



Pewsey Vale u3a

NEWSLETTER

Issue 63

April 2024

Message from the Chair

Dear Members

Welcome to the spring edition of our Newsletter! Many thanks to Joanna and to all of you who have sent editorial material to her.

Looking back at previous editions I thought "I really must try and not mention the weather", but with all the rain we have had this winter it has been an important consideration for us all.

Can we get out of Pewsey or the Vale itself without swimming? And then other questions: are the buses running? Are the train drivers on strike?

So let's be thankful for living in such a beautiful area of the UK. Only last week whilst in London I looked up at the skyline and thought how different the view is from my kitchen windows. No big tall buildings, no queues of tourists, or cars, just lots of sky, clouds, occasional helicopters and planes and lots of birds.

We have seen much of this in the paintings and photographs displayed at our last two socials by the photography and art groups - many thanks to them for sharing their talent with us.

I know other groups have creative skills and maybe you could display some of your work too: please think about it and speak to me or any of the committee. It is lovely to see all that goes on.

Meanwhile take care and keep smiling.

Fiona

This newsletter is distributed electronically to Pewsey Vale u3a members every quarter. If you are one of the few members who have been getting it by post and can now receive it by e-mail, please let us know.



Your diary page

The committee is working on other events: we'll keep you posted

| | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|---|
| May 2024 | Tuesday 21 st | Social Meeting with Ian Caskie on The Restoration of SS Great Britain |
| July 2024 | Tuesday 16 th | Social Meeting with Joanna Dewfall on Mosaics: History and Techniques |
| October 2024 | Tuesday 15 th | Social Meeting with David Lewis of Lewis Law on Wills and Probate |
| November 2024 | Tuesday 19 th | AGM and Social Meeting with Alex Leger on the Life of the Licence Fee - challenges and change at the BBC . Alex joined the Blue Peter programme in 1975 |

STAY SAFE - CYBER CRIMES AND SCAMS



It was lovely to see so many members at the Social Meeting on March 19th. If you haven't been to one of these before, do come: they're enjoyable, informative... and the cake is good too!

Bill Boffin's talk was very informative and his slides are now our website so that you can see them and use any of the information. Please go to

CARD GROUP

We had a lovely afternoon at Julie's working with stamps. We used different types of stamps and inks and different methods to colour them in to produce this selection of our work. It's always interesting to see how each of us interprets the theme for the month.

In April we're off to Weyhill for a workshop to learn some new techniques.



ART GROUP

The art group has had a busy start to the year with plans for two workshops with visiting artists.

Local artist Bill Mather spent a very enjoyable afternoon with us in February helping us with work on portraits. Group members brought along pictures and photos to work from and, after Bill gave us a demonstration and lots of advice, he helped us with our own portraits during the afternoon. Strange how three hours can disappear so fast when you are enjoying yourself and engrossed in what you're doing! It was definitely a challenge for those of us who have never done any portraits before!!

We were very pleased with the results as the photos from the afternoon show, and an end of afternoon exhibition of the portraits gave an opportunity for us to share our results.

We are planning another workshop in April with a different local artist, with a different focus next time.



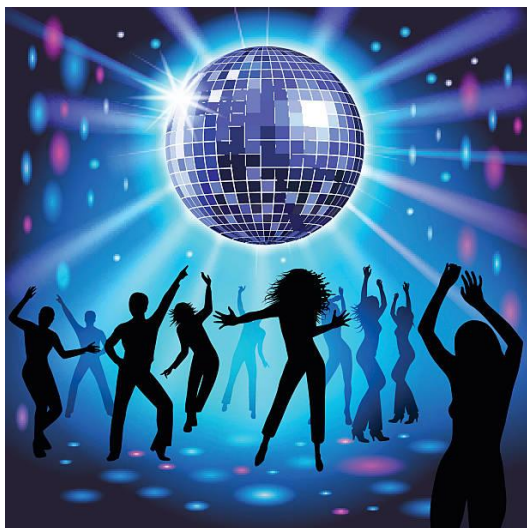
ART GROUP 2

We are pleased to tell you that a new Art Group will be starting from the beginning of April. The group will meet on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month from 2pm - 4pm at the Pewsey Scout Hall SN9 5EF.

If you would like to join the group or would like more information please contact the group leader:

60s/70s/80s DISCO GROUP

The next meeting of our successful new Disco Group will be at 7.30pm on Friday, April 26th at the Bouverie Hall.



Entrance at the door, at £3.00 a head, is only to registered group members but we do have some places left for more members to join our group. All group members must already be members of Pewsey Vale u3a and no guests are allowed.

Members bring their own drinks and refreshments

So, if you're interested in joining and coming along for a bop, or perhaps just to enjoy the music, please contact either of the group leaders below to get your name on the door list and to receive group updates.

See you there!

WORDSMITHS

To quote from the Wordsmith.org daily emailings (no relation):

TERGIVERSATE

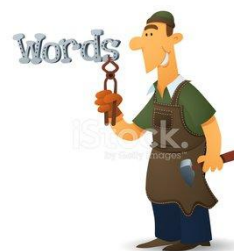
verb intr.:

1. To evade or to equivocate.
2. To change one's loyalties.

From Latin *tergiversari* (to turn one's back), from *tergum* (back) + *vertere* (to turn). Earliest documented use: 1654.

Do you like collecting obscure words like that? If this kind of discussion appeals to you, our Wordsmiths Group might be for you.

We meet in Upavon on the third Wednesday of the month, with friendly dog(s) present. With coffee and biscuits, of course.



LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

No-one really knew what to expect at our first meeting in 2024 given that the speaker was a photographer!* So it was probably curiosity that persuaded such a large number of members to leave the comfort of their homes and brave the freezing cold weather to hear Bob Holman's talk.

'**Marlborough Underground**', is a brilliant photographic exploration of areas of the town that we never see or even know are there beneath our feet, and kicked off our new year in spectacular fashion.



Bob led us into hidden cellars many with whole suites of rooms; passages and tunnels leading in some cases to who knows where but all found beneath the town's familiar buildings and even into the main High Street.

Gaining exclusive and sometimes hazardous access to these, the existence of which was often previously unknown to the owners, Bob has created a wonderful collection of black & white images of servants' quarters, kitchens with their Victorian stoves still intact and even prison cells all of which amazed and delighted the audience.

We all felt privileged to have been given the opportunity to see these gems especially as there appears to be no evidence of them having been recorded before. Bob has been invited to give another talk to us in 2025.

**No insult intended, some of my best u3a friends are photographers!*

In February Kennet u3a member Eileen Hill presented her second talk to our group, the first having been in January 2022 when she shared what little is known of the Wansdyke's history. Her chosen subject this time was one that few of us really knew much about - '**Rural Slum Clearance**'.

Eileen opened her talk with a comprehensive list of the policies and processes involved in the interwar slum clearance programme whilst at the same time expanding on what prompted them and what they hoped to achieve. Included were a number of Acts of Parliament, the 1919 Survey of Housing Needs, the Housing Act 1930, House of Commons circulars and the introduction of Clearance Areas and Improvement Areas.

We then learnt how these had impacted on our own part of the county. Eileen was able to show a good



selection of maps and old photographs, and some she had taken more recently, of sites where condemned houses once stood and in a few cases of the new dwellings that replaced them. There were also images of other properties that had simply been improved to meet new housing standards.

Initially Eileen's research had focused on the Marlborough area so I am grateful to her for offering to expand her talk to include Pewsey and nearby villages. But it was a surprise to most of the audience when the list of sites studied included Beavans Yard, Pewsey along with Oare, Milkhouse Water, Wootton Rivers (where the village hall now stands), Easton Royal (where the main road was straightened), Collingbourne Ducis (opposite the Great Mere), three sites in Burbage, Brimstone Bottom Hutments (near Ludgershall) and a site close to Ludgershall Castle. The image is of Smith's Yard in Marlborough. As in the previous month this talk was another sell-out and much appreciated by the audience.

It was not until the end of the meeting that it dawned on me - our talks were beginning to form a pattern. First we had gone underground and now we had just been razing buildings to the ground. In March we continued the theme when we went underground once again.

I had long held a wish to invite this extremely entertaining character and personal friend to speak at one of our meetings and so you can imagine my delight in March when I was able to welcome esteemed archaeologist and Time Team regular Phil Harding. Phil became a professional archaeologist in 1971 and his dedication to the subject has since been widely recognised and rewarded in many ways. Guessing that he probably would not wish to dwell on these during his talk I had emailed a note of these to group members beforehand.

The list started with him becoming a member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in 1985, followed by the honorary degrees, medals and awards he has received during his career and eight years ago being appointed Deputy Lieutenant to the Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire in which role he will serve until he reaches the age of 75 - having been born in 1952 you don't need to be Einstein to calculate when that will be!

The room soon filled not just by those keen to hear the talk but by Phil's booming, infectious laugh - this was definitely going to be a fun morning. Throughout his presentation titled '**My Life in Archaeology**' a time-line running across the bottom of the screen led the audience from the first archaeologist, William Stukeley (1687-1765) who pioneered the scholarly investigation of the prehistoric monuments of Stonehenge and Avebury, to those of today. Alongside this ran a graph tracking the increasing number of professionals in this field between then and now.

But this was never going to be a dry talk based on facts and figures; this was the life story of a man who as a six year old already had a fascination for digging. At the very young age of eight he was invited to dig in a bronze age barrow near Stonehenge, one that he holds dear and visits often. As a scout he earned his badge in archaeology

According to Phil he cut his teeth taking part in a dig in 1966 and for the next 50 years always went on at least one dig every year. His first TV appearance came a year later at which time he would have had no idea that he was, in time, to become a familiar face on our television screens.

His potential was becoming obvious. At Grimes Grave, the prehistoric flint mine in Norfolk, Phil learnt flint napping but on being invited back to Wiltshire he gave up his job at Pelham's Puppet Factory, much to the displeasure of his mother. All along she had been convinced that no-one could earn a living from digging holes!

Fast forward to 1991. Time Signs was a British television series on Channel 4 telling the story of a Devon valley throughout history and Phil was called in to do some reconstruction archaeology. This developed into Time Team that aired from 1994 to 2014.

Phil has twice been characterised in The Beano, enjoys a pint or two and playing blues guitar. His book



'Joining the Dots' brings together previously untold accounts of excavations in Salisbury since the 1960s; and he is of course still digging holes.

The rushed last minute photo shows Phil with me and only some of the members plus the cuddly Easter Bunny being held by its new owner.

We now look forward to the next quarter when we have yet more interesting talks in the diary. Why not come and join us? We meet in Pewsey on the third Thursday of each month at the Education Centre. For more information just send me a message.

It would be lovely to engage a few more u3a speakers next year so please do email or ring for a chat if this is something you feel you could do. No need to be experienced so long as you enjoy sharing what you know with others.

TRAVELLERS TALES

We are just emerging from one of the most long and unpleasant winters I can remember, so the members of the Travellers Tales Group have been extremely happy to venture to different places and enjoy different temperatures in 2024. Our first port of call was indeed to a much warmer climate - on the Equator, with Mort Burdick showing off the most beautiful country of Kenya, stunning scenery and colours, and you could almost feel the sunshine! It was an ideal destination for January, before we ventured to the Orkney Islands thanks to Cedric Hollingsworth the following month.

His visit there was by boat, and indeed, although you can travel there by ferry, it is not an easy place to access with a car. Although you are made to feel most welcome, there are few facilities for catering or accommodation, the high street is very minimal and a cup of coffee would be quite a find! The scenery his photos depicted was stunning though, very picturesque and appealing, so our journey was delightful and probably the way to explore that part of the UK!



In March we returned nearer to home, to the Thames Path once more, courtesy of Bill and Flora King, as they ventured through the outskirts of our capital, and stopped off at such places as Kew Gardens, Syon House, Ham House, admired the architectural delights of some of the bridges spanning the Thames, like Kew and Richmond Bridges. Bill has a wonderful easy way of inspiring us to be more curious about what is virtually on our doorstep, and we look forward to a further installment before he reaches his final destination at the end of the Path.

In April we venture to Burma, and go mountaineering in May, with a visit to Iceland in June, so certainly a varied set of destinations. We meet on the first Tuesday of the month in Easton Royal Village Hall for a 10.30 am start, and we really do welcome new members!

NEEDLEWORK

We are a small, friendly group of ladies who enjoy a natter and a coffee while doing our needlework. We have various crafts from embroidery to cross stitch and sometimes crochet, and we each help one another if needed.

We meet the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. At the moment we are currently full.

MILITARY HISTORY

This ever popular Military History Group continues to attract a big membership and very worthy speakers who have given us some highly interesting and thought provoking presentations.

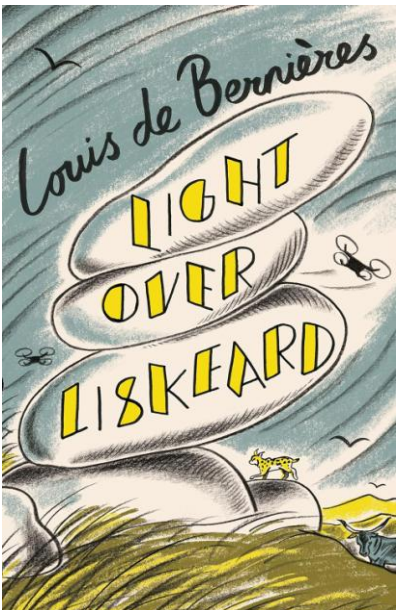


In January we welcomed Sqn Ldr Mike Morison, who gave us a very graphic account of his career with the RAF in his presentation entitled "The Warsaw Pact - my part in its Downfall!". Our February guest was Air Commodore Paul Oborn, still a serving officer, whose whole career has been with the RAF, again a fascinating presentation especially for those of us who have no military background.

Our March guest, David du Croz, took us back to World War One and between the wars, and it was a fascinating talk for those of us whose schoolboy history needed to be improved! It certainly gave us plenty to think about, and made us wonder if we should have learned lessons from the 1930's which could be implemented today!

There will be no proper meeting in April since about 20 of us are going to visit RAF Brize Norton (postponed from last year), and we resume normal meetings on May 13th (NB the second Monday of the month due to the May Bank Holiday). Our presentation then will be by Bill King about Aircraft Production at South Marston, Swindon, during World War II.

WHAT ARE YOU READING?



This time I only have one possible recommendation for you. I've tried and failed to engross myself in any number of books but this was one that actually stuck*.

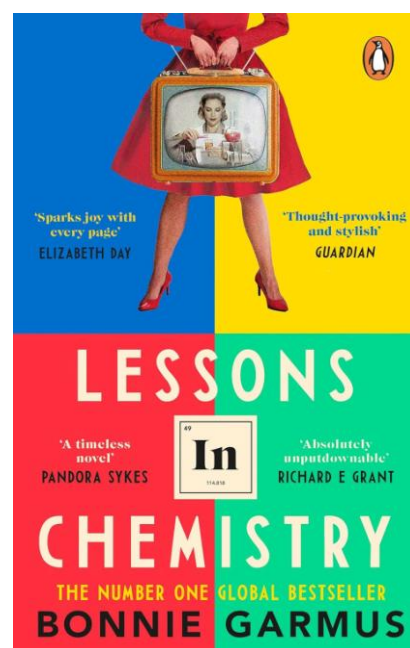
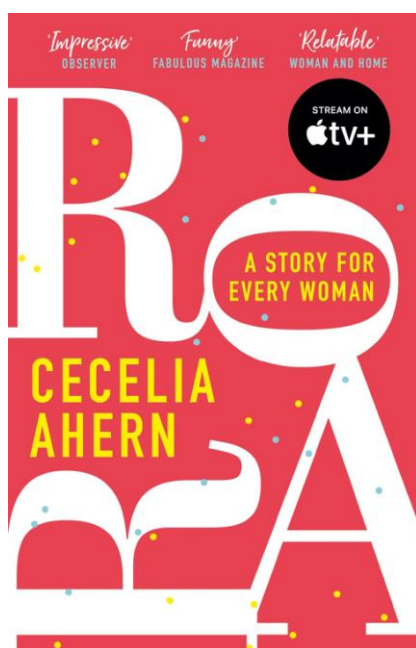
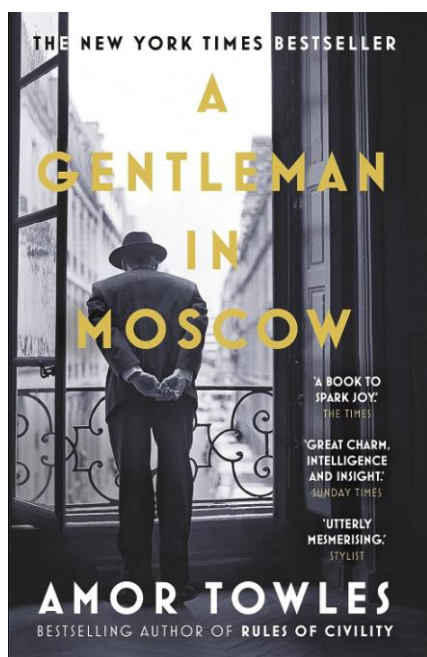
Light Over Liskeard is by Louis de Bernieres, best known for *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*. It's a pre-apocalyptic, dystopian (oh how I hate that word) story, where technology has got the better of society. But it's actually not miserable and has some rare flashes of humour in it. What I found endearing is that most of the characters are likeable. See what you think.

*Apart from *Longshot* by Dick Francis - but you either like his novels or you don't, so I don't need to tell you more.

BOOK GROUP 1

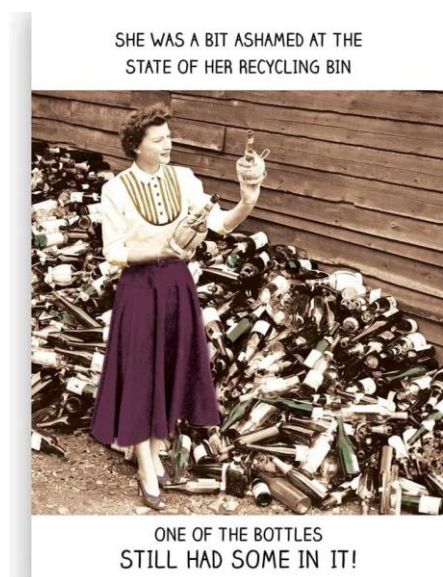
Our favourite book of the year so far is *A Gentleman in Moscow* by Amor Towles. This is one of the most beautifully written books we've had for a long time. As the (Bolshevik) Russian Government of 1922 sentenced Count Alexander Rostov to house arrest for the rest of his life he is sent to live in servants' quarters in the Hotel Metropole. There he meets a nine year old daughter of a Ukrainian bureaucrat. Adventures there begin. I cannot recommend this book too highly.

Before that we had a light read: *Roar* by Cecelia Ahern, and are now beginning *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus.



WINE TASTING AND APPRECIATION

What can we tell you about this group that you haven't read lots of times before?



It runs in two consecutive evening sessions in Pewsey on the evening of the third Thursday of each month.

Each month, the theme is chosen and presented by one (or two) of the members. They can choose wines by type, by grape, by country, by geographical area (Old World vs New World), by what's good in the shops, by what's unusual. Tastings can be accompanied by notes, or else be blind with the details revealed after we've tasted and pronounced on them.

Whichever way we do it, it's always tasty, informative and very good fun. Our meetings are usually very well attended, but we can usually accommodate one or two more regular members. Interested?

BOARD GAMES GROUP

We are a small group of people who meet once a month to play various board games together. We have a natter and a cup of tea or coffee and a biscuit and we don't worry about who wins. In fact we help each other out if we become stuck or can't remember the rules of a game.

There's room for more group members so if you have a game you would like to play bring it along - but you don't have to bring your own, we have loads - to the Heritage Centre room at 2.30pm on the second Monday of the month where you will find people keen to spend an hour and a half with you.

(Do come - it's good fun and then you can stay on for Quiz Group if you like. Ed)

QUIZ GROUP

- ❖ 2nd Monday of the month 4:30-6pm
- ❖ Pewsey Heritage Centre education room
- ❖ About £3 per person (includes a cuppa and a biscuit)
- ❖ Bring 10 questions and answers to share with the group
- ❖ Bring pen/cil, paper, some general knowledge, brain and a sense of humour
- ❖ Humiliation not included - we don't compare scores



JIGSAW SWAP

Jigsaws will be available to borrow or swap from 2 pm at The Bouverie Hall, Pewsey on April 23rd, May 14th and 28th, June 11th and 25th.

If you are donating a jigsaw please make sure it is complete and that all the pieces are in a bag inside the box. Thank you.

BADMINTON

I would like to say that the Badminton group is going from strength to strength but the opposite is the case. For all sorts of reasons the numbers continue to dwindle and we are now down to only having enough active members to use one court. It used to be three courts.

Badminton Group
Needs You!

So I do get it, that you have to have some physical fitness to play but not a great deal and we accommodate those that are less mobile. Those who remain in the group tell me they love their weekly badminton in between having a "good natter". Most would be heartbroken if the group were to fold.

So even if you have not played for 40 years or more, do consider coming along to the Pewsey Vale Campus on Wednesday each week, start time 1pm, just for an hour to play as much or as little as you like.

My number is on the web site if you would prefer to talk to me first.

WALKING4EXERCISE

"Wellies or Walking boots?" has been the crucial question for the Walking4exercise group recently. It has been wellies and walking sticks for stability in the slippery mud most Mondays.

Thank you to the group members who have planned walks and tested the terrain a number of times to ensure everybody can complete the routes.

Fortunately we have walked in some glorious, warm sunshine and enjoyed beautiful scenery of the water meadows full of sparkling water and wildlife.

The overflowing River Kennet near Mildenhall was spectacular to see, views from Martinsell Hill were interesting although we were nearly blown away as we stopped to look! The Pewsey Vale is always a pleasure to explore and the canal near Wilcot was stunning and surprising with a fairy door hidden in the bank.

In the next couple of months we have plans for walks starting at Oare and another bus ride walk so if you would like to join us please contact me.



DOG WALKING GROUP

Yesterday we walked across the fields off Ball Road (the first time for several weeks)! It was muddy and wet near the stream between the fields but otherwise not too bad! Sorry no pics as too busy picking our way in the bracing wind.



The walkies group numbers fluctuate but is gradually beginning to grow once more, Star and Bruce have joined Josh, Tiggy and Rafferty. Rob, Harley, Lottie, Belle and Sprocket were all busy so couldn't join us

My hope is to encourage some of my existing members (if they live outside Pewsey) to consider organising a walk round their home area once the weather has warmed up. Likewise my idea of splitting the group for those who want to walk further and those who prefer a shorter more sedate pace! Again this is still in the future. I have room for more walkers with dogs.

We meet on the 1st and 3rd Monday of the month at 2pm outside the dentists in the High Street Pewsey.

SINGING FOR PLEASURE

Well what can I say - people keep coming :-)



Numbers have not dipped below forty for any session so far this year, and once we had 57! Luckily, the Bouverie Hall can comfortably accommodate all these and more, so the only issue is whether we have enough books to go around.

In the 18 months or so since Cheryl passed SFP over to me and Barbara Dalton, the structure of the sessions has changed. Barbara and I used to prepare a "playlist" in advance of each session, and I kept a close record of which songs we sang so as to use all the songs we had. From time to time, someone would call out a request and we would accommodate this.

Over time, the requests got more and more plentiful until the current situation where Barbara and I don't plan anything at all. We just turn up and, after a warm-up, we sing whatever is requested, there and then. The nice new books, backed up with an efficient filing system for Barbara's piano music, have cut down the time taken to identify the song and play it. The operation has become really slick and we can rattle through the requests in real time. I only write things down when I hear more than one request being called out, and that is so we don't forget and leave any out.

Speaking for myself, I really look forward to SFP sessions and always come away feeling positive and energised. I hope it's the same for others too.

SFP takes place at the Bouverie Hall on the 2nd and 4th Friday of the month.

567 WALKING GROUP

Walking has been challenging during the wet months recently. Members of the group have struggled to find routes that can be completed without becoming knee deep in water or mud.



We have enjoyed sliding along between Ramsbury and Aldbourne, from Collingbourne Kingston to Everleigh, Pewsey to Milkhouse Water and Milton Lilbourne. Fortunately there have been excellent views, friendly conversations and laughter to keep us going.

Some of the best parts of our walks lately have been the pub lunches afterwards! The Waterfront Bistro at Pewsey Wharf, The Barleycorn at Collingbourne Kingston and The Bell at Ramsbury have all hosted us and provided excellent meals and drinks.

We have already noticed cheerful spring flowers beside the paths and we hope that the spring weather will bring more blue skies and sunshine.

There are plans to walk near Stonehenge in April so if you would like to come along please contact me.



CREATIVE WRITING GROUP 2 (aka WRITING FOR FUN)

We're a very friendly bunch of u3a members who enjoy having to stir our braincells and come up with a tale or poem. We currently have a couple of spaces, so why not come and enjoy a couple of hours a month reviewing the challenge we set at the previous meeting? These have included: From an Animal's Point of View, The Tale behind an Old Photo, The Door Creaked Slowly Open... An Overheard Conversation. A Disaster, Museum, An Anniversary. We circulate our pieces to the members prior to the meeting and the aim is to write about 2 sides of A4 - a bit longer, or even shorter. Part of the fun is to read the very diverse offerings. We also aim to write a 5 minute challenge in the meetings, but time runs away with us in enjoyable discussions. There is of course a tea/coffee biscuits or even cake break!

The Mask by Margaret

There it was, nestling in the back of the loft. The red paint was faded now but the eye-holes were still as black and threatening as ever. Every Christmas was the same, "Uncle Jack is coming tomorrow, that's always fun."



But it wasn't. All day the knot in my stomach tightened till evening fell, and all the lights went out. Thrilled children laughed and screamed with apprehension, but not me.

Then the door opened, and he came in, laughing maniacally, a torch lighting up the mask which stared, filling me with terror. "Which of you today, who will it be?" he boomed eerily.

Everyone screamed and hid. I froze. Maybe then he wouldn't see me, but he always did. "Daniel", he said, turning towards me blankly.

"You are the one!"

The Mask by Kate



On the packet it said: 'This face pack plumps up mature skin, firms contours and will leave you looking younger and fresher.'

Just what I need, she thought. It was going to be an important evening. She was sure that Bob was going to ask her to marry him tonight. As for the, unknown to him, fifteen-year difference in their ages, well, she'd deal with that later.

She cut open the sachet and spread the creamy substance across her cheeks and forehead, delicately smoothing it over her nose and chin. She checked her mirror: *Goodness, I look like an alien*, she thought.

The packet instructions said to wait twenty minutes so she rested back in the chair and put her feet on the coffee table. It was so relaxing.

Suddenly someone loomed over her. There was an air of urgency. She was being handed a round hand-held mirror with a pearly plastic rim. She recognised it from years ago. But not the face when she peered into the hovering glass. She was just in time to see her eyebrows sliding down her cheeks like two dead caterpillars. Her nose was dissolving and her melting lips jittered down onto her throat, dragging skin with them. A round black hole where her mouth had been was widening with horror. She watched as her face collapsed into folds like an old chamois leather and slithered down onto her chest.

She moved her hand and tried to grab her falling, disappearing face and, in doing so, woke herself up.

CHINES

CHINES stands for CH(urches), IN(ns) and ES(tates) or, for short, our going out group.

We aim to visit places of interest, many led by one of our wonderful tour guides, who give us an insight into the town, village, house, garden etc we're visiting which we wouldn't get on our own.

Where possible, a church is also included in the visit, and lunch at a pub (or similar) is mandatory!

Anyone joining us needs to be aware that:

- Transport is not provided, though we do try to facilitate car sharing.
- We are on our feet for most of the time.
- There are costs involved, such as parking, entry fees, refreshments, lunch, guides' fees.
- Places are very limited so it's first come, first served when bookings open.

Our intrepid team is currently working on this summer's programme, which is likely to include Avebury, Romsey, Cotswold Sculpture Park, Wells, Sherbourne, Sandham Memorial Chapel, and Winchester.

STRETCH AND CURL

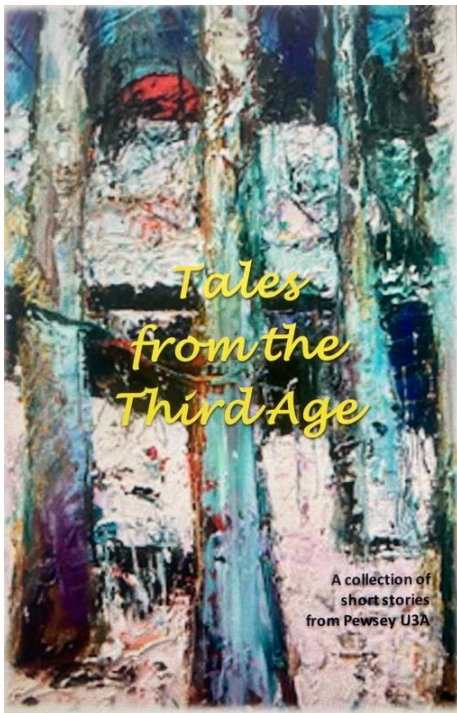
The Stretch and Curl class is well attended and enjoyed by all levels. Come along and have some fun and get fit at the same time.

Bouverie Hall. Most Mondays. See website for more details.



CREATIVE WRITING GROUP 1

How many people does it take to write a book? In this case, it took the contribution of all 8 members of the Pewsey Creative Writing group to create, edit and self publish an e-book of our original short stories.



Wendy Argent, our group leader, guided us through a series of assignments to create interesting, character-led short stories. The end result: 5 stories (and 1 poem) each with unique plots and themes - including mystery, comedy and romance. Everyone in the group, even if those who didn't contribute their own story, provided welcome constructive criticism and encouragement along the way.

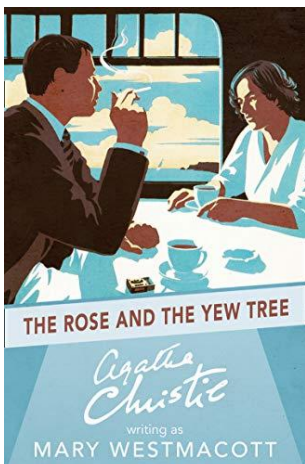
Anne Perdeaux, a group member, donned her editor's cap, patiently reviewing multiple versions and spotting the surprisingly numerous grammatical and spelling errors that somehow crept into our stories.

Fiona Jones dusted off her technical knowledge and researched the best way to format and distribute an online version of the book, as well as one that could be printed.

Ann Saxton contributed the beautiful cover art, thanks to also being a member of the Pewsey Art Group.

And the title? A group effort. We hope you enjoy reading "Tales from the Third Age" - the making of which was a tale in itself! We hope to use what we learned from this experience to publish a selection of our best stories annually.

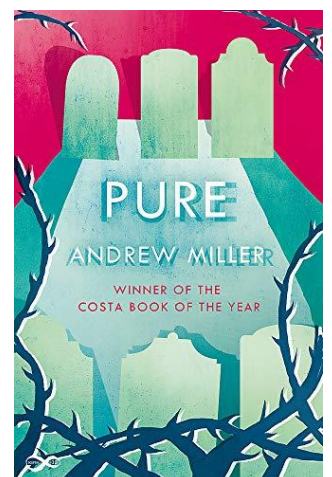
BOOK GROUP 3



Book club 3 has recently been formed and we have agreed to read two books: **The Rose and the Yew Tree** by **Mary Westmacott** and **Pure** by **Andrew Miller**.

We select our next books by consensus of the book club membership and then discuss the books at our next meeting.

We meet on the second Tuesday of the month at 2pm.



FRENCH CONVERSATION

The French Thursday Group was very sad to lose two of its members in the last month.

Lizann Warr had been a member for many years at the time when Marie Neyroud was leader. She was always very positive, with wide experience, and the aneurism she suffered, although not unexpected, was a sudden shock. (Lizann died on February 27th.)

Peter Stayne had brought much to the group. Having lived in France, he was able to speak fluently and amusingly. He much regretted taking the decision to retire owing to his advanced years.

We have just welcomed two members who have been on the waiting list, Joanna Seccombe and Julia Hukin, both of whom as it turns out, live in Collingbourne Ducis.

Joanna has learnt French by being an au pair and has not lost any of it. Julia said she was rusty to begin with but by the end of the morning she was joining in.

We look forward to monthly sessions and possibly a joint meeting with the Tuesday Group when the weather allows us to be outside.

French Conversation Group 2

It's difficult to write much about a group which just meets to chat but hopefully our members are finding our chats useful. Since Christmas we have been taking it in turns to talk about our favourite places in France and we all now have the Luberon, Strasbourg, Talmont-sur-Gironde and l'Ile d'Oléron on our list of places to visit.

This week several of us managed to see the French-language film 'The Taste of Things' at The Parade Cinema in Marlborough, where we tried hard not to rely on the English subtitles. Luckily the dialogue was simple and mostly about food! As a group we are hoping the cinema will offer more foreign language films in the future.

At present both groups are full but it appears there may be a potential leader for a third group so please let either Lynne, Charmian or myself know if you'd like to go on the waiting list.

PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP 2 (PG2)



Broadly speaking, we're a group of friends who go somewhere picturesque every month to take photographs. Oh, and did I mention the pub lunch? Would you like to join us?

We recently got together to discuss where we might go this year. Of course, it's all very weather dependent - oh how it's dominating our lives at the moment! We'll have to have a fair and a foul weather eventuality for every month and are considering Drew's Pond (when the marsh marigolds are in bloom), Beggars Knoll Chinese Garden, Westonbirt Arboretum, as well as the Atwell-Wilson Motor Museum, Weyhill Fairground, Milestones Museum and our old friend the India Shop at Honey Street.

BRIDGE GROUPS

The improvers group are continuing to improve! Thanks to Liz Yeadon and our new helper Viv.



As we were able to move to the Scout Hut I decided to offer Begin Bridge. The response was overwhelming and most of the people who responded turned up for the first meeting and, apart from a few frightened rabbits, I think they survived and hopefully will return. So, if there is anyone who would like to start up a beginner group I am more than happy to share my lesson plans etc.

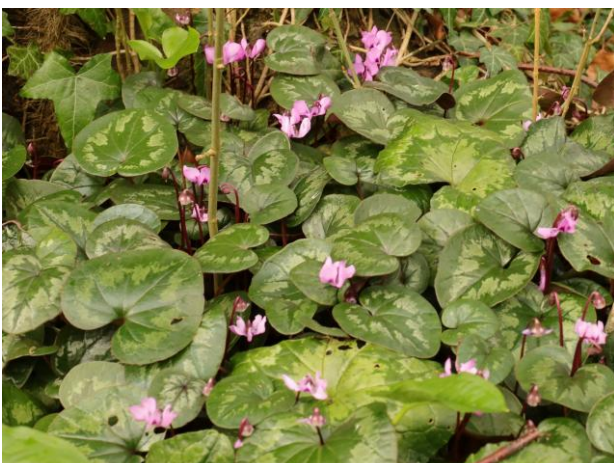
Lastly an appeal, I think I am not alone with this problem. Please could participants let your group leader know if you are unable to attend, particularly if they have material to prepare beforehand.

Also if you are worried that being a leader is an issue, fear not. We are not experts, we just love the subject. So step up.

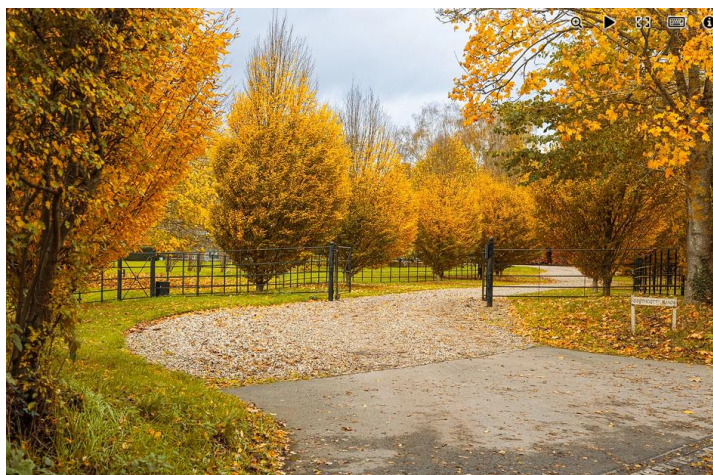
GARDENING GROUP

The Gardening Group meets every 2nd Thursday of the month. This month eleven of us met in one of the members' houses. It was a bit of a grey day and we are all still drying out from the winter.

A few Spring flowers emerging to cheer us all. Winter woes and Spring plans exchanged along with vintage Runner Bean seeds, Rainbow Chard seeds, Black Currant bushes and Cyclamens. Visits to local nurseries planned in future months.



PRACTICAL PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP (PPG)



Last year's programme included a year-long project to run from the beginning of September 2022 until the end of August 2023. Members were required to choose a location which they were to visit each season to take a photo. Of course taking a number of photos was permitted but only one from each season could be uploaded to the album.



At our first meeting of 2024 we reviewed those photos which, as we had hoped, reflected the changes nature creates throughout the year. Images of wonderful autumn colours, the greyness of winter snow and ice, the welcome arrival of fresh green shoots in spring and the abundance of growth under occasional bright blue skies (if we were lucky!) were a clear reminder of how different our seasons are.



Different too was the set of photographs reviewed in February. 'Flat Lay' required the camera to be held immediately above the object to take the shot (although one person who shall remain nameless took a few vertically!). In total members had uploaded 64 images of layouts they had set up at home resulting in an extremely interesting range of items being displayed. The surprise was in discovering that so many of us have a collection of art brushes and paints, many of which we seldom use.

And so to March. 'Fog and Steam' kicked off a debate at a previous meeting about the difference between fog and mist. This was soon sorted by the Met Office definition being circulated by email. As a result there were some excellent photos taken in Hamburg, Norway and New Zealand and others from around the Pewsey area. Some taken at home included a number of steaming kettles and saucepans. One member proved to be quite a contortionist in managing to take a photo of herself shrouded in steam.

We meet on the second Friday morning of each month to review photos and give constructive criticism while enjoying a cup of tea or coffee and biscuits.

COUNTRY DANCING



Dancing "Belfast Duck"
It's one of our favourites.

The Country Dancers have been trying out some new dances to add to our repertoire. Some are quite simple but others are more complex and still need further practice. Fortunately we have managed to avoid too many collisions!

We are continuing our long term work on Alabama Jubilee. Some keen dancers even asked to dance Alabama Jubilee twice so that we could improve on our first attempt. There's dedication for you!

There is satisfaction when the dances are successfully completed and hilarity, verging on hysteria when we muddle things up. So a good time is had by all throughout the afternoon.

If you would like to come along for an afternoon of entertainment please get in touch.

We meet on the second and fourth Tuesdays at The Bouverie Hall, Pewsey, 2pm until 4.

PATCHWORK GROUP

Here are 3 patchwork quilts: the first 2 are memory quilts made for family members using patches taken from their late Dad's shirts. A lovely homage to a much loved man.

The third is a very smart hand quilted quilt. This is a block pattern based on triangles.

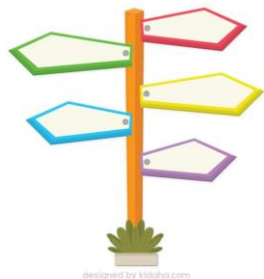
The patchwork group continues to thrive and enjoy our twice monthly meetings. If you would like to try patchwork you could always join our waiting list then, if there were enough, a new group could be formed.



8+ TO 12 MILE WALKING GROUP

The 8+ to 12 Mile Walking Group sits comfortably alongside the other excellent u3a walking groups. We meet on the first Thursday of the month, taking turns to lead a walk.

At 10am on the 1st February we parked just past the old Everleigh Refuse Centre, and headed off eastwards towards Brunton.



After seemingly endless days of rain, we had a blue cloudless sky all day long. It was coats-on coats-off weather, shirts sleeves in the sun, but very chilly in the shade. There was some very muddy and flooded going at times, but all went well until the ford at Aughton Farm. On previous occasions this has been a trickle, but this time it was too deep for wellies, and too wide to jump. Luckily a little way along the bank we found a stout branch placed across the ditch, which we were able to tight-rope with the aid of a stick in the water for balance.

The walk took about 4 hours, including a lunch-stop just above Collingbourne Kingston.

New members are welcome.

SHORT MAT BOWLS

The short mat bowls group continues until June, Monday afternoon in Pewsey and Friday morning in Upavon. Stef Cascarini also runs a group in Upavon on Thursdays until April.

In February we hosted the Enford club for a friendly match and our team won both games! We have a return match booked for April in Enford.

The group is popular and we are getting frequent referrals from new members.

