

Newsletter April 2026

Interest Groups Timetable for April

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

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Monthly Meeting	Tue 28 th	2 pm	Congregational Church, Ashby. Bishop (and magician) Peter Fox 'Illusion, Delusion and Disillusion'
Activities	Wed 1 st Fri 17 th	1-3 pm 2-4 pm	Ashby Leisure Centre
Arts and Crafts	Thu 2 nd	9.45 am	Packington Village Hall.
Breakfast	Thu 16 th	10 am	Flagstaff Brewery Fayre, Ashby LE65 1JP
Bridge	Mon 6 th Mon 13 th Mon 20 th Mon 27 th	7-9 TBC 11am TBC TBC TBC	April 6 th is Bank Holiday Monday but we may meet in the evening. Other dates and times TBC Ivanhoe Social Club.
Calligraphy	Tue 14 th	10 am	At Sue's
Coffee and Chat	Wed 8 th	10 am	Bawdon Lodge Farm, Nanpantan LE12 9YE
Computer	Wed 1 st Mon 20 th	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Croquet	Fri 24 th	10 am	Moira Miners' Welfare Club, Moira DE12 6BP
Digital Photography	-	-	No meeting this month
Drawing and painting	-	-	Venue TBA. We will be working on our entry for Ashby Arts Festival throughout this month
Family History	Wed 8 th	2 pm	2 Marlborough Way
Food from Afar	Thu 2 nd	6 pm	Mount Gurkha, 31 Ashby Rd, Loughborough LE11 3AA
French	Mon 13 th Mon 27 th	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Gardening	Thu 16 th	10 am depart Royal Hotel	Coach to Ashwood Nursery and John's Garden. Self-guided tour & talk. Coach and entry £30.
History	Thu 23 rd	2.15 pm	Packington Village Hall. Andy and Mary Jones - 'A stroppy lot'. Tales of Leicestershire Dissenters
Industrial Heritage	Wed 22 nd	TBC	RAF Cosford

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Literature	Tue 14 th	1.30 pm	At Sandra's house
Lunch	Thu 9 th	12 noon	The Unicorn, Orton on the Hill CV9 3NN
Medium Walks	Mon 13 th	9.45 for 10am start	Meet in the car park of The Bulls Head, Loughborough Road, Thringstone LE67 8LR
Music Appreciation	Wed 1 st	10 am	At Neil's
Poetry Reading	Thu 16 th	2.30 pm	42 Avenue Rd, Ashby
Recorder	Thu 2 nd Thu 16 th	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Rummikub	Tue 14 th Tue 28 th	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Science & Technology	Tue 14 th	2 pm	Packington Village Hall. 'Forensic Entomology' a talk by Kate Barnes
Scrabble	Mon 13 th Mon 27 th	10.30 am	The Bulls Head, Ashby
Short Walks	Fri 17 th	10 am	Meet at the car park of Sence Valley, Ravenstone Road, Ibstock, LE67 6NW
Social Events	-	-	No Socials this month
Supper Club	Thu 23 rd	7 for 7.30 pm	Belper Arms, Main St, Newton Burgoland LE67 2SE
The 10 Milers	-	-	No walk this month
Walking	Tue 7 th Tue 21 st	9.30 for 9.45 Start	Staff of Life, Ticknall DE73 7JH Lakeside cafe, Shorth Heath Rd, Moira DE12 6BW
Wine Appreciation	Wed 15 th	7 pm	Annie's house

Interest Groups Timetable for early May

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Bridge	Mon 4 th	TBC	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Walking	Tue 5 th	9.30 for 9.45 Start	Meet at Thornbridge Estate, Ashford in the Water, Bakewell DE45 1NZ
Music Appreciation	Wed 6 th	10 am	TBC
Activities	Wed 6 th	1 – 3 pm	Ashby Leisure Centre
Computer	Wed 6 th	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Arts and Crafts	Thu 7 th	10 am	Packington Village Hall.
Digital photography	Thu 7 th	10 am	16 Winchester Way
Recorder	Thu 7 th	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Food from Afar	Thu 7 ^h	6 pm	TBC

HISTORY GROUP COACH TRIP TO LEEDS – THURS 30TH JULY

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

We really need a few more names on the list to make this trip viable. If you wish to come along but haven't yet put your name down, please do so as soon as possible.

Please contact Colin on 01530 272592 or e-mail colinellis1950@gmail.com to provide:

Your name plus your e-mail address or telephone number

Trip itinerary:

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

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

POTENTIAL NEW SLOW WALKING GROUP

Firstly, thanks to all of you who have expressed an interest in joining a new Slow Walking Group. The idea came from one of our members who thought that this new group would be welcomed by many, even though we already have four walking groups established for some time.

In order to progress this further, it is important that we get your views on what are your expectations for this new group, how would it differ from the other walking groups which we already have, how frequently you would want the walk and what would be involved to get it started.

I am sure that some of you attend the monthly meeting at the Congregational church and I thought that would be an ideal place for us to meet directly after the main meeting on April 28th, for about fifteen minutes to discuss the above. Do not be concerned, we will still have time for tea or coffee after our discussion.

If you are not attending the monthly meeting, you can send me your thoughts on the above via e mail and we will discuss with those who are attending and decide the best way forward.

Regards,

Michael
Groups Co-ordinator

A THANK YOU TO OUR GROUP LEADERS AND HELPERS

On Friday 13th March (lucky for some) our Chair Tony Smith and members of the committee hosted a free lunch at the Beeches to say thank you to our Group Leaders and to those unsung heroes who help keep our u3a running by putting out chairs and tables and making teas etc.

36 members were able to attend. Group Leaders were each invited to nominate a group member who helped to run their group. Also there were those people who regularly help out at the monthly meeting despite not having any official role within our u3a.

The Beeches provided a nice lunch meal, served very well, and provided endless tea and coffee afterwards. It was good to get all these members together to chat about how their groups run and plenty of other things.

A good time was had by all, and thank you again to all of you, those present at the meal or otherwise, who help to keep our u3a running so smoothly. And a special mention to Glenys for organising this event. It wouldn't have happened without her.

MONTHLY MEETING

24th March – 'Prostate Cancer' by Dr Jyoti Shah MBE

Dr Shah is a local resident of Ashby and, far more importantly, a consultant urological surgeon at Peterborough hospital. She previously worked at Burton hospital and is a renowned expert on prostate cancer and its treatment. She was awarded an MBE for Services to Medicine in 2022

Perhaps some thought that her talk would be rather worthy and dull, perhaps scary, but instead we were treated to an interesting, educational, funny and at times hilarious talk about the diagnosis and treatment of this disease.

The serious part is that 1 man dies of prostate cancer every 45 mins in the UK and 150 men are diagnosed each day. It is the most common cancer in men and is now more common than breast cancer in women. The odds of getting it are 1:8, 1:4 if you're black. Double that if someone in your father's male line has had it.

The good news is that it is quite treatable with a very high survival rate if diagnosed early. So the message to all men is if you notice any changes down below then see a doctor immediately. You will likely be given a PSA blood test to check for symptoms. This is free on the NHS and can be followed up by further tests and treatment if needed.

Unfortunately men can be quite reluctant to go to the doctor and so Dr Shah told us of some of the ways that she and others have taken their services out to the public. They set up a screening event at Burton Albion football ground. It was so successful that they had to do another two sessions to see everyone that wanted to be tested. They have also visited Afro-Caribbean clubs and Hindu temples. In all she has seen over 3800 men at 57 clinics across the country.

This was a most enlightening talk which received a standing ovation from many, some of whom had been previous patients of Dr Shah.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

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

March

Our last Activity Group on Friday 20th March was unexpectedly impacted by a power outage which affected most of Ashby. As a result, we were unable to have access to any of the indoor activities. We were able to play walking football, which as usual was lots of fun. We requested that the Leisure Centre cancel the charges which they were happy to do. If any of our members paid the £3 fee, can they please let me know at our next Activity Group on Wednesday April 1st and we will arrange a refund.



We look forward to seeing you all on April 1st at 1pm and April 17th at 2pm.

Regards,
Michael

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

Our next session will be on 2nd April at 9.45 in the meeting room of the Packington Village Memorial Hall.

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

Just to confirm that the U3A Croquet Group will be back to normal in April with a meeting on the last Friday of the month:- Friday 24th April.

With thanks to the members who coped with the March meeting on a Monday!

Regards, Rupert & Jane

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.

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

For a good chat, a hearty breakfast and some fun, why not join us on 16th April at 10am at Flagstaff Brewery Fayre, Ashby LE65 1JP. 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

Our next gathering will be at Bawdon Lodge Farm, Nanpantan Rd, Nanpantan LE12 9YE on 8th April at 10am. 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

10th March

A full house for our March session and it was very productive. Gill provided us all with a copy of the poem - The flight of the Geese by Charles C D Roberts and we spent the morning writing it out in a font of our choosing. There certainly was a variety of fonts including italics, uncial, modern calligraphy and gothicized italics. Formatting the poem was another challenge as we had to decide how to fit the lines onto the paper!! Everybody was concentrating and although we did manage to chat and catch up at coffee time we had a very industrious session.

For our next meeting we hope to present our finished poem, having completed it at home. Then moving on we will spend the time practising the uncial font as most of us have forgotten how to do it! We will then continue with the theme of 'geese' and use uncial to produce a written piece of our own choosing in time for the May meeting.

Next session is at Sue's on April 14th at 10am.

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

5th March

Unfortunately the weather was against us for an outdoor photo session so we stayed in and looked at the photos that we had all taken based on the idea of "Things beginning with 'T'". We had all the obvious subjects such as trees, trains and twins but also some more unusual ones such as a turnip, two Tesla cars and Tesco trolleys! It made us all think a little harder about what we photograph.

The April meeting due to be on Maundy Thursday was deemed too close to Easter preparations and so has been cancelled. We next meet on May 7th when we shall hopefully visit Sence Valley for some outdoor shots, weather permitting.



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

16th March

We were only four today, but we had a good session helping new visitor Anita to decide on a replacement for her aging Apple Laptop. With a little help from us regarding the exact specification, she has decided to buy an HP Windows machine from Currys

She will report back on her purchase and, if necessary, return for assistance in setting it up and guidance from us. She already uses her husband's Windows laptop, so should have little difficulty.

Converting Apple format text documents in Word might need some help though.

We next meet on the 1st of April at Winchester Way

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

18th March

Drawing and painting group this month was supposed to have been something beginning with I but we spent our time planning the timing of the drawing and painting of our contribution to the Ashby outdoor gallery in May, which only gives us four weeks meaning we will be meeting two or three times a week taking in next months regular meeting.

The letter 'I' is therefore deferred until 20th May and will be at my house in Measham. Lesley.

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

For our next soiree we are visiting the Mount Gurkha Nepalese restaurant at 31 Ashby Rd, Loughborough LE11 3AA at 6pm on 2nd April. If you would like to join us then, please let Colin Woodland know at food_from_afar@ashbyu3a.co.uk.

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

11th March

Today we were 6. Jan was finalising checking over her list of Certificates. Her next step is to build further back on these confirmed data, whilst Eileen (from home) worked on DNA connections that have emerged.

JD Worked on the life story of his great grandfather, turning the lifeline into a connected story. This requires research into the background events in the area which might have affected him.

Elizabeth Has nearly finished her 'neat and tidy' files. These are cleaned up version of the master records.

Ana researched the hometown of her Paternal Grandparents, which is Battram, near Ibstock. Named after the man who had the original cottage

Linda added her Maternal Grandparents to her Tree, then started a line of research in India into one of her Great Uncles

We meet again on April the 8th

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

19th March – Talk by Howard Drury

Our speaker for the March garden meeting was Howard Drury who came extremely well prepared and delivered an interesting talk and provided fabulous photographs. The focus of his talk was 70 years of gardening. All our attending members seemed to enjoy it very much and some requested we ask him back in the future.

We will not be holding any more meetings at Packington Memorial Hall until October because we have trips and garden visits planned throughout the summer months. See our u3a website for details. Enjoy your garden.

Paul, Sheila and the garden committee.

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

10th March

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

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

25th March. The National Needle Museum, Forge Mill, Redditch

Despite a very cold and windy day we had a great visit to Forge Mill where we were given a guided tour around the buildings, and water-powered machinery within, which opened in 1730 and processed needles until 1958.



Photo courtesy of Colin Babb at the Forge Mill Needle Museum

The 23 of us who made the journey to Redditch arrived in time to have a warming cup of coffee before being split into two groups to be guided around the site. The guide for our party, Graham, was most knowledgeable about all the 30-odd processes that went to make needles.

The quantities of needles processed is staggering. At its peak in the 1870s, the Redditch area was producing 3.5 billion needles per year, around 90% of the world's needle production.

Much of the work was done by home-workers or small factories before sending packets of needles to Forge Mill where they were scoured (polished) and returned to the factories for packing and dispatch.

The needles were, and still are, made by drawing (pulling) thick coils of wire through a number of ever decreasing holes in steel plates down to the required diameter. The wire was then chopped to the length of 2 needles, straightened before having two eyes stamped in the middle, both ends sharpened, split into 2 separate needles, then hardened and straightened again before being bundled up to be polished.

Most of these processes were done by manual labour. The man punching the eyes in the needle did it by kicking down on a bar to operate the punch. He could kick 5000 times an hour for a 12 hour shift. The man sharpening the needles risked life and eyesight by inhaling dust from the grindstone and steel shards from the needles. His life expectancy was 10 working years and 35 years of age. But he was paid 1 guinea a day rather than 10/- per week that others workers received. Some processes were done at home by children as young as 3 years old.

Bundles of up to 60,000 needles were wrapped in sacking with soap and sand and rolled back and forth under the watermill powered machines at Forge Mill for 8 hours at a time until bright and smooth. The best needles had this done up to 5 times.

We were then shown around the small exhibition of needles, machinery and ephemera before heading off to lunch at the nearby Beefeater. Another great day out enjoyed by all.

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

Our April venue is The Unicorn, Orton on the Hill CV9 3NN at noon on the 9th. If anyone wishes to join the group please email me at luncheon@ashbyu3a.co.uk to book a place.

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

19th March

During the March meeting, we looked at favourite poems or poets of group members. Pablo Neruda's 'The Rail-Splitter Awakes' gave us an enjoyable challenge and two love poems by John Donne were much enjoyed. ('A Valediction Forbidding Mourning' and 'The Sunne Rising'). Lawrence Ferlinghetti's 'Two Scavenger's in a Truck' was a good contrast and the humour of U A Fanthorpe's 'Not My Best Side' went down well. We appreciated revisiting 'Do Not go Gently into that Good Night' by Dylan Thomas which provoked an interesting discussion and Yeats' 'Cloths of Heaven'.

The next meeting will be on Monday April 27th at 2.30 - change of date due to holidays and other commitments. We will be looking at poems of war or conflict. Anyone wishing to join the group, please get in touch. (07857688822). You would be very welcome.

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

March

On 5th March, we stuck with much of the music we played during February, as we are starting to prepare for the u3a Festival in July. As only 6 of us are planning to attend, and play our recorders on the Thursday afternoon, we need to include our repertoire for the festival in the fortnightly meetings with the whole group included. Also, we have been invited to play at a concert on 9th May at the Chapel in Linton Heath, with the Boundary Singers. Obviously, we will need extra practices, when we have chosen our play list.

We played Andrew Challinger's "Variations on Greensleeves", which we enjoy, and isn't too hard. We played another couple of fairly new (to us) trios, which might fit well around 6 players. The music is actually not very new, being canzonettas by Monteverdi, and Early Tudor trios. After playing one of our favourites, Fauré's "Cantique de Jean Racine", we had another go at Marg Hall's "Three Cats", which is trickier. That needs "a bit of work".

The crumhorn music is going quite well: it has the advantage of not being too high in pitch, but is not very well known. But we need to practise the Handel Allegro. By this time, we were nearing noon, so we played Purcell's Rondeau from the John Pitts quartet book, before finishing.

On 19th March, there were 12 of us. We played some of the Recorder Poppettes, which we first played several years ago: they are good arrangements of well-known tunes, arranged for 3 recorder parts, so they should be suitable for both our engagements. Some of the other music was well liked, but needs more work, and would therefore not be suitable for the performances. The Handel Concerto Grosso and "Vox in Rama" by Clemens non Papa fall into this group. We will continue to play them: some of our members are unable to get to either performance, and we need to challenge ourselves a bit. The Recorder Quartets Book by John Pitts contains a useful selection of fairly well-known pieces, most of which we can play. We finished the session with a selection of these.

We had a new lady at the meeting on 19th. I've known her for ages, and she decided to join us to see what we get up to. She seemed to enjoy herself, so we may see her again.

The group is growing! Trouble is, it gets more difficult to keep us all together when we play! Victims of our success!

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 April we will be meeting on the 14th and 28th.

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

26th March

Today 48 members attended to hear Julie Holland and Amanda Berry regale us with some insights into the Industrial Heritage of (a smart part of) Northwest Leicestershire. They also regaled us with some of their songs, telling the tale of how life was then.

The general industrial history to the area extends far back into Roman times, with the earliest evidence of organised industries dating from the Middle Ages. Farming of course was one of the core industries, but prominent were the textile trades including framework knitters working from home, and carriage makers. By far the most lucrative industries were coal and clay which underlay local prosperity.

While there is no coal directly underneath Ashby it sits like an island surrounded by a sea of coal, limestone and clay; all very important to the new industries.

Whilst coal mining can be traced back to the 14th century 'bell' pits at New Lount colliery, it is names such as Benjamin Wilkes, Joseph Wilkes, Elizabeth Lakin, Sir George Hamilton Beaumont and Frank Hodges which knit together the story.

The story is a complex one involving the work of these men and women at various times from the late 18th century, the accessibility of coal and clay near the surface, the rapidly developing networks of tramways, railways and canals, and the money and influence these people had on the progress of industries.

Always a surprise is to find Robert Stephenson, son of George, prominent in the transport and coalmining scene locally, and the unrelated issue of the development of the Ashby Baths, which should have been the Coalville Baths had it not been for local pressure.

Each of the personages listed above had a very interesting life, none less than Frank Hodges, born into poverty, worked his way in to Oxford and eventually into a directorship of the Bank of England, and brought electricity to Newbold Coleorton

At each juncture in the story, Julie and Amanda played and sang a few verses of one of their songs.

The Silver Spade, with guitar and clarinet; The Miners' Wife (a lament) with Guitar and fife; The Melbourne Line, (a jolly ballad) with guitar and 'hooter'; and Coal and Clay (a dance) with Guitar, hammer and tile.

Julie and Amanda gave us many insights into the lives of these entrepreneurs and into the history of the industries local to Newbold, illustrated with many fascinating slides. There is much more to be found on the Newbold Coleorton website

Above all they made history fun. Which is exactly as it ought to be!

Next month we are to be hosted by a reduced committee, as many of them will be away, but with a free talk by members Andy and Mary Jones called 'A stroppy lot' - Tales of Leicestershire Dissenters.

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

March

The group has settled into a routine of spending the first hour or so discussing the news of the week or previous fortnight with each member taking part in turn. After that we will read and translate from a particular text.

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

4th March

On a lovely sunny day, nine of us assembled at Brenda's for our music session. I started off with a track from a CD that I had just bought, only for Sue to say 'I was ging to play that very track'. Great minds think alike! It was 'New York Ladies' by Bellowhead - a raucous 11 piece folk band who disbanded and have just reformed.

Sallie had chosen a much more gentle piece – 'Morning' from Grieg's Peer Gynt Suite.

Yogi showed a very moving video of a Polish patriotic song called 'Rota'. Many Poles think it should be their national anthem.

Another video excerpt from Neil was from 'Cabaret' where Joel Grey as the compere sings 'If they could see her through my eyes'. A funny but ultimately damning indictment of antisemitism in 1930s Germany.

On a lighter note we then had Frank Sinatra and 'It was a very good year', Paulo Nutini's 'Pencil full of lead', Tape Five with 'Cool Cat in town' and Fairport Convention's 'Si Tu Doit Partir'

Two lovely but tragic Irish songs followed. The Dubliners and Paddy Reilly with 'Fields of Athenry' and Sean Keane's 'Galway to Graceland'

We then listened to more film songs; Sinatra with 'Love and Marriage', Howard Keel's 'Spring, Spring, Spring' from Seven Brides for Seven Brothers and watched the video of George Clooney and the Soggy Bottom Boys with 'Man of Constant Sorrow' from Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?

Yogi offered another classical piece – the magnificent Hubert Parry's 'I Was Glad' as used in King Charles' Coronation.

We then rounded off the morning with various songs – Susan Boyles' first appearance on BGT singing 'I Have a Dream', Ghanaian Afro-Rock band Osibisa playing 'Sunshine Day', Neil Sedaka (who recently died) singing the poignant 'The Hungry Years' and finally Don McLean and the wonderful 'Vincent'

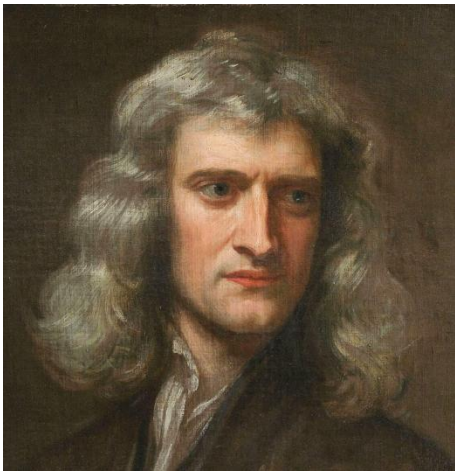
SUPPER CLUB – Co-ordinators: Colin Ellis and Mike Stow - supper@ashbyu3a.co.uk

26th March – The Priory, Nanpantan

We have been to the Priory before and always had good food and good service and this time was no exception. So different to last month! Our table was waiting for us when we arrived, we had pre-ordered but before the order was put though to the kitchen, our waiter handed around the form with our choices on it to make sure we had got it all right. Impressive. The starters arrived shortly after and were delicious and we didn't have to wait too long before the mains arrived so those who didn't have a starter weren't waiting ages to eat. Again all the food was delicious as far as I could see. There was a slight muddle with the various ice creams that 3 people ordered for dessert but otherwise all went smoothly. Good food, good service and good company. What more can you want.

Next month we shall be trying the revived Belper Arms at Newton Burgoland. Online reports are good, lets hope we can report the same after our visit. Anyone wishing to join us, please drop a line to supper@ashbyu3a.co.uk

10th March – 'Sir Isaac Newton' A talk by Paul McKay



This talk highlighted the enormous contribution made by Sir Isaac Newton in physics and mathematics during the 'Age of Reason', during the 16th to 18th Centuries. Up to this time Ancient Greek philosophers, like Aristotle and Ptolemy, had defined the natural world, shaped only by what they observed with the naked eye and the legacy of theological teachings. Accordingly, Earth was the centre of the Solar System and indeed the Universe, and all matter was made from Earth, Water, Fire and Air. Gradually, philosophers like Copernicus, Descartes, Galileo and Newton started to observe, record and think more deeply about the physical causes of what they were seeing and then tested their understanding by predicting future events, with spectacular success.

Born in 1642 at Woolsthorpe Manor, Isaac Newton was a sickly baby whose father had died 3 months earlier. His mother re-married and moved away. Isaac was not wanted by his new step-father and was brought up by his grandmother. This unsettling time deeply traumatised young Isaac and seemed to shape his adult life.

Isaac's mother soon recognised that her son was no farmer and he spent his youth being encouraged in his practical and scientific pursuits by the apothecary, his uncle and his school master in Grantham. With their support, he entered Trinity College, Cambridge in 1661 aged 19 years. Here he started thinking about geometry and light, and although clearly talented, he did not mix with his peers. His future was now split between academic life at Cambridge, time at Woolsthorpe Manor to escape the bubonic plague sweeping the nation and public life in London.

Isaac's mind was most productive at Woolsthorpe, where he was alone to experiment with light and prisms and thought deeply about the nature of gravity. The problem of colour fringes spoiling the image in a Galilean refracting telescope he solved by a radical change from a lens to a parabolic mirror, a shape that brought all the coloured constituents of white light to a common focus. On return to Cambridge his reputation and talent grew and he became a professor of mathematics and member of the Royal Society, where he rubbed shoulders with established luminaries of the time, scientists Robert Hooke, Edmund Halley, Robert Boyle and diarist Samuel Pepys. At a meeting with Halley to discuss the appearance of a bright comet and its orbit, Isaac said he knew that the orbit would be an ellipse due to the influence of gravity under the inverse square law. This incidental remark led to Isaac embarking on his greatest work, the Principia Mathematica which would become the basis of modern for mechanics. This treatise embodied his laws of motion that ruled objects on Earth as well as in the heavens, and it caused a sensation. Isaac became President of the Royal Society and he was knighted by Queen Anne.

Fame and prominence in public life did not suit Isaac Newton. He found criticism difficult to handle and his reluctance to publish his work caused problems. He argued with Hooke over who first discovered the inverse square law, with John Flamsteed (the first Astronomer Royal), over orbital data for the Moon and with a German mathematician, Leibniz over who invented calculus. He also risked ruin by refusing to be ordained into the Anglican Church, as was required for professors at Trinity College.

His appointment to Warden and then Master of the Mint was less troublesome, but his single-minded enthusiasm for the work was the same. Britain's coinage was crude and open to easy counterfeiting and theft. He introduced milling of the edges of coins to prevent them being clipped, accurate weights and measures, and severe penalties for those who stole from the treasury.

Isaac Newton was a genius, but he had many failings. He spent a large part of his life on researching alchemy to find the elusive trick of turning base metals to gold and when he unwisely invested in the South Sea Company, he lost heavily. His lasting legacy was a complete revision of the laws of physics, and there is a monument to mark his burial in Westminster Abbey in 1727.

It is intended to arrange a visit to Woolsthorpe Manor in September. Details are yet to be confirmed.

Our next meeting will be a talk by on Tuesday 14th April by Kate Barnes, a lecturer at the University of Derby, on Forensic Entomology, the study of insects in legal investigations to determine the time of death of a person. Come along to learn more about this fascinating science.

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

25th March

This month Ken presented 4 red wines from the Bordeaux region including 2 well-aged wines from the same vineyard but of different vintages.

First was a Caronne de Belgrave 2021 13% £15 reduced to £10 at Sainsburys. It is from the Left Bank of the Gironde in Haut Medoc. This is the more traditional side of the river for what the British call Claret wines. A blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc. This was plummy and full bodied with some tannins which give that slight pucker to the cheeks as an aftertaste. Like most French wines it was not as sweet as many modern wines tend to be and took a little getting-used-to. But we all liked it and it scored 7.3/10

The 2nd wine was from the Right Bank. Combe de Argent 2023 13% and £8.99 from Aldi. Typical of Right Bank wines this had a lot more Merlot grape with Cabernet Sauvignon. It was rich and dark with a taste of plums and red fruits but had a an initial odd taste which vanished after a few minutes in the glass. Not quite as good as the first wine, it seemed a bit one-dimensional. We scored it 7/10

Now on to the two wines from the same winery. There were from Chateau la Garde on the Left Bank. Chateau la Garde is a good estate, not some made up name for marketing purposes. Both wines were bought in Aldi for £9.99 each but have been on sale elsewhere for much more. Some top merchants are selling them at £25! One can only assume that Aldi were selling them off cheap as bin-ends. One was 2017 vintage, the other 2014. Both are a blend of Cab Sauv and Merlot 52/48% mix.

We started with the younger '17. There was an immediate taste of blackcurrants followed by rich dark fruit and even liquorice. Very smooth. An oaky taste without being too tannic.

We then tried the '14. This was similar but darker and richer and starting to take on a raisiny flavour not unlike Port. This is due to its age – nearly 12 years old. Both were delicious and a real cut above the other two but which was the better?

Interestingly the '17 scored evenly amongst all seven of us, whilst the '14 was a little more divisive, but not greatly so. Some loved it, some less so. However when the scores were totted up they both scored exactly the same at 56/70 or 8/10 average. It is all a matter of which you like personally, and probably what food you were having with them. A great chance to taste some top wines at a very reasonable price.

Next month we will be tasting Iberian wines (i.e. Spanish and Portuguese) provided by Mike.



THE WALKING GROUPS

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

23rd March. Packington to Sence Valley and back, led by Christine

Just 4 of us gathered at Packington Recreation ground. It was a dry and mild day as we walked towards Spring Lane. A few dry days had improved the lane and we didn't see too much mud. From the top of Spring Lane we walked into Jubilee Woods where we stopped by the lake for a short break. We then picked up the National Forest Way to Sence Valley trying to avoid the mud. We stopped briefly for coffee and a snack before heading back towards Normanton where we picked up the NFW path back to Packington for coffee and cake.

There will no walk in May as the date falls on Bank Holiday Monday. However during May there are plenty of guided walks during the National Forest Walking Festival. Walks range from a few miles to 16 miles if you are feeling energetic! <https://nationalforest.org>

Our next walk will be on Monday 27th July starting from Ticknall Village Hall

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

3rd March. Hardwick Hall, led by Kevin

For our first trip to Derbyshire in 2026, we had a favourable weather forecast, and 23 people arrived at Hardwick Hall, likely drawn by the promise of a dry, sunny day. On leaving the car park a little later than normal we set off on an estate footpath through Lady Spencer's Wood and joined an old railway track built for the nearby Pleasley Pit before turning left along another old track now called the Rowthorne Trail Nature Reserve. We continued on further paths on the outskirts of the estate descending on a wide meadow path to the old Mill Ponds connected to the nearby NT Stainsby Mill. We stopped briefly at a visitor's centre and chatted to another group of 20 from Chesterfield u3a before continuing up the main hill of the day back to Hardwick Hall for a picnic lunch in the sunshine.



17th March. Bosworth, led by Kevin

A glorious day greeted 24 of us as we gathered for our Tuesday walk. After choosing our lunch choices at the café we set off up the hill from the car park to the Battlefield Monument for a group photograph. Following the photo, we passed by Shenton heritage railway station, across a field and onto a short road section through Shenton Village and Whitemore farm.

The next section involved several fields and stiles to negotiate before stopping for coffee at the new Battlefield Monument and then more fields and stiles to reach the tow path of the Ashby Canal back to Sutton Cheney Wharf and then on to the Battlefield café for lunch.

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

9th March. From Thornton Reservoir, led by Alison

It was so misty on this morning that you could hardly see the water of the reservoir but at least it was dry and 16 of us turned up. There were a couple of new walkers to our group and we hope to see them again.

The route started along the dam road, across fields to an area known as the Ratby Burroughs. Back skirting Crow Wood and the Forest Hill Golf Course, and finishing with a circuit around the reservoir. By this time the mist had cleared somewhat so the views across the reservoir were better - if only slightly! 5.2 miles completed.

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

20th March. From the lower car park of Beacon Hill

It was a bright sunny day and 12 short-walkers met at Beacon Hill. We were joined by two new walkers both called Sue. After the group photo we set off, just after 10am, along the Blue Trail which was claimed to be 2 miles long. This went straight up the hill to the peak. The first item of interest was the sculpture area. The woodland has scattered carvings produced in the sculpture area all made from wood. Further up the woodland thinned out and we could see over Loughborough. At the top we saw the beacon as it is one of the highest points in Leics. Only one person in our group walked to the trig. point at the very top. On the way down we stopped at the leaf chair where I was photographed. We continued on down where we saw our first daffodils of the season. At the bottom most of us went to the café. Total distance walked just over 2 miles in just over 1 hour 10 minutes.



Your Committee

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