

Newsletter November 2026



Interest Groups Timetable for November

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 24 th	2 pm	Congregational Church, Ashby. 'We're not for sale' - A story of Greenland by Sandy Leong
Activities	Wed 4 th Fri 20 th	1-3 pm 2-4 pm	Ashby Leisure Centre
Arts and Crafts	Thu 5 th	9.45 am	Packington Village Hall.
Breakfast	Thu 19 th	10 am	Olive Branch Cafe, School Lane, LE65 2RF
Bridge	Mon 2 nd Mon 19 th Mon 16 th Mon 23 rd Mon 30 th	11am 7-9pm 11am 7-9pm 11am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Calligraphy	Tues 10 th	10 am	At Sue's
Coffee and Chat	Wed 11 th	10 am	Pot Kiln Farm, New St, Measham DE12 7JN
Computer	Wed 4 th Mon 16 th	2 pm 2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Croquet	-	-	No meeting until summer '27
Digital Photography	Thu 5 th	10 am	St Wystan's Church and Crypt, Repton
Drawing and painting	-	-	No meeting this month
Family History	Wed 11 th	2 pm	2 Marlborough Way
Food from Afar	Thu 5 th	6 pm	Zorba the Greek, 9-11 Bold Lane, Derby DE1 3NT
French	Mon 9 th Mon 23 rd	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Gardening	Thu 19 th	2.10 pm	Packington Village Hall. Talk on gifts for Gardeners by Gerald Ingham, owner of Planters

Group	Date	Time	Venue
History	Thu 26 th	2.15 pm	Packington Village Hall. The History Team and 'Christmas Whoopsies'
Industrial Heritage	Wed 25 th	10.30 am	The Bluebell Inn, Smisby Rd, Ashby
Leisurely Walking	Tue 3 rd	10.15 for 10.30 start	Meet at Moira Furnace, off Shortheath Rd, Moira DE12 6AT. 2nd car park on the right on the way in, close to the furnace building.
Literature	Tue 10 th	1.30 pm	At Sandra's house
Lunch	Thu 12 th	12 noon	The Sump, Newton Road, Burton upon Trent DE15 0TT
Medium Walks	Mon 9 th	9.45 for 10am start	Meet at Packington Recreation Ground, Vicarage Lane LE65 1WP
Music Appreciation	Wed 4 th	10 am	At Nev's
Open Water Swim	Tue 3 rd , 17 th Thu 12 th , 26 th Fri 6 th , 20 th	10 am 10 am 2 pm	TBA. Contact Roger for details.
Play Readers	Tue 17 th	2 pm	St Helen's Heritage Centre
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. Bill Devitt - 'Humphry Davy'
Scrabble	Mondays 2 nd 9 th 16 th 23 rd 30 th	10.30 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Short Walks	Fri 20 th	10 am	Meet at the Oakthorpe Colliery picnic site, Ashby Road, Donisthorpe, DE12 7QG
Social Events	-	-	No event this month
Supper Club	Thu 26 th	7 for 7.30 pm	The George & Dragon, Ashby Rd, Thringstone LE67 8UH
The 10 Milers	Mon 23 rd	9.15 for 9.30	Meet at WI garden by the Paddington bench
Trips and Outings	-	-	No events this month
Walking	Tue 3 rd Tue 17 th	9.30 for 9.45 9.30 for 9.45	Plough, Huddlesford, Whittington WS13 8PY Meet at the Bus Stop outside the old Birds shop on Market Street, Ashby
Wine Appreciation	Wed 18 th	7 pm	Annie's house

Interest Groups Timetable for early December

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Open water swim	Tue 1 st	TBA	TBA
Walking	Tue 1 st	9 am	Lakeside Bistro, Shortheath Rd DE12 6BW
Leisurely Walking	Tue 1 st	10.15 for 10.30	TBA
Music Appreciation	Wed 2 nd	10 am	TBA
Activities	Wed 2 nd	1 – 3 pm	Ashby Leisure Centre
Computer	Wed 2 nd	2 pm	91 Woodside
Arts and Crafts	Thu 3 rd	9.45 am	Packington Village Hall.
Digital photography	Thu 3 rd	10 am	TBA
Recorder	Thu 3 rd	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Food from Afar	Thu 3 rd	6pm	La Torre, 48 High St, Coalville LE67 3EE
Open water swim	Fri 4 th	TBA	TBA
Scrabble	Mon 7 th	10.30 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
French	Mon 7 th	11 am	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Bridge	Mon 7 th	7 pm	Ivanhoe Social Club.

CHRISTMAS LUNCH

The response to the announcement that tickets were available was astounding. Much like an Oasis concert, it sold out in less than a day! All those that have got a place will have been notified by now.

Menu choices have been received, seating arrangements are being sorted and money is being collected.

Let's hope we all have a good lunch on the 10th.

WE HAVE MORE NEW GROUPS:

The Play Readers group has had its first meeting. Full details are below in the News From The Groups section.

We are hopefully going to get a **Canasta/Cribbage/Card Game group** started shortly.

If you are interested in joining it, please contact Michael O'Donoghue our Groups Coordinator at interestg@ashbyu3a.co.uk or 07485 159487

The **Curling Group** is hoping to return in the new year after a break of some years. Again contact Michael O'Donoghue if you are interested in joining.

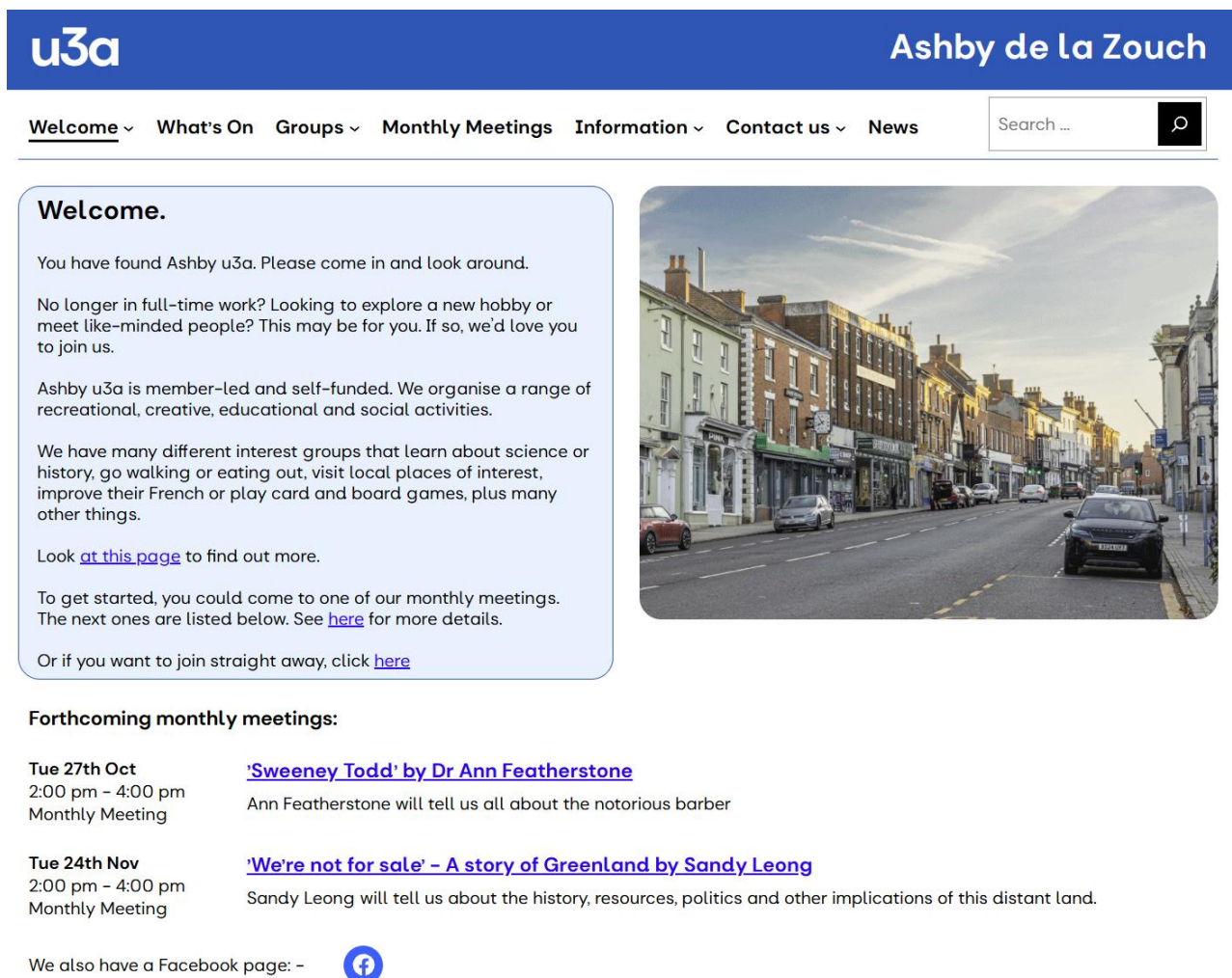
A NEW WEBSITE FOR ASHBY u3a - www.ashby.u3asite.uk

We shall very shortly be introducing a new website, more in line with the format used by most other u3as around the country. It will also be easier for us to maintain and keep looking fresh and up to date.

I shall email everyone on the day that it actually goes live. Until then you can use the current website.

From that date the current website will have a link redirecting you to the new one. So when you next go to our website you may see something like “Click here to go to our new website”, **it is not a scam**, it is not a fraudulent attempt to get your bank details or anything like that.

Please click on the link and go to the new website. It will look like this:



What you will see is the Welcome page to attract visitors and potential new members. To see what is happening at our groups and monthly meetings, click on:

“**What's On**” to see all the events, meetings and outing for the next few weeks.

Or click on “**Groups**” to see a list of all our groups, click on any one of them to find out about that group.

Or click on “**Monthly Meetings**” to see details of the next few Tuesday meetings at the Congregational church.

Go ahead, have a look around. Hopefully you'll like what you see.

MONTHLY MEETING

27th October – Dr Ann Featherstone – ‘I’ll finish him off’ The story of Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber

Dr Featherstone started by giving us the history of Sweeney Todd, how plays about the evil barber were performed as early as 1840, but his story had appeared in the sensational ‘penny dreadful’ papers before that. She told us when he was born, that he was abandoned by his parents aged 10, how he was taken in by one Tony Crook who taught him a trade, and thieving, of how he was sent to prison for 10 years and whilst in there learnt how to shave, and pickpocket, from the prison barber. How he started out after release as a ‘flying barber’, that is working on the streets, and how he bought his shop at 187 Fleet Street and met up with Mrs Lovatt who ran a pie shop nearby. She told us of the series of disappearances in the area, and of an awful smell coming from the crypt of nearby St Dunstan’s church. How police had found dismembered bodies in the crypt and footprints leading to both Todd’s barber shop and Lovatt’s pie shop. Of their arrest, of the discovery of human flesh being used in Mrs Lovatt’s pies, her suicide in prison and Todd’s trial for murder and his subsequent hanging outside Newgate prison.

She then reminded us that this is all fiction. No details of any part of this tale can be found in any newspaper or court records. However the story contains such rich detail of names, dates and real places that it sounded, and still sounds, plausibly real.

Ann then went on, in her inimitable, entertaining and humorous way, to explain why the story caught on and why it has remained famous to this day. It seems that the story played to the worries and suspicions that people had about the conditions and practices of the day. Some of which persist to this day. Fleet St was known as a dangerous area in the 19th century and the very poor were considered to be part of the criminal underclass. There was no food regulation at that time. Flour was known to be contaminated with chalk or sand or sawdust. Meat unfit for human consumption was thought to go into pies, disguised with highly flavoured gravy. Despite that, pie shops were as popular then as Greggs are today. Stories of cannibalism were rife at that time; Bluebeard and the Giant in Jake and the Beanstalk being two. People did go missing, murders for robbery or otherwise did happen in the streets of London. The public knew that this happened, but perhaps less often than imagined.

These and many other reasons led most people to believe that Sweeney Todd really did exist and that the story is true despite the complete lack of evidence.

Ann told us an excellent tale herself, and entertained us wonderfully for an hour. Thank you Ann.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

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

October

For our two meetings during October, we have had strong turnout and many thanks especially to those members who have supported the group from when we launched last year. We always have a lot of fun and laughter, a little competitive at times especially in the walking football and great social interaction.

We also played a Pickleball tournament against Melbourne u3a, and this was also a lot of fun, very competitive and many of the matches were very close indeed, even if we were on the wrong side of the closest matches, losing 15/14 in four of the games. So well done to Melbourne u3a but no doubt, we will be having a rematch .

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

1st October

The Craft group was a little low in attendance this month as several were away on holiday.

We had a sudden change of plan for this month's craft, as the person who was going to show us a new craft was unavoidably called away. So we made Christmas cards!

This time, the ladies learned how to do stamping and embossing of cards. They did a great job! Having successfully stamped and embossed their cards, they proceeded to colour them in. Some used water colours and others used coloured pencils. The finished cards looked great. Everyone enjoyed the activity and managed to make two cards each.

The next meeting will be at Packington Village Memorial Hall at 9.45am on 5th November (We will NOT be making fireworks!!)

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

15th October - Swarkestone Garden Centre Café

Seventeen originally booked to join us at Swarkestone for breakfast but only fifteen materialised. The service was swift and efficient. The food was of high standard and very tasty. The Scones for which they are well known were as good as ever and hot out of the oven.

The next breakfast gathering will be at the Olive Branch, School Lane, Ashby de la Zouch LE65 2RF at 10am on Thursday 19th November. They offer a wide range of breakfast dishes. You are bound to find something to your taste.

If you want to join us just drop an email to breakfast@ashbyu3a.co.uk.

BRIDGE – Leader: Neil Roberts - bridge@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 01530 455957 or 07804 743471

The group meets at the Ivanhoe Club every Monday.

Times for each day usually alternate between 11 am to 1.30 and 7 to 9 pm but can vary depending on the number of Mondays in the month. 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.

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

19th October

We welcomed a new friend today, Alastair. There were six present, but only one problem to solve.

Joan was struggling to get rid of her AVG software but has met obstruction from AVG. Steve showed her how to close this down. She now needs to make certainty doubly sure by stopping her Direct Debit payments at the bank.

We meet again on Wednesday the 4th of November at Winchester Way.

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

3rd September

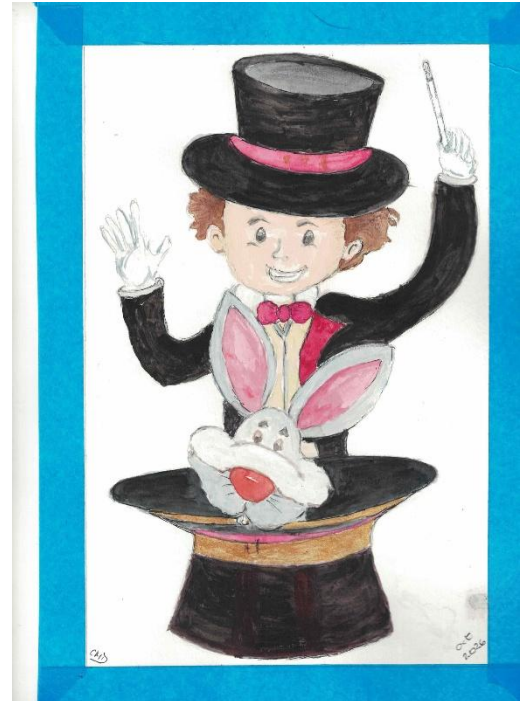
Today we were seven, including a new friend , Brian. We reviewed our photos from several recent expeditions.

Next time on the 5th November, we will be going to Repton to see the church and the crypt.

21st October

Drawing and painting this month was something beginning with M and the contributions were from John - Mount Fuji, Sharon gave us Mistletoe, Christine gave us a Magician and Lesley attempted a Moonscape whilst under the influence of the Covid / flu jab.

Next month we will not be meeting to paint as we are taking John and Margret out to lunch as it will probably be our last chance before they leave to move house. The next meeting in December will be coffee and cake for Christmas, venue to be advised.



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

14th October - The Barn in New Swannington

Ten of us managed to find our way to the Barn in New Swannington. It was tucked away up Church Lane, opposite the Primary School gates. Unfortunately, the post code was not very helpful and it took some a while to use their scouting talents to find the place. The staff were most helpful and accommodating, enabling us to all sit together and have a good old chat as we consumed our coffee, tea and cakes.

The place is well worth a visit once you have sussed out how to get there. The group will be returning in the not too distant future.

Our next gathering will be at The Pot Kiln Cafe, off New Street, Measham DE12 7JN at 10am on 11th November. This is a new venue for our group and a lot easier to find than the Barn.

If you would like to join us, please let Colin Woodland know at coffee@ashbyu3a.co.uk or sign upon the sheet at the back of the church at the monthly meeting.

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

23rd October

We took too much notice of all the yellow warnings of a dire weather day and cancelled the October session on Thursday afternoon. As it happened on Friday morning we were in the eye of the storm with blue skies and very little wind! Things did change later, but only after the session would have finished. Unfortunately the croquet lawns are now closed for the winter.

Potential Good News. The Croquet Club has been given permission by The Welfare to "borrow" a couple of 5 a side football pitches on the site to see if we could use them for 'winter play'. They have been marked out and are due to be tested next week to assess their suitability for play. We will check to see if they hold up and if the U3A Group might use them as well.

Keep your fingers crossed for fine weather as that area of the Welfare Grounds are not well drained.

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

13th October

Due to holiday, poorly dog sitting and very sad bereavement, it was a small select meeting of 3 today. Everybody continued to practise Modern Calligraphy with the aim of producing a piece of work for November. Then possibly a Christmas project in December.

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

1st October - Slice of India Buffet, Derby

Twelve foodies assembled at the Slice of India for a taste of the East. There was so much choice that it was impossible to sample everything, even though several tried their hardest. The food on offer really does suite every taste from those who like hot and spicy to those more conservative and those who prefer the more aromatic dishes. A good time was had by all.

Our next event will be at the Zorba the Greek, Bold Lane, Derby DE1 3NT on 5th November at 6pm.

So far, thirteen people have signed up. If you would like to join them, please let Colin Woodland know at food_from_afar@ashbyu3a.co.uk or sign up on the sheet provided at the back of the church at the members monthly meeting.

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

14th October

We had an excellent session today with 8 attending, including two new friends: Val and Carol.

JD inducted Carol and Val, then Carol took over assisting Val with her work.

Adrian started with them, then transferred to the other table to help another very new friend, Jayne, to get some momentum on her research and to help with her technology problems: her laptop is not doing its job! Then he worked on his own Lincolnshire records reviewing additional records from the Genealogist.

Jan exchanged views with Mary, and was helped by Adrian, also on technology matters, before turning to her step-grandmother's ancestor, an euphonious butcher in Bicester.

(There was a Butcher from Bicester
Who sought for an ancestor, but missed her
The one that he found was the wrong one around
But even so went up and kissed her.)

Mary is back with us working on birth certificates with promising results

Adrian as above seemed to have been all over the place! He is working on the Beacon system, and we will hear more from him.

JD has been deeply involved in research into his family's letters and memoirs as aides to adding depth to his own life story. He also went to the aid of Shirley, who had hit rocks in getting online. We managed to clear that hurdle but discovered that a more important problem was that her subscription to FindMyPast had expired. We then transferred to JD's laptop to move her tree further along. In the process we discovered the name of the woman her family had always known only as 'The Irish Woman'!

There was no problem fitting everyone in and my thanks must go to Carol for stepping in promptly to help Val; Adrian for doing sterling duty with the others; and Mary for helping with the essential work of getting the beverages prepared.

We meet again on November the 11th. Lest we forget, that is Armistice Day.

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

15th October – Harvest Meeting

Our Harvest meeting went very well with a great group of people attending! The food they brought was fabulous with a good choice of items to choose from. Lots of chattering and laughter to be heard. An excellent start to our winter program. We had a free plant raffle with a large selection of plants as prizes. Our next meeting at Packington memorial hall is on the 19th November and Gerald Ingram , owner of planters garden centre will be talking about gifts for gardeners.



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

8th October - Cherry Tree Farm, Etwell

Eleven of us wended our way to Willington and then out to the edge of the A50 to the Cherry Tree Farm Farmhouse Inn. The place had just undergone a multi million pound refurbishment. Although the place was spick and span and the carvery area had been more ergonomically laid out, I had to ask myself "where did all the money go for such minimal changes?" That said, the staff were excellent and even though we had to order at the bar, the staff carried the drinks to the table for us (a rather nice touch).

The carvery was plentiful and well cooked and presented. From the general chatter, it was obvious that people enjoyed the experience and we are very likely to repeat it soon. Surprisingly, there seemed to have been NO price rise due to the renovations!

Our November venue will be at The Sump, Newton Road, Burton DE15 0TT on 12th Nov. at 12 noon. This will be a repeat visit to a well liked venue.

If anyone else wishes to join the group please email on luncheon@ashbyu3a.co.uk to book a place or sign up on the sheet placed at the rear of the church at the monthly meeting.

22nd October – Bill Devitt and ‘Ashby’s Transport problems and how they were overcome.’

32 members assembled for another piece from our ever-popular Bill.

Today was a somewhat eclectic mix, or melange, starting with a potted history of transport through the ages.

In the beginning the ‘Standard’ of Ur (a kind of Toblerone shaped artefact with scenes inlaid on the two sides) from about 2,500 BC bears the first depiction of a wheeled vehicle, although the wheel must have been in use long before. The Romans brought proper roads to Britain from AD 43 and there is evidence of a Roman era trackway near Moira from about AD150. There is even a road called Via Devana in Moira which purports to be a small part of the road from Colchester to Chester (Deva). The Migration Period in Europe, after the absorption of the Western Empire by the Celtic clans, obscured much of the Roman network, and roads tended to deteriorate to simple trackways. This was the state in which they remained until the improvements made by the likes of John Metcalfe (Blind Jack) and Thomas Telford in Britain who introduced a Roman style of construction. By the first quarter of the 19th century main roads were good enough to allow a timed stagecoach service from London to Glasgow and Edinburgh via York. Large parts of the costs were covered by Tollgates which levied money for their upkeep.

Ashby benefited particularly from the efforts of industrialists and engineers to extract and transport coal and other goods from the area to places like London, Leicester and Birmingham. Mining had been undertaken (sic!) in the area from the Middle Ages, notably at Lount, although George Stephenson had opened up new fields near Coalville, one of which required the Swannington Incline. The main artery was originally the canal, but trackways and tramways were needed to move the goods from their source to the canal, and later the main line railways. The Ticknall tramway ran from Ticknall and the lime kilns there, all the way through to Willesley Wharf on the Ashby Canal. This only one of very many whose remains can still be traced in the district.

These embryonic railways became links to allow the growth of the excursion industry, so popular in the 19th century, particularly the ‘Bass Trips’: annual summer works outings organized by the Bass, Ratcliff & Gretton brewery in Burton-on-Trent from the 1860s until 1915. These were so popular that thousands regularly travelled to places like Blackpool, Scarborough, and Liverpool.

The increasing popularity of train trips and similar public entertainments in the early 20th century, took in air shows around the country with the Burton Washlands a favourite landing place. In 1908 Dolly Shepherd, a female parachutist and stunter, flew (or rather jumped!) at Ashby after recovering from a catastrophic accident.

Bill expanded his talk with a look at the grandiose Chinese plans for a 7,000-mile transcontinental railway from Beijing to Europe, (the Belt and Road Initiative), one of at least three huge projects they are working on.

He linked it to the ancient Silk Road, and it is intended to cut up to a month off the sea trip. However, it’s main focus will be on freight, so we will not see any 600 MPH maglev passenger trains whisking you from Berlin to Beijing in 12 hours anytime soon! Other initiatives include the short sea route via the Arctic. Interestingly, none of these schemes which involve consortia from many countries, seems to include India, so there are counter proposals which do.

All in all, Bill provided a very educational and interesting look at transport as it has historically affected Ashby, and as it might well affect the global world of the future.

28th October – Hudson's Whistles, Birmingham

This month several members of the Industrial Heritage group travelled into deepest Birmingham to visit the Hudson's Whistles factory in the Jewellery Quarter, makers of ACME Whistles.

We were welcomed by Simon Topman, owner and MD of the company, who proceeded to tell us the history of the company. Simon's humour, knowledge and obvious enthusiasm for all things whistle related kept us all enthralled and laughing at his stories. He told of the bomb that landed on the factory in 1940 and showed us the shrapnel damage to the steel girders, of the man who returned a whistle he had picked up outside the factory on that day in 1940. He told of getting stopped by German customs officers on his way to a trade fair with duck-calls that looked like small hand grenades!

The company was founded in 1870 by Joseph Hudson who moved to Birmingham at the age of 12 to work in the factories there. He trained as a toolmaker and at the age of 22 started his own business making and repairing anything that earned him money but his real passion was for whistles. He heard that the Metropolitan Police were looking to replace their heavy wooden rattles with something lighter and more manageable. He decided to produce a whistle with a distinctive discordant sound that everyone would recognise. He went down to London to demonstrate his whistle at Scotland Yard and they eventually offered him a contract for 21,000 whistles. The ACME Whistle Co was born.

They now make over a hundred different whistles:- dog whistles both silent and human-audible, military and railway whistles, bird calls for a dozen different birds, boatswain's pipes, train whistles, whistles for various sports including, of course, the famous ACME Thunderer used by many a football referee including Gottfried Dienst at the final of the 1966 World Cup to signal England's one and only win at that tournament (so far!)



The famous ACME Thunderer

Before touring the factory, Simon reminded us of the dangers therein. "Do not put your hand under any presses, do not stick your hand in the vats of sulphuric acid in the plating shop and do not put your hand near the induction-soldering machine if you are wearing a metal ring" ! All good advice which we dutifully obeyed.

Almost everything in the factory apart from the plastic injection is done by hand or by hand operated machines. Brass pieces are stamped out and folded, then wired together by hand before being placed on the afore mentioned soldering machine. They are then hand-fettled before being polished, plated, engraved and packed by hand. All beautifully finished. The workers were all

happy to chat about what they were doing and seemed to love visitors coming round.

They now have a specialty range of personalised pieces including diamond encrusted whistles. Simon told us that if David Beckham had bought one, he couldn't possibly tell us!

After the tour we took Simon to lunch with us where he continued to tell us amazing stories.

A brilliant day out at an exceptional factory with a wonderful guide.

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

The group continue to meet at Sandra's house to discuss the latest books that they have been reading.

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

7th October

This month we had a full house round at Neil and Lesley's.

Nev started us off with a video of Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac and 'Need your love so bad'. Excellent blues and you can barely recognise Mick Fleetwood!

We then listened to Edith Piaf's version of 'Autumn Leaves' and later compared that to Eva Cassidy's very different version. Both great.

We also had two tracks from the original film of 'West Side Story' – 'Somethings Coming' and 'America'. Great singing and choreography.

It is 50 years since Stevie Wonder's 'Songs in the Key of Life' album was released. 'I Wish' from that album still sounds great, as does the rest of the album.

To follow that Lesley offered Whitney Houston live at the American Music Awards singing a medley of songs 'I loves you Porgy/ And I am telling you I'm not going/ I have nothing'. Yet another wonderful voice.

A very different choice from Andy was Pippa Evans on 'Sorry I Haven't a Clue' singing Hokey Cokey in the style of Mariah Carey singing 'Without You'. And a very good, funny job she makes of it too!

Very different again was Pete's choice of the Alash Ensemble, Tuvan throat singers who play traditional music with a Western rock twist. Tuva is a Russian republic bordering Mongolia. The tune 'Bashtak' proved to be interesting and very catchy. Great fun.

Back to more conventional blues rock was Mike's choice of Bonnie Raitt singing and Bruce Hornsby playing piano on 'I can't make you love me'.

Neil finished the first round with Elvis Costello's 'Shipbuilding' a song about the moral dilemma of working to feed one's family by building warships.

Andy brought us back to a gentler time with the choir Voces8 singing 'The Lark Ascending' accompanied by solo violin. Beautiful harmonies.

Other classical pieces we listened to were the lovely 'Waltz from Masquerade Suite' by Khachaturian and Andre Rieu's Orchestra and the remarkable 10 year old Amiro Willighagen singing 'O Mio Bambino Caro'. An incredible talent regardless of age.

Another wonderful singer is Aretha Franklin, this time singing Carole King's 'You make me feel like a natural woman' in tribute to King at the Kennedy Centre Honours concert in 2016. Carole King's reaction is priceless.

We had a selection of top artists today. Yet another was Larry Adler playing 'Rhapsody in Blue', that was followed by Tom Jones guesting on Hugh Laurie's New Orleans show singing 'Baby please make a change'

We finished with a tune most of us recognised without knowing the artist. Neil introduced us to Myles Smith and 'Nice to meet you'. A good upbeat end to the morning's session.

**OPEN WATER SWIM – Leader: Roger Western - openwaterswim@ashbyu3a.co.uk
phone 07816 171538**

16th October.

This swim group has got off to a good start with 6 swimmers taking up the challenge of their first open water swims. So far we have been to Spring Lakes and the river Trent at Burton. The conditions have been very good and we have all really enjoyed the experience of a refreshing dip, plenty of good laughs and good quality after-swim chat.



More swims to come in the coming weeks and we will be trying some new locations. The dates and locations are somewhat ad hoc at present so please get in touch with Roger, details above, if you want to join us.

Group members keep in touch via their own WhatsApp group which new members will be invited to join.

PLAY READERS – Leader: Trevor Jordan - play_readers@ashbyu3a.co.uk - phone 07887 537244

21st October

Sixteen of us gathered in St. Helen's Heritage Centre for the introductory meeting of the Ashby u3a Play Readers. After a round of introductions, we read extracts from *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde, and from Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*. On this occasion, we read each piece several times, partly to get the flavour of reading plays in a group for the first time; and partly so that everybody had a chance to read. Everyone enjoyed the readings, and it was fascinating to hear how different readers brought a new dimension to each character, bringing the written words to life. Theatre without having to learn words!

We went on to discuss how to continue with the group. We considered a number of possibilities, including perhaps setting up two smaller groups, but finally we agreed unanimously that we would continue to meet as a single large group from 2pm to 4pm on the third Tuesday of each month in St Helens Heritage Centre. To help cover the cost of refreshments and room hire, we agreed a Meeting Contribution of £5.

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, 17th November 2026. I'm still going through the list of plays which members were kind enough to suggest — watch this space!

We regret that Tuesday isn't ideal for some folk who replied to our initial invitation, but should you find yourself unexpectedly free one Tuesday, do please join us. We'd also be delighted to welcome new members, but please let Trevor know if you plan to come so he can set out enough chairs!

Thanks for a fantastic first act!

With best wishes,

Trevor Jordan

Group Leader Ashby u3a Play Readers

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

October

Our next meeting will concentrate on completing some exercises from a certain text book, particularly with an emphasis on nouns and their gender. We will look at place names and the names of countries, rivers, islands etc. If it proves useful in terms of giving structure to the meetings then we might decide to adopt this text book going forward.

As always we meet every fortnight at the Ivanhoe Club in Ashby on Mondays at 11am. The next meetings will be 9th November and then 23rd November and so on.

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

15th October

As always, a few poems shared around a kitchen table provoked a wide-ranging discussion:-

‘Dublinesque’ by Philip Larkin, painting an impressionistic word picture of a Dublin funeral procession. Simultaneously stereotypical and evocative.

‘Abou Ben Adhem’ by Leigh Hunt (a contemporary of Keats and Shelley), radical in its time, more conventional now.

‘The Pomegranate’ by Eavan Boland, an Irish poet, based in the US and Ireland, blending Greek myth with a mother’s sense of loss as she allows her daughter to grow up.

‘Sea to the West’ by Cumbrian poet Norman Nicholson, blending vivid impressions of water and blinding light in the coastal post-industrial landscape he inhabited.

‘The Ballad of Reading Gaol’ by Oscar Wilde with its themes of crime and punishment, anger, shame and terror. How many of you have read the whole of this powerful poem? We haven’t managed all 137 stanzas, but it could be worth spending a spare half hour sometime.

Next meeting: Thursday 19th November. 42 Avenue Road. We’ll be sampling some Nobel Prize winners and nominees. Email for details if you’d like to join us at the kitchen table.

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

October

On our first meeting on 1st October, we had a smaller number of players, with no regular treble players. However, there were two bass players, so one of them could play treble when needed. It pays to be versatile. One problem with this was that some of the music wasn’t printed with the score, so the emergency treble didn’t have the treble music, so we couldn’t have all parts. However, we still had plenty of music to play, including the Elizabethan dances, which are a straightforward set of pieces, and don’t do the brain too much harm

On our second meeting, on 15th October, we had a larger group of players, 14 in all: 5 descants, 3 trebles, 4 tenors and 2 basses. Perhaps we need to invite some of the descant players to consider swapping to a larger instrument from time to time. In particular, another treble and another bass player would be useful.

We played some music from the previous meeting, but added a Bach Gavotte, and “Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring”, which is more difficult. We also had a first attempt at two choruses from the “Messiah”: Hallelujah and Amen. These might be useful as Christmas music, if we ever play to an audience! Getting the timings right can be tricky, even if you know the tune!

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 November we will be meeting on the 10th and 24th.

SCRABBLE - Leader: Alastair Brown. Group contact: scrabble@ashbyu3a.co.uk

The group now meets at the Ivanhoe Club every Monday at 10.30am 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

Tuesday 13th October. - 'Projects that went nowhere' by Adrian Hickson

Adrian outlined several projects that really had no hope of being accomplished. An irrigation scheme planned for Majorca that had no water, not even a reservoir, but also lacked a power supply.

Two power stations in South Africa were to share a water supply. They were only 6 miles apart but had no pipes to carry the water.

In Athens an energy management system had been set up with the heating on in August. Also an automatic lighting system was installed in corridors with no outside windows. To make it more difficult all the cabling was the same colour, black.

In Spain a mercury mine used chlorinated water as drinking water. Many of the workers had mercury poisoning despite all the precautions.

Adrian was involved in Sellafield's preparations for the year 2000. They found that all the tapes used for backups were blank so could not be used to restore in the event of problems.

Adrian also worked on the Charing Cross Embankment station. Work was not going well but had to be finished in time for the Olympics. This is also where Skyfall was filmed. At one point Daniel Craig who starred in the film was moved off the site.

In Manchester the council installed automatic bus stop signs to display the time of the next bus. The bus drivers did not like the system so they frequently unplugged it in their cabs.

Also the units were not fixed to the floor so were free to roll around as the bus drove round its route. The only good point in the system's favour, it did show the time correctly.

This was a fascinating talk by someone who was well versed in the technologies he was describing. It's just amazing that anything works. Fortunately, the display system at Packington Hall worked perfectly for Adrian's talk.

SOCIAL EVENTS Organiser; Glenys Morrice – socials@ashbyu3a.co.uk

Thursday 1st October. Fish Supper and Quiz

The Beeches hosted us for another Fish Supper and Quiz. There was plenty of chatter across the tables as 60 members old and new tried to work out who the logos in the picture quiz belonged to. It is surprising how we see these logos every day but can't remember whose they are!

Fish, chips and mushy peas were very tasty although some would have liked their peas as an option, like last year.

The rest of the quiz was led by our Chair Tony with a few teaser questions to catch us out so overall, a good time was had by all

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

22nd October – The Riverside Inn, Branston

This hotel/pub is at the end of a street of houses tucked away at the back of a suburb of Burton. You wouldn't find it by chance. It appears to be a building from the early 20th century in the Arts and Crafts style. Huge and, as the name suggests, on the banks of the River Trent overlooking Drakelow Nature Reserve although we couldn't see that in the dark of an autumn evening. We had been attracted by their autumn Game Menu as well as the usual choices and largely we weren't disappointed although the two people who had ordered haunch of venison were a bit put out to find they had not had a delivery of that. Nonetheless the food, service and ambiance were a cut above average and we all had a good time. It might be nice to see it in summertime when the river and nature reserve are visible.

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

21st October

This month Chris presented a selection of wines to which he had a connection albeit sometimes rather tenuous. Some were rather expensive but some were much less so.

First was a Bordeaux white from the Graves region, the 2nd Cru from Chateau Olivier called Dauphin d'Olivier 2022 13.5% A friend of Chris's used to bring this back from France but Chris saw this on sale at Morrisons reduced from £30 to £14 so had to buy it!

The wine is a 50/50 blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon. It is a pale greenish yellow with ripe tropical fruit, a rich flavour that could be sweet but wasn't, and a dry freshness. A proper old-school French white wine which would go really well with a rich fish dish, with a cream sauce. It scored 7.5/10

Next was a rosé. Reserve Pierre Costiere de Nimes 2025. 13% £8.

Nimes is at the southern end of the Rhone Valley and produces softer, less dry, wines than Provence. A blend of Syrah and Grenache, it was a very pleasant easy drinking wine, ideally suited to the long hot summer days which have just passed. Not a stunning wine but one could drink far too much of this sitting in the garden! We rated it 7/10

Chris then presented 2 red Malbec wines wrapped in paper to hide their labels and asked us to compare them. That was easy as they were very different, and it turned out Chris had made a mistake as one was actually a Merlot, not a Malbec!

The Merlot was from South Africa's West Cape, Cambalala winery. 2025 11% from Aldi £6 reduced to £3.99. It was pleasant, if a little sharp, and quite light. Flavours of cherry and lighter red fruits. We gave it 6.5/10 however at £3.99 it is a bit of a bargain.

The Malbec was very different. Argentinian Trivento Golden Reserve 2023 14% £13 from Tesco. This was altogether heavier, oaked, tasting of blackcurrants and dark fruit. Most of us liked this a lot, with one exception. We scored it 7.5/10. The price held it back a little.

Lastly Chris offered us a quite rare Chianti Classico Reserva 2023 13.5% from Naked Wines £8.25.

After the Malbec this was slightly dry and a little tannic and with less fruit but that is an unfair comparison. Italian reds are generally lighter than many and this would go nicely with Italian food, particularly anything with a tomato-based sauce. It was, just, our best scoring wine of the night at 7.8/10

As all the wines we liked most are not easily available, it is almost impossible to recommend a wine of the month but if pushed it would be the Chianti.

TRIPS AND OUTINGS – Leader: Colin Ellis – trips@ashbyu3a.co.uk – phone 01530 272592

14th October. The NDR Philharmonic Hannover Orchestra, Nottingham Royal Concert Hall

After the success of the last outing, Colin had again organised a trip to Nottingham, this time to see the NDR Philharmonic Hannover Orchestra perform Prokofiev's Classical Symphony, Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No.1 and Brahms Symphony No.2.

As before, we started with an early dinner at Bistrot Pierre and again had a really good meal then walked the short distance to the concert hall.

The NDR Philharmonic, are affiliated with the German radio broadcaster, much like the BBC Philharmonic is, and proved to be a very good orchestra. We were particularly lucky to see and hear the world-renowned pianist Nicholai Lugansky performing the Rachmaninov with great gusto and amazing dexterity. He received multiple ovations afterwards.

The Hall was surprisingly no more than half full, but perhaps the orchestra is not quite so famous here as say the Hallé. Nonetheless it was a good evening's entertainment.

THE WALKING GROUPS

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

October

We didn't walk this month but in November we shall meet at the WI garden by the Paddington bench in town for the last walk of the year which will take us to Blackfordby, Boothorpe and Moira.

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

Tuesday 6th October 2026. Mountsorrel led by Val

The morning started misty, but still 21 started out from Mountsorrel for a 7.5mile walk. We climbed the hill to the monument, overlooking the Soar valley to admire the view, now that the mist had lifted. We walked on passing Swithland Reservoir, where the sun appeared and warmed us up nicely.

On to meet the Great Central Railway line and to walk alongside the track before following a stream through woods to Quorn. After walking through the village we crossed the A6 Footbridge and on reaching Barrow on Soar we followed the river bank back to Mount Sorrell and the pub for very welcome refreshment.

Tuesday 20th October. Cossington led by Kevin

19 of us gathered at the pub in Cossington, fully prepared for a wet walk across the Leicestershire countryside. However, despite a cloudy day, we stayed dry for the three and half hours we were walking. We followed a quiet road to reach the agricultural college before crossing the first muddy field of the autumn to Leicester City Training ground. We then followed the road into Seagrave before turning onto a footpath where we stopped for refreshments before continuing past 100's of free-range chickens into Sileby. From Sileby we headed out to the weir and along the meadows back to Cossington where we had our lunch.

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

12th October. From Sutton Cheney led by Alison

We matched our maximum number this month with 19 of us meeting in Sutton Cheney for a planned walk around some of the interesting points in the Bosworth area. However, the best laid plans.....the pre walk a few days prior had highlighted a closed section, due to tree cutting, so plans had to be altered.

However, we had a dry day and after closing fields from Sutton Cheney to Darlington Lane we took the Ashby Canal Tow Path to Sutton Wharf, through Ambion Wood and onto the Battle of Bosworth Heritage Centre. Some of us went to view the Richard III memorial and then we all set off back to our cars. 4.7 miles completed.



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

16th October. Grace Dieu Woods

On what started out as a slightly chilly day, 11 of us met up in the car park of the Bulls Head before heading off into the woods behind. Once in the woods and walking, it was not as chilly and it was very pleasant. Trees and shrubs were starting to take on a golden hue and the streams had enough water to look interesting rather than the dried up river beds of summer. The walk took us round in a loop behind the old railway track running high on its viaduct above us.

On returning to the car park we drove off to the Barn coffee shop at Swannington for the obligatory coffee and cake.

6th October. Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Wood

Viewing the early morning fog, you'd be forgiven for preferring to stay home rather than making ready for a slow walk. But Ashby u3a walkers are a pretty stalwart lot.



So, 11 of us enjoyed not only the beautiful surroundings but some surprising welcome sunshine. Teasels and Reed heads were in abundance as well as the splashes of colour from the red Hawthorn berries. Sadly, we didn't see any wildlife. No birds along the track at all, but the lake looked amazing in the distance. A perfect calm early Autumn walk with excellent company which we all thoroughly enjoyed.

YOUR COMMITTEE

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

Role	Name	Contact email
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