicely oily in the glass but was drier than expected, tasting quite strongly of apple with a touch of lemon. It was quite nice but didn't really taste like a Riesling. As first wine of the night we rated it 6.5/10. Most thought it was a bit pricey.

Next was Pikes Traditionale 2024 11.5% from Clare Valley, S Australia, an area famous for world-class Rieslings. Unfortunately this didn't seem to be one of them! It was very dry, slightly fizzy, very acidic, tasting of lemon and apple but not in a good way. It scored just over 4/10, with one person scoring it 3! At £13 full price from Tesco, it was very disappointing.

Third was another Aussie; Tesco Finest Tingleup 2024 12%. This comes from Western Australia, made by Howard Park Winery. Again this was disappointing in having very little flavour. Not unpleasant but not exactly exciting. Many Tesco buyers seem to agree judging by their comments online. Again £11 full price. We scored it 5/10. Not doing very well so far!

On to European wines, and first up was Tesco Finest Steep Slopes Mosel Riesling 2024. 11% and £7.50 (currently £6.25 on Clubcard and potentially £4.69 with 25% off). This was surprisingly much better than the previous three. Crisp and dry, tasting of real lemon, not just citric acid, with a tiny hint of peppermint on the nose. Very palatable. This is what we expected the Rieslings to taste like. Almost everyone liked it and one of us scored it 9! It averaged 7.5/10.

Next up was a Peter Hugel Alsace Riesling 2023 that Annie had been given, bought at some expense at an Oxford wine festival. 12%. Unfortunately it was disappointing and rather thin, with little taste of anything. It was the second-best wine so far, but that was only faint praise! We scored it 6.5/10.

For the last wine of the night John had brought a non-Riesling, thinking we might need a change. Very prescient of him! This was an Austrian PFAFFL Muskateller 2024 from Lidl at £9.99 and 13%. Muskateller is another name for Muscat which can be very sweet but this was only slightly so. A grapey taste (strangely muscat is the only grape that still tastes of grape after it has been made into wine!) with a melon and pear flavours and a dry finish. We all liked this with scores ranging from 7 to 8.5 and an average of 7.5.



And so our wines of the month were the Mosel Riesling from Tesco and the Austrian Muskateller from Lidl at exactly the same score.

They were the two cheapest wines by far. It just goes to show that price is not always an indicator of quality.

Next month will be our Christmas party where we all bring 'Something you'd like to drink at Christmas' and some food to go with it. Should be fun.

THE WALKING GROUPS

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

21st November. Stapenhill to Burton washlands

A lovely day and five people met at the car park near St Peter's Church in Stapenhill. We took a photo of the group only for a sixth walker to arrive.



A crisp, sunny day

Expecting the Washlands to be partially flooded, we started walking towards the old road bridge over the Trent and took the path down to the flat area which had puddles in the grassy area but the path was clear. We then followed the path back along by the side of the river and passed the car park before taking the path up the slope past the church memorial tree area and on to the footbridge over the road that leads to the new road bridge across the Trent.

We climbed down the steps and out onto the 1881 footbridge that runs across the Washlands from Stapenhill into Burton. As the Washlands seemed dry enough, we left the footbridge and walked along the Burton side of the Washlands up to the library. This no longer has a cafe since the refurbishment so we walked into the market square. The market hall was closed for refurbishment so we crossed the road into the shopping mall. Then up to the cafe in Cooper Square.

After elevenses we walked through the open market square, passing the Burton college to the start of the footbridge back to Stapenhill taking the lower path under the road bridge and back to the car park. Distance walked about 3 miles.

The 10 MILERS – Leader Christine Green – 10milers@ashbyu3a.co.uk – phone 07784 738597

3rd November. Ticknall to Melbourne, led by Christine

Just two of us started the walk from Ticknall on a dry mild day in November. We made our way along Chapel street and through Stanton Woods and Robin Woods towards Woodend Cottage. We crossed a field to St Brides and then walked around the lake at Melbourne where we stopped for refreshments at the little cabin. We walked to Staunton Harold Reservoir and followed the path to enter Calke Estate. The final bit of the walk was through Serpentine Woods and back onto the tramway trail to Ticknall. Finishing with homemade cake and coffee (joined by an extra for the tea and cake!).

Please note future walks will be on the 4th Monday of alternate months starting with Jan 26th at 9.30am

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

10th November. From Staunton Harold, led by Alison

This was nearly a maximum number of walkers for the Medium Group at 17 and even more impressive given the weather forecast of rain.

Unfortunately the weather forecast proved to be correct when rain started about 11.00am and didn't stop.



Not raining yet!

The route was a well worn one for this group but which we hadn't done for about 2 years and the mud was still there even after the long dry summer we have had. Over the fields towards Heath End, joined The Ivanhoe Way, Alastairs Wood, the trackbed of the old Derby to Ashby Railway Line and back to the cars via Bagshaw Woods. 4.7 miles and all were very wet at the end of it.

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

4th November 2025. Horseshoe Trail, led by Chris

20 of us gathered at Foremark Reservoir on a mild dry November morning. After leaving Foremark we headed towards Bendall's Farm, where we joined The National Forest way to Milton. We then headed across the fields towards Repton where we joined a bridle path to Repton Shrubs. We turned at Hartshorne bog which fortunately wasn't too boggy! Finally rejoining The National Forest Way we passed Carvers Rock and back towards the cars. A car journey back to Ticknall for a well deserved lunch. This was the 2nd half of the Horse Shoe trail.

18th November. Lapworth, led by Kevin

After a slightly longer drive than normal, seventeen of us all arrived within a few minutes of each other at the Punchbowl Pub at Lapworth and gathered for the group photograph.

Turning left from the pub car park we followed a quiet road and passed some very expensive houses for a few hundred metres and then turned left onto an old drive into the National Trust, Packwood Estate. Following a quick toilet stop we continued along short road section and joined the towpath of the Stratford and Avon canal.

Stopping for coffee by a series of locks we continued to the junction of the Grand Union canal under the main railway line and joined the Heart of England way into the National Trust, Baddesley Clinton Estate. On leaving the estate we passed some very happy pigs wallowing in mud and rejoined a short section of road back to the Punchbowl for lunch.

This is your Committee

They can all be contacted at the email addresses below.

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