

Newsletter February 2026

Interest Groups Timetable for February

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 24 th	2 pm	Congregational Church, Ashby. Phil Drabble - 'The Western Front'. A trip on a Triumph Tiger bike
Activities	Wed 4 th Fri 20 th	1-3 pm 2-4 pm	Ashby Leisure Centre
Arts and Crafts	Thu 5 th	10 am	Packington Village Hall.
Breakfast	Thu 19 th	10 am	Tall Chimney, The Pipeworks, Swadlincote DE11 9FQ
Bridge	Mon 2 nd Mon 9 th Mon 16 th Mon 23 rd	7-9 pm 11am-1.30pm 7-9 pm 11am-1.30pm	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Calligraphy	Tue 10 th	10 am	At Gill's
Coffee and Chat	Wed 11 th	10 am	La Zouch Coffee House, 2 Kilwardby Street, Ashby LE65 2FQ
Computer	Wed 4 th Mon 16 th	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Croquet	-	-	No meetings now until the start of Spring
Digital Photography	Thu 5 th	10 am	16 Winchester Way
Drawing and painting	Wed 18 th	10 am	16 Winchester Way
Family History	Wed 11 th	2 pm	2 Marlborough Way
Food from Afar	Thu 5 th	6 pm	Aurora Café, Pass Courtyard, Ashby LE65 1AG
French	Mon 2 nd Mon 16 th	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Gardening	Thu 19 th	2.10 pm	Packington Village Hall. Change of speaker due to cancellation. Ken Sterne will give a talk plus free gardening raffle. Entry £2
History	Thu 26 th	2.15 pm	Packington Village Hall. Yogi Godwin 'Ashby Heroes 1 - William Hastings'

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Industrial Heritage	Wed 25 th	TBA	Mountsorrel Heritage Centre, Swithland Lane LE7 7UE
Literature	Tue 10 th	1.30 pm	At Sandra's house
Lunch	Thu 12 th	12 noon	Brewers Fayre, Flagstaff, Ashby LE65 1JP
Medium Walks	Mon 9 th	9.45 for 10am start	Meet at NT free car park by Dimminsdale Wood DE73 8BJ
Music Appreciation	Wed 4 th	10 am	At Nev's
Poetry Reading	Thu 19 th	2.30 pm	42 Avenue Rd, Ashby
Recorder	Thu 5 th Thu 19 th	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Rummikub	Tue 10 th Tue 24 th	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Science & Technology	Tue 10 th	2 pm	Packington Village Hall. Talk by Richard Nevin- NHS First Responder
Scrabble	Mon 9 th Mon 23 rd	10.30 am	The Bulls Head, Ashby
Short Walks	Fri 20 th	10 am	Moira Furnace car park near children's play area
Social Events	-	-	No Socials this month
Supper Club	Thu 26 th	7 for 7.30 pm	Ferrers Arms, Lount
The 10 Milers	-	-	No walk this month
Walking	Tue 3 rd Tue 17 th	9.30 for 9.45 Start	Lakeside Bistro, Shortheath Rd, Moira DE12 6BW. The garden by Ashby South St. car park LE65 1BH
Wine Appreciation	Wed 18 th	7 pm	Annie's house

Interest Groups Timetable for early March

Group	Date	Time	Venue
French	Mon 2 nd	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Bridge	Mon 2 nd	11am-1.30pm	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Walking	Tue 3 rd	TBA	TBA
Music Appreciation	Wed 4 th	10 am	At Brenda's
Activities	Wed 4 th	1 – 3 pm	Ashby Leisure Centre
Computer	Wed 4 th	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Arts and Crafts	Thu 5 th	10 am	Packington Village Hall.
Digital photography	Thu 5 th	10 am	16 Winchester Way
Recorder	Thu 5 th	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Food from Afar	Thu 5 th	6 pm	TBA

MONTHLY MEETING

27th January – ‘The real Home Guard’ by Jed Jaggard

Our speaker this month, Jed Jaggard led us through a fascinating tale of the founding and actions of the Home Guard during the second World War. Speaking without notes for over an hour and handing round various props for us to handle, including a rifle, two machine guns and a hand-grenade! we were able to get a better insight of how the Home guard actually operated.

His talk was peppered with anecdotes and quotes and showed that many of the episodes of the TV series ‘Dad’s Army’ were based on fact albeit with added comedic twist.

Britain has always had some form of local militia; in the 13thC Henry III had decreed that all men should have a helmet and padded jacket so that they could be called upon to defend their land from invaders. By the 18thC this had evolved into a paid Militia and Yeomanry cavalry home defence units. By the time of WWI a Volunteer Training Corps was formed for men ineligible for regular service. They were part of local county regiments but they were self-funded including their uniforms which were often very individual. They were disbanded after the end of WWI.

The Home Guard as we know it was formed in May 1940 as the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV) as a last ditch defence against Nazi invasion. PM Anthony Eden announced the formation on radio expecting 500,000 men to join, but they got 250,000 applications in the first week rising to 1.5 million by July. Eden said that they ‘would not get paid but would receive a uniform and will be armed’. The uniform initially was an LDV armband and the weapons not forthcoming for quite a while. Eventually some 50,000 civilian shotguns were issued after people had donated them for LDV use. LDV officers were still volunteers and had no commissioned status or Army rank despite many of them having served in WWI as officers.

As they were not part of the Army, many LDV units created their own structures and operating methods. The Upper Thames Patrol used a private motor launch to patrol their stretch of river, a platoon in Hyde Park decided that they would be prepared to shoot down paratroopers, but so that said paratroops didn’t see their rifles, they patrolled wearing sombreros!

Eventually some weapons started to arrive, mostly from America. Enfield rifles, Tommy guns and hand-grenades being the main weapons. The Tommy gun was considered to expensive, costing £1 to make and so the Sten gun was developed in the UK costing just 7/- (35p in new money) to make. However they were considered more dangerous to the operator than the enemy as they had no safety catch. Dropping one could set it off!

Churchill did not like the name and when he became Prime Minister had it changed to Home Guard despite the fact that 1 million LDV armbands had been issued. Eventually army-style uniforms were issued with HG badges but helmets were in short supply as were overcoats.

From as early as the Battle of Britain, home Guard units manned anti-aircraft guns, and during the Blitz they were tasked with locating unexploded bombs. The Home Guard lost 1206 members to unexploded bombs.

Although they started out as mostly young and old men, by the end of the war their average age was 35, so they could have made an effective fighting force if there had been an invasion.

Jed had so much more to tell us and it was fascinating to hear of the heroic stance taken by the men left at home, who would mostly have been of our fathers’ generation, who were prepared to fight to the last to defend this country.

NOTTINGHAM CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERT TRIP – THURS 4TH JUNE

Colin Ellis is interested in organising a trip to The Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham on Thurs 4th June at 7.30pm. The Halle Orchestra are performing a programme of:

Janacek	Taras Bulba
Tchaikovsky	Violin Concerto
Dvorak	Symphony No.8

Based on car sharing Ashby to Clifton South Park & Ride, then tram to a stop immediately adjacent to the Concert Hall, the cost of Concert Ticket, Tram Travel and Contribution to petrol cost estimated at £40 - £45.

If you would be interested in taking part (there is no commitment at this stage), please complete the sign-up sheet available at monthly meetings to provide:

- Your name
- Your e-mail address or telephone number
- Number of seats required
- Whether you would be willing to drive
- If you are able to drive, how many seats you would have free for passengers
- Whether you would wish to have a meal before the concert, if this can be arranged.

Please write legibly – if I can't read it, I can't contact you!

Alternatively contact Colin Ellis on 01530 272592 or e-mail colinellis1950@gmail.com

HISTORY GROUP COACH TRIP TO LEEDS – THURS 30TH JULY

Colin is also organising the History Group's annual city coach trip. This year it is to Leeds. The trip is open to all Ashby u3a members.

Leaving from the Royal Hotel, Ashby at 8.30

Anticipated arrival in Leeds approx 11.00. Leaving at 5.00.

Return to Ashby approx 7.30. A brief stop at motorway services about mid-way in both directions.

Cost: £25.00 per seat.

Major attractions in and around Leeds:

- Royal Armouries, Industrial, Thackray Medical & City Museums, Art Gallery
- White Rose & Victoria Arcade Shopping
- City Varieties Music Hall
- Leeds City Football Ground,
- Temple Newsam House
- Kirkstall Abbey
- Tropical World, Roundhay

Please be aware that some of these are a bus ride away from the centre

If you would be interested in taking part (there is no commitment at this stage), please complete the sign-up sheet available at monthly meetings to provide:

- Your name
- Your e-mail address or telephone number

Please write legibly – if I can't read it, I can't contact you!

Alternatively contact Colin Ellis on 01530 272592 or e-mail colinellis1950@gmail.com

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

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

Come and join us on Wednesday Feb 4th at 1pm or Fri 20th at 2pm at the Ashby Leisure Centre.

We will have our usual activities, Walking Football, Badminton, Boccia, Pickleball and Table Tennis. We should also have Archery and Cornhole, which we introduced to the sessions last month.

Following enquiries from some members, we have also managed to make arrangements for swimming. This will be available on a daily basis at any public class at the Leisure Centre.

For those interested, you would be required to pay an annual membership fee of £8.80, payable to Leisure Link. Payment can be made at the Leisure Centre reception. There would also be a charge of £4.20 per session, which would be available between 12pm and 1pm on Wednesday and Fridays.

If anyone is interested in swimming and needs further information, please contact me directly.



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

8th January

New Year - New Craft - Crochet.

About half of the ladies attending this month already knew how to crochet, but the other half didn't. Therefore, the group was divided into two smaller groups. Each person chose the colour wool they wanted to use before I explained to the experienced ones what they would be making. It will be a small shoulder strap bag that will eventually be lined with a fabric. I then went to the beginners and showed them what to do before they began a 2 inch practice square. Most of them mastered a good tension by the time they were half way through the square making their square. Almost all of them were able to move on to begin the bag project by the end of the session.

We will continue working on the bags next month, and possibly into the Spring.

Our next session will be on 5 February at 9.45 in the meeting room of the Packington Village Memorial Hall.

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 February. 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

15th January - Bull's Head, Thringstone

Just a bijou group gathered at the Bull's Head for an excellent, all you can eat, breakfast buffet. As usual, the staff did us proud and the food was both plentiful and of good quality. Such a good time was being had that I had to remind everybody that we needed to vacate our table by 11.30 to accommodate those arriving for lunch.

For a good chat, a hearty breakfast and some fun, why not join us on 19 February at 10am at The Tall Chimney (Hungry Horse) at the Pipeworks, Swadlincote DE11 9FQ? Don't forget to register your car at the bar to avoid any parking fine! Fifteen 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

14th January - Bluebell Tea Room

Ten of us gathered at the Bluebell Tea Room in Swadlincote and enjoyed Tea or coffee and a nice selection of breads, pastries and cakes. Conversation flowed freely, as it usually does.

Our next gathering will be at the La Zouch Coffee house in Kilwardby street, Ashby on 11TH February at 10am in the downstairs back room. Ten 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

13th January

Five members met at the Gelsmoor for a Christmas lunch. In February we will meet at Gill's to plan our activities for the coming year.

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

19th January

For our first meeting of the year we had eight attending.

There was not too much to discuss or help with, although we did talk around many minor topics, including Bluetooth connectivity issues and how any particular computer in a house chooses between different connections.

Sue did have an issue with responding to an email from her professional organisation. It seems that when she replied, she was blocked on the grounds that the website was unsafe.

On inspection it turned out that the website had been late in updating its certification. Once this was resolved Sue was back in touch.

We next meet on Wednesday 4th February.

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

January

Strangely we decided not to meet on New Years Day and so we will next meet on 5th Feb, when we will look at a selection of our own favourite photos, especially festive season ones.

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

23rd January - Willesley Park Golf Club

The Food From Afar group joined forces with the Ashby u3a Burns Night this month to enjoy a feast of Scottish fare. All the expected antics were experienced. The Selkirk Grace was said: the piper piped in the haggis which was paraded among the guests: the address to the haggis was expertly recited: Robbie Burns' poem - To a Mouse - was recited in the true Scottish tongue and the lassies were addressed and toasted, before "My love is like a red, red Rose was sung by Bill Wilson, who finally led us in a rousing rendition of Auld Lang syne. What a great evening!

Our next meeting will be another first for the group. We will be sampling the Ukrainian fare at the Aurora Cafe in the Pass Courtyard, Ashby at 6pm on 5th February at 6pm. They are opening especially for us!

Sixteen have already booked for the occasion and the cafe cannot cater for many more . If you wish to attend, please let Colin Woodland know at food_from_afar@ashbyu3a.co.uk and he will put you on a waiting list and you will be informed if anyone has to cancel or the proprietor can find any more seats.

The meal will consist of samples of typical Ukrainian fare and will cost £22.70 per head plus any drinks purchased. The cafe does not have a license. If you wish to bring your own alcoholic beverages that will be fine but the proprietor will charge a corkage fee.

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

8th January - Mill Wheel, Hartshorne

Twenty eight members signed up for this gathering but, come the event, just twenty four turned up at the Mill Wheel for Lunch. We arrived as the place was opening and, despite booking the event and providing a pre-order, the staff were clearly unprepared for our arrival. We had to rearrange the bar furniture in a ridiculously small part of the premises. There was an excessive wait for the food to arrive and when it did, the quality varied from exceptionally good to exceptionally bad. Those who had the Camembert starter had a real treat. Some main courses were hot and tasty but others had clearly been left standing and had gone cold and were unappealing. Nonetheless, with true British grit, we made the most of it and the company made up for much of the restaurant's shortcomings.

Our February venue is the Brewer's Fayre off the Flagstaff roundabout at Ashby at noon on 12th February. Twenty two have already signed up to be there. If anyone else wishes to join the group please email 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 that 48 hours notice I will have to charge you for the meal.

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

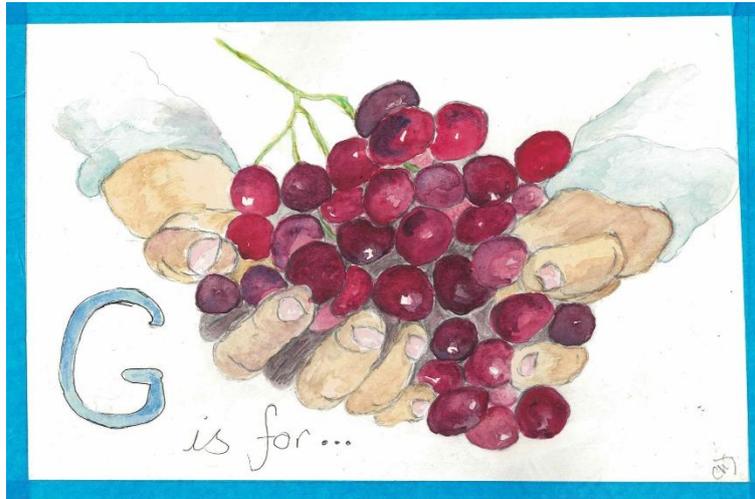
13th January

The group met, as usual, at Sandra's house to discuss the latest book reading.

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

21st January

January meeting of the painting and drawing group saw a full complement of artists getting back into the routine following the alphabet and the letter was G.



We met at Susan's house (and there was cake thank you Susan) the pictures produced can be viewed on this group page art gallery , and next month we meet at John's house and the letter is H.

We also discussed the possibility of submitting a work for the Ashby art festival again this year it seems that it is going to be possible so watch this space.

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

14th January

For our first meeting of the year, we had five around the table and one report from elsewhere.

Linda, as you do, tried to see if there was anything in some Hints on Ancestry and another tree, but failed in her mission. Worth a try! She also had a look at the One Name Website for her maiden name, but no luck there, either.

Eileen is working to flesh out the data on her known ancestors, having traced her Tree as far back as it will go.

JD is still working on his Family Story, today concentrating on the Cholera and Scarlet Fever epidemics of the mid Nineteenth Century in Northumberland and Durham. These tie in with some of the deaths in his family then. He is also trying to see if he can pinpoint with the 1851 Census on old maps of Durham the exact house or tenement his Great Grandfather grew up in. Not as easy as it seems!

Elizabeth was working from home, and on the trail of her 3x great grandparents, whom she has identified in some Parish Records in 1829. There look also to be signs of them in the 1841 Census, which if true is very good news.

Jan had a mildly frustrating time chasing after a male relative and a female relative who seem to appear and then disappear!

Shirley is working steadily on her documents.

We meet again on February 11th

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

January

The French group continues to meet fortnightly on a Monday at the Ivanhoe Club in Wilfred Gardens

We meet as the club opens at 11am for a 2 hour session finishing at 1pm. We usually start with the group members in turn reciting in French the various activities that they may have been involved with throughout the previous 2 weeks. We then will often read an article in French and use it as an exercise in both translation and pronunciation. These articles can often be obtained from the internet as you can find on YouTube various French teachers who give tutorials by email as well.

We try to intersperse instruction on points of grammar or verb declension as we go along and often set homework to do before the next session.

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

15th January – Talk by Jeff Bates on 'Seasonal Gardening'

We had a good attendance today for our first meeting of the year, with a talk and demonstration on seasonal gardening, given by Jeff Bates.

The main talk was on the plants that are out this time of year, and a demonstration on how to prune shrubs, trees, fruiting plants etc. and also telling us what month this should be done. He walked around our members showing how to prune the branches he was holding. He also gave tips on propagating etc. A very enjoyable meeting.



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

15th January

The group held a January meeting and had a discussion about poems to do with winter which seemed appropriate! Members of the group had suggested poems in advance and we talked about a good selection of them. 'Those Winter Sundays' by American poet Robert Hayden proved a particular favourite as did Hardy's 'The Darling Thrush'.

The next meeting will take place at 42 Avenue Road, Ashby on Thursday February 19th at 2.30 when we will look at the poems we didn't have time to consider in January. These include work by Simon Armitage, William Wordsworth, Pablo Neruda, John Burnside and Roger McGough.

If anyone is interested in joining us, please get in touch.

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

28th January – visit to Derby Museum of Making

The weather was kind to us on Wednesday and the rain held off all day making the journey and the 10 min walk from the car park a lot easier. Talking of the car park, just about every utility company is digging up the roads around the area making it difficult to access the CP and when we did get in we found it to be almost full. And the meters only take cash (no change given!) or a phone app which nobody seemed able to access. Much scrabbling around for loose change ensued. Just as well it wasn't pouring with rain as it took us ages to buy the tickets. The pathways to the museum were also being dug up and the river Derwent was in full spate.



Once we got to the museum things were much better. After a well deserved cuppa, we set off to wander around. The excellent model railway was running which kept everyone amused for a while. The museum houses samples of just about anything made in Derby. The obvious things are to do with the railways, Rolls Royce aero engines and Toyota cars, but Derby factories have made so much more. The amount of 'stuff' on display is amazing. Much of it is the detritus which would have been thrown away when firms closed down, but it is all so fascinating. From model trains and aero engines to tin plate and cast iron signage, to wooden moulds used for making cast iron parts to ledgers and tools plus everything from oil lamps to lawnmowers. There is a collection of clothes made locally, pottery and chinaware, motorbikes and bicycles. Clocks and mining equipment, stonemasonry and maps. There is even one of the original RR aero engines from Alcock and Brown's Vickers Vimy. The first plane to cross the Atlantic non-stop in 1919.

The staff on duty around the halls were chatty, helpful and extremely knowledgeable about almost everything on display. Eventually we retired to the café downstairs for some very nice food, well served, again by helpful staff. A good start to the Industrial Heritage season.

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. In February we will be meeting on the 10th and 24th.

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

22nd January

A near record turnout attended today for our very own Michael Smith's presentation on 'A History of the 20th Century in Cartoons'.

But first Yogi reminded us of events on (or about) this day in history.

In 1879, the British Army suffered its worst defeat to that date, when a Zulu Impi of about 20,000, armed mainly with assegais, overwhelmed a British detachment of 1800 equipped with the latest rifles, field guns and even a rocket firing unit. The British lost 1300 dead, whilst an estimated 1,000 to 2,000 Zulus died. A large section of the same Impi then went on to be thwarted at Rorke's Drift by a small unit of about 150 of the Royal Engineers and the 24th Regiment.

Apparently yesterday was National Hugging Day in the USA! In 1793 Louis XVI was guillotined in France, beginning the Reign of Terror. In 1919 the Irish Dail declared for independence. In 1368 the Ming Dynasty began, lasting until 1644. In 1870 A U.S. Army attack on Piegan Blackfeet in Montana resulted in the Marias Massacre. Finally on January 23, 1958, Venezuelan dictator General Marcos Pérez Jiménez was overthrown and fled Venezuela.

Michael then set about illustrating the 20th century with cartoons. These ranged widely, covering the introduction of the Old Age Pension in 1909. 5/- a week for singles and 7/6 for couples. But only for over 70's. Who numbered about 500,000, mostly women. This changed in 1925 to 65 with wider rules. Then came the Suffragettes, WWI, ("If you can find a better 'ole") and the Zeppelin raids. The Peace of 1919 was seen as a precursor to more potential conflicts, partly because Victor Clemanceau (The Tiger) insisted on more stringent penalties than President Woodrow Wilson proposed. The era that followed was lampooned as a time for the rich to ignore the advantages provided by the previous generation, especially comparing the flappers to the Suffragettes.

This contrasted with the Jarrow March and all it stood for. Then came WWII, Churchill, Dunkirk and Nazi horrors, and a light-hearted approach to civilian hardship and air raids.

But the end of War saw the Cold War, and the Iron Curtain and the terrible events in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Political blunders like the Suez Canal venture when we found out what the 'Special Relationship' really meant. Then came 'Supermac', JFK and the effective end of Empire. Internal scandals were noted such as the Profumo Affair, and the demise of Harold Wilson. A brilliant cartoon showing how Margaret Thatcher rose to power by walking up a staircase of crouching men raised quite a laugh. Then came Arthur Scargill, the miners' leader being seen as a beast to be carved by Ian MacGregor for Thatcher. MacGregor had a very mixed reception. The renewed 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland came in for acid comment, highlighting the conflict between adherents to the same God; and finally, the end of the 20th century, noting the short-lived easing of controls in Iran.

A thoroughly erudite exposition of how the apparently simple medium of the cartoon can convey much more than mere words.

Many thanks Michael!

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

January

We didn't meet in January as the next night was our Burns Supper, see report below, so our first gathering of the year will be on Thursday Feb 26th at the Ferrers Arms in Lount. If anyone wishes to join us, please let Colin or Mike know. We shall have to pre-order from their online menu.

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

7th January

We met at Mike's house this month and seemed to be in a choral/classical mood with several members choosing such music. But Neil started us off with one of the most famous pieces by the late Chris Rea who died just before Christmas. Rather than choose 'Driving Home for Christmas' he chose 'The Road to Hell'.

We followed with Sue's choice of Stevie Wonder's 'Have a talk with God' and Nev's Annie Lennox and 'Mood Indigo'. Andy started the choral mood with Cantus choir singing 'Stars' by Eriks Esenvalds and Sallie played us Freddie Kempf's piano rendition of 'Winter Wind' by Chopin. Dorothy chose 'Southampton' a piece from the Titanic movie and Brenda also chose a movie piece – 'Do You Hear The People Sing' from Les Miserables.

Mike returned to rock/jazz with Sting and 'Englishman in New York' featuring some lovely jazz saxophone playing and Sue offered Roberta Flack's moving 'First Time Ever I Saw Your Face'

Nev had found an interesting video of two young singers Nathan Pacheco and Clara Hurtado Lee performing 'One Hand, One Heart' from West side Story. Very talented.

There were more choral pieces in the form of Andy's choice of Voces8 singing a lovely acapella version of 'Homeward Bound' and Kiri Te Kanawa with the Coventry Cathedral choir singing 'In the Bleak Mid Winter' offered by Sallie.

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

January

We started the year a week late, as our first meeting should have been on New Year's Day. However, we decided to live dangerously, and move this month's dates a week back. Apologies to those we managed to confuse.

Our first meeting was on 8th January, and we had twelve members. Two new members have joined us recently, so we dug out some older, simpler pieces to start off the morning. We then played a set of easy Baroque Consorts, arranged by Helen Hooker. While each piece may not have been well known, the style was familiar, and we played them successfully. We returned to "Simple Gifts" by Joseph Brackett, which is a Shaker tune, which was used by Aaron Copland in his Appalachian Spring, and for the song "Lord of the Dance". Our version was adapted by Sheila Richards. We then played an arrangement of the Sarabande from Grieg's Holberg Suite. The Bassano family came to London in the time of Henry VIII (I think), and stayed to compose and play music at the Royal Court, and they also made recorders. They stayed on after the death of Henry, so they must have been careful. We played the first two movements of Augustine Bassano's Royal Wind Music. We then brought ourselves more up-to-date with Bare Necessities, but went back in time to play some music written for Crumhorns. The range of recorders must be similar to that of crumhorns, although the crumhorns don't go as high as descant recorders can.

Our second meeting on 22nd January was also well attended, with 15 in the group, including another potential new member. Our play list was very similar to that of the previous meeting, with an additional crumhorn piece, and The Hippopotamus replacing the Bare Necessities. We also played a few pieces from our reserve anthology, including the Cherry Tree Rag, Purcell's Rondeau, el Choclo (a tango), and we managed to squeeze in "Basin Street Blues" before the end.

We discussed the possibility of our going to the u3a Festival in York in July. We have been invited to play, so we now need decide how many of us will go, so that we can choose our programme.

If anyone knows of (or is) a conductor without a band, please get in touch. As our numbers increase, there is more scope for us to go astray. None of us wants to stop playing, as we rather enjoy it.

13th January - 'Amazing Women in Science, Medicine and Engineering.'

A talk by Professor Catrin Rutland. University of Nottingham

If you ask a child to draw a picture of a scientist inevitably they draw a man in a white coat. If you ask Google for images of scientists or engineers you have to search hard for female images. So were there really no or few women who contributed in these fields in the past? Or have their contributions been downgraded and forgotten?

Such stereotypes images in society are very slowly changing, the majority of vet students are now female, in biology the majority are female students but men still become the professors. Male Nobel prize winners greatly outnumber female, male collaborators in a team often being given the credit.

Images are important as children quickly assume these stereotypes while in primary school and females often assume certain careers are not available to women. So 50% of talent could be wasted. Parents with positive attitudes are the biggest counter influence, and the prominent women in science and engineering often credit their father for active encouragement.

So if not on Google or Wikipedia where is evidence of female contributions in these fields? Well the first seems to date from 3,000 BC. **Marsa the Jewess** was the founder of alchemy who wrote and published works under her own name. She invented distillation of alcohol amongst other things. The famous library at Alexandria in classical times was available to many female scholars. **Metrodora** was a physician who wrote '*On the Diseases and Cures of Women*', which is the oldest known medical book written by a female. In the Middle Ages **Hildegard of Bingen**, a German nun, established a series of convents which provided women with an education including in science and medicine. In Italy **Anna Morandi Manzolini** in the 16th century, was an distinguished anatomist and lecturer of anatomical design at the University of Bologna. She became internationally known for the production of anatomical wax models based on dissections. In 1732 **Laura Bassi**, an Italian woman, was the first woman to have a doctorate, a Ph.D. in science at the University of Bologna in Italy, and taught physics there.

Elizabeth Cavendish (Bess of Hardwick) was a notable figure of Elizabethan English society and published some scientific papers. **Anna Atkins** was an English botanist and photographer, and the first person to publish a book illustrated with photographic images. **Ada Lovelace** is now famous as the first computer programmer. Her father was the poet Lord Byron but he deserted the family when she was only 6 months old. Her mother was therefore determined to give her daughter a sound education in science and mathematics, not poetry!

James Barry (18th century) was a distinguished military surgeon. He improved conditions for wounded soldiers and native inhabitants. He performed the first recorded caesarean section by a European in Africa in which both the mother and child survived the surgery. He eventually rose to the rank of Inspector General in charge of military hospitals. Only after death was he shown to be woman who had disguised herself as man in order to study and practice medicine, so his contribution was later downgraded. Another notable medic was **Elizabeth Garrett Anderson** a physician and suffragist. The first woman to qualify in Britain as a physician and surgeon and founded the London School of Medicine for Women - the first medical school in Britain to train women as doctors. As mayor of Aldeburgh, and also the first female mayor in Britain, **Florence Nightingale** is the founder of modern nursing but should also be recognised for establishing her nursing school at St Thomas' Hospital in London - the first secular nursing school in the world.

Beatrix Potter is best known for her children's books which she wrote to make a living but had a love of flora and fauna, which she closely observed and painted. Potter's study and watercolours of fungi led to her being widely respected in the field of mycology.

Dorothy Bate was a Welsh palaeontologist and pioneer of archaeozoology. At the age of nineteen she got a job at the Natural History Museum the first woman to be employed as a scientist by the museum. There she remained for fifty years but was a piece-worker, paid only by the number of fossils she prepared. She travelled extensively discovering new fossils, but often at her own expense.

Prejudice and lack of recognition continued until more recently. **Dorothy Annie Garrod** was the first woman to hold a chair at either Oxford or Cambridge and that was as late as after WW2. **Rosalind Franklin's** work was central to the understanding of the molecular structures of DNA and RNA., but her contribution to understanding the structure of DNA was largely unrecognised during her life, Crick and Watson took the full credit and were awarded Nobel prizes. The book and film 'Hidden Figures' recently brought to light the essential role of **Mary Jackson**, the first African American in NASA and her significant role in the space program.

More recently severe discrimination was experienced by Professor **Katalin Karikó**. She was demoted by the university of Pennsylvania, her research funding cut. But her research laid the scientific groundwork for mRNA vaccines, which led to the development of the Covid vaccine. So yes, there have been many contributions by women in medicine, science and engineering but it would often be a struggle to qualify them and their contribution is less recognised.

Coffee rota- A thank you to Mary and Annie who served and washed up. Julia has offered to help next time. If you have not yet served a turn, could you please offer.

Next meeting 10th February 'Are you prepared for when your loved ones fall ill?' A talk by Richard Nevin – an NHS First Responder.

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

23rd January– Burns Supper

Willesley Park Golf Club hosted us again this year and we had all the usual festivities planned. However, with two days to go our piper Don, who has performed for us for many years, told us that he was ill and had been taken to hospital. We wish you a speedy return to health Don. A frantic search by Bill located another piper, Michael Gordon from Nottingham, who was able to step in at the last moment. Also performing for the first time this year was Lesley Notghi who recited the Burns poem "To a mouse" in full Scots dialect after explaining the poem's full meaning. As usual, Bill gave the Address to the Haggis after it had been piped around the room and Colin Woodland gave a very funny "Toast to the Lassies".

The food was good and generous, the company fine and the entertainment excellent. We finished as usual with a hearty rendition of "Auld Lang Syne" before disappearing into the night.

A big thank you to Glenys for organising everything and to Bill, Colin, Michael Gordon and Lesley, to our Master of Ceremonies Tony Smith and to the staff of the Golf Club for a wonderful evening.



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.

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

21st January

Ken had brought along a selection of reds this time for us to compare.



We started with a Georgian wine from M&S – Saperavi 2023 13% and £11. Saperavi is a grape native to Georgia and unknown elsewhere. It was dark, thick, smooth and plummy. A slightly unusual taste but very nice. A heavy suitable for winter casseroles. Everyone enjoyed it but as it was the first wine of the evening many were reluctant to score it too highly, not knowing what was to follow. However it scored 8/10 from everyone. A good start.

We then compared 2 Chilean Merlots, one a Sainsburys Taste the Difference Valle de Maipa 13.5% ££9.50, the other from Tesco, Diablo Velvet 2024 13.5% £10.50 from Valle de Maupe. The first was medium heavy, smooth, tasting of redcurrants with a woody aftertaste so it had seen some new oak. The second was very smooth, absolutely no tannin but smelling of wood shavings suggesting it too had seen some oak. At just over a year old it would not have been aged in oak, more likely oak chippings had been used to add flavour. Slightly sweeter than the Sainsbury one tasting of blackcurrants and plums. Strangely they both scored exactly the same at 7.5/10 but half of us preferred one, half the other. But only by small degrees.

Fourth was an Italian blended wine which many of us had tried before called Piccini Memoro. It is non vintage and 13%. Tesco have it at £9.50. This is made from grapes around Italy, Merlot from Veneto, Montepulciano from Abruzzo near Rome, Primitivo from down south and Nero d'Avola from Sicily. It is supposed to remind one of all of Italy. It has a nice balance of dryness and sweetness and no tannin. Whilst it is quite rich is it somehow lighter than the other wines. Again we all enjoyed it and it scored exactly the same 7.5/10 as the previous 2 wines.

So the Georgian wine was the winner, but not by much. We don't think you'd be disappointed with any of them.

It just happened to be Annie's birthday that day so after much toasting of 'Happy Birthday', (we were not allowed to sing it!) Annie broke open not one but two bottles of Port for tasting! We didn't finish them, honestly! The first was an escapee from Brasenose College, Oxford, their house Ruby Port with a very raisiny taste whilst the other was Taylors LBV (late bottled vintage) 2012 which tasted much more of black cherries. The sort that come in syrup in a jar at Christmas. Both were delicious although the first was definitely a cheese wine, Stilton comes to mind, whilst the other was a dessert wine. Great with Christmas pudding or chocolate gateau. Thank you Annie for allowing us to taste these lovely wines with you, and Happy Birthday.



THE WALKING GROUPS

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

26th January. Ticknall to Foremark, led by Christine

5 of us met at Ticknall Village hall on a rather cloudy but dry day. We set off along the National Forest way and at the Hangman's stone we turned left and headed towards Foremark Reservoir. Water levels are surprisingly still quite low despite the recent wet weather. We continued along the National Forest way towards Carvers Rocks before following a bridle path towards Repton and Milton. We then followed a muddy path before rejoining the National Forest Way back to Ticknall.

Just under 10 miles. On our return we all enjoyed a hot drink and homemade cake.

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

12th January. From the Gelsmoor, led by Alison

It was a good turnout for our first walk of the New Year. 15 of us met at the Gelsmoor Pub as we planned to have lunch after the walk.



We walked to the New Lount Nature Reserve, through Rough Park and Heart Wood parallel with the A42. Even though we had rain the day before to wash away most of the snow there were still some icy spots to navigate. However we all made it back in one piece and had a very good lunch afterwards. 4.7 miles completed.

A leader is needed for the March 3rd walk. Is anyone available to help?

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

20th January. From the Smisby Arms, led by Kevin

The sun was shining for the first time this week as 21 of us met outside the Smisby Arms. On leaving the pub we stopped briefly for photograph by the old lockup building.



To avoid some serious mud and several stiles we set off up the road passing Smisby Church. After crossing the Ashby / Ticknall road and passing the first Pisternhill farm we moved carefully down a very slippery Pistern Hill passing a group of walkers from Lichfield u3a coming the other way. The walking came a lot easier and less muddy as we joined the Tramway Trail and into Calke Explore for a coffee stop.

Continuing along the trail we passed by Heath End farm joining the Ivanhoe Way for a short period before passing Wicket Nooks cottage, the second Pisternhill Farm and back to the Smisby Arms for lunch.

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

16th January. From Hood Park gates for a walk to Tesco's

It was a dry but overcast day and 8 people met at the Hood Park gates and we set off along North Street and at the bend in the road, we took the footpath through Wainright's yard and soon we were at the kissing gate and on to the better path which opens out by the new car park which had one car in it.

We continued on the path across the entry road to the new estate, Warner Road. The path continued by the new houses, we took the right fork staying parallel to Nottingham Road. The path then followed Gilby Close and crossed Woodcock Way. There followed a grassy area. Here we took another right fork that led to Plantagenet Way and on to Featherbed Lane onto which we turned right until we found the footpath again which led to Discovery Way and to Tesco's cafe. After a drinks break, we returned on the same path stopping for a photograph at the new car park which now had 4 cars. Total distance just over 1.5 miles

Your Committee

We can all be contacted at the email addresses below.

Role	Name	Contact email
Chair	Tony Smith	<u>chairman@ashbyu3a.co.uk</u>
Vice Chair	Adrian Hickson	<u>vice-chair@ashbyu3a.co.uk</u>
Business Secretary	John Pilgrim	<u>secretary@ashbyu3a.co.uk</u>
Treasurer	Kevin Green	<u>treasurer@ashbyu3a.co.uk</u>
Membership Secretary	Val Reed	<u>members@ashbyu3a.co.uk</u>
Minutes Secretary	Iain Banns	<u>minutes@ashbyu3a.co.uk</u>
Groups Co-ordinator	Michael O'Donoghue	<u>interestg@ashbyu3a.co.uk</u>
Speaker seeker	Yogi Godwin	<u>speakers@ashbyu3a.co.uk</u>
Social Secretary	Glenys Morrice	<u>socials@ashbyu3a.co.uk</u>
Communications	Mike Stow	<u>webmaster@ashbyu3a.co.uk</u>