



Newsletter June 2026

Interest Groups Timetable for June

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 23 rd	2 pm	Congregational Church, Ashby. Martin Lloyd – ‘Passports, Assassins, Traitors & Spies’
Activities	Wed 3 rd Fri 19 th	1-3 pm 2-4 pm	Ashby Leisure Centre
Arts and Crafts	Thu 4 th	9.45 am	Packington Village Hall.
Breakfast	Thu 18 th	10 am	Robins Nest, Burton Road (Measham Road), Measham DE12 7QX
Bridge	Mon 1 st Mon 8 th Mon 15 th Mon 22 nd Mon 29 th	11am-1.30pm 7-9pm 11am-1.30pm 7-9pm 11am-1.30pm	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Calligraphy	Tue 9 th	10 am	At Sue’s
Coffee and Chat	Wed 10 th	10 am	Swarkestone Nursery, Lowes Lane DE73 7GQ
Computer	Wed 3 rd Mon 15 th	2 pm 2 pm	91 Woodside 16 Winchester Way
Croquet	Fri 26 th	10 am	Moira Miners' Welfare Club, Moira DE12 6BP
Digital Photography	Thu 4 th	10 am	Hicks Lodge, Willesley Woodside, LE65 2UP
Drawing and painting	Thu 17 th	10 am	At Susan’s
Family History	Wed 10 th	2 pm	2 Marlborough Way
Food from Afar	Thu 4 th	6 pm	Tarboush, Market St, Loughborough LE11 3EP
French	Mon 8 th Mon 22 nd	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Gardening	Thu 18 th	Depart Royal Hotel 9 am	Coach trip to Powis Castle. Coach and entry to castle and gardens £41 (NT members £23)
History	Thu 25 th	2.15 pm	Packington Village Hall. Michael Hardy - ‘A hands-on identification of historical artefacts’.
Industrial Heritage	Wed 24 th	Depart Ashby 8.45 am	Churnet Valley steam railway. ST10 2HA

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Literature	Tue 9 th	1.30 pm	At Sandra's house
Lunch	Thu 11 th	12 noon	Wolferstan Arms, Main Rd, Shuttington B79 0DP
Medium Walks	Mon 8 th	9.45 for 10am start	Meet on the upper car park at Moira Furnace
Music Appreciation	Wed 3 rd	10 am	At Nev's
Poetry Reading	Thu 18 th	2.30 pm	42 Avenue Rd, Ashby
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 Hall. 'Theatre Science' by Kitt Lane
Scrabble	Mon 8 th Mon 22 nd	10.30 am	The Bulls Head, Ashby
Short Walks	Fri 19 th	10 am	Meet in Melbourne car park opposite Assembly rooms. DE73 8GJ
Social Events	-	-	No events this month
Supper Club	Thu 25 th	7 for 7.30 pm	The Otter, London Rd, Kegworth DE74 2EY
The 10 Milers	Mon 27 th	9.15 for 9.30	Meet at Ticknall Village Hall Carpark. DE73 7JX
Walking	Tue 2 nd Tue 16 th	9.30 for 9.45 9.30 for 9.45	Meet Staff of Life Ticknall DE73 7JH Meet at Beacon Hill lower car park LE12 8TA
Wine Appreciation	Wed 17 th	7 pm	Annie's house

Interest Groups Timetable for early July

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Music Appreciation	Wed 1 st	10 am	TBC
Activities	Wed 1 st	1 – 3 pm	Ashby Leisure Centre
Computer	Wed 1 st	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Arts and Crafts	Thu 2 nd	9.45 am	Packington Village Hall.
Digital photography	Thu 2 nd	10 am	TBC
Recorder	Thu 2 nd	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Food from Afar	Thu 2 nd	6 pm	TBC
French	Mon 6 th	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Bridge	Mon 6 th	TBC	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Walking	Tue 7 th	9.30 for 9.45	Meet in Hartington Village, opposite the Charles Cotton Hotel SK17 0AW.
Leisurely Walking	Tue 7 th	10.15 for 10.30	TBC

ASHBY u3a's FACEBOOK PAGE

Do you know we have a Facebook page? It can be found at facebook.com/ashbyu3a



Ashby u3a

239 followers • 17 following

One of over 1000 u3a groups nationally, offering over 30 activities to people no longer in full time work, from Ashby de la Zouch and its surrounding area. We share learning experiences and social activities for fun.

Community organisation

Sign Up

Following

Search

Lynda Kovach does an excellent job of posting up to date news about happenings within our u3a on a regular basis.

Please take a look if you don't already, and please follow our page. It helps our u3a to be noticed by yet more people.

LEISURELY WALKING GROUP

The proposed Slow Walking Group has got a new name and it is now to be called the Leisurely Walking Group.

The Group Leader is Estelle Sandles. She met with a small number of potential walk leaders to determine the group's direction.

To gauge interest in the group 20 would-be members were then sent a questionnaire to ascertain their views. Following the replies it was decided to have the first walk on Tuesday 7th July.

This group's emphasis is not on speed or distance but on empathetic enablement, enjoyment and a tool for physical and mental wellbeing. It will be covering shorter distances than other walking groups.

A webpage for the group will appear on our website very shortly.

MONTHLY MEETING

28th May – ‘Florence Nightingale’ by Danny Wells

Danny Wells is a local historian and he gives talks on many famous people with a local connection. Florence Nightingale is one of the most famous names in history and during Victorian times was the second most famous woman after Queen Victoria herself.

She came from a privileged background, born in May 1820 into a wealthy British family in Florence after which she was named. Her older sister Parthenope was also named after her place of birth, a Greek settlement on the edge of Naples. The family returned to England in 1821 and settled at Lea Hurst, an estate in Derbyshire which her mother had inherited.

Much of what is known about Florence comes from a collection of 1600 letters which she left behind with the instructions to burn them after her death, Fortunately for historians the family kept them.

Her father made his money from lead mining in Matlock. Her mother thought that Lea Hurst was too small as a family home as it only had 15 bedrooms! so they moved to Embley Park in Hampshire. It was here that Florence claimed to have received a calling from God to devote herself to the service of others. In 1844 she announced that she would become a nurse. Nurses at the time were considered a very badly, often pictured as being slovenly, uneducated and drunk. However Florence wanted to change that image. She learnt basic nursing whilst staying at a Lutheran community in Germany.

She was courted by politician Richard Monckton Milnes for 9 years before she rejected him thinking he would interfere with her nursing career.

She is most famous for her role in the Crimean War after she heard about the horrific conditions for the wounded men in the hospital at Scutari. There was little medicine, poor hygiene and very few overworked staff. Mass infections were common, many of them fatal. She wrote to the Times asking the government to do something and they commissioned Brunel to design a prefabricated hospital to be sent out Turkey. It had a death rate one tenth that of Scutari. In her 1st winter at Scutari over 4000 soldiers died. 10 times more from illness than from battle wounds. It was here that her patrolling of the wards late at night earned her the nickname ‘Lady of the Lamp’



She introduced basic hygiene such as washing of hands, clean dressings and washing of floors whilst also pressing for better nutrition, medicines and more staff.

However the Crimea was only a small part of her work. She returned to London and set up the first nursing school at St Thomas's Hospital in 1860. She wrote 'Notes on Nursing', the first of its kind explaining hygiene in simple words. She wrote endlessly to politicians and friends in high places, campaigning for better hospitals and better nursing. She was intermittently bedridden due to 'Crimean Fever' that she contracted whilst out there and also suffered from depression, but she continued to write from her bed.

She was awarded numerous medals and honours; among them were the first Royal Red Cross, the Order of Merit, The Order of St John and the Honorary Freedom of the City of London.

She never married, but had many long lasting friendships with men and women. She died on 13th August 1910 aged 90.

Trying to tell her story in one page of the newsletter is impossible, but Danny Wells did an excellent job of telling us all about her life and career in a 60 minute talk. She was a most inspiring person and so much more than the 'Lady with the Lamp'

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

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

May

Not much has changed at the Activities Group. Attendance is still relatively small although we did have 18 at the last group.

It remains very enjoyable for all who attend, we just need to get more members to join.

Regards,
Michael

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

7th May

The Crafty Ladies met on Thursday 7th May. We were down in numbers again this month because some were away on holiday. The ladies had taken their crochet bags home to complete and brought the results back for all to see. One lady brought in 2 completed bags (she obviously enjoyed crocheting). Another had added crocheted flowers to the front of her bag flap.

With our bags completed, we began our next project. We had been given a bag full of face masks that had not been sold during Covid. A square was cut from each side of the masks which were lined, thus giving us four squares. Sharon had purchased a panel of squares depicting elderly ladies doing various activities such as walking dogs; sitting on a swing; watering plants etc. These will form the centre of a larger square by surrounding them with the squares from the masks. We will, hopefully, complete these blocks in June or, possibly, July.

There was a lot of fun and laughter during the morning and there was also tea/coffee and cake of course as one of the ladies was celebrating her birthday this month.

The next meeting will be at Packington Village Memorial Hall at 9.45am on 4th June

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

18th May

Today we had 5, and few issues.

JD reported he was unable to hear incoming phone calls on his mobile. All other notifications were perfectly clear and audible. It was deduced that the Bluetooth link to his hearing aids might be blocking these, but this was unable to be tested in the session.

The topic of Chromebooks was raised. They have certain utility, especially cost and lightness, but can only really operate with Cloud storage systems. Ideal for someone always on the move, but otherwise quite limited. They do not run Windows apps like Word or Excel.

We talked about the way Open Office can open Apple Pages, but MS Word can't. PDFs can be opened by almost any machine which is why our Webmaster uses it to communicate to the Membership.

The perennial problem of Windows 10 machines which cannot be upgraded to Windows 11 came up. The ESU option might be useful for some, but does not give full protection, and is time limited anyway. Which, considering that around 75% of all Windows machines installed around the world cannot be upgraded to Windows 11 is a serious problem. The general opinion, however, was that unless the user had been on some dodgy sites, had downloaded questionable software, or used multiplayer games over the internet, they were reasonably safe at the moment.

We next meet on Wednesday June 3rd at 91 Woodside.

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.

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

7th May

Today nine of us went on safari to Sence Valley Park. We split up and wandered lonely as a cloud, around this charming park for an hour and a half, then congregated at the Little Bluebird Café.

There were not too many exotic birds to see, but the day was very pleasant, and the exercise was good.

We meet again at Hicks Lodge on June 4th.

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

20th May

The drawing and painting group met at Lesley's house to paint something beginning with the letter I. John was unable to join us and although that was disappointment it was a blessing in disguise as Susan was with us and she needs lots of space at the table. Christine stretched the I and painted the Irish patron St. Patrick. Lesley painted Ice flow on the Bow River in Banff, Canada.



We had two pictures that are not yet completed but hope to see them next month when we meet at Susan's house on the 19th June and the letter is J for June.

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

21st May - Hill Farm Café, Spring Lane, Packington

Eleven hungry souls gathered at Hill Farm for breakfast on 21st May. There was a good selection of breakfasts. One or two had beautifully presented omelettes, some were satisfied with the standard fry up, but a few embarked on the huge Farm House breakfast. The staff brilliantly produced fine meals from an amazingly small kitchen.

The group remained for quite some time after eating to enjoy a good old chinwag. As the party broke up, many availed themselves of various meats from a choice of beef, pork, bison and venison and fresh farm eggs on their way out.

The next breakfast gathering will be at the Robins Nest (part of Robins DIY store) on the Burton/ Measham Road, Measham DE12 7DX at 10am on 18th June.

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

29th May

I can report that we had a successful May meeting, with eleven members enjoying some friendly competition in perfect weather.

Our next meeting is on Friday 26th June, when Marjorie and Roger will be running the session.

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

12th May

Almost a full attendance for our session today where we were able to compare our attempts at writing out the poem “ The Flight of the Geese”. Most people had followed the brief and practised the uncial font while some of us fell by the wayside!!!

So while we’ll finish off work in progress at home, today we just ‘played’ by tying two pens/pencils together and attempting to write words or phrases to see what effects we could produce. Obviously there were some successes while more practice was needed by others!!

Lovely coffee and biscuits finished off a satisfying session.

Next meeting will be at Sue’s on June 9th where we will continue with ‘playing’ and bring any finished work we completed at home.

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

13th May - RedZ Cafe, Coxon's Mews Ashby

Eight members gathered at RedZ Cafe for tea, coffee and cakes. A good time was had by all. Sharon and Colin were away at a funeral and left things in the capable hands of Brenda, who did a splendid job of keeping everyone in line.

Our next gathering will be at Swarkestone Nursery, Lowes Lane BE73 7GQ at 10am on June 1st. This is a firm favourite with the group. 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.

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.

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

May

The French group continues to meet at 11am every other Monday at the Ivanhoe Club in Ashby.

At present we continue to encourage conversation at the start of each session by each person in turn recounting the things that they have done in the previous fortnight. After that there will be revision of grammar or verbs with translation of interesting articles thrown in for reading and comprehension practice.

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

7th May - Pepitos Mexican Restaurant, Derby

Twelve of us journeyed to the metropolis of Derby to partake of Mexican delights served up by a charming waitress under training under the eagle eye of the manager. The group ganged up on me and refused to let me have a starter because I might hold up the delivery of the main courses. I graciously forewent my starter of course. However, I had a cunning plan! When others ordered a dessert, I ordered a starter. I must congratulate the waitress under training, who took it all in her stride and remained unflustered.

For our next adventure we are testing out a restaurant we have not previously visited that serves Syrian and Moroccan fare. We are going to the Tarboush in Market Street, Loughborough at 6pm on 4th June. So far, twelve people have signed up. If you would like to join 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

13th May

Today we were 6, including one working from home

Adrian and Sue are now back from Australia: Welcome home! Adrian is still working on his written story, currently about his 5th great grandfather and his two brothers. As with any story of this kind, it requires steady, detailed work.

Sue is engaged with her 3rd great grandparents and very large family. Building up their lives will take time and determination.

JD spent some time installing mapping software onto his laptop for future meetings and discussed some of the issues of working up details to fill out the backgrounds of ancestors' lives. In particular, developing indirect clues as to their personalities, a matter which normal records just don't address.

Dora (from home) has purchased Family Tree Maker 2019 and worked on readying her Ancestry files for transfer to it. She also went back to working on her Scotland's People records of the 1700's.

Linda was working on a link to her maternal 2nd great grandmother, and the area she lived in.

We meet again on June 10th.

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 June we will be meeting on the 9th and 23rd.

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

21st May – Felly Priory Gardens

We had a fantastic visit today to Felly Priory Gardens, it is situated in north Nottinghamshire hidden half a mile off of the M1. It is a tranquil garden with many rare and unusual plants with the house and garden nestled in beautiful rolling countryside and the nursery is stocked with many of the plants you can find in the gardens. The Priory of Felly was founded in 1156 on the site of a small hermitage.



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

9th May - George and Dragon on the Ashby/Loughborough Road

Once again, thirteen members turned up at the George and Dragon on the Ashby/Loughborough Road for lunch. The menu choices were considerable and varied. As people soon found out, the portions were, in general, enormous and very tasty. It is some time since we had visited the George and Dragon and it remains a very enjoyable experience. People were so engrossed in conversation that time slipped by unnoticed and it was all too soon time to depart.

Our June venue is an old favourites with a superb pastoral view, the Wolferstan Arms on the Main Street in Shuttington B79 ODP on 11th June at midday.

Thirteen 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.

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

12th May

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

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

May

At the first meeting in May there were 14 of us, but no bass players, so the music was chosen to accommodate this. Fortunately we have quite a lot of this, dating back to our earlier days when we didn't have anyone who could play bass.

We experimented a bit with dividing descants and tenor recorders so they were not always playing the notes they expected. This is most probably very wrong musically, but gives us a chance to see what other parts are playing.

At the end, eight of us stayed for a rehearsal of the pieces we were to play at a concert with Boundary Singers Ladies choir on the Saturday evening. Initially we planned to stay for half an hour, but eventually stopped after nearly two productive hours.

At the concert, at Linton Heath Methodist Church, we were able to use our new banners for the first time. Our performance was not perfect, but seemed to be well received, particularly The Wombles song and The Hippopotamus.

At the second meeting, on 21st, there were 15 of us, including two basses. Patrick came again to conduct us, so we started the practice 30 minutes late, to allow for his train times, and also had a short tea/coffee break. We played three pieces: Fauré's Cantique de Jean Racine, 'Simple Gifts', and 'Airs and Dances' by Gaspar Sanz. We play the first of these fairly often, so we do it fairly well, but Patrick was able to improve our playing of it. 'Simple Gifts' went well, but the 'Airs and Dances' is more difficult, especially No.5. It was written originally for guitar, and the tunes are quite well-known. It was useful to have Patrick's comments and suggestions, as well as his conducting. We plan to play the first two of these pieces at the Festival at York in July. We will need to have some extra practices before then!

Next month's meetings as usual, on the first and third Thursdays of the month. We may change the pattern in July, as those of us playing at York will be busy there on the first Thursday, and we can use the 2nd and 4th Thursdays instead. This is not yet confirmed!

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

21st May

The group were back to our normal schedule of the third Thursday in the month.

If anyone wishes to join the group, please get in touch. (07857688822). You would be very welcome.

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

28th May – A car-sharing trip to the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas

On a lovely sunny day, but thankfully somewhat cooler than of late, a dozen members drove out to the Arboretum. Some had never been before and some only a long time ago. For those who hadn't been for ages it was quite a surprise. There are more and bigger reception and meeting areas including a very nice terrace where one can sit and admire the view, and maybe partake of some refreshments.

Talking of the view, it has changed beyond all recognition since I was last here with 25,000 trees covering 150 acres of what used to be a quarry. There are over 400 memorials to those who have served and continue to serve our country. Whilst the majority of these memorials are to members of our armed services, there are also ones to the civilian services of police, fire, ambulance, nurses and the RNLI.

Memorials range from the main Armed Forces Memorial to small plaques to maybe a regiment, squadron or even an individual.



The Armed Forces Memorial



The Naval Service Memorial

The whole site is a beautifully laid out in a seemingly random way which makes it all much more personal and less formal. Seats and benches where one can sit in contemplation, or just take a rest, are everywhere often dedicated to an individual or small group.

Our dozen members wandered off in different directions, some looking for particular memorials, perhaps involving a relative, whilst others took in the whole scene. After 2½ hours walking I had seen maybe half of the site.



Memorial to the Paras



A small group of us got talking to a site volunteer and were privileged to hear his story of being one of the survivors of HMS Coventry which was sunk during the Falklands War 44 years ago this week.

He told us that the names 19 of his mates were on the wall of the Armed Forces Memorial.

The whole site is a moving tribute to so many who have given their lives for this country, but it is also uplifting and beautiful place, well worth the visit.

Next month

The History Group are back in Packington Hall but with the cancellation of the Leeds trip the program for later in the year has changed slightly. See the website or later editions of this newsletter for more details.

27th May – MINI factory tour, Cowley, Oxford

This month's visit was somewhat different in that it could hardly be called Industrial Heritage to visit one of the most modern automated car assembly plants in Britain, however the very same site was founded by William Morris (not the textile designer) in 1914, one hundred and twelve years ago, and cars have been made on this site continuously since then. Mini has been owned by BMW since 2001

We arrived rather early despite the best efforts of the M42 and A34 to delay us, but at least we had time to wander around the small museum area before being kitted out in hi-vis jackets, safety glasses and radio earpieces so that we could hear our guide over the noise of the factory. Unfortunately no photography is allowed on site, but I found some photos on the BMW press office website.

We were first taken to the body-in-white shop where the car bodies are welded together from pressed panels into a complete body. This is done almost entirely by robots. There are 1500 robots in use at any one time with several hundred spares in case of a breakdown.

There is even a robot dog who patrols the site looking for leaks, odd smells or high temperatures and it informs the maintenance crew to attend.



Photos courtesy of BMW press office



From there the bodies are taken to the paint shop where more robots paint them in what ever colour the customer has requested. We were not allowed in there as the fumes can be nasty (the few workers in there wear full hazmat suits and are also told what perfumes and deodorants they are allowed to wear as they might contaminate the paint finish!

The bodies now go to the assembly shop where we joined them to see the engines, interiors, seats, suspension, wheels and all the other bits added. This is mostly done by human workers but with lots of

help from machines to lift the heavier parts into place. They make 3 different models on the one production line and in strict order of the customers' orders. There can be a white convertible followed by a blue 3-door and then a red 5-door with a sunroof. In any trim configuration. All the right parts come together at the right time to make sure the right bits go on the right car.

The completed cars are then filled with fluids including petrol before being driven off the line and straight on to transporters for delivery.

A fascinating place which I'm sure William Morris would be astounded to see 112 years later. We were.

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

6th May

Eight of us managed to squeeze into Mike's house for this month's session. We started with Nev's selection of Bill Bailey playing and singing the Dr Who theme in the style of Belgian jazz, complete with cod French lyrics such as 'Je suis Dr Qui'. Brilliant.

Sallie had found an excellent video of Louis Armstrong at the BBC singing 'Hello Dolly' in 1968 and Andy followed it with Jessie Buckley singing 'The man that got away' during her audition on 'I'll do anything'.

Brenda gave us Fred Astaire and 'There may be troubles ahead' and Dorothy chose Clannad singing the theme from 'Harry's game'.

Mike followed up with the first of two 'organ' pieces - The Animals and the classic 'House of the rising sun', while Sue played us Ray Charles duetting with Nora Jones on 'Here we go again'

Pete had chosen Sidney Bechet playing soprano sax on 'Petit fleur'. This prompted Nev to also choose Bechet playing 'Si tu vois ma mere' for the soundtrack of 'Midnight in Paris'. Two excellent tracks.

We continued the 2nd round with Sallie's video of the Nat King Cole Trio on the Ed Sullivan Show singing 'It's only a paper moon', Andy's choice of Judi Dench and 'Send in the clowns' and Brenda's Frank Sinatra & Celeste Holme with 'Who wants to be a millionaire'

Dorothy then played us Mussorgsky's 'Night on a bald mountain'. Most famous for being in Disney's 'Fantasia'

Mike then offered his second 'organ' piece – Bach's 'Tocatta and Fugue', the catch being that it was played on a Bayan button accordion by Russian Sergey Sadovoy. Played in an echoing concrete hall it somehow produced the deep bass notes of a church organ.

Sue produced Belgian Gotye singing 'Somebody that I used to know'. A song we all knew but most didn't know who had sung it.

We closed with Pete's choice of Cleo Laine and 'Turkish Delight' followed by Nev's choice of Ry Cooder and 'He'll have to go'

Yet another excellent selection of very varied music and videos. Next month we are at Nev's house.

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

28th May – Bulls Head, Wilson

After some slight confusion over the number of people booked to attend (my bad!) and the late addition of a new member, welcome Roger, we finally had enough chairs to all sit down. The pub cheerfully accepted the extra food orders and we waited for the food to arrive. The starters arrived quite quickly and were very good, but we then had a very long wait for the mains to arrive. It was nearly 8.30 when the first of them came out. Fortunately the food was very good, hot, well-cooked and tasty. But by the time we had eaten that, everyone felt it was too late for a dessert so we paid our bills and left. The service was very good and friendly but there must have been a shortage of staff in the kitchen. A shame.

We have been trying for a couple of months to book the Staff of Life in Ticknall but no-one is answering the phone, only a recorded message to say that they are undergoing refurbishment. So next month we will try the Otter on the A6 between Hathern and Kegworth which we haven't been to for a while. Anyone wishing to join us, please drop a line to supper@ashbyu3a.co.uk

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 Mondays 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.

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

12th May – 'A moss safari' by Andy Chandler-Grevatt

Many of us have been to Africa and searched for THE BIG FIVE there. But have you ever searched for the BIG FIVE, nematodes, rotifers, tardigrades, mites and the elusive gastrotrichs, in moss in your garden?

Well that is what Andy Chandler-Grevatt showed us how to do that, how to search and find these microscopic creatures that most of us did not know existed.

Far, far away in a laboratory in Brighton we saw what Andy was looking at through his microscope. These minuscule creatures only a fraction of a millimetre in size projected onto a screen in Packington.

The moss was collected from his roof that morning and revived in a petri dish with some water. As each new creature was discovered on his microscope slide, a fascinating collection of facts about them, their cells, survival mechanisms, reproduction were uncovered by a true enthusiast. We could see eyes, legs, mouth parts, heard about the number of cells in the body. Tardigrades are probably the most resistant of earth creatures, some have been left on the moon surface to study how/if they survive, nematodes are like miniscule worms, some are well known from their DNA, others still a mystery to science.

Andy is a real enthusiast and was delighted because we saw both an eutardigrade and a heterotardigrade – both active – so we spent a bit of time with them. In total we managed to see three of the Big Five (tardigrades, rotifers and a nematode) plus several other microscopic marvels: a feather bard; mystery egg and a lot of cyanobacteria.

He loves doing the online Moss Safaris, they are easy to do from the comfort of his desk, involve no travel (low carbon footprint) and allows him to give his talks to faraway places – the East Midlands in this case would be at least a long day trip from Brighton!



A Eutardigrade

The next meeting at Packington on June 9th is 'Technology in the theatre' by Kit Lane, Senior Lecturer in Performance, Performing Arts and Theatre, Derby University

When most people visit the theatre they think primarily of the author and actors. If they do think about the science and technology behind the success of the production it is thought of as lighting and loudspeakers only. But these days things have moved on so much with back projections computers etc. Come along be amazed.

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

20th May

Ken brought along four South African wines for us to taste this month, one white and 3 reds.

We started with the white, a Stellenrust Chenin Blanc 2025. 12.5%, £10.50 from Sainsburys.

This had a quite pronounced pineapple, pear and lime taste yet it wasn't too dry or acidic. A nice crisp taste which would be nice as an aperitive or with seafood or Oriental foods. Not an exceptional wine but certainly very acceptable. We scored it 7.5/10 on average with only one person scoring it as low as 6.

The next two were also from Sainsburys, a Merlot and a Syrah from the same company:

Journey's End Bluegum Merlot 2023 14% £13 reduced to £11.

This wine had spent some time in French oak barrels but the tannins were soft and vanillary with elegant soft dark fruits. Slightly drier than stated on the bottle but very pleasant. It too scored 7.5/10

Third was Journey's End Spekboom Syrah 14% £10.50

This was also rich with dark berry fruits, very smooth and with no tannins but didn't have that slightly spicy flavour one expects from Syrah/Shiraz. Again an acceptable red wine but not exceptional. It scored identically to the Merlot at 7.7/10

Lastly we tasted Bellingham Pinotage 2022 13.5% from Tesco at £11.50 marginally the dearest wine of the evening.

Pinotage is South Africa's signature wine, but it can be divisive. Some love it, some don't. It depends on what soil it grows on. This was very nice, smooth, darker than the previous two reds, with a good depth of flavour. All but one person liked it, they scored it a 6. (Interestingly each wine tonight got one 6, but each time from a different person). Overall it scored slightly higher at 8/10.

So, our wine of the month? I think it has to be the Pinotage. Not normally my favourite grape variety but I really liked this one.



THE WALKING GROUPS

The 10 MILERS – Leader Christine Green – h May – phone 07784 738597

May

We didn't walk in May as the date fell on Bank Holiday Monday.

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

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

11th May. From Ravenstone, led by Alison

We were a very select band of walkers this month as there were only 7 of us that met at The Almshouses in Ravenstone. Perhaps the weather had something to do with it as rain was forecast.

After the (small) group photograph in front of the church we set off through the village and onto Heather Lane. Across the fields into the Sence Valley Forest Park. A short pit stop in Heather and then onto the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Wood. Admired the view across the lake, had a little sing - something about ugly ducklings!! Back across fields to Ravenstone.

The rain held off and 5.4 miles completed.

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

8th -10th May – North Wales

As well as their usual fortnightly walks, many of the group decided to take a weekend away in deepest Snowdonia, or Eryri as it is now called.

On arriving at Betws-y-Coed, we all met at the Tourist Office to start our walk to the Swallow Falls. We followed the line of the river to the Miners Bridge, before crossing and following the river on the other side. After paying our £2 we all went down the slope to see the falls. After a brief refreshment at the Swallow Falls Inn, we then walked back along the road back into the town to book into our accommodation. In the evening we all met at the Gwydyr Hotel for a meal.



Saturday we met again and followed part of the Slate Mine trail to the Fairy Falls, where we followed a path down towards the Falls, after rain over night some of the paths were slippery but some of the more agile of the group were able to make their way down while the rest of us enjoyed the views from the top. We then made our way to the Conway Falls which again was well worth the walk. We had a picnic lunch near the falls and then made our way back to the road and headed back to Betws-y-Coed for some free time and a look around the shops. The evening meal was at The Royal Oak where we ate in a rather grand dining room!



The following day was a clear day and an ideal day to walk up to the steep path (Cardiac Hill) for some amazing views across Llyn Elsi Lake and a walk around the Lake before walking down the steep Hill. From here we all said goodbye and agreed it was a good weekend with some great weather, good memories and great company.

Watch out for the next one in September or October 27!

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

15th May. Grace Dieu Wood

The day was bright, dry and breezy, with a slight chill to the air when nine walkers gathered in the carpark behind the Bulls Head pub.

Brian led us off out of the carpark and through the low arch under the old railway viaduct and rightwards into the woods. We strolled along in alternating sunshine and cloud, parallel to the railway viaduct (now a walkers' path) for a while as the viaduct grew lower and eventually sank below our path. Then Brian turned us away and downhill towards the brook at the bottom. With sunshine coming and going, the scent of wild garlic loud in the air, and the sunlight glinting off the water we paused for a group photo.

Unable to cross the raging torrent (!) we strolled along parallel to it and eventually, crossing the line of an old canal, out into the open fields to the west of the ruins of the Priory. After a visit to the serene statue of the Mother Superior, we returned to the canal and went round to the ruins themselves. These are worth a visit all by themselves, but we contented ourselves with wandering in and out among them trying to interpret all the various features.

We then returned via the path parallel to the viaduct to the car park. We walked around one and a quarter mile in very pleasant weather and beautiful surroundings. Naturally, coffee and cakes were required to round off the day, so we repaired to the ever-friendly Wellie Delle. For those curious about the railway and canal: the former (the Charnwood Forest branch of the L.N.W.R) ran from the car park of the modern Lidl store on the A6 in Loughborough due west to a point north of Grace Dieu, then curved around to go southwards past the Priory and on towards Thringstone, Whitwick, Coalville and points south.

The canal (much older than the railway) snaked around the countryside to the west from Thringstone up to Osgathorpe and back down to the Priory, then wanders away to the east and Nanpanton; much of its track still identifiable today in field boundaries. Thank you Brian for an excellent morning's outing.

Your Committee

If you want to get in touch with any of us, here are our email addresses

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